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The battlefield at Voin. Germans coming from the right. The space between the pebbles represents a gully or ravine.

Voin Defense 1941: *Command Decision*

by Russ Lockwood

The WWII *Command Decision* scenario for this Friday Night at the Fights was the battle at Voin. Marc GMed, I was the Soviets, and Pat and Dan ran the Germans. Everything was set up when I arrived, so I didn't have to worry about positioning troops.

Von Pat (left) and von Dan advance on Turn 1.

By Autumn We Stood With Our Backs To The Town of Orel

In early October, 1941, the 4th Panzer swept through Orel and headed for Tula on the way to the ultimate goal of Moscow. A group of Soviet troops and tanks from the 1st Guards Rifle Corps put together a line at Voin, a little to the southwest of Mtsensk. Although the Germans had crossed the river, a series of woods, ravines, gullies, and a ridge aided the defense.

On the right flank, my Soviet force consisted of a pair of dug-in motorcycle platoons and a BA-20 armored car platoon. A deep gully was in front of them, protecting them somewhat from assault, although shooting across them was unimpeded.

On the left flank, an NKVD infantry company was dug-in with a gully in front of them, defending a dirt road that skirted around the gully. These were not the ruthless fellows of late war, but border guards that had retreated long enough.



In the center to the right of the main road, a company was dug into a woods and another company was in entrenchments. A 45mm AT platoon covered the main road. A pair of T-34 platoons and a KV-1 heavy tank platoon sat behind them on a ridge.

In the center to the left of the main road, an infantry company was in entrenchments, in part guarding a massive ravine. A pair of light tank platoons gave them some firepower.

Behind them in a treeline was an infantry company with two platoons of 85mm AT guns, a mortar platoon, and a command platoon.

Dismounted German motorcycle infantry backed with panzers reach gully's edge. My entrenched Soviet platoons are about to open fire.

Closer And Closer To Moscow They Come

On the Soviet right, the Germans fielded an infantry battalion of three companies plus a motorcycle company with an attached 37mm AT Gun platoon.

An 88mm AT/AA platoon was deployed dead center on the main road, guarding the all-important bridge.

On the Soviet left, four companies of panzers, mostly Pz IIIs but also with Pz IIs and IVs, sought to bull their way through the Soviet defense. A regimental command platoon was in support to help call in two off-table 105mm batteries, one 150mm battery, and one Nebelwerfer battery.

The Soviets seemed outgunned in artillery and certainly outnumbered in panzers, although the 85mm AT guns should equalize the equation. The other German advantage was in troop quality. The Soviets were trained and few were experienced or veteran.

As my Soviets were on defense, it would be up to the Germans to recon and discover if the troops were real or fake.

First blood to the entrenched NKVD AT rifle platoon smoking a PzIII trying an end run around the gully.

Riding The Wind Like A Bell

On the Soviet left, Major von Pat sent a pair of Panzer platoons along the dirt road and at the dug-in NKVD. Private Ivan sighted his AT rifle and fired. Lo and behold, his aim and shots were so accurate, he brewed up the PzIIIs.

Alas, when he tried against the PzIV, his shots bounced, but the explosions of the PzIIIs and the pings against the German armor were so unnerving, the entire PzIV platoon fled over the rise and became pinned. Indeed, it took a considerable



time for the crews to summon up their courage to advance once again.

Ivan's shots against a PzII at extreme range went wide. Still his single-handed shooting gave the German armor a bloody nose. He was put in for a hero of the Soviet Union medal.

So, two companies of panzers were frozen in place -- one scared witless and pinned by the AT Rifle shots and the other in the center patiently and prudently waiting to exploit. To their eyes, my entire left was as intact as ever.

Even von Pat's artillery proved ineffective.

Meanwhile, Major von Dan sent his infantry and motorcycles against the Soviet right, capturing a small village. The gully proved an obstacle. As they approached, my dug-in Soviet motorcycle platoons opened up to good effect. Alas, supporting panzers and artillery shot the motorcycle platoons into oblivion.

On the right, I lost both dug-in platoons, but took a few Germans and pinned the panzers.

I knew the right flank was rather weak from the set up, so I trusted the gully to delay the infantry long enough for me to hope reinforcements would reach the area. I pulled the BA-20 back behind the ridge.

I also used my one mortar to rain death and consternation upon the German infantry moving in the open. I nailed a few platoons and sent a few more temporarily packing for the rear.

My T-34s on the ridge refrained from shooting at long range. The panzers had to come to me.

Of note, the 88mm AT/AA platoon moved off to the right and deployed on a rise. Again, I refrained shooting with the tanks, figuring the 88 had the better chance at range. I did play some mortar music over the crew, eventually blasting them into oblivion and rendering the gun useless. I don't think the gun fired once.

General Guderian Stands At The Crest Of The Hill

Even though General Guderian was miles away, von Pat could feel the commander's wrath at his delay in shoving aside the Soviets. His tanks began to shift position to the Soviet right.

One of my 85mm AT gun platoons smoked a PzIII platoon grinding past woods and towards the center. The accompanying PzII platoon drove right by my 47mm AT gun platoon. It looked like an entire panzer company would be flickering their souls to the wind.

The 85mm AT gun (bottom left corner) destroyed the PzIII (top right corner), but the dug-in 47mm AT gun (upper middle) blew its shots against the PzII.

Alas, the AT crew bungled their shot. Still, the 47mm hammering created terror among the Pz II crews and the German platoon fled, shaking in their boots and



never to return to the attack.

A lucky random reinforcement brought a battalion of infantry to my right flank, which was sorely needed because I had no infantry to oppose von Dan's German infantry battalion. My reinforcement also included a mortar platoon, so I now had two platoons that played music for the exposed German infantry. Sufficient carnage resulted.

Center

Von Pat threw in his reserve, an engineering company, in the center, presumably to pin me while he and von Dan worked panzers and infantry from the right to the central woods.

It didn't work. My dug-in machine gun platoon slaughtered two of the three platoons. The third ran. Of course, the deluge of German fire eliminated the MG platoon, but I'll take a two-for-one exchange all day.

And Back On The Left

The PzIV crews finally sorted themselves out and re-attacked the NKVD lads. Sadly, Private Ivan couldn't replicate his feat and fled, soon followed by the rest of the company.

The PzIV crashed through a treeline and took revenge against the now out in the open NKVD company. Only one platoon survived. That did uncover the second 85mm AT gun, which missed.

Meanwhile, a panzer company with PzII and PzIII platoons swept around and towards the all-important crossroads. The first 85mm AT gun smoked the PzIII platoon -- it's second kill of the battle. Despite the loss, that PzII platoon stuck around, although its return fire did nothing.

Scrum in the Woods

I had a T-34 reinforcement platoon drive down the main road and park at the all-important crossroads. I also positioned a 47mm AT gun next to it. For good measure, I sent the KV1 to cover the crossroads as well.

In the woods my infantry company was obviously in need of target practice. All platoons fired on German troops advancing in the open and missed. As expected, German tank and artillery return fire plowed them underground.

A panzer company charged through the woods and ran into my KV1. I fired at point blank range and missed. The accompanying German infantry platoon tried to close assault the tank and failed. Yet the KV1 failed morale and fled from its tormentors.

Judging the time right, I moved up the pair of T-34 platoons to flank the German PzIVs in the woods. One whiffed and the other forced a retreat, leaving one lone PzIV platoon in the woods after the supporting German infantry fled.



The T-34s move up and force one Panzer platoon to flee but the other remains. German infantry perish on the rise, but the Soviet infantry are hurt in the open as well.

Just beyond, three Soviet infantry platoons that had laid low the entire game judged the time right to charge and close assault the command tank, which had meandered onward in the center. How sweet it was: one Soviet infantry platoon died in a hail of bullets, but the other two platoons attached satchel charges and blew up the command tanks and assorted supporting vehicles.

It's Been Nearly Four Months That I've Carried a Gun

By this time, the Germans had few infantry remaining. The Soviets were in good shape, even if random reinforcements proved scantier than expected. Indeed, the off-table Kaytusha rocket brigade never fired a shot.

The KV-1 flees (bottom right corner), soon to be followed by the AT guns and MG. I still hold the crossroads with the T-34 and nearby 45mm AT gun, but the Pz holds the woods. A close assault is on the HQ platoon (upper left middle).



As the scrum for the crossroads played out, I had advanced the infantry battalion on the right. I was perhaps a bit too aggressive, but I wanted to put pressure on what remained of the German infantry. It proved successful in knocking out just about all German infantry, albeit at a cost of three platoons.

I sent the BA-20 armored car to reoccupy the original positions of the late motorcycle troops. My goal was to swing around and recapture the bridge from what few rear-area troops still milled about.

The Soviet close assault knocks out the HQ platoon, but loses a rifle platoon.



A Game of 10s

We had played 10 turns in about three hours, which is a little better than average. Granted, I didn't move much in the first few turns and the one shot from Ivan's AT Rifle set the German timetable back several turns on my left.

How? Because Pat rolled a 10 on a d10 a couple times in a row for the morale rolls. Yes, 10 is the worst roll for morale. Likewise, I rolled a few 10s that pinned otherwise intact units.

End game positions. One PzIV and two Soviet light tanks are off photo (upper left corner). German infantry dead are piled next to road in the center.



On the final turn, we rolled morale rolls. Two successive 10s proved my undoing -- the T-34 and KV1 tanks in the woods fled with the company with the 85mm AT guns.

They bolted for the rear, even though the tanks were completely intact and the AT company had only lost one platoon out of four. It would take at least three turns for them to return after rallying. Dasvidaniya, comrades!

That resulted in the PzIV and PzII platoons close enough to the crossroads to contest its occupation opposed by one T-34 platoon, a supporting "tank rider" infantry platoon, and a 47mm AT gun platoon and supporting platoon.

Marc declared the game a draw. Up until those pair of 10s, I would have given it a marginal Soviet win, but with my tanks and big AT crews a runnin', that made sense to me. I guess they'll have to make another stand at Mtsensk.

Thanks Marc for hosting and GMing.

Tile Me! *Carcassonne*

by Russ Lockwood

Dan pulled out *Carcassonne*, a tile-placing game akin to *Dominoes*. Square tiles are drawn at random and placement requires that an edge (farmland, road, city, etc.) match an edge already placed. The board builds slowly and you try to maximize your points with completed cities, roads, and farms.

The game starts. Dan has placed a meeple in a city.

You are allowed to claim a city, road, or farmland with a meeple and no other player can claim said area. When the area is completed, for example, all the city walls connect across multiple tiles, you tally victory points at 1 VP per tile and get your meeple back. That's important, for you only have seven or eight meeples -- with the caveat that meeples placed on farm fields stay there the entire game. There's a bit more, but those are the basics.

I played this about 10 years ago.

Game The First

Tile by tile, our area grew. Cities and roads sprung up, some completed, some not. The farmlands formed snaking areas. We had to be on the lookout to trace them back so that only one meeple controlled a particular area.

I got smoked point-wise because I invested too many meeples in farmland and got caught meeple-less. Hmmm. Always keep one in reserve. The game took about an hour, tops.

I draw a tile and try to figure out a spot for it on the expanding board. Photo by Dan.

Game The Second

Wiser in the ways of tile placement and meeple management, we restarted. I was more sparing in tossing out meeples and retrieved many from the growing board as I completed a number of roads.

I still lost, but it was far closer. Here, I was too stingy in placing farmer meeples -- an over-reaction from the first game.

The board at the end of the game in mid-VP count.

Thoughts

This is a good variation on *Dominoes* and suitable for at least three or four players. As it's matching edges, it's even good for kids.

Some nice moments when you pull a tile that just perfectly matches to complete a city or road. Dan had one that completed a big city of eight or nine tiles, plus bonus points for those that included a shield. More often, you find orphan cities and roads because you didn't pull the right tile. I recall I managed to mis-place a tile that we caught only at the end of the game when we tallied VPs.

An entertaining game.



Return to *Space Base*: Pluto

by Russ Lockwood

With a little time left on this wargaming weeknight, Dan pulled out a card-game favorite: *Space Base*. That said, while we both enjoyed the *Shy Pluto* expansion, the expansion after that was a bit too much. So, we stuck with the first expansion.

Early in the game. My board on the right.

I've written about this fun game with the combo of card draw and 2d6 dice tosses that balance the luck with the strategy. As you buy more spaceship cards for your space empire, you try to set up card combos that rocket up your purchases of cards with money, VP guns, and lawyers.

OK, I made up the part about lawyers.

Sometimes you score with your own die rolls and sometimes with the opponent's die rolls. First one to 40 VPs wins.

I never quite got my economy rolling in this game, so I was only about halfway to 40 VPs when Dan crossed over that threshold.

Thoughts

A favorite eurogame. I've played in games with up to seven players (need an expansion from the basic box) and it's still enjoyable. The more players in a game, the more you have to pay attention to what you can get from opponents' die rolls.

One interesting anecdote: A particular card allows for a bonus 2d6 roll that the opponent cannot use. In this game, that card was in my "7" spot. The card also gave me 1 coin in revenue. I managed to roll a "7" on 2d6 five times in a row! While the rewards in my setup were less than if I had rolled such on a craps table at a casino, it was a (so-far) one of a kind feat.

Thanks for the games, Dan.

*A game of surprises...
Photo by Dan.*



Total Domination: Abstract WWII Boardgame

by Russ Lockwood

Renaud came over and brought a new WWII boardgame to try out. Called *Total Domination* (TD), this abstract two-player WWII card-driven game pits the Allies against the Axis starting in 1939. The units are abstract: ground, naval, and optional air. No names or numbers, just generic units. Each turn is a year.

The Map.

Let's Start At The Beginning

Germany/Italy and UK/France begin the game at war in 1939. That makes sense. The US is also neutral, which also makes sense.

Now for the ahistorical parts. Japan begins the game at war with UK/France, but not at war with China. The USSR is at war with Germany/Italy and Japan. Talk about an ahistorical opening.

There may be optional rules about starting. Dunno. The US and China may enter the war via Lend-Lease actions.

Just to be clear: historical WWII this is not.

The Map

TD plays out on a point-to-point map containing 45 spaces: square spaces are generally land, circular spaces are general sea, and octagons are, are, are... generally both types. I don't recall what makes them special.

Each space has one to three stars representing Victory Points (VPs). When you enter an empty space, you capture it and gain the VPs. A running VP total track encircles the board, with a certain number needed to win.

Each space also contains arrow connections to other spaces. The arrows are brown for ground and blue for water -- your first unit across must match the arrow. Some of them make perfect sense. Some you wonder.

For example, Germany to the Benelux Low Countries are brown, so a German ground unit must be the first from Germany to enter the Low Countries. Likewise, the Low Countries to France is also a brown arrow. France to the UK is a blue arrow, so a naval unit must be first to use it. All perfectly logical.

However, Germany to Norway is a brown arrow, while Norway to Germany is a blue arrow. Likewise, UK to Egypt is a brown arrow but Egypt to UK is a blue arrow. Like I said, makes you wonder. Not all spaces connect with surrounding spaces. Some spaces go off one board edge and enter on another: Romania and Balkans is one combo and Egypt and Persia is another.

After the game, Renaud noted that the arrows don't matter for attacks, only movement. We're not sure about that logic -- how can an attack be OK if you can't move there without an attack? Go figure...



All In The Cards

All is card-driven. Each player gets dealt a hand of seven or eight cards and selects two or three to keep, depending on the turn. The remainder of your hand is exchanged with your opponent. You then pick two more cards to keep, and hand the rest back to your opponent. Eventually, all the cards are held except one that's discarded.

This provides great tension. In every hand, I always wanted to keep one more card than allowed. So, I had to grit my teeth and pass it along. On rare occasions, it actually came back, but mostly, Renaud knew the value of high-operation cards just as much as I did.

A card divides into three aspects: A tech icon, a bonus icon (usually free units and/or moves) slugged to a country, and an operations number. You can play the card for your choice of one of the three aspects.

You are allowed one tech upgrade per year, so choose wisely. Most reduce the number of operations points needed to move, attack, or deploy. The bonus usually provides free units and movements -- no need to spend the Operations points. The Operations Points allow you to attack, move, and/or deploy units.

Note that the order of card play in 1939 was Germany, UK, Japan, and USSR. In 1940 it was UK, Japan, USSR, and Germany. In 1941 and each turn, the order shifted again, and so on. Clever bit, that.

Obviously, the use of cards enhances replay value while part luck and part selection determine how your armed forces perform.

Player Control Panel

The Player Control Panel uses multicolor cubes to track armed forces status/capabilities and tech usage. The board has recessed squares to generally hold the cubes in place.

Some tech, like Close Air Support, requires pre-requisite tech to be developed before you can develop CAS. The Atom Bomb has four pre-requisites.



Units deploy in your home country space and can move and attack an adjacent space. If you have enough Operations Points and have developed appropriate tech, you can do two and sometimes all three of these actions using the same card.

Think about this. You not only have to consider what card to select in the card-picking phase, but also the sequence you play them for maximum effect. I can't tell you the number of times I attacked, but didn't have the Op Points to move in. Better tech lowers the Op Points needed for deploys, moves, and attacks. Cool.

By random selection, I was the Axis and Renaud the Allies. We did the back and forth card selection process, and off I went. I was surprised that Finland and Romania start as neutrals. They each had a ground unit, but the only way to grab the space was to attack it. Sheesh, the Axis have enough enemies! Did I mention the ahistorical aspect?

Game On: Tech Ho!

I first played a German card for tech to improve tanks. At the end of the turn, I would move the brown cube from tanks to the "Tank X" icon space. Next turn, that would reduce a ground unit attack from three Op Points to two Op Points to eliminate an enemy ground unit. Naval technology is a different tech icon, so a Naval attack still required three Op Points.

The UK played a card for tech. As Japan, I played a card for tech. The USSR played a card for tech. That was expected.

Now came the conquest. I played a 5 Op Points card and spent three Op Pts to attack Poland. All attacks are automatically successful (no die rolling). That got rid of the starting Polish ground unit and I used the remaining two Op Pts to move one unit into Poland. Two VPs were added to my total.

The Soviets took the Baltic Countries by moving in (no defending forces) and added one VP to the Allied total. I forget the first turn UK play, but my Japan rolled into Siam for a VP.

Card play followed card play as we deployed free units and used Op Points to shuffle units around. I invaded and took Norway with a move, put a U-boat in Icelandic waters, and used the free deploy cards to build up the German armed forces. With Japan, I built some ships and pushed into the Marianas. I will note that the UK and USSR did the same sort of build-up and VP grabs.

Countries' Chain Gangs

Every country you grab requires a garrison or else you lose it. Garrisons also ensure a Line of Supply. Something bad happens if your Line of Supply is broken, but we were pretty good at ensuring a solid LoS.

One aspect that took me a bit to figure out was moving up a chain. As you conquer more countries, these spaces act as links in a chain. In a single move, you can jump to the end of the chain and into an empty neutral or enemy space.

