

Spanish Reign or Rain? SnapCon 11 -- 1813
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Books I've Read

Washington's Lieutenants: Amer Rev
War in Ukraine: V8: Kyiv EurWar 50
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US Seventh Fleet: Korea 1950-53
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B-52 Stratofortress: Combat Air 158
Manila Bay 1898: Campaign 419
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Luftwaffe Intruder Operations Over UK
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The Final Reflection: Star Trek 16
China's Fighter J-7/F-7 V1: TechWar 4
Armed Forces N. Korea V1P1: AsiaWar 55
The Final Nexus: Star Trek 43
Ishmael: Star Trek 23
Fighting Kaiser's War: Saxons 1914/1918
Hood's Defeat Near Fox's Gap
Imprisoning the Enemy: Axis POWs

Hitler's Paratroopers in Normandy
A Flag Full of Stars: Star Trek 54
War in Ukraine: V9: Artillery EurWar 52
Doctor Mirabilis (novel)
The Disinherited: Star Trek 59
German Logistics 1939-1945: C Illustr.
Norbert Hannig: Luftwaffe Fighter Ace
The True Story of Catch-22: WWII
War Without Mercy: American Revolution



James S (second from left with cap) provides his annual pre-game SN mechanics overview. GM Mike on far right with bicorn.

Spanish Reign or Rain? SnapCon 11 -- 1813

by Russ Lockwood

C'mon folks, sing along with me...

It's Snappy Nappy time,
It's Snappy Nappy time,
Oh what a great design,
It's Snappy Nappy time!

Let's give a rousing cheer,
'Cause Snappy Nappy's here.
It's time to start the game,
We're glad you came!

For those who don't recognize the tune,
try this 37-second YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1USHuud5i8>



Friday night set up. (l to r): Nathan, Sean, Mike, and Peter.

Seriously? Oh Yeah!

Time for another SnapCon and another rousing *Snappy Nappy* Napoleonic Campaign in a Day multi-player, multi-table game. This one brought us to 1813 Spain, courtesy of GM Mike Seibert and Assistant GMs Peter Anderson and Mark T. James S. overcame printer problems to create custom nametags. All of the above created the terrain on the 14 tables (13 single tables and one double table).

The French are on the run back to France with a massive wagon train of loot. The British, Portuguese, and Spanish are hard on their heels, trying to trap the French before they can escape over the border.

A first at SnapCon: A double table. Vittoria in center.



James C was French C-in-C Joseph Bonaparte while Steve T was Allied C-in-C Arthur Wellesley (future Duke of Wellington). With 21 gamers across 14 tables, the game featured plenty of maneuvering and combat.

Vittoria and the cows and wagon train of loot.

I should mention that for this game, like the 1809 Italy game from years ago, Mike dropped the scale from brigade per unit to regiment per unit.

Special French rules for this Campaign in a Day game: the wagon train of French loot moves 3d6 inches every 15 minutes and blocks road march of any other unit. Clausel's Division (five infantry units and one artillery unit) starts in reserve at Bayonne. Joseph may split it apart and order these units to become garrisons in any town if he so desires. French messages have a 5% chance of failing to get thru due to the all-pervasive Spanish guerrillas and a chance of being captured.

Other than that, it's usual *Snappy Nappy* rules.

More Friday night set up. Bayonne table in foreground.

Partisans

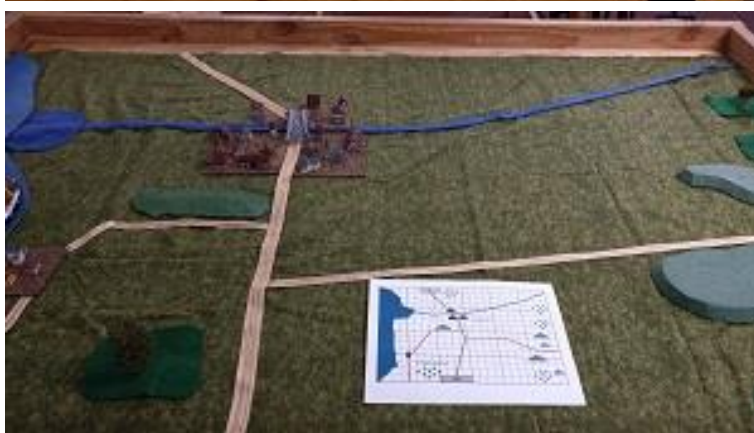
Did I mention the Spanish partisans? They were abstracted out, appeared on certain tables, and posed quite the dilemma for the French. You had to garrison every town with an actual unit (regiment). As a division commander, do you give up units for garrison duty to keep the supply lines open, or, keep units on the front line to combat the British? If you fail to garrison the towns and villages behind the lines, you risk a supply roll -- failure impacts all your division's units and other units ahead of you, too.

GM Mike's map of Bayonne table and the table.

And because all players are playing in the same campaign, failed supply rolls on one table impacts other tables. Decisions, decisions.

Historical Situation

By June 1813, the British have retaken Madrid and driven the French back beyond Burgos. Napoleon ordered Joseph to make a stand and defeat Wellesley. The neutral Austrians were watching such battlefield developments closely and were considering which side to join.



GM Mike (green uniform) briefs the commanders around the all-important Master Transit Table.

Worse, Napoleon took 25,000 troops out of Spain to defend Germany. This left Joseph with about 68,000 men. Joseph has pulled back to what he hoped was a smaller perimeter to defend in the northern part of Spain -- a line on the River Ebro. If Joseph can't turn back Wellesley, a French defeat will embolden all of Napoleon's enemies to join the anti-French Coalition and doom the Empire.

Commanders scatter to set up their troops.

On the Allied side, Wellesley's campaign of 1813 saw his combined British, Portuguese, and Spanish army of 79,000 strike northward towards Burgos without allowing Joseph's French armies to concentrate. Wellesley's troops marched hard to cut the French off from the road to the Pyrenees Mountains, Bayonne, and France.

As for the Spanish, the people rose up against the invader, having been encouraged from the British success in the prior year.