So, I put that to the test. I had captured Norway with a ground unit and the Iceland sea area with a U-Boat. I then moved a naval unit along the chain to pop into an empty Canada!

Aha! So clever! I've captured Oak Island...

Later, we discovered it was also illegal. U-boats never control a space, so using Iceland as a link in the chain was illegal. Oh my, perfidious Germany. We discovered that a bit late, for the UK spent Op Pts to attack and sink my naval unit, retaking Canada. I guess the *Graf Spee* didn't make it to a neutral port.

Anyway, that's how you can get units from home country deployment to front line use quickly.

The Years Roll By

The USSR concentrated on Germany, attacking and capturing Poland and Romania. I counterattacked and eliminated the Red Army units, but didn't have enough Op Pts to actually occupy them. I really needed to pay attention to that. Obviously, my initial Poland Op Point use was a fluke...

This went on for a turn or two. Frustrating, but at least the Red Army units were being whacked as I held the line. The Polish and Romanian 2 VP spaces were solidly in the Soviet VP track.

The free unit deployment cards were especially useful. It's a bit single-minded as a card, but it is helpful. As Germany, I finally grabbed Romania, took back Poland, and advanced into Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Japanese Army attacked and conquered Burma, India, and Persia while the Navy took another island chain.

At one point, I thought about attacking China and eliminating the armies, but wouldn't have enough Op Pts to advance. That would allow China to expand and be a thorn in my side. So, I didn't. Hey. I was learning to count Op Points.

Still, the conquests gave me just enough VPs to squeak out a victory in 1943.

Thoughts

TD is not WWII, but it is a good eurogame with a caveat: You have to plan ahead with a strategy based on your random card draws. That's the whole luck factor in the game. The UK never seemed to get going -- especially with Lend Lease that was needed to bring China and the USA into play -- while the USSR created a big Red Army that always seemed to burn up my Op Pts to eliminate, but not enough to roll over me. I eventually captured USSR territory, but I needed to pay more attention to the tech to do better on the ground.

Note that the game lasts up to seven turns, but there are 15 possible tech advances. As you can only do one tech per turn, that means a maximum of half can be advanced. I'll have to think about that a little more.

We stumbled a bit on some of the icon combos, but nothing that we didn't find in the rules or extrapolate.

Some clever mechanics make the game fun and challenging, although any correlation with historical WWII is coincidental. I'd play it again. Thanks, Renaud for the game.

Star Wars: Card Game

by Russ Lockwood

Here's a quick and clever deck-building card game that uses a common deck to draw from and a common area to buy from. The Rebel player can buy Rebel cards, but never Empire cards. Likewise, the Empire can buy Empire cards, but not rebel cards. Neutral cards can be bought by either side.

Renaud plays a card. Note common deck (bottom right corner), cards to purchase (bottom edge), and the three yellow cubes (resources) he has yet to spend. His base card is in front of him.

The *Star Wars* cards have three aspects: resources, the Force, and Attack. Some cards offer points for only one aspect, some two, and a few all three aspects. You play resource cards to buy more cards, use the Force to gain benefits, and use Attack to destroy enemy bases. The player who destroys three or four bases wins the game.

You may use cards as soon as you gain them, which helps shorten the game. You have to pay attention to the order in which they play. Many is the time we both drew resource cards that allowed us to play other cards, that allowed us to draw more resource cards, and so on. Sometimes it seemed a perpetual motion machine was in action.

As for the game, I could not buy or draw a spaceship card to defend my bases. Not one. Renaud had three during the game and I had to destroy them all before Attack points could apply to the base. Individually, they took between three and seven attack points to blow up, but that was enough to keep the 12 and 14 point bases in operation for an extra turn or two.

I'm not sure if that's a design attribute or I was just unlucky in spaceship card draws. Whichever, the game was still close. Renaud destroyed three of my bases, but we played on for the fourth. I caught up, but just fell short as Renaud wiped out the fourth Rebel base for the win.

I'm sure there are killer card combos here as in every card game. This moved quick, seemed balanced, and was easy to learn. Worth another play, for sure.



Dominion: Pair of Card Games

by Russ Lockwood

Popped over to Dan's for a couple hours of the card game *Dominion*. He has a list of 700 or so configurations accumulated over the years, so we picked one, laid out the cards, and had at it. I was smoked.

But the second game with a different configuration was a tight game all the way to the end. I really should learn to keep a tally of VPs in my head, but obviously never seem to do so. I knew it was close. My card selections and combos chugged along early but never quite accelerated past a certain point, whereas Dan's deck started out slow and accelerated.

I really wanted to go out the turn before, but didn't have enough coin to buy out the Pearl Divers and grab a VP Colony (or even Province), which I thought I needed for the win. Alas, Dan squeaked by with a two-point win. Still an entertaining game!





The beginning of the Waterloo scenario. French to left, Allies to right. Hougoumont and its wall up top. La Haye Sainte in middle. Papelotte the closest. The colored rings indicate owning corp. Single stands are skirmish units, leaders, or artillery units.

Snappy Nappy: With Skirmishers

by Russ Lockwood

Renaud set up a Waterloo scenario using modified *Snappy Nappy* rules -- he included Skirmishers. He has figures based on square bases, but I assured him that as long as the base widths are the same and the depth relatively equal, all would be well. Squares fit the bill.

Unlike the big multi-player games, this was just us two on a three foot wide by four foot deep table. The British and Dutch were set up mostly on the ridge and the French coming towards them. The Prussians were not coming.

La Haye Sainte and Papelotte were considered villages and Hougoumont was a town. By random selection, I played the Allies and Renaud played the French.

Skirmishers

I don't have skirmishers in *Snappy Nappy*, as I made the design decision that the scale is too large to include them. I suppose you can make the argument that if you drop the unit scale to regiment level, skirmishers might be a factor. Renaud wanted to give them a try and why not? Some of the coolest extensions of the mechanics came from gamers who wanted to try something new.

In his variation, skirmishers were single stands per unit, not the usual two stands per unit. As they didn't have as many men as a regular unit, they fired at -1 die modifier and generated a -1 die modifier when shot at. They had a 2-inch range instead of 1 inch and had the same 1-inch "zone of control" as a standard unit.

Furthermore, he noted that only skirmishers could garrison La Haye Sainte, Hougoumont, and Papelotte. The larger units could melee, but never advance into these three places. The French had four skirmisher units and the British/Dutch had three.

Opening Gambits

I pushed my skirmishers into the three urban areas and set up a forward defense. That may not have been the brightest idea.

*Allied view of the battle, Turn 1.
French up top. Allies below.
Urban areas labeled.*

The French spread out and advanced across the front. I met them with what I had, but I soon figured out that quality was not an Allied strongpoint. The British contained a number of Elite units, but most were Seasoned. The French were universally Veteran except for the Imperial Guard.

I fielded three regular artillery batteries and one light horse artillery battery. The French fielded three regular artillery batteries and two Imperial Guard heavy batteries.

I was also outnumbered in cavalry: five French to three Allied. Again, quality fell the French way.

Mid Turn 3. French advance.

Mid Game

By Turn 5, my center-left was hammered into mincemeat. The French had captured all three urban areas and pressed forward.

End of Turn 5. French grabbed all three urban areas. Imperial Guard 12 lbs clear Allied left-center. Lots of red badges of disorder sprout up.

On the left flank at Papelotte, I maneuvered to load up on the French cavalry in an even-up attack -- best I could accomplish. I held until I didn't.

On the right flank, I recaptured Hougomont and pressed an artillery advantage that sent one French unit packing. But Marshal Ney gathered cavalry and



another infantry unit to confront Picton. A series of melees recoiled my Brits.

Of note were a number of rolled 1s for morale while a leader was attached. This generated a roll on the Leader Loss Table. Indeed, sometimes two 1s were rolled for morale and the attached leader had to roll twice. The French generals were generally lucky, but one was dragged off the field to be replaced by a less competent leader. The Brits also had their share of 1s and had a couple of close calls, but only one wounded. Wellington received a "hole in his coat" and soldiered on.

Marshal Ney (upper right corner) and his cavalry in line charge along with an infantry column into Picton's Elite infantry and Seasoned artillery.

Center Scythe

I had no answer to the pair of Imperial Guard artillery units that played the Marseilles along my line. No reverse slope in this game. My units took casualties or packed up entirely.

I couldn't keep up with the rallying. That's a design mechanic, by the way, that reflects my idea that chaos is easier to create than order.

The end result of the melee: hurting Allies and Picton wounded and heading to the rear. He would return the next turn.

Call It A Game

The game lasted eight turns. It was a decisive French victory. As Renaud noted, without Prussians, the French should win. The British can hold their own in spots, but quality will tell over the long run.

That's not to say I didn't get some streaky luck at times, only that pendulums swing and good luck on one turn becomes ill luck on another.

As for the skirmisher units, they did OK. I sometimes used them to stick in front of the Imperial Guard artillery to shield the rest of my troops. The more tactical the scale, the more logical the additional skirmishers.

The inability of the usual two-stand units to garrison or capture urban



areas proved a bit difficult and left them vulnerable. Skirmishers could slip in and fire at the flanks of enemy units that moved past. As we discussed this, Renaud allowed a regular unit to garrison the urban area in exchange for a level of disorder -- but it made the unit more fragile.

I understand the reasoning -- you can't park a brigade in Hougomont. The British held it historically by feeding in a company at a time. I'd argue that allowing a unit to garrison the place represents the same general thing.

As *Snappy Nappy* runs 150 yards to the inch, skirmishers are built into the range. For brigade level games, I'm not sure there is an advantage to using them. For a regimental level game, you have a better argument for skirmisher use.

Also, with a two- or four-player game, they are easily adapted. In a 15- or 20-player game, the simpler the better. But you can always try it for yourself. Let me know.

FYI: In 2015 at SnapCon 1, we gamed the Waterloo campaign on the 200th anniversary of the battle. We had a dozen or so tables based on the Columbia Games map and the French marched four corps via Hal on the left flank while holding the center and right with a couple corps. Being French trying to hold off the Prussians with one corps, it was a near run thing for me. Yet the sweep worked and caught the British in a vise. You can read the account on Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog.

Anyway, thanks, Renaud for setting up the game. I always enjoy playing *Snappy Nappy*.

Full Disclosure: I created *Snappy Nappy*.

End Turn 8. Without the Prussians, the Allies fall back before the victorious French.



Hyperspace Hack: Spaceship Battle

by Russ Lockwood

About a dozen or so years ago, I created *Hyperspace Hack*, a tactical set of spaceship miniatures rules that emphasized simplicity and carnage. Yesterday, we played two games in about two and a half hours with 17 ships each.

Two problems. First, I couldn't find my well-painted *Battlefleet Gothic* spaceships, so I made do with a collection of older *Star Trek* and unremembered manufacturer miniatures along with a couple *Twilight Imperium* plastic ships.

Second, I really should have re-read my rules -- or at least followed the Sequence of Play. I left out half the fire and return fire steps in the first game. DOH!

Renaud ponders the Hyperspace Hack Quick Reference Sheet. His orderly line of Red Alert ships contrasts with my jumble of ships from a company whose name I forget, but met the designer at a show.

That said, the first (flawed) game went even quicker than I remembered. It didn't help that I had star-powered hot dice and Renaud had vacuum of space cold dice.

Fortunately, Renaud can read and the second game played out much closer to what I had envisioned. For this second game, Renaud kept his fleet a little tighter in formation and aimed for my two biggest ships. I went looking to pick off smaller ships and force a Task Force morale roll before I lost too much firepower.

His dice picked up heat and mine picked up cold. I was down to 50% in no time, but passed the morale check. When I hit 66% losses, I failed the morale check.



The Matrix

The key to *Hyperspace Hack*'s speed of play is a matrix of firepower versus ship type. When firing, a player is allowed, nay, encouraged, to concentrate firepower from multiple ships onto one ship.

The matrix (*right*) shows the attack factors (AF) versus the targeted ship. The column goes to 41+, but this corner will do for an example.

Tally the AF and cross index with the targeted ship. For example, 5-6 AF versus a DDD (Destroyer) results in a 5/1 result. The firer rolls 1d10. If the roll is equal to or under the first number, the targeted ship is damaged. If the roll is equal to or under the second number, the targeted ship is destroyed.

A separate table holds the ship stats. An intact DDD has 3 AF, so if two DDDs fire (5-6 AF) at a DDD, it's a 10% chance of destroying the target outright and 40% chance of damaging it.

Ships are either intact, damaged, or destroyed. Two damaged equals a destroyed.

As you can tell, the more AF that piles onto a targeted ship, the better the chance of damaging or destroying it. Optional rules include saving rolls and repair rolls based on crew quality, boarding action, and Task Force and Fleet morale.

Anyway, I had my potluck fleet. Renaud brought his *Red Alert* (boardgame) fleet. While I was rusty on the rules, we enjoyed a couple quick games.

Plug: *Hyperspace Hack* is available from: www.onmilitarymatters.com

Attack				
Factors	TRN	FRG	DDD	CRL
0	2/-	1/-	-	-
1-2	5/1	4/1	3/1	2/-
3-4	6/2	5/1	4/1	3/1
5-6	7/2	6/2	5/1	4/1
7-8	8/2	7/2	6/2	5/1



The two pre-game set-ups: Top for the Allies and bottom for the Germans. Ships are 1/1800 scale from Axis & Allies.

Norway 1940: Part I -- Double Blind

by Bruce Potter

Once again, Bruce ran a double blind naval game using Axis & Allies warship and aircraft miniatures as the core tactical rules. The strategic rules used the boardgame Norway 1940: The Kriegsmarine Strikes as the fundamental map with Bruce's own well-honed touches.

Alas, I was unable to attend...

All photos by Bruce. --RL

Set Up

The set up for Norway 1940 Double Blind was similar to earlier games except for the Tactical Table. Because one hex on the game map is approximately 30 nautical miles, only one half of the center table was open sea, depicting a 12x12 grid of hexes measuring 5,000 yards across.

The strategic map used from the boardgame.

The other half of the table is laid out to depict the several fjords over which combat will take place when invasion begins. The fjords will be used one at a time as coastal forts and objective cities are fought for. This was a cool addition to the usual open sea battles.



April 7, 1940

At noon of April 7, 1940 a strong breeze blew over the North Sea. The weather did not affect air and sea operations. Royal Navy, Polish, Marine Francaise and Kriegsmarine submarines were deployed across the map. The Royal Navy was violating Norwegian neutrality by laying mines in the Leads. Troop-laden Kriegsmarine surface forces were departing home ports. RAF and Luftwaffe searches were aloft.

A Kriegsmarine force of two battlecruisers and ten destroyers were sighted off the Jutland Peninsula (B12), and attacked by RAF Wellingtons, Blenheims, and Hampdens. The Wellingtons stayed high and reported while the others dove in and crippled DDs Z9 and Z21.

RAF air attack on German convoy.

In the afternoon, the weather did not change and the opponents lost contact with each other.

In the evening, a portion of the Home Fleet sailed into a U-Boat Flotilla of five Type II Boats in H6. The boats closed in undetected in the darkness and fired spreads of torpedoes at light cruiser Sheffield, and the destroyers Punjabi and Bedouin. After sinking *HMS Bedouin*, the boats escaped undetected, having expended their fish. The Royal Navy continued the mission.

At midnight on April 8 the only activity was reported heavy sea traffic moving north along the east and west coasts of Denmark.

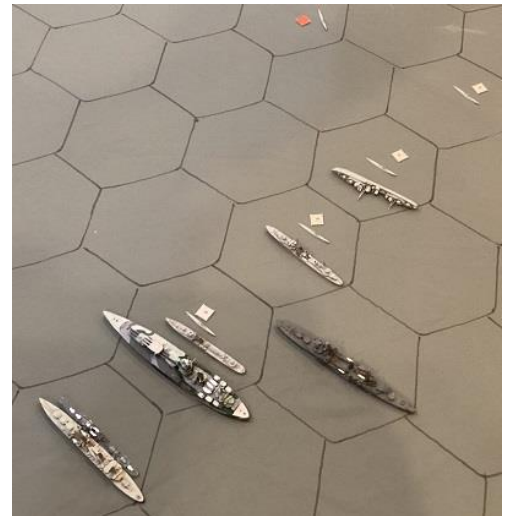
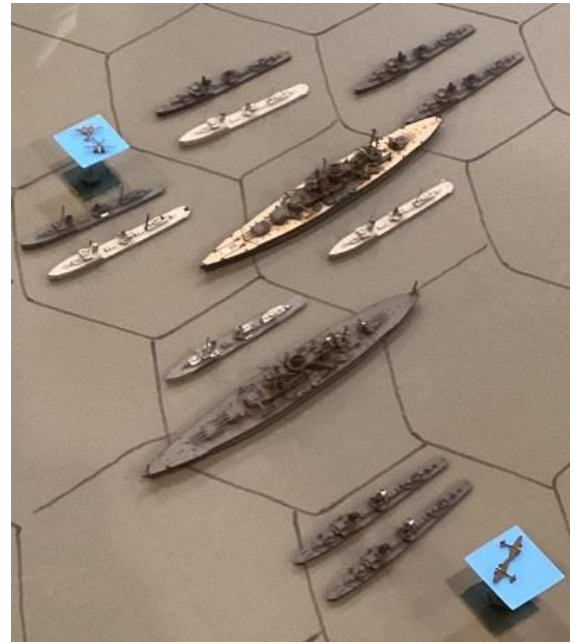
Results of the U-Boat attack.

April 8, 1940

Morning (Turn 5) brought no change in the weather, but much combat.

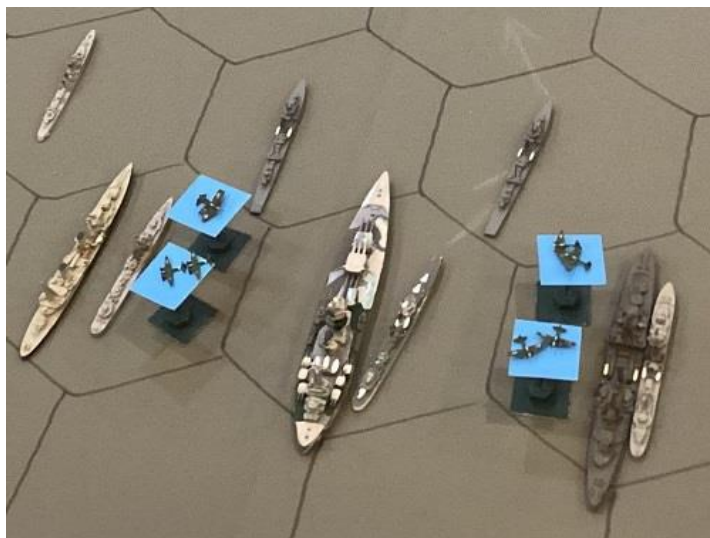
A Kriegsmarine force was spotted and attacked in the Skagerrak (E15), by a RN submarine flotilla. The four S Class Boats moved in

British submarine sinks the Koln, but is sunk in turn.



undetected. *HMS Swordfish* sank the light cruiser *KMS Koln* with two salvos. She was quickly avenged by the E Boat flotilla detecting and sinking the *Swordfish* in turn. Further action resulted in light cruiser *KMS Konigsburg* and torpedo boat *KMS Wolf* sinking, but again, the E boats sank *HMS Seahorse* and *HMS Starfish*.

Meanwhile, 100 nautical miles West-Northwest of Stavenger (H8), a portion of the Home Fleet was spotted by another U Boat Flotilla of three Type II Boats. Simultaneously, a maximum effort by the Luftwaffe of 120 HE-111s and 160 JU-88s made an appearance. The first air attack wave hit light cruiser *HMS Penelope* while the U Boats approached. The second wave of JU-88s sank the *Penelope* and DD *HMS Kimberly*. The third wave of JU-88s crippled light cruiser *HMS Sheffield*. The U boats finished off *HMS Sheffield* and lost U-1.



Point Tally

At the conclusion of Turn 5, the points stand at:

Allies: 262 Points

German Ships Sunk – 2 light cruisers, 1 torpedo boat, 1 U boat: 37 Points
Norwegian Objectives – 225 Points

Germans: 60 Points

Allied Ships Sunk – 2 light cruisers, 2 destroyers, 3 submarines: 60 Points

RAF attacks Oslo Force.



Norway 1940 Part II: Multiple Invasions

by Bruce Potter

At noon on April 8, 1940, a strong breeze continued to blow over the North Sea. The weather did not affect air and sea operations.

Two Kriegsmarine task forces were spotted in D14 and F15 in the Skagerrak. The larger force was attacked by RAF Wellingtons, Blenheims, and Hampdens. The Hampdens and Blenheims attacked and sank two troop-laden Vorpostenboots, while the Wellingtons were unsuccessful with the light cruiser *Emden*.

Luftwaffe attacks Destroyer Force 2.



In the afternoon, the weather did not change. Royal Navy Destroyer Flotilla 2 (DF2), consisting of HMS Gurkha, HMS Garland, and HMS Gallant, spotted three "neutral" cargo ships proceeding on course 315 in E11, SW of Stavenger. Royal Admiralty guidance was to observe and report, but not to challenge. Meanwhile, the "neutrals" vectored in the Luftwaffe. The JU88s smothered and obliterated DF2.

In the evening, the French Naval Squadron sighted another six "neutral" cargo ships proceeding in the darkness on course 315 in the same vicinity as above. There was no challenge or action.

The fjords of Norway.



April 9, 1940

At midnight on April 9, the six "neutral" cargo ships proceeding in the darkness on course 315 were again spotted west of Stavenger in G10. Meanwhile, the Kriegsmarine commenced hostilities by simultaneously entering Norwegian fjords and bays at Oslo, Stavenger, Bergen, Kristiansand, Trondheim, and Narvik.

German Oslo Force advances into the fjord.

Oslo

The cruiser Blucher led cruiser *Lutzow*, light cruiser *Emden*, and three torpedo boats into Oslofjord. The forts challenged and fired to no effect. Return fire from the Kriegsmarine silenced the forts, which surrendered.

The German attackers next met the Norwegian coastal defense ships *Tordenskjold* and *Haarfarge* near Horton Naval Base.

In the exchange of fire, both defense ships were sunk as was the cruiser *Emden*. The Horton minesweeping flotilla and the submarine flotilla in Oslo were unable to react and fight. As the Oslo force approached the fortress Oscarborg, the Norwegian fort surrendered.

The German task force moved on to the national capital and began to disembark 69th Infantry Division troops who immediately met stiff resistance from the Royal Guards Battalion and some mobilized 2nd Regiment troops within the city. After an intense firefight, the German infantry was chased back to their ships. The attack on Oslo was repulsed.

Attack on Stavenger.

Stavenger

The German attack on Stavenger was conducted by the 2nd Minesweeping Flotilla reinforced by a flotilla of eight Raumboats (R Boats: motor minesweepers) and two crippled destroyers.





The German attack on Bergen.

Stavenger was defended by Norwegian Torpedo Boat Flotilla 3, consisting of *Aeger*, *Gyller*, and *Odin*. In the combat, all four German minesweepers and two R Boats were sunk along with the *Aeger* and *Gyler*. The crippled *Odin* limped away and scuttled. The remaining R boats landed troops from the 163rd Infantry Division and the destroyers landed elements of the 3rd Mountain Division, capturing the undefended port as well as the neighboring Sola Airfield.

Bergen

Due to the earlier loss of two light cruisers and a torpedoboat to RN submarine attacks, a reduced German assault force approached Bergen. The minelayer *Bremse* led the torpedoboat *Leopard* and the 1st S Boot Flotilla into Bergenfjord. see the sixth attached photo.

Bergen was defended by a fort and the an aging flotilla of old destroyers *Troll*, *Garm*, and *Draug*. The fort engaged the S boats as they sped past enroute to Bergen. See the attached seventh photo.

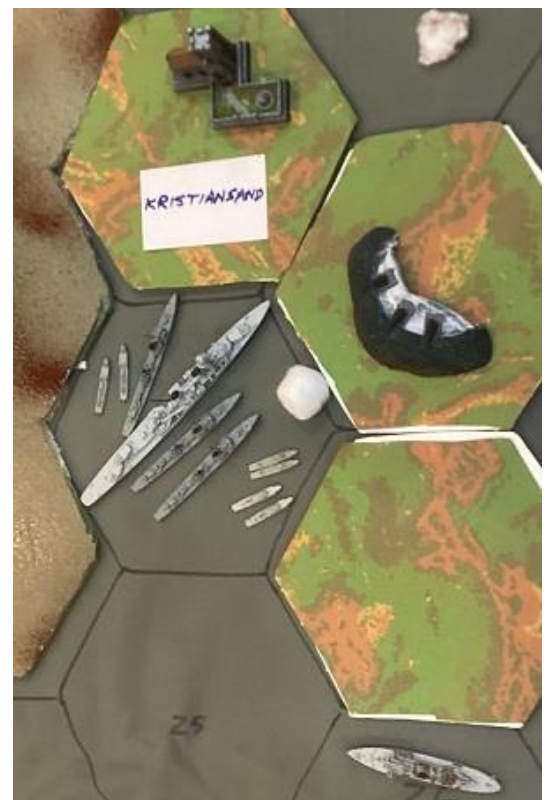
The Norwegians reacted by sending the *Troll* forward to the fort and defended Bergen with *Garm* and *Draug*. *Troll* crippled the *Bremse* but was sunk. The fort sank the *Bremse*. German torpedoboat *Leopard* escaped the fort's gunfire, and a battle was fought in Bergen harbor.

Two Norwegian ships as well as two German S boats were sunk, but the landing of infantry from the 69th Division penetrated into Bergen. Resistance by rapidly gathered Norwegian troops of the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Division stymied the capture of the city. Fighting continued in Bergen throughout the morning.

Attack on Kristiansand.

Kristiansand

The German light cruiser *Karlsruhe* led TorpedoBoat Flotilla 2 and S Boot Flotilla 2 into the bay at Kristiansand.



The *Karlsruhe* and the fort traded volleys until the fort surrendered. The Norwegian torpedoboats were taken by surprise and never came into action. Troops from the 69th Infantry Division were landed and seized the port and the nearby Kjevik Airfield.

Attack on Trondheim.

Trondheim

The German cruiser *Hipper* led Destroyer Flotilla 3 carrying the 138th Mountain Regiment into Trondheim fjord. Although out of night sight range from the fort. The Norwegians sent three ancient 19th century *Ravn* Class boats to investigate and delay, while the submarine flotilla unsuccessfully tried to activate.

The *Ravn* crippled destroyer *Z7* but were smothered by *Hipper*'s gunfire. The Germans moved into Trondheim and unloaded their troops, capturing the city and the nearby Vaernes Airfield. The fort, manned only at 50%, sank the crippled *Z7* in the harbor.



German Narvik Force trades shots with coastal defense ship Eidsvold.

Narvik

Two flotillas of German destroyers approached Ofotfjord with 3rd Mountain Division troops embarked, see twelfth photo attached.

The only Norwegian naval resistance present and in action was the coastal defense ship *Eidsvold*. Neither the coastal defense ship *Norge* nor the submarine flotilla received the alarm. The *Eidsvold* succeeded in crippling DD *Z17* but then was hit by gunfire and torpedoes and sunk. The mountain troops landed but were ambushed and roughly handled by the 16th Infantry Regiment. The attack on Narvik was repulsed.



Historical Record

The wargame's Norwegian reaction was pretty historical. Out of 12 naval units, six surrendered and six fought. Out of five forts, one surrendered, three fought, and one fought at half strength.

Points

At the conclusion of Turn 9, the points stand at:

Allies: 216 Points

German Ships Sunk – 3 light cruisers, 1 Training ship/minelayer, 1 torpedo boat, 1 U boat, 1 destroyer, 2 VP boats, 4 minesweepers, 2 motor minesweepers, 2 S boats: 99 Points

Norwegian Objectives – 117 Points

Germans: 115 Points

Allied Ships Sunk – 2 light cruisers, 5 destroyers, 3 submarines: 79 Points

Norwegian Objectives – 36 Points

Stay tuned for more of the double blind Norway 1940 game in the next AAR. – RL



HMGS Next Gen: Elementary Gaming

By John Spiess

Romans in Darien: CT

This refight of the Battle of Watling Street during Boudica's rebellion against Rome. A quick shout out to one of our HMGS vendors, David Tofer, owner of Tofers Miniatures, for sending me some pretty cool Roman fortifications that I was able to use in the game.

Top: Darien gamers.

*Right: All in all, it's just a—
nother Roman at the wall.*



That said, the kids playing the Romans wanted nothing to do with sitting behind a wall.

Completely outnumbered, they just charged out and destroyed all the British tribes in front of them. However, at one point, a few Roman cohorts advanced too far and became cut off from the rest of the supporting cohorts.

One of the kids playing the Romans knew about the Testudo formation. I really didn't have any rules for that, so we actually just made something up on the spot. Whether it was historical or not, I guess my point is that I was pretty impressed that they had a discussion on some new rules and how they would work in the game.

In the end, the Romans destroyed the British (which was the historical outcome), but it was pretty close. The cohorts in Testudo held out until the rest of the Romans hacked their way through to them.

This might be a good option for one of our kids games at Historicon in July.

Napoleonics in Brooklyn: NY

We have been working on establishing a club at Brooklyn Tech High School since late last year. The faculty is all for it, and when pitched to the students, over 50 signed up as being interested. The problem is the location. Brooklyn is over a two-hour ride from our regular crew in Connecticut. Not much better for the NJ crew. So Dave and Andy Waxtel are making the trip for Next Gen.

This game was a 15mm Napoleonic scenario. I'm pretty sure I painted that church with the red roof for Dave



about 20 years ago. That's scary. According to Dave, these eight kids had never played anything like this before. Brooklyn Tech is known for its quality students, and these kids picked up the rules and tactics with no problems at all.

While I think the desire for the school is to have weekly meetings, it looks like Dave and Andy will at least go monthly, until I can figure out some reinforcements.

Top: The Ridgefield gamers. Bottom: American defense.

AWI in Ridgefield: CT

The kids played the AWI Battle of Ridgefield. The British players came up with a plan to feint an attack on the center and then hit both flanks of the American barricade at once. It worked pretty well. They had no idea that was pretty much what actually happened until I gave the historical summary at the end. Everyone had a great time, especially Kenji. They also asked a lot of good questions about the rules, which meant they were actually trying to figure out the best maneuvers to do.

I still think it's pretty cool knowing that the library literally sits on the battlefield. The British marched down Route 33 from Danbury back to their ships at Compo Beach in Westport. The road was right outside our window. Once the barricade was overrun, there was a running fight through town. There is still a cannonball in the corner post of the Keeler Tavern.



100 Years War in Larchmont: NY

The castle siege is always popular, so one of the Next Gen tables at Historicon will be running ongoing siege games as part of our convention kids program.

One funny moment occurred when the English captured one of the towers that held a French catapult. They turned the catapult on the main French gate tower and destroyed a catapult there. Both English siege towers then reached the

wall (usually at least one gets knocked out). The French held out in a few sections, but there were too many breakthroughs overall and they had to surrender.

This was our last scheduled event in Larchmont, but I just received an email last night from the library director asking to extend our contract for the summer session. Pretty cool.



*Top: Hundred Years War gamers.
Bottom: Castle siege.*

WWII in Rye: NY

We played a small part of the Battle of Carentan, with US Airborne troops fighting the Germans.

The seven gamers of Rye.

You might notice a German halftrack with an American Bazooka pointed right at it. I told the girl that all the Germans already jumped out and had run into the buildings. She wanted to blow it up anyway since... "I really like those smoke markers."

Thinking about it, they probably would have shot at the halftrack anyway.

Rye continues to be one of my favorite stops, since we always have a lot of kids who just come up and watch, play a few turns with their friends, and listen to the historical summary.

Halftrack and the smoke marker.

AWI in New Canaan

I ran the Battle of Ridgefield scenario. I was very happy to see Chip (red hair) again, since he has been unable to attend our games for a while. We had a few newcomers as well, and the homeschool kids are now becoming regulars. James was proud of his "homework" summary of the battle.

The New Canaan gamers.

A lot of the homeschool parents are very happy with this program, since it gives their kids a chance for socializing. I have been talking about Historicon, and it seems like there is a lot of interest. We will have to see if it materializes. A few kids also asked about the AWI figures, so I plugged metal figures.

WWI in Somers: NY

We have another new library that just signed up for monthly events: Somers, NY. Schools were on vacation, but the turnout wasn't bad for a first event.

You might notice the woman (Jean) playing in the game. She signed up for the event thinking it was to watch a movie. I explained that it was a game and convinced her to try it out. Since she had a walker, we put her in charge of defending the trench so she wouldn't have to move too much. She said her father was an airplane mechanic in the Pacific during WWII, and she had some nice stories.

A few of you might also notice Henry Grell from NYWA. He is a teacher in nearby Briar Cliff, so he stopped by to say hello. One of the German figures in the game was designed to look like Henry, so we had a few laughs with that. I'll be following up with him about starting something in Briar Cliff.

Top: Somers gamers. Right: Jean and Henry.



News

20 Sided Gamified Podcast: *Snappy Nappy*

by Russ Lockwood

Back in March, Jared Fishman, creator of the 20 Sided Gamified Podcast, interviewed me and Peter Anderson about *Snappy Nappy*. Peter runs the Blunders on the Danube blog and has been a driving force behind the annual SnapCon multiplayer multi-table *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-in-a-Day games. Full Disclosure: I created the Napoleonic rules set.

After a word from his sponsor and besides how Peter and I got started in gaming, much of the one hour and 21 minutes of the show revolved around the design elements, mechanics, and multi-table game play in general -- fog of war, map-reading skills, tactics, communications, and so on.

Take a listen:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/20-sided-gamified-podcast/id1675149554>

And to read how they play out (including OOBs, maps, and the SN QRS):

<https://blundersonthedanube.blogspot.com/>



Brenda Zartman: New HMGS Membership Coordinator

by Russ Lockwood

The HMGS Board of Directors is excited to announce Brenda Zartman as its new Membership Coordinator, a new position recently approved by the board. As Membership Coordinator, Brenda will oversee membership recruitment and retention, membership programming, and focus on maintaining a close relationship with our members and their feedback. Brenda started in her new role on Monday, March 21, 2025. She will be formally introduced to our annual membership meeting at Historicon this summer.

Brenda is excited to settle into her new position: "It's my absolute pleasure to have this opportunity to serve my fellow HMGS members in a way that will help strengthen our community and foster growth in our hobby."

Brenda. Photo by HMGS.



Brenda has been a dedicated part of HMGS for many years in a variety of roles. Her husband, Dale, took her to her first HMGS Historicon Convention in 2011 at Valley Forge Convention Center. Her first volunteer job was stuffing swag bags, folding t-shirts, and helping with questions from attendees, which helped her learn about HMGS. "I enjoyed it so much; I volunteered for extra duty."

Currently, Brenda serves a Volunteer Coordinator and Assistant Convention Director for multiple HMGS conventions. Her experience as Volunteer Coordinator and as a volunteer recruiter (a role she will continue to fill), provides an extremely unique background for taking on this new role.

"My new role as Membership Coordinator will be a challenge for researching, developing, and evaluating various ideas and strategies to increase the number of HMGS members and the value of HMGS membership. I will be responsible for not only driving new membership activities and reporting ideas, plans, and outcomes to the Board. I can't wait to get started and thank you for your support as I dive into this role!"



14th Century Command Sets: 3D Printed by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games released a series of 14th Century Command Sets: Infantry Command, Knight Command, Crossbow Command, and Archer Command. All set contain three unpainted foot figures in 28mm (\$9), 40mm (\$15), or 54mm (\$20) plus 75 cents packing charge.

Medieval Command Set.

CPG also produces a series of Roman Republic figures, including Triari, Hatati, Principes, Velites, and Command. Each package contains 10 assorted, unpainted plastic miniatures with sword or Pilum (default is sword, please state preference). Miniatures may need some assembly. Each package is available in 28mm (\$25.00), 40mm (\$35), or 54mm (\$60).

Info: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com/>



Why The Military Plays Games to Prepare for War by Russ Lockwood

A total non-wargamer, Johnny Harris, participated in a Center for Naval Analyses wargame about a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. The game starts with Taiwan conquered and Johnny trying to figure out what to do as the leader of China while the US player considers a response.

*Astride the world with CNA socks.
Photo from Harris' video.*



It's a slick presentation, even if the game isn't run to completion. Unfortunately, the video had zero discussion about mechanics other than players roll dice.

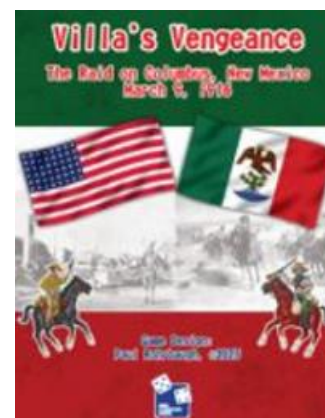
Ya gotta luv the socks...