Asst GMs Peter (left) and Mark T. (wearing a Jane Austen-worthy uniform) discuss sizes of dice.

Tasks At Hand

Joseph needs to repel the British Army approaching the French frontier, and if possible, recapture Burgos -- the main city on the British supply line that extends all the way back into Portugal. He also needs to avoid a major defeat, as that likely would persuade Austria to join the coalition forces in Germany.

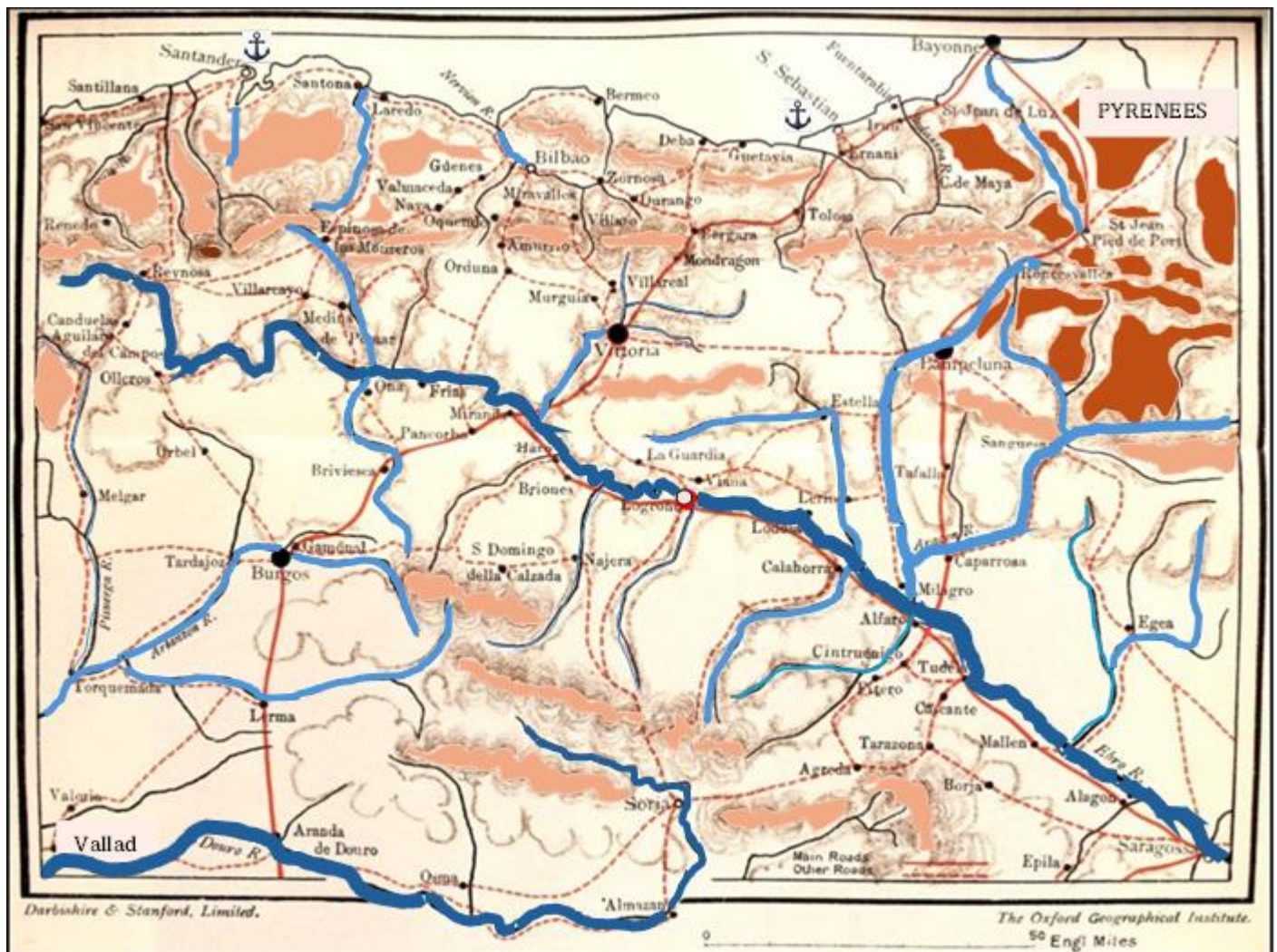
For the French, the force is divided into three armies: Army du Portugal (Reille), Army du Midi (Drouet aka D'Erlon), and Army du Sud (Gazan). These commanders will provide additional rally capabilities for their respective army only. In addition, they would be the senior commander on the table for initiative rolling.

Wellesley needs to capture the major cities on the main road to the border and toss the French out of Spain. Capturing Bayonne, the main French supply source, would be even better.

The British Army is split into three wings, with Wellington in command of one of them. The allies are composed of veteran British regulars and Portuguese troops.

The main road includes Vitoria, Tolosa, and San Sebastian tables. Additionally, the important cities of Pamplona and Bilbao will be included, as will a goodly number of crossroad towns.





Each player received a copy of this map. Notice that the tables are **not** marked. Fog of war, folks!

Who, Me?

I wasn't picky about which side to be on, so it turned out I would be French. When asked which command I would like, I picked the one under Général de division Cassagne.

Why?

It had the lowest-rated troops of all French divisions. Usually, each command gets a mix of troops from Elite to Conscript, and sometimes a Militia added in. However, all my troops were Seasoned. That means it was a fragile division and had to be handled very carefully. Much would depend on where Joseph Bonaparte sent me. What can I say, I like a challenge.

I started at San Sebastian.

A Quick Campaign-in-a-Day Overview

Snappy Nappy Campaign-in-a-Day features multiple players battling across multiple tables in one big game. In this case, GM Mike split northern Spain into 14 4x6-foot battlefield tables. The first two turns are synchronized across all battlefield 14 tables, but starting on Turn 3, each table runs its own Turn sequence.