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqFMX__AH9s

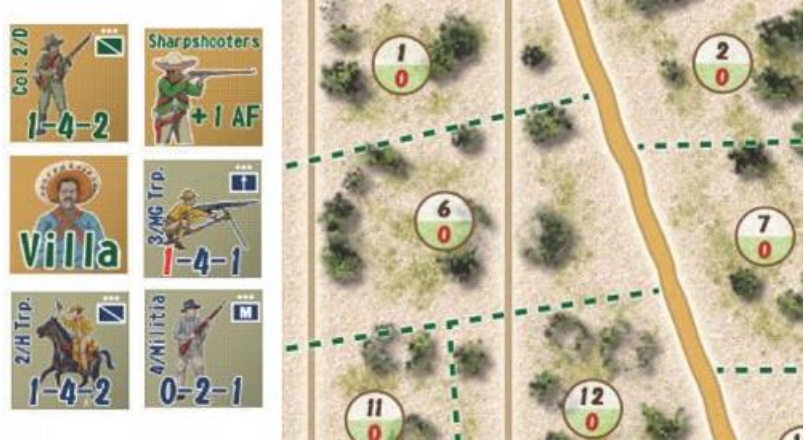
New Wargame: *Villa's Vengeance 1916* by Russ Lockwood

High Flying Dice Games released the introductory-level wargame *Villa's Vengeance: The Raid on Columbus, New Mexico, March 9, 1916*. The Mexican Revolution that began in 1910 with the overthrow of dictator Porfirio Diaz degenerated into civil war following the assassination of President Francisco Madero. By end of 1915 the forces of President Carranza were arrayed against a variety of leaders supporting either themselves or General Victoriano Huerta.

Pancho Villa, commander of the Mexican Army del Norte, at first supported Carranza, but then went rogue after the US Government recognized Carranza's government. Historians still debate Villa's reasons, but in early March 1916 he decided to enter the US and raid the town of Columbus, New Mexico.



Although the town was where the 13th Regiment US Cavalry was garrisoned, he knew most of the troopers were scattered along the border. Believing the town was only weakly guarded, his force of just under 500 men were to steal arms, provisions and horses while also wreaking as much havoc as possible. Such a raid he believed could galvanize the US government into a retaliatory strike that would drag Carranza's government into a war with the US it could not win, or a humiliating capitulation that would outrage the Mexican people. Either way, Villa reasoned, it would mean the downfall of Carranza.



Contains: One 11x17-inch map sheet, 63 un-mounted, double-sided counters, and five pages of rules. An inch on the map represents approximately 50 yards. Each turn represents a half hour of time. A unit represents 40 to 50 men.

Players will also need a standard deck of playing cards and a six-sided die to play the game. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00. A custom card set, replacing the ordinary deck of cards, is \$11.00.

Villa's Vengeance, designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Dariusz Buracweski, costs \$16.95 plus shipping/handling.

Info: www.hfdgames.com/villa.html

ACW Wargame Announced: Rebels Against Rebellions

by Russ Lockwood

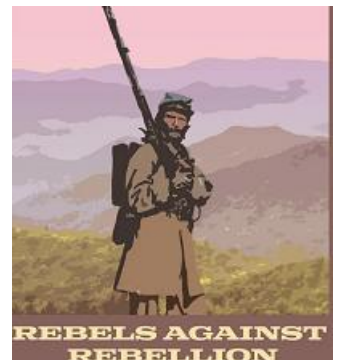
Flying Pig Games announced that its upcoming ACW Wargame *Rebels Against Rebellions* is expected to launch on Kickstarter in the Summer or Fall 2025. Designed by David Thompson and Trevor Benjamin and art by Kwanchai Moriya, this will use card-driven mechanics, with cards in your deck represent the units and locations under a player's control. Card actions will add, remove, and improve the cards in a deck.

Tennessee's role in the American Civil War and the Secession Crisis was marked by significant internal divisions between its eastern, middle, and western regions. In early 1861, when South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union, Tennessee's legislature resisted the idea. However, following the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, a state referendum on June 8, 1861 resulted in a decisive vote to secede.

As tensions escalated, residents of East Tennessee found themselves forced to take sides, often leading to violent confrontations. Loyalist- and secessionist-aligned partisans and outlaws engaged in raids on farms, stealing livestock, and destroying property. The establishment of local militia groups known as the home guard sought to defend loyalists. These small militias acted in secret, launching surprise attacks on Confederate soldiers and secessionist raiders, but they also faced constant threats from the Confederate army and local secessionist groups.

Of the 31 counties in East Tennessee, none voted against succession by a higher margin than Scott County. With a vote of 521 to 19 in favor of remaining with the Union, the county's stance was clear. Local residents so opposed the Confederacy that later in 1861, the county court approved a protest resolution declaring the county's secession from the State of Tennessee and the creation of a "Free and Independent State of Scott."

No other details were available at this time.



Napoleonics: Campaign Wargame Maps

by Peter

Mike needed a good campaign map for the players. Yet the ones he found already had the units printed in the map.

I sent him the following link:

<http://www.murat.ca/maps.htm>

Each map section is downloadable and contains a great view of a campaign area.

HMGS Historicon 2024: By The Numbers and Names

by HMGS

HMGS released the official 2024 Historicon report.-- RL

Convention Director's Final Thoughts

I want to thank all of the Historicon Volunteer Staff that worked tirelessly before during and after the convention to make “America’s Flagship Historical Wargaming Convention” a success. I also want to also thank the HMGS BoD for having the confidence in our outstanding Convention team to run another convention, Historicon 2025. We couldn’t have done it without their support. All of us hope that you had a great gaming and convention experience at Historicon 2024.

Adam Wine, right, receives the Best Host award.



We continue to collect feedback from folks to help improve all HMGS Conventions, including working closely with the Fall In! 2024 team as they introduced our new game and convention registration system Table Top Events (TTE). This is a tremendous step forward for all of our attendees and our HMGS staff to be able to provide a system that you can access from your computer, tablet and even smart phone in real time to see what games are available, what classes you can still get into, or where to go for your game or to just buy some HMGS swag or even a Flea Market Table in real time while you are sitting at a game or at the bar. No more spending valuable convention time trying to see if a game ticket is still available on the board for a game in an upcoming time slot, if it is open you can reserve a seat on your phone get a confirmation, walk up to the game table, show the GM and you are in.

Historicon 2025 is at the Lancaster County Convention Center on July 16-20. The Convention Theme will be celebrating the 250th Birthday of the United States Army. So get out your Green Army Men or those Rev War troops that you haven’t put down on the game table in years and let’s get ready to game. Thank you again everyone for making Historicon 2024 a memorable convention for all of us.

Happy Gaming!

David Hill shows off his Best of Show award.



The Numbers:

Total Attendees: 2,557 includes Spouse/Children: 175/126

Number of Games: 613 not including vendor demos and cancelled

Average Fill Rate: 88%, with 185 games taking on additional players (Thank You Game Hosts)

Special Notes: 11 walk-up games; 93 Kid Friendly games; 29+ Beginner Friendly games

Number of Exhibitor Demo Games: 33 (this is increasingly popular with attendees and vendors to playtest new and emerging games)

Number of Game Hosts: 267+

Number of Tournaments: 23

Number of War College Presentations/Attendees: 22/503

Number of Hobby University Classes/Attendees: 49/263

Hobby U Paint and Take Attendance: About 7

21 Teams in the Iron Paint Brush Competition

Board Game Ticketed Events: 65 games

And the Names:

Duke Seifried Game Host
of the Year: Adam Wine

Best of Theme: Tom Uhl --
Arnhem Bridge: The Battles for the
Bridge

Best of Theme set up.

Best of Show: David Hill -
- Test of Honor: Shogun and the
Last Samurai

Best Terrain: Doug Fisher (and friends) -- Action of 5 November 1813

Young Guard: Michael Fijalka

Legion of Honor Battle Star: Rick Dunn & NOWS -- Mission for
the Governor

Rick and the Legion of Honor Battle Star award.



Pour Encourager Les Autres' (PELA) awards:

Gordon Andrews: Roman Circus III

Sean Barnett: How the West Was Won

Ed Bowen: Battle of the Assunpink Creek

Carl Cardoza: The Battle of Midway

Richard Claydor: Hot Fuzz

John Emmett: Out of Ammunition – Arnhem Bridge

Doug Fisher and friends: Action of 5 November 1813

Jed Fishman: Surviving the Northwest Frontier

Sam Fuson: Sherlock Holmes and the Crime of the Century

Thomas Garnett: Prussians at Elsasshausen – Battle of Proschwiller

David Good: The Alamo

Edward Harding: Nothing Bigger Than a Bren Gun

Trevor Hawkins: Buccaneers of Bird Cay!

David Hill: Test of Honor – Shogun and The Last Samurai

Kris Johnson: Red October Factory 7 Assault

Greg Pooler: What a Tanker – Berlin!

Jim Purky: Picketts Charge – The Wargame

Brad Schaive: Ragnar's Raid

John Seitz: Hollywood Studios Shootout

Adam Sharp: Battle of Sitka – The Battles for the Bridge

Shelby Thompson: The French Flotilla

Shelby Thompson: The Mummy

Tom Uhl: Arnhem Bridge – The Battles for the Bridge

Thomas Vielott: Siege Lord Hasimoto's Castle!

John Wilk: Antietam – Burnside's Bridge



The Judges: Mike Bassett, Steve Boegemann, Cliff Brunken, Daniel Caramagno, Kevin Carroll, Annemarie D'Amato, Patrick Devine, Dino Diakolios, Nikolas Diakolios, Doug Fisher, Brandon Fraley, Matthew Fridirici, Rich Greenaway, David Good, John Hosie, Marie Hubley, Eric Jacobson, Maja Jacobson, Glenn Kidd, Bill Koff, John Leonard, James McWee, Michael Pederson, Dennis Perlot, Marc Raiff, John Sileo, and Joe Swartz.

Wargames Illustrated Painting Competition:

Historical Single Miniature Winner: Aaron Simmons

Historical Unit/War Machine – 25mm+ Winner: Chris Velas

Chris Velas' winning entry.

Historical Unit/War Machine – Small Scale Winner: Ed Kee
(also won Best of Warlord)

Fantasy Single Miniature Winner: Andrew Waxtel

Fantasy Unit/War Machine Winner: Aaron Simmons

Sci-Fi Single Miniature Winner: Andrew Waxtel

Sci-Fi Unit/War Machine Winner: Andrew Waxtel

Youth Winner: Nicholas Jensen

Diorama Winner: Aaron Simmons

Open Winner: Gregory Zuniga



Hobby University Participants:

Total classes: 49

Total Class Attendance: 263

Thursday: 103

Friday: 90

Saturday: 70

Paint 'n Take participants: 63 (with a few additional walk-ups, probably over 70)

Iron Paintbrush competition: 6 teams with a total of 21 participants.

More info and photos at:

<https://historicon.org/2024/08/23/historicon-2024-after-action-report/>

Best Terrain award winners: Doug Fisher (and friends)





The Mob Scene: *D&D* Choices

by Ed

Our "Mob" -- Alan of the Stabbing Knife, Alina of the Healing Word, Balien the Scarred, Cadan of the Smashing Blade, Cristof of the Clever Mind, Gavriel of the Book, the Hammer, Henry of the Noble Visage, Sarge of the Axe, and hairy-handed Skurg -- set forth from Sheffield on a cool day strange for the land. They sought the Dwarven stronghold said to hold the secret of the White Dragon's lair, the creature said to be responsible for the ongoing change in weather.

At a village of wild men news reached us of orcs in the mountains, and tall purple figures in the night. A mere quarter day's further march brought us to what used to be a pair of mountains. One, half destroyed, slumps upon the other, and a great entry gate to the Dwarven realm stands blocked with massive falls of rock. A magic eye scouted the area and revealed three paths forward: the orc village that squatted around entry to the upper halls of the Dwarf fortress, the ravine where a burrowing river promised nature had found a way, or the standing stones.

Declining the invitation to fight orcs, and finding the mystical standing stones of more interest than a ravine and river bed, our Mob found a riddle and with the help of the magic shield of ye olden King from the tomb we'd plundered previously, solved it, granting entry through a narrow passage to the halls which had seen no Dwarf foot for hundreds of years. The Mob gained entry to a desecrated temple of Moradin, where a battle raged in the far past, with skeletons of the fallen dead everywhere, and a pentagram marked on the floor. As we entered, the summoning circle flared with fire and the skeletons rose as one to battle in the company of summoned demons and a banshee.

The battle raged hot but brief. The foes fell before the weight of the Mob, which then rested. During the rest, Alan of the Crafty Ears heard light footsteps beyond the temple door every 20 minutes or so, his skilled hearing determining it was probably the step of an elf.

Purple Reign

Clever Cristof's Chime of Opening removed the bar blocking access and the Mob entered the inner halls. We had not got far before a stern elvish voice demanded to know our business. Negotiations ensued: we wished to search the halls of the fallen dwarves for the information we sought. The House of Gadafin, dire Drow and surely those who had brought the dwarves low centuries before, wished us to leave immediately. Or...

...maybe we could do them a favor, and then we could seek what we wished. A certain purple dragon troubled them, one Nihog and its flying



round friend who live in the great hall below. While we doubted the dragon to be genuinely purple, black perhaps, yes, certainly black thought Balien the Scarred, we agreed to slay the dragon and its companion, a fortuitous decision as fate would show. As we approached we did not shy from searching along the way and found a hall dedicated to Dwarven history, unplundered due to the remnant magic of its Hallowed ground.

There we found the Hammer of Thunderbolts, held by the statue of King Orvorn Ironheart. Meanwhile Bruce, a small inoffensive bat, flapped about the dwarf halls and found the lair of the foe.

The strong among us lifted gates, bent bars, and cleared a path to a side entrance to the lair -- another fortuitous event as fate showed us as events transpired. The Hammer took his summoned friend, a Beholderkin, back to the front and awaited battle. To the rear the door opened and the dragon's Beholder inquired if we had arrived to give gifts to Nihog.

"Sure!" said always crafty Cristof and as we began to enter it became clear to the Beholder we were not there for gift giving but rather for battle -- and battle was joined. The great hall featured a raised plinth where the Beholder floated and a vast hole in the floor--big enough, yes, for an Ancient Dragon!

Behold, One And All!

Where Beholder's look with their giant eye no magic exists, which cramped the style of many in the Mob. Of dangerous battlers we had several in our Mob, and the Beholder took great care to sleep and paralyze them. Sarge of the Axe fell to snoring, and Codan of the Smashing Sword stood motionless.

From the far side of the room The Hammer and his summoned beam-casting monster engaged the Beholder. That battle had not gone on long before a Purple Dragon -- yes, Purple! -- rose from the pit and breathed spores upon the party causing great mental anguish. Luckily our stoutest blade-wielders were protected from the worst effects of this dragon breath by Gavriel of the Book, and we fought on, hampered at every turn by the lair, Nihog's attacks, and the Beholder.

Yet the Beholder faced the dancing sword of Balien the Scarred and felt the cunning stabs of Alan. Hairy-handed Skurg stood hard pressed to keep all the Mob alive as the fight went on, as he unleashed the mightiest of healing to restore those wounded and fallen back to the fray. Henry's Noble visage aided all those near him defend against the foe as all fought on.

Rhythm And Purples

It seemed the fight had fallen into a rhythm where the Dragon would rise to fight then sink out of sight, but soon it showed a new trick and burrowed into a wall to face out and breath again on the party. Many of the Mob were now gravely hurt, and during this scrap two would die outright but be revived by Hairy-handed Skurg. The Hammer hammered away at the Beholder, Alan used his wiles to deliver sneak attack after sneak attack on the Beholder, helping bring it low. Then the Dragon, beset on the end of the great hall where the Mob mostly entered with blade and spell, moved the battle to the



entry end of the hall where spellcasters fled.

Several times the issue held at the balance point, to victory or defeat, and several times the mysterious Moon Witch, Alina of the Healing Word, dispensed her grace and kept open the road to victory.

More breath followed, and many fell, and with Sarge awake the dragon-killing axe made a great wind up but struck no blows when Alan of the Impaling Arrow popped out of his side door hidey-hole and slew the dragon with one final sneak attack. A few moments of anxious healing ensued to assure no one died a true death. The lair was ours!

So many dragons, they had to use orange.

Bruce the bat, on guard, saw spiders scurry away to take word of our victory to the Drow of House Gadafin. The Mob ransacked the room and found desired books in the archive below the great hall. Other riches beyond count and a portable hole to carry them we found. Fate had smiled upon us in our road to this place, this great battle, and had led us on a road of least resistance to our goal.

Soon our hosts arrived and demanded we go, and so insistent were they, and so agreeable as to provide a cart to speed our exit, that we agreed. They sent a spy to follow as we left the broken mountain to a resting place where we healed our wounds and marveled at our success. Beholder parts and Dragon parts also formed part of our booty, and to each of the wild men Sarge of the Deadly Axe gifted a purple scale.

D&D Campaign Continues: White Dragons

by Fred

We fought four White dragons in their lair. Daddy dragon, an Ancient White who thinks he is some type of god, is the force behind the cold snowy weather in this tropical area. After a long battle, we had to escape. During that time, a few players encountered white kobolds and a hatchery. Around 15 large eggs were taken. Most were found later to be kobold eggs. Some are white dragon eggs. Allen the rogue took most of them in the portable hole he was carrying. He also encountered a white dragon wyrmling, stuffed that in the hole also. Size of a large dog, recently hatched.

We stopped the "thing" that was creating the cold weather by breaking it. We did not kill the four dragons – Daddy (ancient, probably around 500 HP), Mate (around 200-300 HP), and two Young dragons (around 150 HP). Their lair is a hollowed out glacier in the mountains. Need to consider if we wish to return to tussle with the dragons again. Daddy's breath weapon is 16D6 plus need a 22 constitution save. They can burrow through the glacier at a high speed, the ice falls in behind them, so no tunnel to follow. They would pop out, fight for a while, then burrow back into the glacier.

We did much damage, but they had healing capability when hiding in the glacier. A number of the party had to be revived on the field of battle. Many cure potions recently obtained in Greyhawk were expended, plus kept the three clerics busy.

Battle!



BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

The Mighty A. by David F. Winkler. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 254 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Short, Heroic Life of the USS Atlanta (CL-51)*

Subtitle: *America's First Warship Commissioned After Pearl Harbor*

The WWII cruiser was the third ship to bear that name. The first was the *CSA Atlanta* that was salvaged and repaired. The second, commissioned 1886, was a protected cruiser. The third was CL-51, designed in 1938 and commissioned on Dec 24, 1941. Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With The Wind*, did the champagne bottle honors.

This is the first book I've read about the warship launching process and the details keep coming throughout the pages. The Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock company in Kearny, NJ, built the USS Atlanta and sister ship USS Juneau, being paid \$12,226,000 each (p10).

Teething problems came early and often. Severe vibration of one propeller, plumbing woes, and burning hydraulics in the shell hoist were a few of the mechanical and engineering problems that needed fixing before the ship could be sent off to battle.

Bios of officers and some crew are included as the ship sails for operations in and around Guadalcanal. Not only are the sea battles and air attacks well told, but you get a sense of shipboard life and liberty calls. It's all quite engaging.