In a regular SN C-in-a-D game, moving off of one battlefield table immediately puts you on another, although that is almost never the adjacent table. Credit James S with creating Deployment Zones marking table entry and exit points and a system of coordinating entering troops with the table's Turn Sequence.

OK, for this game...

Last year, Mike GMed and used an Australian-created Transit Table system where exiting off one battlefield table sent you to a middle table with lots of Transit "tables" containing 3x5-inch cards that matched that specific exiting numbered Deployment Zone. The card sent you to either another battlefield table (no waiting), or, to a "Transit Table" --

an 8.5x11-inch sheet of paper representing a named geographic area in between the 4x6-foot battlefield tables. If you landed on one, you had to stay 5 real-time minutes. There was a log sheet to fill out at the Master Transit Table and an official GM clock to mark the 5 minutes.

And a Mike wrinkle:

In the regular *SN C-ina-D* game, when a player's troops were the only ones on the battlefield table, the owning player would run through the Turn Sequence rather quickly, and move rather quickly. "Warp speed" was the slang used, although I termed it a strategic surprise, or being "humbugged" so to speak.

Mike wanted none of that. In his game, a player had to wait 5 minutes between moves to eliminate the warp speed.

So, with these wrinkles in mind, on to the campaign. The time was about 11:00 am in real time.

Oh, one last point: When I give a Turn number, that number only applies to my force. Since all tables follow the Turn sequence independently of other tables, all I can give is my own impression of time.

I started in the city of San Sebastian (bottom). Turn two saw me on my way to Tolosa (top).

My 25mm Troops

Division: Général de division Cassagne
(Dashing Commander: +1)

16th Légère Regiment (Light Troops) Seasoned
17th Légère Regiment (Light Troops) Seasoned
8th Line Regiment Seasoned
9th Line Regiment Seasoned
51st Line Regiment Seasoned
52nd Line Regiment Seasoned
53rd Line Regiment Seasoned
54th Line Regiment Seasoned
Nassau Chasseur à Cheval Regiment (Cavalry) Seasoned
Foot Battery 6lbr Artillery Seasoned
Foot Battery 12lbr Artillery Seasoned

These all started inside San Sebastian city limits. It was a tight fit, but that's where they started.

Let The Operations Begin

I was about to send a pair of regiments (units) to garrison the two towns (Irimi and Ernami) on the table when all of a sudden, two units of reinforcements arrived from Bayonne to do the garrisoning for me. Thanks, King Joseph Bonaparte.

The King ordered me to Tolosa, the next table over, so I shook out into road column. The main road was fast enough and I soon had my light cavalry leading the infantry and artillery.



About this time, I was awarded a great honor -- I also became Corps Commander D'Erlon (Drouet – Charismatic commander +2). This also posed a dilemma and an opportunity. The dilemma was how to be two players in one, but the opportunity was to be able to split my entire force so I could cover two roads entering / exiting the San Sebastian table.



I pass through town of Tolosa in road column. I would show you photos of the later countermarch, but they look exactly like this except pointing in the opposite direction.

Obeying orders, I sent Cassagne down the main southwest road with most of the force towards Tolosa while D'Erlon took three infantry units west to scout.

Cassagne's Countermarch

By Turn 4 and 5, I headed off the San Sebastian table and onto the Tolosa table, with the next turn finding me at the outskirts of the city. No enemy troops were on the table, although I did meet Daricau's troops, who turned around and headed back to Pamplona.

As per Joseph's orders, I marched towards Vittoria on the main road. On Turn 7, I passed through Tolosa. Turn 8 (12:08 pm by my notes) I was most of the way across this battlefield table. On Turn 10, I was off the Tolosa battlefield table and deep into a Transit table.

On Turn 13, my advance elements arrived on the (doublesized) Vittoria table. Turn 14 saw my troops move off road to make sure the wagon train of loot could pass. Those wagons and cattle were road hogs.

On Turn 15, Corp Commander Reille, who is the tactical overall commander on the Vittoria battlefield table, gave me a verbal order to head back to Tolosa.

What? I just got here!

This contradicts King Joseph's order and initial reports say a large British and Spanish force was slowly surrounding Vittoria. Reille is also not my superior -- D'Erlon is. Yes, as a player, I am also D'Erlon, but that commander and his small force are far away, not on the Vittoria battlefield table. Still, the umpire noted in pre-game briefing that corp commanders were the "C-in-Cs" of the table they were on.

I, of course, protested. I was ordered to Vittoria. Reille noted he was a marshal and ordered me back to Tolosa. Apparently, he was better informed about the overall situation in Spain than I was and mentioned a threat to Tolosa -- which would cut off all our forces.

Well, my marshal was nowhere to be seen and Reille the marshal gave me a direct order to protect the route back to France. Tolosa was part of that route, so I turned around and sent my units back off the table.

All during my march, I was sending messages back to King Joseph apprising him of my progress. I can't say I knew what his specific plan was, but I can definitely say no plan survives contact with the enemy.

D'Erlon's Drive

Back to D'Erlon, who had taken the west road from the San Sebastian table.

On Turn 6, D'Erlon and his three infantry regiments were in Durango (Transit Table). On Turn 9, he was all by his lonesome when his troops arrived on the Bilbao battlefield table. A last-minute cancellation meant a French force under Surrat never started in Bilbao. Also, a British force near Pamplona was also a cancel. All I knew was that the Bilbao table was empty except for me.

No sooner had D'Erlon left a garrison in Bilbao and headed southwest (left side -- in Deployment Zone) than British General Howard (Nathan, right) shows up, much to the amusement of Asst. GM Mark T, sans uniform.



This is not a good thing for us French. That meant an entire northern route was open, as Surrat was to be the most western of our forces. Alas that cancellation wasn't passed down to me. Double fog of war.

With the importance of Bilbao in mind, as well as its location as a supply line, I left a garrison of one regiment (the 9th Legere). But what to do with the other two? Hold here? Go west? Go southwest? Go south?

On Turn 11, I received a reply from King Joseph to my previous message. The King ordered me to: "Advance to Burgos by any road I choose."