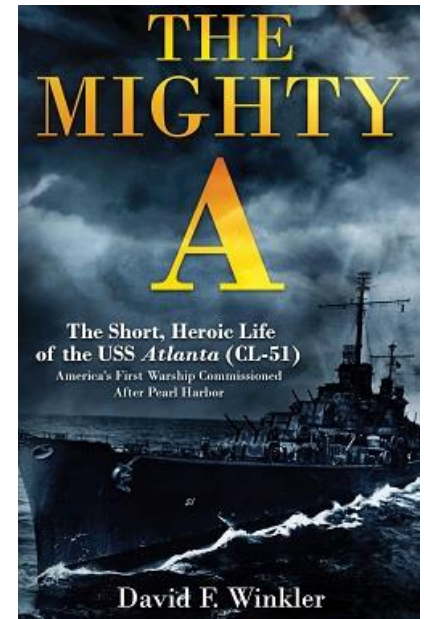
One interesting tidbit: The US used radio-controlled target drones for AA drills (p64). Radio-controlled drones were a lot more prevalent than I thought -- Germans and Italians used them in the Med. Now the US used them in the Pacific.

Typos: "announcing the promotion seven of the.." (p126) needs an "of" after "promotion," and, "halting to offloading operation" (p158) probably needs to replace the "to" with "the."

The book contains 23 black and white photos and one black and white map.

Incidentally, the *USS Atlanta* was lost during a naval night action near Guadalcanal, which included being hit by friendly fire. This is a "mighty" fine ship profile.

Enjoyed it.



Bagration 1944: The Great Soviet Offensive. by Prit Buttar. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 488 pages. 2025.

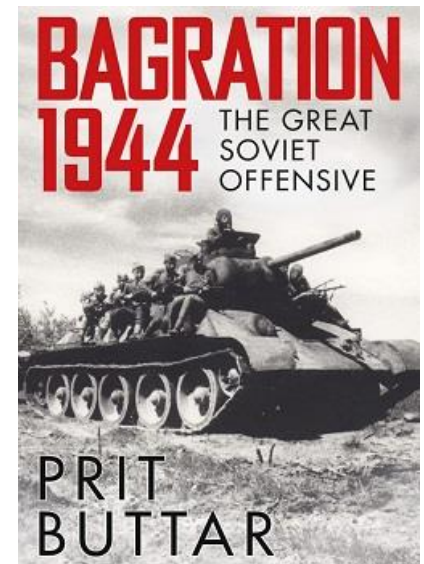
Once again, Buttar provides an excellent account of WWII's Eastern Front, this time on the 1944 Soviet Operation Bagration that shattered Germany's Army Group Center (AGC).

Front-by-Front, the offensive hit where the Germans least expected it. AGC fielded 486,000 troops, 118 tanks, and 452 assault guns (p137). AGC saw little in the way of the reinforcements needed to combat the 1.7 million Soviet troops, 3,800 tanks, 2,000 assault guns, 32,700 guns, mortars and rocket launchers, and 7,800 aircraft (p117) and most were transfers from other parts of the Eastern Front. The Germans were outnumbered 3.4 : 1 in troops, 10.2 : 1 in armored fighting vehicles, 10.1 : 1 in artillery, and 8.5 : 1 in aircraft (p137).

Oddly enough, in March and April of 1943, USSR and German representatives met in Stockholm, Sweden to discuss a peace deal. Stalin offered 1941 borders and Hitler offered the Dnepr River line. Negotiations went nowhere.

The overwhelming attack and desperate defense play out as you might expect. The Soviets had learned a few things about mobile warfare since 1941 and Hitler's insistence on turning cities into fortresses and forbidding retreats doomed any sort of elastic defense. Great descriptions and analysis, punctuated by sprinklings of excerpts, offer a smooth read.

Only the Vilnius chapter stumbles over the bugaboo of too many excerpts and too little of Buttar's masterful prose. To me, excerpts should be short, incisive, and highlight some viewpoint or explanation more powerful than prose can convey. Buttar's prose is too good to be overshadowed by excessive excerpts. Thankfully, the vast majority of the book unfolds with superb research, exceptional analysis, and spirited prose.



Couple typos: "approached over a bill" (p251) is probably "hill" and "Model's counterattack east of Moscow" (p431) has to be "Warsaw."

The book contains 14 black and white photos and 30 black and white maps. The latter are especially helpful with large unit placements along a front and the geographic relation between cities and towns. Terrain shows the larger rivers, road networks, and railroads, although they are much appreciated and far more informative than the usual half dozen maps in many books. OOBs and numbers are within the text.

Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Pompey the Great: The Roman Alexander. by Lee Fratantuono. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 366 pages. 2024.

This is the first of two volumes about Pompey the Great, known for initial military victories and later military defeats. A one-time equal to Julius Caesar and Crassus, he ultimately came out on the losing end of the Roman Civil War versus Caesar.

Born on Sep 29, 106BC and died on Sep 28, 48BC, he learned the art of Roman military and political power and went on to restoring Roman rule in Iberia, defeating the pirates across the Mediterranean Sea, and crushing rebellious kings and foreign invasions in the East. When he disbanded his army upon returning to Italy, he was at the height of his power and popularity.

It was all triumphs and accolades until it wasn't. Then came Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon River. While Pompey's strategy may have been sound given the forces available, and his army even beat Caesar's army in Greece once, he was never able to exploit the victory. Assassination ended his life in Egypt.

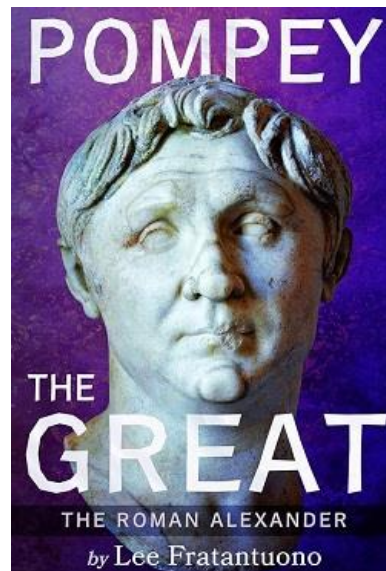
This sympathetic biography offers a smooth read through his ambitious life, complete with analysis of his political decisions. When ancient sources contradict, several options are examined, including the most likely actions taken. Political aspects receive far more attention than military action, but both are weighed against particular influences of the specific period in time. It's all quite well reasoned.

One nit: Every so often, he fumbles out of the biography and enters into an academic argument quoting theories from one historian, academic, or another. It's not excessively bad, but it is noticeable. He writes so well that such interruptions are unwelcome.

The book contains zero images. No photos, no maps, no illustrations -- no nuthin'.

The second book will cover the sons of Pompey. I look forward to it.

Enjoyed it.



Lockheed C-130: FlightCraft 32. by Ben Skipper. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

The original C-130 design came about after the Korean War with the first flight in 1955. Over 130 versions and variants were made and one or another is still being built today (p1).

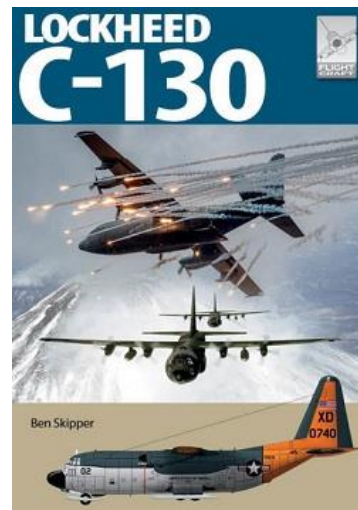
It seems that all 130+ models are covered, or at least mentioned, in this book. A lot of the historical text (p1 to p54) covers the wide array of technical system changes for modernization or specialty versions. Admittedly, I can't say I read every word, but the overviews should give you a starting point if you need more details.

The next section (p55 to p62) provides 24 color profiles of camouflage schemes of various countries' C-130s. The final section (p63 to p96) covers plastic models and modeling, including some aftermarket products to up the game of what comes in any given box. There isn't much text here, just photos, especially with the in-progress work on three 1/72 scale models: Italeri C-130J C5, Zvezda C-130J-30, and Zvezda C-130J. These are probably appreciated more by experienced modelers than by those just getting into plastic model building. You can figure out some techniques, but the lack of text limits what a novice can learn.

The book contains 25 black and white photos, four black and white illustrations, and 98 color photos in the history section. The modeling section contains 123 color photos and four color illustrations.

Another fine volume in the *FlightCraft* series.

Enjoyed it.



The Modern British Army: Europe at War 44. by Richard A. Rinaldi.
Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 84 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: The Path to Future Soldier, 2010s and Beyond*

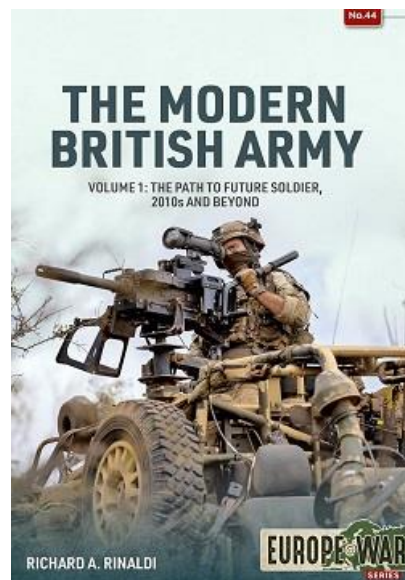
"Future Soldier" is the UK's new plan to transform the British Army. It includes technological, organizational, and equipment upgrades and changes as well as a reduction in the number of troops. The British Army is running about 100,000 troops of all types.

Best of all are the unit OOBs, dividing the divisions into component brigades that are also divided into component units, usually battalions. Logistics, helicopter troops, and other units also receive OOBs and an overview.

Couple typos: "that here will inevitably be a new defence review" (p3) seems to read better with "there will" and the photo caption (p66) refers to barracks while the actual graphic is a repeat of the OOB from page 6. My guess is someone in layout clicked on the wrong "6" file.

The book contains 79 color photos, four black and white OOB diagrams, 15 vehicle color camouflage profile illustrations, three helicopter color camo profile illustrations, and four uniform camo illustrations. The photos provide a considerable resource for the painting of miniatures.

The workmanlike prose isn't exactly an exciting read, but for OOB enthusiasts, this can be a valuable reference. Enjoyed it.



The Italian Army in the Balkans 1940-41. by Massimiliano Afiero.
Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 246 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia*

Top-notch recounting and analysis of the Italian invasion of Greece during WWII centers on tactical battles in the mountains of Albania and Greece. Mussolini's ego couldn't stand Hitler's abrupt occupation of Romania without a word, so Il Duce invaded Greece without telling Hitler. Yet another example of Mussolini's war-time bungling.

The multitude of Italian invasion plans are examined, as well as lack of preparation and logistical failures. For example, the Italian Army needed about 10,000 tons of supplies per day, but the Albanian ports had a 3,500 ton capacity (p34). Granted, Bulgaria was supposed to invade at the same time, but Il Duce bungled that as well.

Despite the miserable winter weather, the Italians made some headway, but the more numerous Greeks shifted troops and launched a counter-offensive that recaptured lost Greek territory and grabbed part of Albania. Only the German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece saved the Italians from an even worse defeat.

The text contains a steady stream of citations from the Italian Gold Medal of Valor awards. The initial amusing propagandistic nature of the text gets a bit well worn by the half-way point. I ended up skipping them.

The Italian OOBs are functional enough. Of note is that the Italian Army divisions contained only two regiments (of three battalions each) versus most countries' three regiment structure.

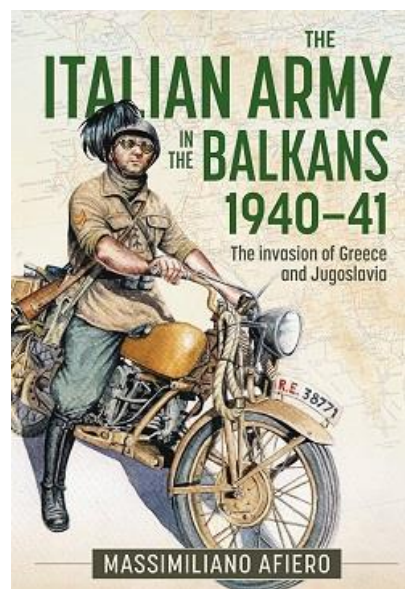
The book also has brief mentions of Italian actions at Rhodes, Crete, and other islands as well as Italian contributions to the invasion of Yugoslavia.

A few typos: Subhead "11th Armoured" (p96) should be "11th Army"; photo caption "gug into the snow" (p135) should be "dug into"; and "231 Infantry" (p145) should read "231st Infantry."

The book contains 193 black and white photos, 19 black and white maps, and 14 black and white illustrations (mostly reproduced Gold Medal of Valor postcards).

It reads well. You gain a real sense of the effort exerted by Italian and Greek troops in mostly mountain warfare. Nice job.

Enjoyed it.



The Blackhorse in Vietnam. by Donald Snedeker. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 326 pages. 2023 reprint of 2020 book.

Subtitle: *The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam and Cambodia 1966-1972*

The 11th was a self-contained unit with intrinsic infantry, artillery, armor, helicopters, and support subunits that became known for its rapid response to Viet Cong (VC) guerilla and regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA) attacks on convoys, bases, towns, and even Saigon. As it gained experience, it shifted from a support role for other divisions to a lead role in sweeps and attacks.

The initial ambushes, harrowing though they may be, provide excellent examples of combatting guerrilla units that could pick the time and place of the ambush. In response, the unit developed aggressive tactics to foil the attacks, using the speed of M-113 APCs (modified with three MGs with gunshields), firepower of M-48 tanks, and airpower to support infantry counter-attacks.

Numerous tabletop scenarios can be pulled from the pages, although how to simulate the often minimal damage caused by a multitude of RPGs fired might be difficult. Low probability to hit, I suppose.

The biggest change was the switch from Westmoreland's search and destroy (and often abandon) to Abrams' clear and hold strategy. The "hold" part wasn't every square inch of jungle, but the interdiction of major and minor supply routes from Cambodia towards the provinces around Saigon. Prisoner interrogations and captured orders and maps provided the information to often pre-empt VC/NVA attacks.

Interesting that the change in strategy was accompanied by a new measurement of success: instead of body count, it was tons of rice captured (p120). Strangling the supply routes, including a 60-day invasion into Cambodia that captured vast stocks of rice and weapons, proved disruptive to VC/NVA operations. It also loosened the grip of VC/NVA extortions of South Vietnam farmers and villagers.

The book contains 45 black and white photos, 33 black and white maps (mostly of deployments to provinces), and two black and white illustrations.

One caution: The author is the official historian of the 11th, so consider his inclination. It's not unlike reading the US Army WWII green books. Lots of good accurate information and the prose moves right along, but I sometimes wondered about the 11th undefeated record. Given the accounts of individual heroism under fire, and the escalating experience level, the elite status seems well earned.

Enjoyed it.

Why Vietnam? Reflections on the Effect of War. by Margaret Colbert Brown. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 293 pages. 2025.

This interesting retrospective on US involvement in the Vietnam War encompasses elements from WWII on, but with a focus on the 1960s. Along the way, you'll learn facets of Vietnamese culture, geography, and response to Viet Cong (VC) guerilla and regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA) coercion, plus various US programs and efforts to enhance rural security, improve the economy, and create political stability. Personal reminiscences populate the pages, highlighting various aspects.

A nice touch is the use of 70 poems as part of the emotional commentary.

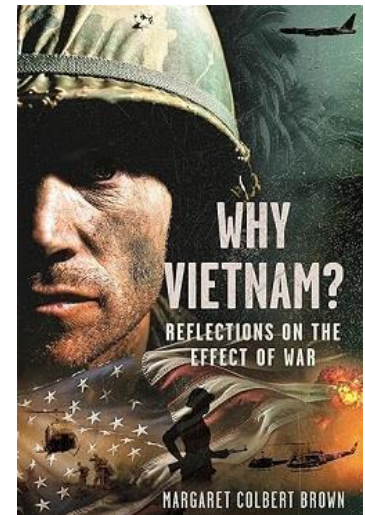
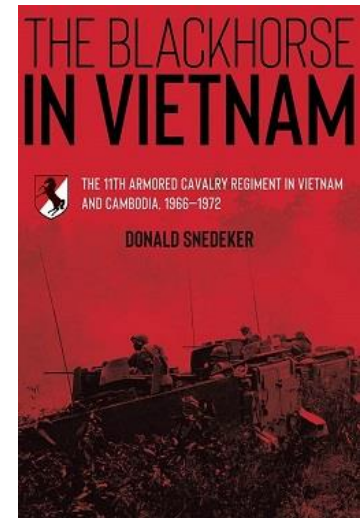
A couple typos: "1971to" (p191) needs a space, and, "earned over 30 medal" (p219) needs an "s" after medal.

The book contains 121 black and white photos, four black and white maps, and four black and white illustrations.

I must say that this book contains the most incompetent photo graphics I've ever seen. Never mind the blurriness, which seems the result of a too low dpi image being over enlarged, it's the skewing of the images that is most bothersome. It's like the graphics grunt didn't understand proportional enlargement. Not all of them, of course, but so many as to be quite noticeable. How these ever got through quality control is beyond belief.

While you certainly get a sense of military impact, the cultural and political impact remains at the forefront. You won't find much to put in a tabletop scenario unless you're doing a political game. Still, it's important to understand reasoned examination of all sides of the war. You may or may not agree with what's inside the book, but given that South Vietnam surrendered on April 30, 1975, the 50th anniversary is a good time for an analytical examination. This presents one piece of a complex puzzle.

Enjoyed it.



Mercenaries, Gunslingers & Outlaws. by Robert M. Kurtz. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 222 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Two Years as a Security Contractor in Iraq*

First-person account of a Personal Security Detail contractor covers his activities in Iraq from 2004 to 2007. Like most, he was ex-military -- in this case 12 years in the US military. Other nationalities populated the ranks of the contractors.

All the chapters are short, from one to three pages, and cover one assignment or observation. You get a sense of the chaos in Iraq as he becomes the bodyguard for various clients. Much of what he did was pure anxiety that mostly went off without a hitch, but numerous close encounters with IEDs, hit teams, and suicide bombers populate the pages.

In many ways, this was like the Olde Wild West in transporting executive and technical personnel across the country from one fort to another. They try and fix infrastructure and set up relief operations. The terrorists try to kill them before they do.

One interesting point was that the number one firearm for contractors was the AKM, an upgraded model of the AK-47 (p98). The second favorite was the H&K MP5 submachine gun (p100). These were provided by the contracting company, although it was not unknown for contractors to buy additional weaponry.