Turn 15. D'Erlon and two French regiments double back and threaten the British flank (top). One French regiment garrisons Bilbao (bottom left) as the British close in.



Ah. Decision made. D'Erlon and two regiments headed southwest and exited the Bilbao table.

On Turn 12, the first British troops arrived: 1st Division. One of these formations included the Coldstream Guards -- as good a unit as any Imperial Guard unit. The British tallied six regiments plus an artillery -- outnumbering me 2:1. You don't even want to know about the qualitative difference.

You do? OK. The base firing to hit number for all my Seasoned troops is 7+ on a d10. The Coldstream Guards is a 4+. The Brits also had an Elite regiment that hit on 5+, three Veteran regiments that hit on 6+, and one Seasoned unit that hit on 7+.

Did I mention the Veteran artillery? Egads! At least he didn't have cavalry.

On Turns 13 and 14, I watched the British advance on Bilbao. On Turn 14, D'Erlon arrived back on the Bilbao battlefield table with his two regiments -- a puny force in the face of a full division. The only good thing was this arrival was on the flank of the British, forcing them to send half the troops to face me. It was time for the Battle of Bilbao.

The Battle of Bilbao

I realized D'Erlon was outnumbered, outgunned, and out-experienced. The only thing I could do is try and outmaneuver the British.

I split my two southern regiments apart. One slowly backed into the village of Gdenes. The other slowly shifted to get atop a hill. I thought about running off table, but I realized that I was the only blocking force between the Brits and San Sebastian, which would cut off the French fighting at Vittoria, not to mention Cassagne at Tolosa. The French needed more bodies. D'Erlon recalled Cassagne to San Sebastian.

D'Erlon gets a better view on the hill and it's looking grim. The two regiments (top) edge backwards to the village of Gdenes and the hill. Gen. Howard attaches to the Coldstream Guards while waiting for the artillery to pound the defending French 9th regiment.



D'Erlon headed to a point between Bilbao and Gdenes to keep everyone in command.

The British under General Howard sent the Coldstream Guards and a Veteran regiment against Bilbao, but stopped short of engaging us French. Clever general! While I was busy loopholing the place, Gen. Howard brought up his artillery. I was about to be pounded.

Back at Gdenes, the firefight was short and sweet. By Turn 19, both my southern units had routed. Gdenes was captured and so was the hill.

Turn 18. The British tighten the noose.

That left my 9th Legere in Bilbao. I sent my commander to take personal command. A massive lopsided firefight developed with two far better British infantry units and an artillery unit pounding away at my one infantry regiment defending in a town.

Slowly, the bombardment nibbled away at the 9th Legere. D'Erlon was everywhere rallying his troops, so much so that he escaped injury with only a hole in his coat. Still, the end was inevitable.

On Turn 19, D'Erlon and the 9th were kicked out of Bilbao. They ran away in utter panic, holding on to minimal cohesion only by the force of D'Erlon. Even as they fled, D'Erlon rallied them. Before they exited the table, they turned to fight again on open ground.

Meanwhile, the British 2nd division, primarily Portuguese under General Graham, arrived and marched hard for D'Erlon.

Turn 19. D'Erlon barely halts the 9th Regiment as they flee from Bilbao. Gdenes and hill also soon fall.

D'Erlon was clever. His back was to the Deployment Zone. He could retrograde move into it. It was Turn 21. The British were surprised at the bold defense. If the 9th Legere couldn't hold with the defensive benefits of the town, how could it hold in the open field.

Here's where I pointed out to General Graham that if I could get a double turn and the British road march formation was close enough to hit and melee, I'd automatically wrack the lead unit and force a morale check on the artillery unit behind as it fled through the artillery. It's a nuanced result of the melee rules and the British/Portuguese player should know about it. This is a friendly game.

Anyway, Graham paused to bring the artillery up. D'Erlon slipped away back to the Durango Transit Table and ultimately the San Sebastian battlefield table.

Cassagne forms a defensive line as Darmagnac (Dick) marches in from Bayonne. This is the last table and the last line of defense for France.

Cassagne's Last Line

As per orders, Cassagne left Tolosa and



arrived back in San Sebastian to secure the road to Bayonne. By this time, D'Erlon's frantic efforts at a fighting withdrawal gave Cassagne time to set up a last-ditch defensive line.

General Darmagnac arrived as well, and between the two division commanders, they set up a double line brimming with artillery and infantry. Cavalry was off on the left flank. It was Turn 23 (2:49pm real time).

British Gen. Graham (left) arrives in the Deployment Zone (off photo left) to see the San Sebastian defense.



At exactly this time, two conflicting orders arrived for Cassagne. One from King Joseph ordering him to Burgos and the other from Reille ordering him back to Vittoria.

Are you kidding me? Burgos? Did Joseph not read any of D'Erlon's messages about a British attack across the northern roads?

Hmmm. Maybe the messages were captured by Spanish guerrillas? And go back to Vittoria? Really, Reille?

How to choose which order?

Marshal Reille was far away and no longer in direct contact. D'Erlon was the direct commander and finally arrived on the San Sebastian battlefield table. D'Erlon countermanded Reille's order.

That left King Joseph's order. Well, the King never said how many troops to send, so D'Erlon took his now rallied 9th Legere and headed cross country towards Tolosa. He exited the San Sebastian battlefield table.

The Portuguese and British entered the table.

The Battle of San Sebastian

The Portuguese arrived on Turn 24 and made a beeline for Cassagne's waiting line of troops defending San Sebastian. The artillery duel was remarkably short. One Portuguese shot and half my artillery blew up right then and there and the gunners routed all the way back to Paris. Now the Portuguese sat and fired at my infantry with impunity. I advanced a regiment towards the Portuguese artillery. It was pounded backwards and retreated through the gap I left. It pays to plan ahead.

The Portuguese form up a line just as D'Erlon arrives back with the 9th Regiment (bottom left) – just ahead of the cows and wagon train of loot. This distracts the British cavalry, leaving my cavalry ready to charge.



The following British swung out to their right flank, which was the French left flank, and aimed at Darmagnac, who swung his cavalry wide to take cover behind a hill while maintaining his infantry and artillery line.

Together, the 12pdr artillery of Cassagne and Darmagnac responded in the center. Darmagnac went after the Coldstream Guards, but the regiment stood firm despite the pounding.

D'Erlon rode to the sound of the guns with his one infantry unit, joined by Cassagne's Chasseurs unit. Darmagnac brought the Cuirassiers up and over the hill and charged a British infantry unit, which successfully formed a Hasty Square and sent the cavalry packing.

Meanwhile, the lone British cavalry unit with General Howard attached, faced the 9th Legere. In a twist of fate, and turn sequence for the magnificent (or dreaded) double turn, my Chasseurs charged the British cavalry in the rear and routed them. Howard tried to rally them, but a saber slashed him from his saddle and he was taken from the field wounded.

Alas, British units under Gen. Howard arrive in the nick of time to flank my cavalry and confront my infantry. I am overmatched.

The British artillery fired at the 9th Legere, forcing it backwards while D'Erlon rallied it. Here again, D'Erlon escaped injury with yet another hole in his coat. He joked he had matching holes left and right.

About this time, the wagon train of loot appeared on the San Sebastian table.

Now? In the middle of a battle? I thought they had already passed by and were in France. My misconception!

Darmagnac's cavalry is poised to take the British cavalry in the flank. His infantry start to push off the hill. The Portuguese artillery engages in an artillery duel with the line.

The British artillery fired at the flank of the Chasseurs, routing them. British infantry closed on the 9th Legere and despite D'Erlon's heroic efforts, routed the 9th and D'Erlon back to Tolosa. The cattle and wagon train were plundered by the British.

Darmagnac's cavalry (right) routs the British cavalry in the flank. Gen. Howard (circular base tipped over) is dragged from the field wounded. D'Erlon is beaten and flees off table through the Deployment Zone. The British capture the cows and wagon train of loot.

End of Game

Here is where my tale of battle ends after 35 Turns.

The Battle of Bilbao was a fighting



withdrawal.

The Battle of San Sebastian was a back and forth battle on the flank and a pounding firefight in the center. As I noted, Cassagne's division was fragile and I kept it intact as much as possible. It stood because there was no place left to run.

Bayonne was secure. The road from Bayonne to Tolosa not so much.

That said, I had little idea what went on at other tables.

Turn 35. End game on San Sebastian table.



Debrief

A Campaign in a Day game is always, on purpose, a little confusing to an individual commander. I look forward to GM Mike's recap.

End game on Vittoria table.

Best of what I could piece together amid loud victory celebrations... To my surprise, us French still held Vittoria (2 VP), although a huge battle was around it. We also held Pamplona (2 VP) and San Sebastian (1 VP). I believe we also grabbed Burgos (2 VP). I believe one French division was exhausted (-1 VP). That gave the French 6 VPs.

The British had taken Santander (1 VP).

The wagon train of loot was not worth any VPs to the British, only 1 VP to the French. Likewise, Bayonne was worth a whopping 10 VPs to the Brits, but no VPs to the French.

So it was a 6-1 French victory.



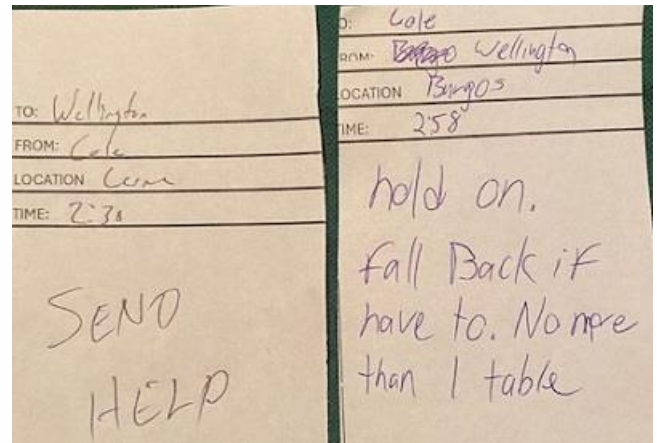
The big debrief by GM Mike (bottom left, tan cap). Imagine our surprise with the French victory.



But wait! There's more!

In taking Burgos, we French apparently captured British C-in-C Wellesley -- the future Duke of Wellington, although with such a French victory in Spain and 2024's SN C-in a-D French victory in 1813 Germany, maybe there wouldn't be such a promotion for Arthur or even a Waterloo. Burgos also served as the main British supply, so maybe the force falls back on the port of Santander -- another Corunna-style British evacuation as per 1809? Maybe the Austrians stay out of the Coalition, reducing the number of Coalition troops and possibly creating a negotiated peace?

Two British messages late in the campaign.