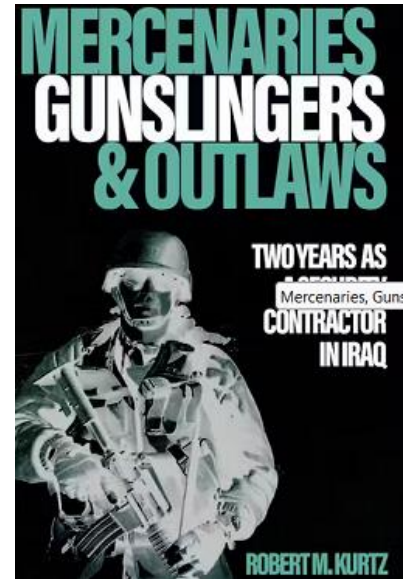
Also of note, recreational games could be any type as long as they were not set in the Middle East (p116). The *Halo* first-person shoot-'em-up video game was a favorite.

A quirk: many infrastructure projects and friendly bases seem to be 400 acres and a number of dollar amounts are \$400. I'm not sure why this number is significant, but it's something in his mind.

The book contains 25 color photos.

It's a quick read and offers a few personnel shuttles and convoy escort scenarios. The reality is not a spate of shoot-outs, but avoiding shoot-outs in the first place.

Enjoyed it.



Wagner Group: Private Military Company. by Jaons Besenyo, Andras Istvan Turke, and Endre Szenasi. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 64 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: Establishment, Purpose, Profile and Historic Relevance 2013-2023*

In many ways, Wagner is the Russian equivalent of the US Private Security Company (PSC) noted in *Mercenaries, Gunslingers & Outlaws*. The difference is that PSCs guarded people and places while a Private Military Company (PMC) partook in active military attacks.

Western media made sure that Wagner was well-known and this book pieces together disparate bits of information into one place. Wagner took horrendous losses fighting against Ukraine, so much so that owner Yevgeny Prigozhia pulled them out of the line and began a march on Moscow. His good friend, Pres Vladimir Putin, eventually de-escalated the situation and promised much. He also allegedly delivered a plane crash that killed Prigozhia and others.

This traces the creation of the original Slavodic Corps that was sent to Syria in 2012, a year before Wagner Group was founded by former Slavodic Corps mercenary Dmitry Utkin. Wagner eventually expanded to include African countries, offering services in exchange for control of mines, oil, and other resources. It made Wagner rich.

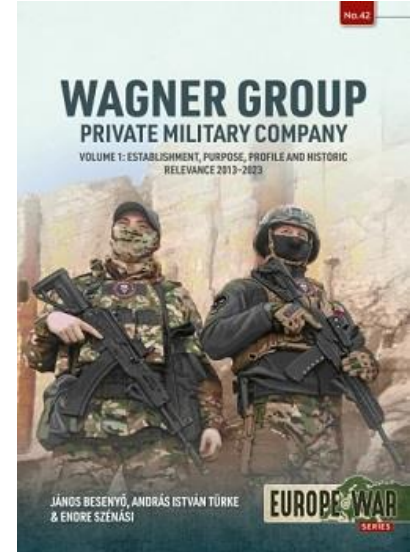
One typo (p40): "Across the Big Pound" should probably be "Pond."

Big Goof: The endnotes for Chapter 6 are really for Chapter 1. I don't know if the problem is limited to these two chapters' footnotes being switched or it is a cascading problem with all Chapters' endnotes. Chapter 1 is an overview of mercenaries generally from Roman Empire to the Renaissance -- quite different. Sloppy.

The book contains 42 color photos, one black and white photo, three color maps, and 21 color profiles (six aircraft, three uniforms, and 12 vehicles). In addition, Chapter 1 has four color uniform illustrations of historic mercenaries.

Informative.

Enjoyed it.



The Hunting Falcon. by Christopher A. Lawrence and Jay Karamales. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 369 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Story of WWI German Ace Hans-Joachim Buddecke*

I never heard of Buddecke, but early in the war he was right up there with Boelcke and Immelman in aircraft shot down and awards. He eventually was sent to Turkey and took part in the air war over Gallipoli. His transfer back to the Western Front proved his undoing and he was shot down and killed.

The basis of this book is an autobiography written just before his death and published after his death in 1918. Those chapters are a straight translation. In between are chapters with brief overviews of pilots, planes, the war in the air, and so on. It's all choppy pieces, often multiples per page, that is a traipsing through the period. That's not to say bits and pieces are not interesting, but a coherent narrative this is not.

Indeed, the prose slips up from time to time and calls the Germans and Turks the "Axis" instead of the Central Powers (p155) and multiple references to the British and French as the "Allies" (p156, 159, 160) instead of the Entente.

The book contains 50 black and white photos and one black and white illustration.

To me, and I realize this might be a bit unfair, it's like doomscrolling through the translation and clicking on various related links. Yet, efforts to intersperse relevant info in between the autobiography chapters reads like a cut and paste job. From the bibliography, I'm sure he spent a lot of time searching the web and consolidating info with secondary sources. Nothing wrong with the process, but the output isn't a traditional biography. For including the autobiography translation, I'm still going to say ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.



Saving MacArthur. by Rudy Tomedi. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 234 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Story of America's Most Daring Naval Rescue and of the Men It Left Behind*

The book follows the exploits of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 3, consisting of six PT boats under the command of Lt. John Bulkeley that arrived in the Philippines on Sep 28, 1941.

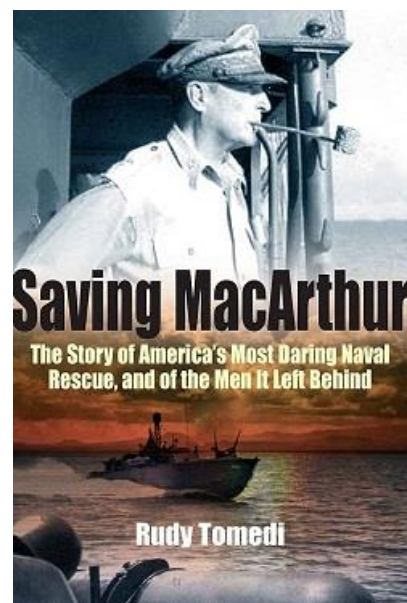
As the war progressed and Gen. Douglas MacArthur retreated the Army to Bataan, 'Ron 3' fought as best they could without spare parts or relief. PT boats suffered degraded capabilities as jury-rigged field repairs never quite met shipyard specs. Two boats were lost and four made the trip to Corregidor to pull off MacArthur, his wife, and about 20 staff. Sailors of the squadron had to be left behind to make room. That MacArthur brought out staff at the expense of sailors was news to me -- hence the reference in the subtitle.

Well written and explained, the four PT boats together and then individually defied the odds and made their way to Mindanao. MacArthur and company then flew out to Australia. The crew left behind was captured. The crew that made it part way joined guerrillas.

The book contains 16 black and white photos.

The escape makes for compelling reading, especially because I knew little other than MacArthur was rescued. Ron 3 was extremely lucky at times avoiding all Japanese air and naval forces in the escape. It was also more active prior to the escape than I knew.

Enjoyed it.



The Defeat of the Damned. by Douglas E. Nash, Sr. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 371 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Destruction of the Dirlewanger Brigade at the Battle of Ipolysag - December 1944*

This is a history of an SS penal unit filled with a bunch of sadists, rapists, and murderers. Think of it like *The Dirty Dozen* only it's The Dirty Thousands. Originally an anti-partisan unit, its activities were so heinous, the SS administrator of Poland threatened to arrest them if the unit wasn't shipped out. The Soviet Union was the next stop and the atrocities continued, followed by Slovakia.

I won't kid you. This is a hard book to digest -- no heroes, just scum. Even the SS disowned the unit and gave it unique crossed rifles and grenade unit patch instead of the lightning bolts.

Eventually, as the Soviet offensive rolled into and through the Balkans, the unit, reinforced with convicted communists and Russian POWs, was sent to fill a hole in the line at Ipolysag (Hungary).

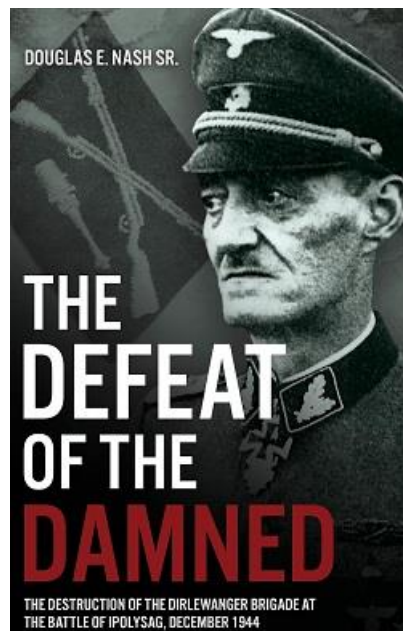
A combat unit this was not. It had small arms, but no AT guns or tanks and it went up against a Mechanized Corps. Between the defections and scurrying, the unit unhinged a semblance of a line and so the Soviet attack continued. Counterattacks by depleted combat units failed to stem the steamroller. Oddly enough, the Brigade was upgraded to a full division -- 36th Waffen SS -- in Feb 1945 (p264), although it never achieved the TO&E of a full division.

Typos: "reported the capturedd of 492 rifles" (p11) has an extra d; "All but 600-700 troops reached the safety of their own lines..." (p245) should read "Only 600-700 troops..."; and a really poorly written sentence about trucks for the unit (p28) that I can't quite fathom.

The book contains 63 black and white photos, nine black and white maps, and three black and white illustrations. The OOB for the unit is well done.

The battle of Ipolysag is quite detailed, including movements and attacks of adjacent German units and enemy Soviet units.

Enjoyed it.



The Pathfinder and the President. by John Bicknell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 371 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *John C. Fremont, Abraham Lincoln, and the Battle for Emancipation*

As you might tell from the title, this book is more about the politics of the era and not the military battles. The initial biography of Fremont showcases his advance into California. That brought him fame and eventually the position as commander of the Western (later Mountain) territory during the American Civil War. His main area was Missouri.

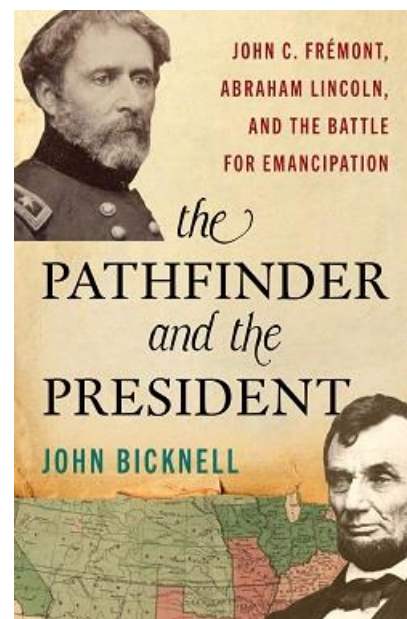
In his first big decision, he opted to reinforce Cairo on the Mississippi River instead of pursuing a Confederate force -- generating complaints. The force that did pursue was ill-trained and suffered a rebuff, generating even more calls for his ouster. His performance suffered yet again as another force proved tardy in reinforcing the Union's Shenandoah Valley offensive.

His big play was emancipating the slaves of Missouri at the outset of the war, a position Lincoln opposed. Fremont believed it a betrayal and relations were never the same. Fremont was eventually relieved and later resigned. He mounted political opposition against Lincoln, which is amply described within the text.

The book contains 15 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

As you can glean from the subtitle, this book is mostly about politics of the era, with Fremont at its center. For wargamers, very little is in this book, but for those wishing to understand infighting and political posturing over a backwater part of the Union ACW effort, superb.

Enjoyed it.



System Failure. by Joe Zieja. Softcover (5.5x8.3 inches). 416 pages. 2019.

The third book in the trilogy follows R. Wilson Rogers' efforts to win the war with the Jupiterians and avert the end of the galaxy. As with the first two books, the satire and spoofing remain front and center, although the humor factor is reduced with familiarity. Nonetheless, it ties up the plot threads as any good book in a trilogy should.

Enjoyed it.



Barbarossa Victims: Camera On 34. by Tomasz J. Kopanski. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 80 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Luftwaffe Kills in the East Volume 1*

The latest in the photobook series offers half-page and sometimes full-page photos of destroyed and sometimes captured Soviet planes in the summer of 1941. Modelers looking for unusual scenes for their aircraft diorama may be able to gain inspiration from the shredded planes.

One typo: Two captions (p44 and p45) are identical although the photos are different.

Aircraft include: Gloster Gladiator, I-5, I-15, I-15bis, I-153, I-16, I-16 UTI-4, MiG-1, MiG-3, and LaGG-3.

All totaled: 149 black and white photos of good to excellent sharpness.

Enjoyed it.



Fighting Colours 5: Hawker Hunter in British Service. by Richard Caruana. Softcover (horizontal: 11.7x8.3 inches). 54 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *50th Anniversary Collection*

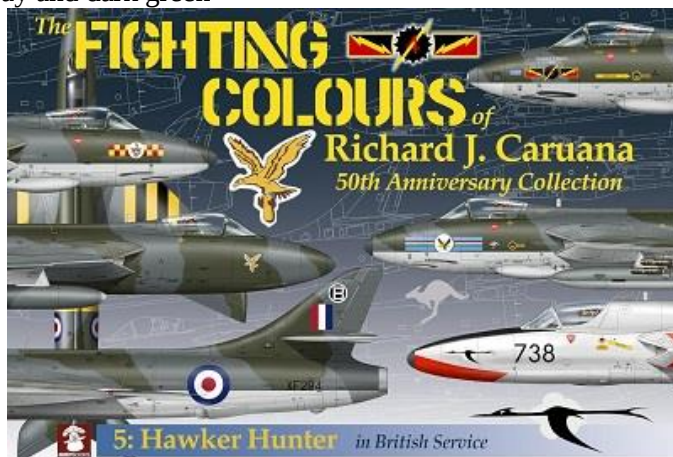
A short development history and deployment soon becomes a massive color camouflage profile section. Granted, most are the basic sea gray and dark green pattern with aluminum underside -- only the markings are different.

Each caption -- in really tiny type -- contains information about colors, markings, locations, and sometime pilots.

The book contains four black and white photos, 13 black and white illustrations ("Hunter Versions Comparison Guide"), 137 color profiles (129 side, four top, and four bottom), and 81 unit insignia (some duplicates).

It's a glorious color guide for modelers looking for Hunter versions from 1954 to 1971, although this book also includes a 1989 Hunter T Mk 8C.

Enjoyed it.



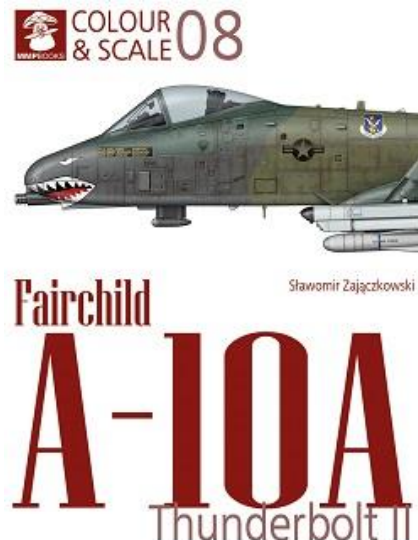
Fairchild A-10A: Colour & Scale 08. by Slawomir Zajackowski. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 16 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Thunderbolt II*

This booklet offers a quick scale and painting guide for the A-10A. It includes 11 1/72 scale black and white drawings and 20 color camouflage profiles (14 side, three top, and three bottom). Summer green/gray, arctic green/white, and desert "Jaws" spotted green/brown over tan are pictured.

The last page in Polish text notes the squadron and date -- covers from 1977 to 1991. The English translations are on the pages containing the color illustrations.

Modelers will swoon over this booklet and the series.



Military Aircraft of the 1950s: Combined Volume. by John W. H. Taylor. Hardback (4.1x6.3 inches). 312 pages. 2024 reprint of 1954/1955 book.

This 2024 compact reprint shrinks down to tiny dimensions what I suppose was a full page 1955/1956 book. It also consolidates four different publications, including RAF, US/Canadian, Continental Europe, and Helicopters. Jet and Prop planes, helicopters, and airships are included. So are the advertisements -- interesting.

Most aircraft are one to a page, although some are multiples per page. Each page with an individual aircraft contains a black and white photo, specs, recognition features, remarks, and a trio of black with white outline illustrations (side, front, and bottom). Some of the newer aircraft, like the Hawker Hunter, note that some specs are classified.

Also, while it looks complete, I'm not sure if every military aircraft is included, although a number of WWII-era planes are included -- was the ME-109 and JU-52 still being used by Germany?

This reprint uses a dual page number system -- the original page number is not the same as the reprint page number. When you jump from one 1955 publication to another, the new volume restarts the numbering while the reprint numbering scheme continues on. Hence the original page number for the Convair F-102A is 20 while the reprint page number is 110. The index uses the original page numbers.

It's tiny, but packs a lot of information for its time. I only skimmed through it, but thumbing through Cold War era aircraft proved interesting from time to time.

Enjoyed it.

Covert Radio Agents 1939-1945. by David Hebditch. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 301 pages. 2023 reprint of 2021 book.

Subtitle: *Signals From Behind Enemy Lines*

These profiles of various covert intelligence operations focus on the agents who sent the intel back to the Allies. The book primarily covers Europe with agents in Norway, France, and the "Red Orchestra" in Germany, but also a chapter about the coastwatchers in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific.

Much revolves around finding the best location for surveillance and the schemes agents used to hide their radio transmitters and receivers.

Of interest were the German efforts to track down and locate said agents using fixed and portable radio direction finders as well as people assets. Surprisingly, not all captured agents were executed -- instead interrogations, some including torture, and incarcerations were used to gather additional information about cell members and procedures.

The book contains 163 black and white photos, seven black and white illustrations, and 14 black and white maps. Chapter 8 (p222-p278) contains technical briefings on the various pieces of equipment as well as examples of codes, encoding, and decoding.

The extensive use of excerpts makes for a choppy read, but the overview of activities is solid.

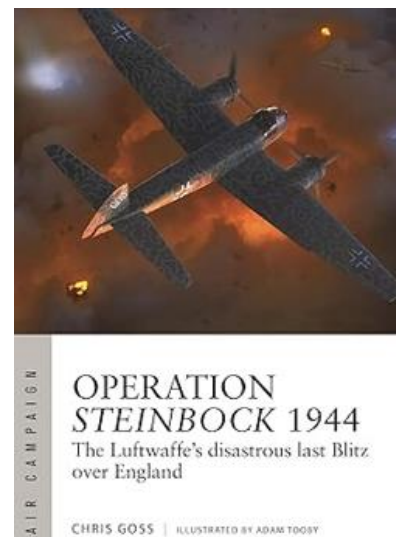
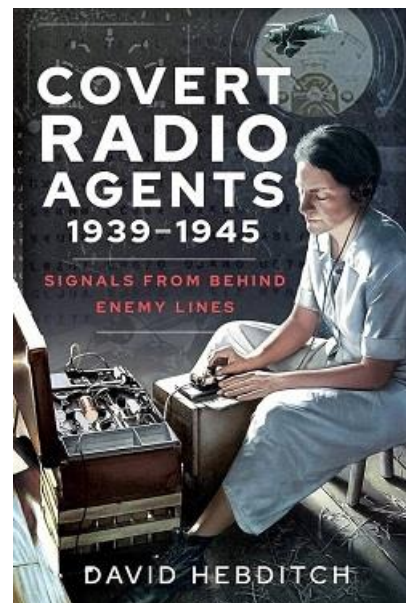
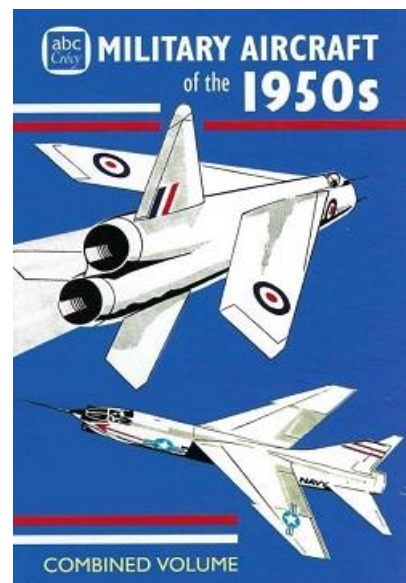
Enjoyed it.

Operation Steinbock 1944: Air Campaign 52. by Chris Goss. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Luftwaffe's Disastrous Last Blitz Over England*

If the Luftwaffe couldn't defeat the UK with bombing in 1940, it seems like madness to think bombing in 1944 would turn out any different. Fewer aircraft. Poorly trained crews. Air inferiority.

But with German cities ablaze from round the clock Allied bombing, Hitler felt something had to be done and so began a few months of night-time bombing that started off with about 500 aircraft and dwindled as the weeks passed.



The booklet follows the usual *Air Campaign* format with chronology, forces and capabilities, the actual campaign, and analysis. As you read, you just keep wondering about the wisdom of the attacks. Even veteran crews were being killed while green crews hardly hit anything. You'd think an extra 500 bombers would have been better used on the Eastern Front.

One gaffe (p44): "The pilot, Beobochter and Bordfunker baled out uninjured and hence their names are unknown." Besides the logic conundrum linking baling out with their names, apparently, B & B were known.

The booklet contains 77 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, five color maps, six color illustrations, and three color two-page action illustrations. I'll also make my usual plea to increase the small font size to match the larger regular *Campaign* booklet font size.

Another fine booklet in the series that covers relatively campaigns well-known and obscure.

Enjoyed it.

A War of Their Own. by William H. Chickering. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 248 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Fulro: The Other National Liberation Front - Vietnam 1955-75*

In reading about the Vietnam War, I often ran across the Montagnards -- a highlands peoples more or less supported by the US who fought against the North Vietnamese. What I never heard of was that they had built a semi-organized movement -- Front Uni por la Liberation des Races Oppreemees (FULRO) or Liberation Front for Oppressed Races -- to create their own country.

The history of the Montagnards is intertwined with the various invaders over the centuries, the latest ones being the French, Japanese, North Vietnamese Communists, and South Vietnamese. Six leaders from the 1950s to the 1970s tried and failed to secure recognition for the efforts and the Vietnam veteran author tracked down five of them. The book conveys the detective work needed to uncover the history of FULRO, taking the author all over the world tracking down people and documents.

Besides the biographies, the politics of the period and how it affected the Montagnards peels back the revolutionary impetus for FULRO. The main military action consisted of attacking and capturing multiple base camps as the catalyst for the declaration of autonomy. As you can tell from history, it wasn't a success, but it was ambitious.

The book contains 29 black and white photos and five black and white maps.

It's always fascinating to discover a war within a war and the efforts made to create a country out of the larger Vietnam War.

Enjoyed it.

Convoy PQ-17 1942: Campaign 414. by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Disaster in the Arctic*

A perfect storm of events created the scattering of PQ-17 -- a convoy of 36 cargo ships plus close escorts and distant escorts sailing around Norway to get to the Soviet Union. Of the 36, one hit ice and one ran aground in Iceland (p35), leaving 34 ships. Of those, only 11 ships reached Murmansk (USSR) as German aircraft, surface ships, and U-boats sank the rest.

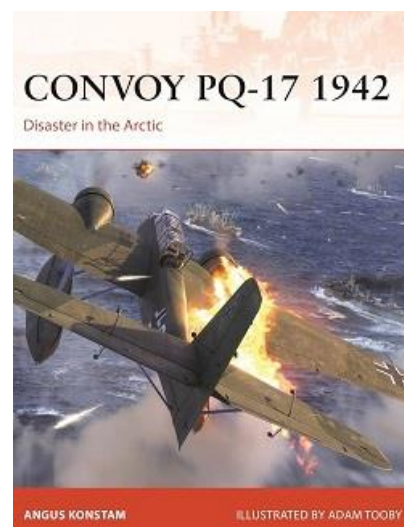
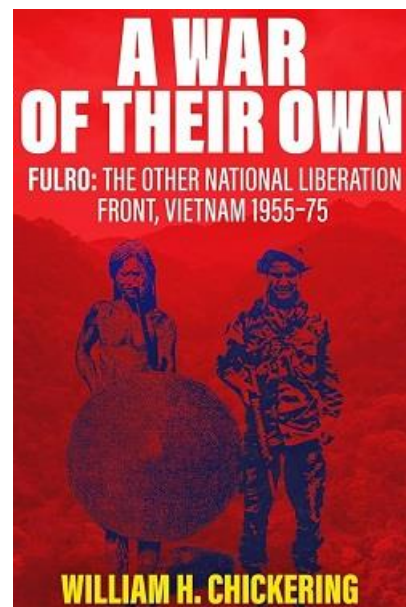
Of note, many of the convoys started from Iceland and hugged the northern ice. In summer, they could sail farther away from Norway. In winter, as with this convoy, they had to sail closer. The closer they came to Norway, the better the chance that the Germans could find them.

Reports of the Tirpitz sailing encouraged the commander to decide to scatter -- even though questions were raised at the time. Scatter they did and therein lies the tale of being unable to defend in strength.

The booklet contains 52 black and white photos, two color photos, four black and white illustrations, nine color maps, one color illustration, and three color two-page action illustrations. The OOB is quite good.

The format is down to near perfection and this booklet's execution is also near perfect, too. Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.



Soviet Motor Torpedo Boats of World War II: New Vanguard 336. by Przemyslaw Budzbon. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2025.

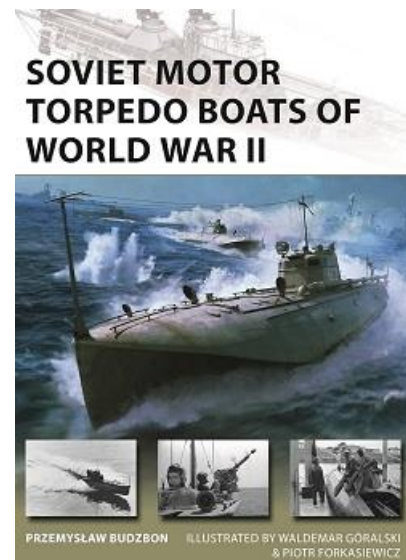
The nuts and bolts of Soviet Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) design, development, construction, and capabilities of the various models receives a detailed look.

When Germany invaded on June 22, 1941, the Soviet Union fielded 290 MTBs (p38), of which 147 were sunk by the end of the war (p44). Although intended for swift attacks on naval ships, 1941 efforts yielded only one abandoned minesweeper sunk (p41). By 1942, they were used as personnel landing craft and minelayers (p41).

Interesting tidbit: In the 1930s, two divisions of MTBs, one in Black Sea and one in Baltic Sea, were outfitted with remote control devices. The operator would be in an airplane (p24). Apparently, there were a lot more remote-controlled devices in WWII than I originally thought.

The booklet contains 38 black and white photos, two color photos, one black and white illustration, one color illustration, two color one-page action illustrations, one color two-page cutaway illustration of G-5 series MTB, and 15 color camouflage illustrations. Lots of spec boxes are throughout the booklet.

While not the success envisioned, the Soviet MTBs contributed to ultimate victory in WWII. Enjoyed it.



Tanks in the Gulf War 1991: New Vanguard 337. by Steven J. Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2025.

This overview of Gulf War tanks includes the Iraqi, US, UK, French, and Saudi Arabian models. Technical specs, tactical organization, and operational doctrine provide an entry point to understanding why Coalition forces did so well and Iraqi forces did so poorly.

Iraq started the war with roughly 2,550 Soviet tanks -- 150 T-72, 1,300 T-62, 1,050 T-54/T-55, and 50 T-34/85 (p12-13) -- and about 2,000 Chinese export Type 69-II tanks (p15). These were export versions, not top-of-the-line Soviet and Chinese models.

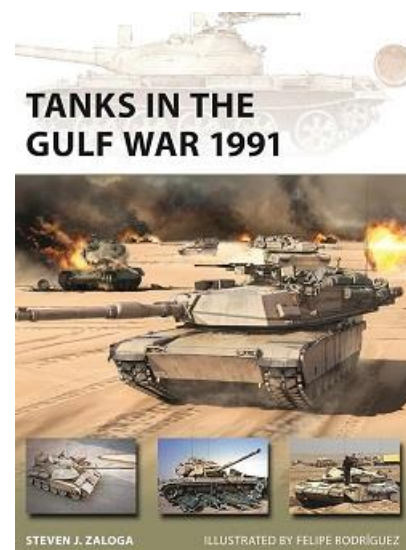
The US brought about 2,000 M-1 tanks in various versions that were mostly top-of-the-line models. Add in British, French, and Saudi Arabian tanks to that number. Other Coalition allies provided tanks, but they were not used in the main attack.

Coalition training and tactical operations overwhelmed the Iraqis, although some Republican Guard divisions fought well. And let's not forget how air superiority contributed to the destruction of Iraqi tank forces.

The booklet contains three black and white photos, 38 color photos, one color one-page action illustrations, and 12 color camouflage illustrations (six Iraqi and six Coalition). Lots of spec boxes are throughout the booklet.

The overview of the campaign is short and focuses on the armor contributions to a Coalition victory. You get the gist of why the Iraqis were so badly beaten.

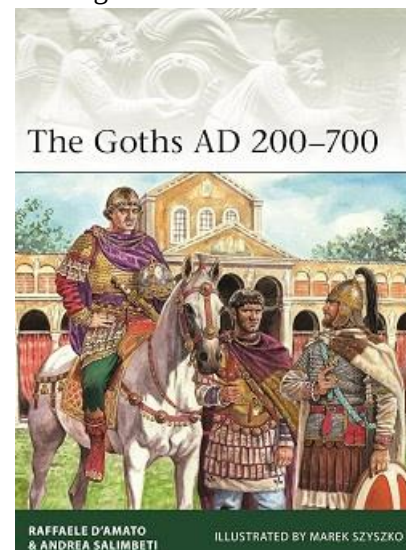
Enjoyed it.



The Goths AD 200-700: Elite 261. by Raffaele D'Amato and Andrea Salimbeti. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2025.

Given the 500 years of history, the Goths eventually separate into Visigoths and Ostrogoths. Arms, armor, locations, raids, mercenary hiring, and conquests receive coverage, providing an overview of the culture, damage, and terror they inflicted on their wanderings through Europe. Shoehorning lots of info into a short format booklet is nicely done.

Organization-wise, the predominantly infantry warbands divided into heavy cavalry, heavy infantry, light infantry, and archers. They even eventually had a navy of sorts as well as siege equipment such as towers and battering rams. Apparently, the Romans taught them a thing or two.



The booklet contains four black and white photos, 44 color photos, 11 black and white illustrations, and eight color uniform plates containing 14 infantry and 10 mounted figures). Yes, the most famous Goth of all, Alaric, is one of the color uniform figures (p21).

Enjoyed it.

France 1940: Air Campaign 53. by James S. Corum. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The First Great Clash of World War II Airpower*

The analysis of the disparity between German and Allied tactics and operations helps us to understand how France fell so quickly.

The sheer ineptitude of French logistical support stands out. France only had 30% of the NCO mechanics needed to service the air force. Hundreds of US-supplied Curtis Hawk fighters sat idle because manpower could not be spared to fit out factory-new aircraft with machine guns and the like. Ditto for bombsights and bombers. The main reason was that civilian junior air mechanics made more money (p24-25).

The campaign covers support for the initial German advance, disastrous Allied bombing efforts, Dunkirk evacuation success, and the final push against the rest of France.

The booklet contains 60 black and white photos, two color photos, seven color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

This reads well, conveying information with a pleasant chronological account of the Allied shortcomings and German success.

Enjoyed it.

Raising Atlantis. by Thomas Greanias. Paperback (4.2x6.7 inches). 337 pages. 2005.

An astronaut general, an environmentalist nun, and an archeologist walk into a bar. That's kinda how this novel starts as the three meet and head to the Antarctic to explore the sunken city of Atlantis underneath the ice. An earthquake/icequake exposes a pyramid while massive storms begin to sweep the planet. Toss in a Pope with thoughts of an apocalypse, an Egyptian with dreams of using Atlantean tech to create a world-wide empire as pharaoh, and UN involvement, and you have a storm of personal grudges and ambitions. In other words, you have a beach read.

Nothing wrong with that. The concept is good, given that some medieval maps showed relatively accurate outlines of the Antarctic continent sans ice that we only verified using modern tech.

The action seems even more over the top than an Indiana Jones movie -- and pretty much not believable when it came to the main characters. By the time the multiple-ring circus of competing fire teams shoot it out in the Atlantean passageways, the book lost me.

Pity. The set up was entertaining, but the longer I read, the more I faded.

B-29 Superfortress vs Japanese Nightfighter: Duel 144. by Mark Lardas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2025.

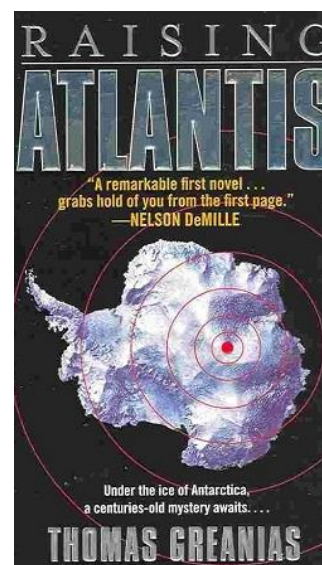
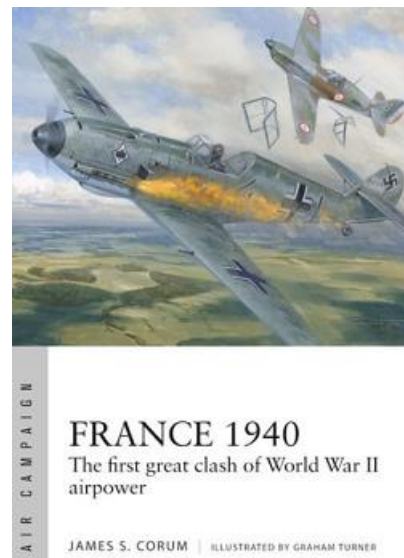
Subtitle: *Japan 1944-45*

My late father-in-law flew on photo recon B-29s over Japan in WWII. His joke was: "What's the difference between flying a bombing mission and a photo recon mission?"

"On a bombing mission, you fly in once, drop bombs, and get the hell out. For photo recon, you fly multiple grid lines, so if they don't get you the first line, they try, try again."

He survived, but once his plane belly-landed on a beach either on or near Guam and a second time, the plane made a forced water landing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. A PBY deviated from its flight path to pick up the crew and continued on to Australia. Two days later, he was back on a plane bound for Guam.

In any case, this volume in the series covers the technical specifications,



crew and pilot training, and operational doctrine for both sides. For the US it's the B-29, which went through a series of problems as it was rushed into service. For the Japanese, the planes covered are the Kawasaki Ki-45 Toryu ("Destroyer") and the Nakajima J1N1-C Gekko ("Moonlight").

What's interesting was that the B-29 was faster (348mph maximum speed) than the Ki-45 (335.5mph) and J1N1 (315mph) (p62). Of more import, the Japanese did not have a centralized fighter command to direct defenses, nightfighter aircraft were few in number, Japanese radar was not as advanced as the US and European models, and pilot training was truncated. Production of Ki-45s and J1N1s ended in December 1944 and newer planes were not replacing them (p74).

Roughly one B-29 was shot down for every two Japanese nightfighters aloft, which sounds pretty grim except for the few nightfighter numbers and even fewer that could fly -- roughly one-third to one-half of the planes didn't fly for one reason or another (p76).

The booklet contains 53 black and white photos, three color photos, two black and white illustrations, one color map, nine color illustrations, one color two-page action illustration, and six aircraft color camouflage profiles (three B-29 and three Ki-45 -- side, bottom, and front views).

Of the 3,970 B-29s built, 22 are still in existence (two in flyable condition). Only one Ki-45 and one J1N1 are still in existence -- both in the Smithsonian Museum.

Enjoyed it.

Luftwaffe Bombers vs British AA: Duel 145. by Donald Nijboer. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Britain 1940-41*

The hit parade of Luftwaffe bombers (DO-17, HE-111, JU-87, and JU-88) and fighters (Bf-109 and Bf-110) at the Battle of Britain are engaged by British 3-inch and 3.7-inch AA guns, searchlights, and barrage balloons.

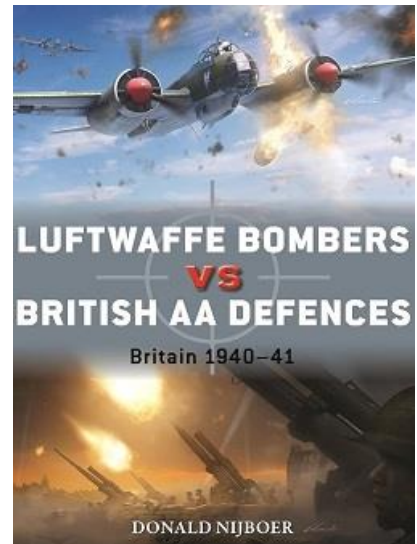
The usual format of technical specs, training, and doctrine explain the advantages and disadvantages of the two forces.

The British AA defense system became more and more coordinated as the war continued. While British fighters shot down far more aircraft than British AA, the AA often caused bomber formations to become looser and thus easier prey for Hurricanes and Spitfires.

As for the bombers, they shifted altitudes and made evasive maneuvers to lessen the effect of the AA. Ultimately, daylight raids became too costly and the Luftwaffe switched to night attacks.

The booklet contains 59 black and white photos, 10 color illustrations, two color maps, one color two-page action illustration, three color camouflage illustrations of 3.7-inch AA gun, and four color camouflage aircraft profiles (DO-17, HE-111, JU-87, and JU-88).

Enjoyed it.