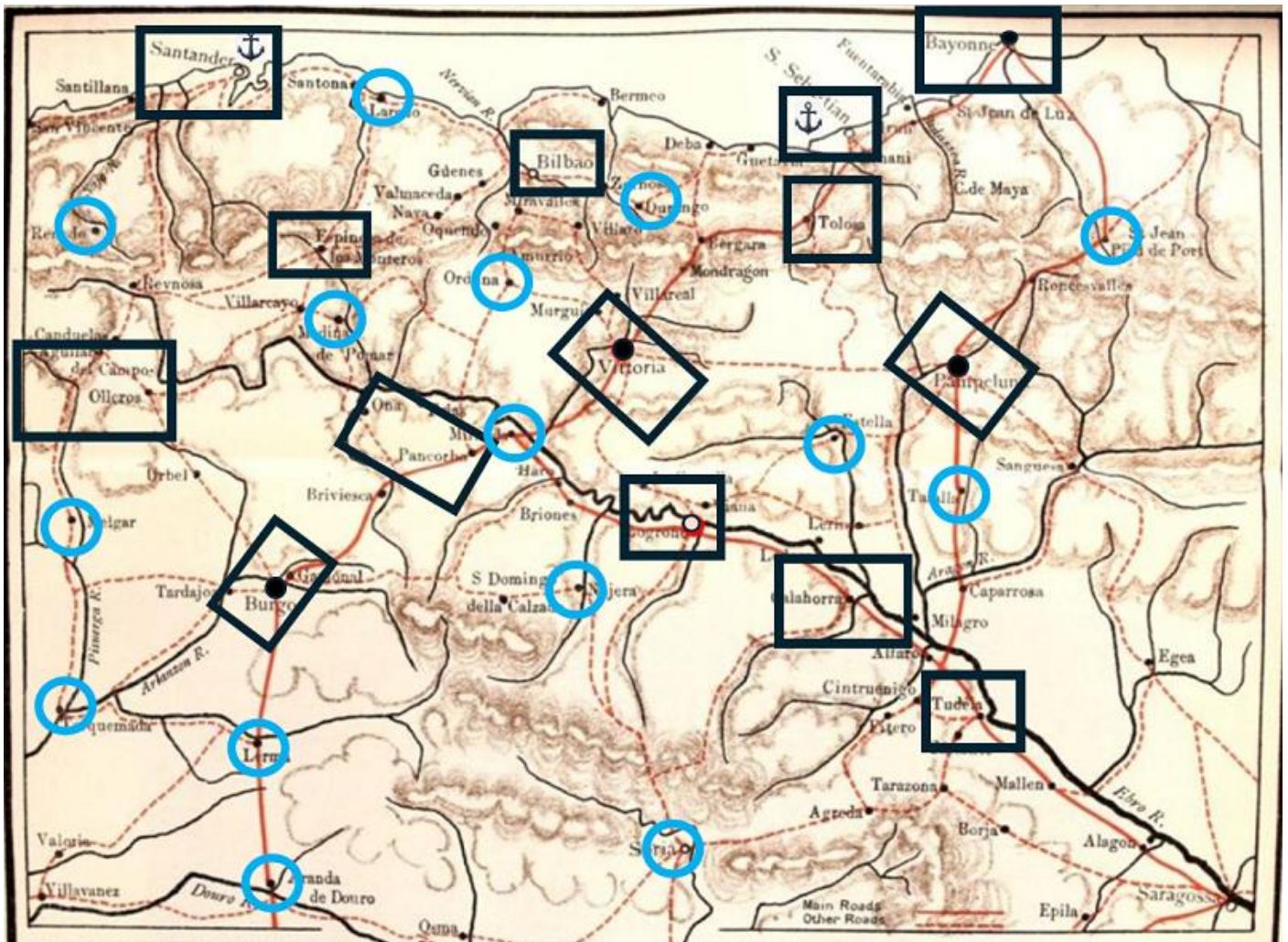


Could I Do Better?

Of course, all players do as best they can at the time with the information and orders they have. I found it amazing that Cassagne marched a long way only to be ordered back to his starting point. The move turned out to be correct in terms of protecting Bayonne, even if the troops might have been better used elsewhere instead of marching back and forth. And in no way would they counter-counter march back to Vittoria or Burgos.

Those of you with knowledge of 1815 Waterloo know that D'Erlon was the corps that Napoleon ordered to march from Quatre Bras to Ligny, where, just as it arrived, D'Erlon's immediate superior, Ney, ordered it back to Quatre Bras. Thus, it never got into either battle to the detriment of French fortunes. Almost tabletop duplication!

Debrief reveals GM Mike's master map that shows how the tables were linked. Blue circles are non-playable Transit tables.



So you can see how tabletop commanders could order the same counter-march as a historical commanders. What we have here is a failure to communicate, or maybe communicate too much. And it was a tad ironic that it was a division from tabletop D'Erlon's Corp that did the tabletop counter-march.

Anyway, Cassagne was a fragile division. As we saw at Bilbao, Seasoned troops against Veteran troops is a challenge. Sprinkle in some Guard and Elite and you need to be lucky to hold. Fortunately, Darmagnac also had troops there. It would be a near run thing for the French to hold.

The one decision I debated about is whether to form a line at San Sebastian and give the Portuguese and British room to deploy, albeit requiring a number of turns to shake out of marching mode and into fighting mode, or, to form a line of battle close to the Deployment Zone and crowd them before they can fully form up and spread out.

Darmagnac's cavalry would force British infantry into square, limiting mobility and buying more time. Yet getting to grips earlier with superior troops would likely cause considerable damage to French forces. It might have allowed the wagon train of loot to slip by, although VP wise, the +1 VP for loot would likely offset the -1 VP for a wracked division.

Guess I'll never know...maybe next time?

Another Great Campaign-in-a-Day

Once again, I enjoyed pushing troops across multiple tables and engaging in a fighting withdrawal (Bilbao) as well as a set-piece battle (San Sebastian). Judging from the cheers and groans, all enjoyed the fog of war of battling on multiple tables without knowing everything about every unit. That units could slip across tables to surprise the enemy in a strategic flank offers a glimpse into trying to coordinate forces across vast distances.

Steak tonight for the Brits. End of game. D'Erlon, the 9th Legere, and wagons of loot in Deployment Zone. Photo by Peter.



A big thank you to The Portal (60 Hilliard St., Manchester, CT 06042 -- 860-432-0711) for allowing us to use the backroom for our annual SnapCon. If you are anywhere near Hartford, CT, stop by. Besides a ton of new boxed games, fantasy and sci-fi miniatures, and gaming supplies, there's a large selection of used games for sale at various prices and new games at a 50% discount. I picked up one of the latter -- you'll undoubtedly hear about it in a future AAR.

A big thank you for GM Mike for putting the entire campaign together, Peter and Mark T for Asst GMing, James S for a quick overview of the rules, Mark T for supplying a mid-afternoon pizza lunch, and all the players who pushed troops and rolled dice to create a magnificent gaming experience.

Best Dressed Award: Mark T for his Jane Austen-worthy uniform. Runner up: GM Mike for adding a bicorne to his Russian uniform hoodie. Halloween came early!