Target London: Battle of Britain 5. by Dilip Sarkar. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 281 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *7 September 1940 - 17 September 1940*

If you want a day-by-day, mission-by-mission, and virtually every combat-by-combat account of the Battle of Britain, here's your book and presumably series. This is the fifth volume of the series, which is being published in association with the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust. I have not read the first four. The series is planned to have eight volumes.

This combs official British records, diaries, and memoirs and uses such first-person accounts to detail the aerial combats during these 11 days in the fall of 1940. If you are looking for this sort of excerpt intense narrative, you'll be as happy as an ace landing after a successful mission.

However, as I've noted before, after about a half a book, excerpt after excerpt starts to read the same. Don't get me wrong. It's meticulous research from a guy who seems to specialize in Battle of Britain history. He weaves observations about the strategies and tactics within to describe trying to control the chaos of combat operations. There is even the occasional German first-person account and a passing effort at trying to verify claims with actual losses. But this



is an excerpt-heavy account.

One of the more interesting excerpts came from Hurricane pilot Sgt Alfred Marshal, who damaged a ME-110, but was in turn shot down by the rear gunner (p42). I don't recall ever reading about a ME-110 rear gunner shooting down a fighter.

And that said, some of the most interesting excerpts to me were from the firefighters on the ground as the bombs rained down and fires roared during the Blitz.

The book contains 56 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

I read up to the photo section, or about half the book. You can certainly pull more than a few scenarios from its pages. How interesting you find the book depends on how interested you are in reading lots of excerpts. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

British and Commonwealth Armies 1939-1943. by Mark Bevis. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 87 pages. 2025 reprint of 2024 reprint of 2001 book.

Subtitle: *Helion Order of Battle 1*

As the subtitle indicates, this is a book of OOBs -- and an absolutely fantastic one at that. Every wargamer who has ever wanted to delve deep into TO&Es probably knows about Bevis and his MicroMark OOBs. I certainly do -- they were a staple on MagWeb for years. Here they are in booklet format.

This first book consists of six chapters by theater: North-West Europe (including the Home front); North Africa; the Middle East, Central and East Africa; the Mediterranean; the Far East, Australasia and India; and Special Forces (all theatres). TO&Es (Tables of Organization and Equipment) are given down to section level where possible and list equipment, vehicles, and weaponry. This includes support units as well as main combat units. On occasion, you can choose from a number of variants for a specific regiment, reflecting changes over time.

Note that this volume often consolidates units while the *Supplement* volumes expand them. For example, 7th Armored has a listing for Sep-Dec 1941. The *Supplement 1* volume divides this time period into four listings.

The booklet contains no photos or maps. Indeed, there is very little text other than the WWII TO&Es. You read this like a wargamer.

And it "reads" brilliantly. It even includes Training and Morale ratings for specific units. It's enough to make a scenario designer cry with joy.

Pair this with Bill Rutherford's *US Army WWII Unit Organizations: A Gamer's Guide* and you have the main WWII Western armies in book format. Add in the online Nafziger files for opponents.

I can't say I read every listing -- just skimmed a few here and there. Nor am I conversant in British TO&E, but what I see jives with the general idea I have from gaming with British troops.

Kudos to Helion for the reprint -- and here's to many more publishings of Bevis' work. Perhaps the next series could be the Soviet Union?

Enjoyed it.

British and Commonwealth Armies 1944-1945. by Mark Bevis. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 94 pages. 2025 reprint of 2024 reprint of 2004 book.

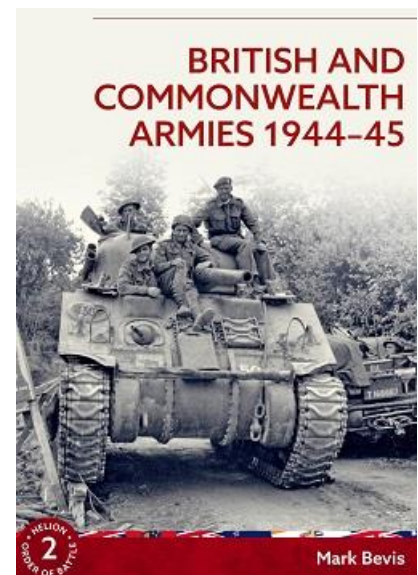
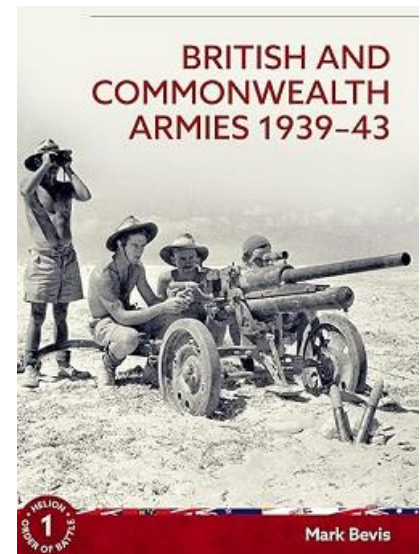
Subtitle: *Helion Order of Battle 2*

A sweet continuation of *Order of Battle 1*. The chapters cover North-West Europe; the Mediterranean; the Far East, Australasia and India; planned invasions of Malaya and Japan; and Special Forces (all theatres).

It generally follows the same format and has the same level of excellence. The same praise I showered on the first volume repeats for the second volume.

As before, I can't say I read every listing -- just skimmed a few here and there.

Enjoyed it.



British and Commonwealth Armies 1939-1945: Supplement Volume 1. by Mark Bevis. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 87 pages. 2025 reprint of 2024 reprint of 2005 book.

Subtitle: *Helion Order of Battle 3*

This contains five chapters providing data covering formations in North Africa, the Mediterranean, North-West Europe, Burma / India and Special Forces.

Certain units receive more attention than others. For example, the British 7th Armored Division has 11 TO&Es covering North Africa. The Table of Contents has a typo: Number 8 is really October 1942, not November (duplicate of Number 9).

The breakdown of specific units depends on the date.

Likewise, I still can't say I read every listing -- just skimmed a few here and there.

But the praise remains the same.

Enjoyed it.

British and Commonwealth Armies 1939-1945: Supplement Volume 2. by Mark Bevis. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 87 pages. 2025 reprint of 2024 reprint of 2001 book.

Subtitle: *Helion Order of Battle 4*

Another five chapters of TO&E for formations divided by theater: North Africa, the Mediterranean, Africa, the Home front, overseas garrisons, and Special Forces.

I know, it's repetitious, but it's repetitiously good.

For wargamers with a flair for WWII British forces, here are four volumes down to section level to draw up scenarios. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.

Montgomery vs Rommel at El Agheila 1942. by Zita Ballinger Fletcher. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 284 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Duel at the Gates of Egypt*

The title has almost nothing to do with the actual text. El Agheila isn't even reached until page 156 and even then the battle is described in general terms. Mostly, it was less a battle than a rearguard. Rommel sent the Italian infantry rearward to establish an alternate defensive line at Buerat while preparing the German forces to retreat. That's when Monty attacked.

The bulk of the book is a psychological analysis of Montgomery and Rommel, starting with bios of them growing up in childhood. Eventually, Rommel shows up in North Africa and works his tactical magic to outfox the British and reach El Alamein. Enter Montgomery and British victory and the thousand mile plus chase across the desert.

Many books portray Montgomery as overly cautious. This one portrays him as a master of discerning Rommel's tendencies and then exploiting those tendencies against Rommel.

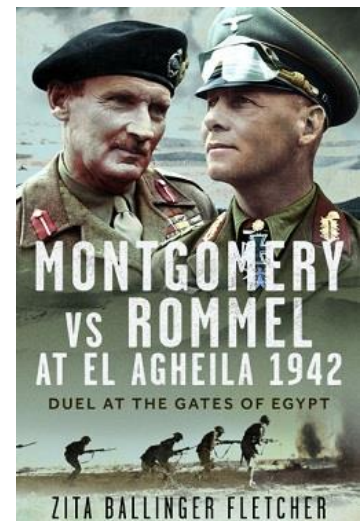
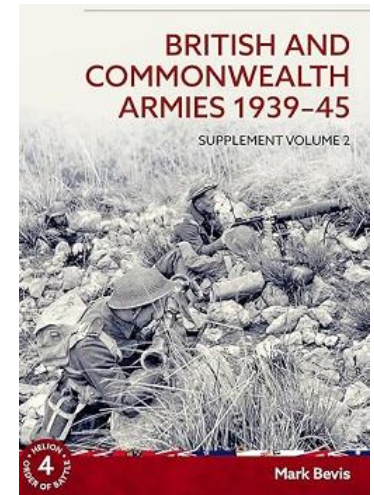
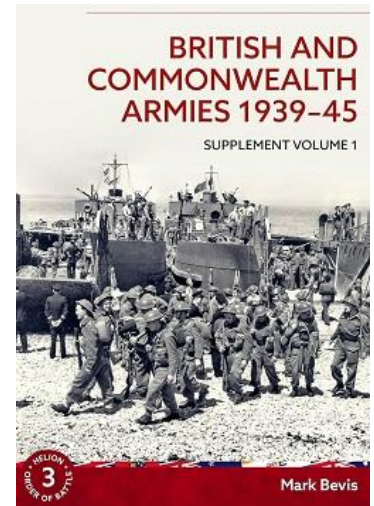
Rommel's relative ineffectiveness after losing at El Alamein results from disillusionment at being abandoned -- few supplies, few reinforcements, and most of all, political disregard for his troops. Ordered to stand and slug it out, Rommel balked and retreated to save as many of his troops as possible. For this, he was shunned by Hitler, Mussolini, and the rest of the high command.

Monty drove his men forward all the quicker, even rashly, to keep Rommel retreating. At El Agheila, the chase ended for a while as both commanders regrouped and both headed off for conferences -- Rommel to Germany and Monty to Cairo.

The same stand and slug it out order when Rommel fixed his defense at El Agheila resulted in the same response -- retreat to save his troops and fight another day. Here, it was even worse, for he had lost faith in Germany victory after El Alamein.

The resumption of the British offensive hit rearguards that soon sped back to Buerat and then farther westward.

The book contains 35 black and white photos and three rudimentary black and white maps without scales.



As a narrative of the Battle of El Agheila, this falls far short of being useful for any scenario for the tabletop. As an examination of what made Montgomery and Rommel tick, this offers excellent analysis. It sometimes drifts into a bit of hyperbole about the desert -- as if it was an entity -- favoring Rommel, but otherwise is a nice, fast, well-written read. Enjoyed it.

US Army 1783-1811: Defending a New Nation. by John R. Maass. Softcover (6.7x9.3 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

As I read this latest volume in the *Casemate Illustrated* series, the text seemed awfully familiar. It was a nagging feeling. I looked at the copyright page and saw a reference to "main text" copyright 2013 Center of Military History, US Army. The boxed text, aka sidebars, were to Chris McNab. Nowhere did I see Maass mentioned. Now, that's strange.

To the MagWeb archive (the website is long gone, but I still have a backup copy) and found what I was looking for -- the "Blue Book" released by the US Army. I call it the Blue Book because on my copy the cover was blue. It's like the WWII Green books, only, er, in blue. I did a quick comparison of the initial chapters of the Casemate version and the Blue Book version, which I believe was by Robert Coakley. My hard copy is earlier than 2013.

Bingo. They are not identical, but generally close. Basically, the Casemate version is an abridged version of chapters from the Center of Military History Blue Book.

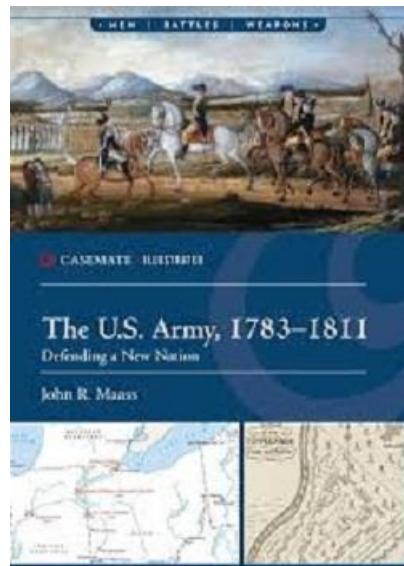
A quick Googling of Maass found he is an historian at the Center of Military History. Thus, it seems to me that he edited down a couple of chapters. Hence the "main text" copyright, although US government produced work is generally in the public domain.

Obviously, you can find the entire Blue Book online with a two-second search. What you can't find in the online version -- but will find in abundance in the Casemate version -- are the marvelous array of illustrations.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, 12 color photos, 11 black and white illustrations, five black and white maps, 33 color illustrations, and two color maps. Value add, indeed.

The *Casemate Illustrated* series still offers a great overview of a topic. Maass did a good job adapting US Army text into a readable overview of US military history from the end of the American Revolution to just prior to the start of the War of 1812.

Enjoyed it.



Manfred von Richthofen: His Life and Times in Pictures. by Tim Hillier Graves. Hardback (7.1x9.9 inches). 171 pages. 2025.

This is the third Red Baron in photos book I've reviewed. The first was *The Red Baron: A Photographic Album of the First World War's Greatest Ace Manfred von Richthofen* (see the review in the 6/29/2021 AAR or here at hmgs.org). The second was *The Red Baron: A History in Pictures* (see the 6/29/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The first had 230 black and white photos, plus six black and white illustrations and two black and white maps. The second had 201 black and white photos and one black and white illustration.

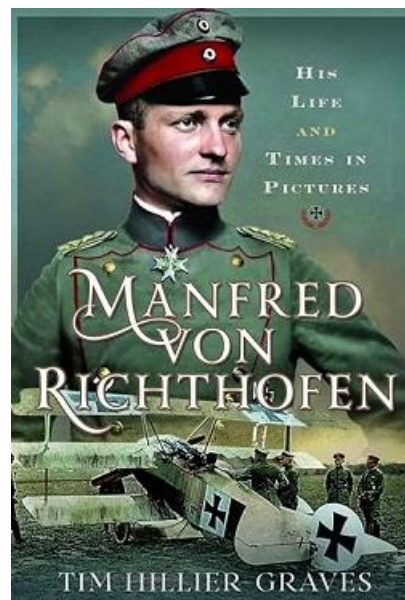
This third one contains 341 black and white photos, 29 color photos, five black and white illustrations, and three color illustrations. Many are not of von Richthofen -- hence the "Times" as part of the title. No matter, plenty of Manfred to go around. Note the color section contains mostly colorized versions of black and white photos.

The text borrows from his autobiography and includes excerpts from fellow pilots and Allied pilots. It covers from childhood to death.

Couple typos: "Kampflieger" (p. viii) or "Kampfllieger" (p. xi) -- I don't know which spelling is correct; and "hope for a quite exhumation" (p156) should be "quiet."

With all those photos, it reads quick and offers plenty of photo resources.

Enjoyed it.



Ground Forces in the Korean War 1950-53 (2): Men-at-Arms 561. by Robert C. Mackowiak. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The US Army and Marine Corps*

This latest MAA booklet contains all things uniform for the US Army and Marines. Jackets, shirts, pants, headgear, boots, and insignia are covered in detail.

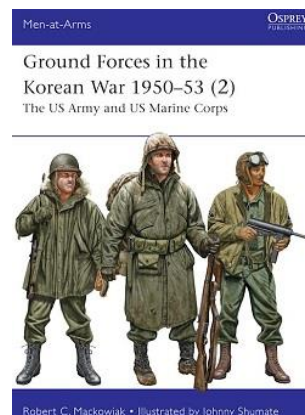
New to me was the increasing use of flak vests by ground troops. Just like modern personal protection, plates slid into cloth pockets to provide armor (p37).

The workmanlike prose covers the clothing and some equipment, supplemented by numerous color photos of the author's personal collection.

The booklet contains 35 black and white photos, 24 color photos, and eight color plates with 24 color uniform illustrations.

If you are looking to paint up some Korean War miniatures, here's a great reference. Pair this with *Ground Forces Korean War (1): Men At Arms 560 The North Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army* and you have a two-volume uniform reference for soldiers of both sides.

Enjoyed it.



Great American Marine Corps Stories. Edited by Tom McCarthy. Softcover (5.5x8.5 inches). 310 pages. 2025.

This is a collection of 10 reprinted articles originally published from 1955 to 2023. They cover from WWI's Belleau Wood to Afghanistan in 2005. Four are reprints of official MSMC accounts and the remaining six are excerpts from Lyons Press books.

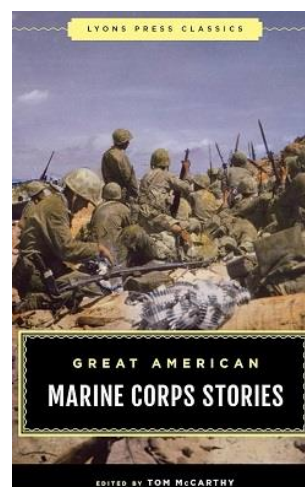
It's less historical recap of a battle, although there is that dimension, but more the ground-level action of the Marines caught up in firefights and other events. Action abounds, mostly concerning battles: Belleau Wood, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, Inchon, Khe Sahn, Gulf War, Hurricane relief, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Chapter 9 (Fallujah 2004) is rather disappointing for one reason: I don't know what happened to the puppy, which seemed more the main character than the author.

Other than that one, they read fine. Quite telling is the complete lack of maps or illustrations. That makes it less useful for tabletop warfare than it could be.

By changing periods, at least it's not repetitious, although I would have liked a wider date range of stories back to the American Revolution. Ties go to the author, or in this case, the editor.

Enjoyed it.



Steel Lobsters. by Myke Cole. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 280 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Crown, Commonwealth, and the Last Knights in England*

This book covers Sir Arthur Hasilrige's Regiment of Horse, known as "The Lobsters," during the English Civil War. Sir Arthur and his unit fought in a number of battles and skirmishes: Edgehill, Ripple Field, Lansdown, Devizes (siege), and Roundway Down.

The chief characteristic was the almost full-body armoring of its troopers, with armor from head to knee and thick leather boots. Cole offers an excellent description of the arms, armor, and equipment. In addition, the book offers a captivating comparison of the Dutch caracole versus Swedish fire and charge tactics.

Sir Arthur proved to be an energetic opponent of King Charles, so much so the King ordered his arrest, but Parliamentarians hid him and four others. Once the war started, Sir Arthur raised a troop of cavalry and led them out to war.

The battles and skirmishes are well covered, with Sir Arthur finding himself being pulled into battle and often coming out on the victorious side -- at least until the end. While trying to escape, Sir Arthur faced Richard Atkins, who shot him multiple times, but the armor held. Then, in a miraculous escape, Sir Arthur was rescued by other Lobsters and fled to Bristol. Yet the demise of the armored knight had been complete by the end of this battle.

The book contains seven black and white maps, seven color photos, and 11 color Osprey illustrations.

Sir Arthur's armored cavalry didn't last long, but this unit history does the Lobsters -- and Sir Arthur -- justice. It reads well, dissects the differences in tactics, and delivers an analysis of how the Lobsters fared in battles. Superb.

Enjoyed it.