More Info

The Portal: The website for the store:

<https://www.theportalct.com/>

Blunders on the Danube Blog: All the *Snappy Nappy* Campaign in a Day OOBs, maps, and recaps from all SnapCons and eventually this one, too.

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

Campaigns In a Day and Downloadable Quick Reference Sheets:

<https://blundersonthedanube.blogspot.com/p/campaigns-in-day.html>

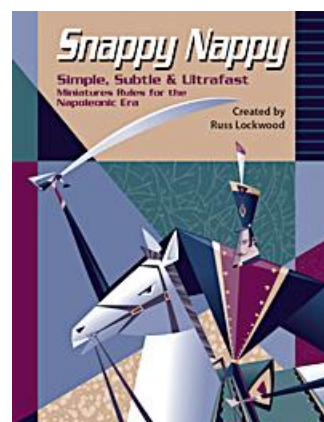
***Snappy Nappy* (To purchase):**

Paper version: <https://www.onmilitarymatters.com/product/1-190320>

PDF version: <https://www.onmilitarymatters.com/product/2-190320>

Paper version in UK: <https://www.caliverbooks.com/bookview.php?id=15996>

The Snappy Nappy rules cover.



In The Shadows: French Resistance 1943-1944

by Russ Lockwood

Here's a gaming topic not generally covered: the French Resistance during WWII. Cards rule the mechanics and the simple cubes and cylinders aren't really much to look at, but the area-based board is clearly delineated into three regions: red, white, and blue (like the tri-color flag). These regions are subdivided into areas called Zones. The cubes (German and French collaborator units) are spread out while the red (cell) and yellow (Maquis) are placed upside down for fog of war. Two of the red cells are informants, but all the yellow Maquis are anti-Axis.

It did take us a while to get the hang of the game. Key is to pay attention to the color of the event card played, because Action Point costs (for movement, hiding, sabotage, ambush, arrest, etc.) are increased if you do something outside the particularly colored region.

I was the Germans and Renaud was the French.

At start and the beginning of Round 3 (top) and later in the game.

Two Tracks

The French player has a victory track that provides automatic victory conditions as well as a circular track that affects the victory track. Likewise, the German player has a plunder track that increases French resistance the more goods sent from France to Germany.

Now, I thought all I had to do was plunder France to its maximum for the win. Er, no. I had to have a certain amount of plunder AND reduce the number of Resistance units to some number based on the French victory track.

It only took me almost all of the game to start to read the rules. Then, in two turns, I had formed two hunter-killer stacks and eliminated all the yellow Maquis units from France. I was so close to dropping the total number of the red Cell units to the number I needed. Alas, I was one away!

That's also when Renaud figured out he could pop out more Cells at a higher percentage chance than Maquis. And he went a poppin' indeed. It came down to the last turn and I conceded.

Why? Because I needed at least two action points to eliminate a Resistance unit: one to "uncover" the unit and a second to "arrest" it and remove it from the board. I needed to eliminate five units, which would take 10 action points. The card only gave a maximum of seven APs. So, mathematically impossible, I conceded.

Thoughts

I had a Klaus Barbie marker good to demand one new card draw (there are no dice, just card draws for results) if I didn't like the result. It was very helpful each turn. There are a couple results that quickened the marker movement around the French circular track. That's a prime time for the German player to use the Barbie marker. For most of the game, I was too quick or too slow. Not that it wasn't helpful, but it could have been even more helpful and make a difference in the game.

The cards usually specifically noted "Success" or "Failure" under some actions, but not for others -- you kind of had to guess at the icons and the back-page of rules chart sometimes wasn't helpful. We figured it out or logicked it out for the most part, but the inconsistency of displaying card results proved to be an annoyance.

That said, *Shadows* was an interesting abstract game of the French Resistance. We did blow a few rules -- the color coding being the most prominent and Alert markers coming in second. The latter turns found us paying more attention.

Thanks for the game.



Revenge Is A Dish Best Served Hoth: *Star Wars*

by Russ Lockwood

Last time we played *Hoth*, a *Command & Colors* (C&C) variant for the *Star Wars* universe, Renaud and I made a wee mistake: Both the Rebel infantry and the Imperial Snowtrooper infantry had three figures per unit. In a re-read of the rules, Renaud discovered the Imperial Snowtrooper infantry units were supposed to get four figures each.

Renaud plays his initial card to start the game.

In essence, we shorted the Imperial infantry 25% -- that means they now stick around longer and hence, may perform offensive fire for longer. It also means that my 1 in 27 rolls for three hits on a 3d6 roll won't kill off a Snowtrooper unit in one firing. I'd need at least a second infantry unit to concentrate fire for the possibility of eliminating an Imperial infantry unit.

We brought out the game to try Campaign Number 2. Once again, Renaud was the Imperials and I was the Rebels.

Game The First

We started with the first scenario of the second campaign -- labeled Scenario 7. Just go with the numbering.

The Imperials were out for blood, with two AT-AT, two Droid, and six Snowtrooper units. I believe I had eight infantry units and one laser turret.

It's all very hazy because the game went so fast. I was able to get good cards with an extra die here and there and gunned down the SnowTrooper infantry -- four figures or three, it didn't seem to matter.

After the Rebel victory, Renaud glanced around the hex grid and said, "I know why my Snowtroopers aren't doing well."

"Why's that?"

He picked up the dark gray Snowtrooper figure and held it adjacent to the off-white color of the Rebel infantry figure. "They don't have any snow white camouflage!"

Good one.

Game The Second

This went so fast, I didn't even take a photo. I recall more SnowSpeeders. They seem to move too fast (3 hexes) and shoot too much (4d6 at one hex range). Targeting them is a bit like targeting the Droids -- specific icon needed for a hit.

As a Rebel player, this sort of encourages me to use them early and often, especially in tandem with supporting infantry. The Imperials need to target them early and often. If not, they just cause damage galore.

Renaud reads his winning text in Game the Third.

Game The Third

I guess I pushed my luck a little too much this game. Renaud's dice suddenly became odds-worthy instead of abysmal and I lost my SnowSpeeder unit fairly early. Then he just kept whittling me down until I broke. Nicely done.



I'm not sure who won the campaign, but I think it was third game winner take all. One for the Imperials.

Ion Cannon Battle

In this one-off scenario, losses don't matter. The only thing that matters is firing the Ion Cannon three times. Only there's a catch: It takes three turns to "load" the cannon and a fourth to fire it. On that fourth turn, the Rebels can do nothing else. That means the Rebels have to stick around for at least 12 turns.

Last ditch defense of the Ion Cannon as the Imperials close in.



On the negative side, I don't see the logic of the rest of the Rebels doing nothing when the ion cannon fires. The troops in the field have nothing to do with the power of the cannon. Maybe they're all cheering.

On the positive side, it does pose an interesting dilemma about whether to shoot at an Imperial unit getting too close to the cannon or fire the cannon for the VP.

Also, I recall that if I eliminated an Imperial Snowtrooper unit, it came back. Bloody clones!

On came Renaud and the wrath of the Imperial army. I advanced out of the ridges to eliminate the first Imperial unit. I was hit in return. I continued to create an active defense and deferred my first ion cannon shot by a turn (firing it on turn 5 instead of 4) because I wanted to stabilize my line.

The smoke says it all.



Alas, the second ion shot never came. The Imperials swarmed my ever dwindling force. I was knocking off units, but also losing my own units in the process. I had actually pumped up the ion cannon to six (turn 11) with deferred firing when the Imperial assault troopers managed to blow up the cannon.

So, I had lasted 11 turns, but only fired once. I suppose deferred firing was a mistake. I didn't keep my eye on the prize.

Had the rules allowed Rebels to perform activations along with firing, Renaud still would have won, but it would have been closer than this outcome.

Still, for *Star Wars* fans, *Hoth* is a good intro into *C&C* wargaming and perhaps a gateway into hexless miniatures gaming. Thanks for the games.



Dan (left) and Mike contemplate the tricks and treats of the Halloween variant of Dominion.

Halloween *Dominion*: Custom Cards

by Russ Lockwood

Mike and I arrived at Dan's house to pick from a half dozen excellent three-player games. With one just as good as the other, Dan rolled a d6 -- *Dominion* card game. Ah, but Dan had a trick and a treat up his sleeve. This was the Halloween edition of *Dominion*.

Never heard of it? You shouldn't -- it's a customized version of the game created by Dan. It uses all the *Dominion* mechanics, and indeed uses original *Dominion* cards suitable for Halloween. He also made custom card faces. Instead of battling for VP cards labeled Estates through Colonies, you battle for candy, like Bagful, Pile, and Horde. And you don't spend coin to get them, you spend minutes of Trick or Treat time.



He's done this before. I'm rather fond of his Monty Python set using *Holy Grail* movie stills taken from online. Ah, but tonight, we battle for candy.

We selected the 10 Kingdom piles at random via die rolling and off we went. As we selected and paid for Kingdom and Minutes cards, our decks built. After an hour or so of play, Dan and I knew Mike had the stronger deck. He was picking up candy like an industrial strength vacuum cleaner. Dan at least was trying to keep pace like a dust buster. My deck? It just sucked.

We conceded.

Kingsburg: Influence Resources

by Russ Lockwood

Mike had to go, but I stuck around for another favorite: *Kingsburg*. This eurogame uses 3d6 dice tossing to employ courtiers to provide resources that are turned into buildings to get VPs. Yep, typical eurogame spreadsheet

manipulation, or if you prefer, resource management. The die rolling offers the randomness needed to keep my interest.

As we rolled and built, the end of the first year found an orc invasion. Sure enough, I had stunted on defensive structures and Dan's random combat roll of 1 ensured his victory over the orcs but my defeat. That setback wasn't too bad, but given the limited number of turns and chances for resources, it wasn't pretty.

Still, I was keeping pace until Dan built an Embassy. That provides 1 VP per quarter and that proved the difference between Dan's victory and my runner up status.

As Dan recalled, that building was key in his previous victory. You'd think I woulda learned by now...

Thanks for hosting Dan and for the games.



Star Wars: C&C-RUSE Fusion

by Russ Lockwood

Wow. The magnificently-painted *Star Wars* figures, including Walkers (AT-STs and AT-RTs), Speeders, Laser Turret, and Laser MG, faced off across a hex grid. Renaud wanted to try his *RUSE* card system with *Command & Colors* (C&C) movement and combat mechanics.

Imperial Walker and friends.

Short Digression: Command, Control, and Communications

C&C divides the hex grid into three sections (left, right, and center) with the activation cards slugged to one or more sections, plus some special activation cards for specific or generic units. I find it maddening and illogical that random card draws dictate my tactics as a commander. During a game, these random card draws leave your units in one section or another high and dry, unable to activate. It makes no sense to me.

Obviously, I'm in the minority as C&C and its variants are best-selling wargames. And let me be quick to say I have no problems with the other mechanics.

So, Renaud decided to try his *RUSE* card mechanic, where you pick a numeric card to activate a certain number of units of your force. Furthermore, you pick the units, not the random card draw. Even better yet, low number goes first, so you decide whether to pick a low number that has the possibility of going first or a high number that will likely go second but activate more units than the low card for counter-attack potential.



I endorse that C3 mechanic. I may choose poorly, and my opponent may convince me to choose units other than the ones I had in mind, but I choose the card from my constantly replenished hand of three cards.

At start.

So, that's what we tried across a hex grid studded with towering crystal spires that blocked line of sight -- except for AT-STs standing next to one. End digression.

I played the Imperials while Renaud was the Rebels.

Battle

So it began, with my pushing the right flank with an AT-ST Walker in the lead along with Bike speeders. On my left, I sent the AT-ST forward as well.

Renaud countered with the Boba Fett Brigade of bounty hunters. They shot up my bikes with ease. Concentrated fire from the Walker and Elite Stormtroopers cut down most, but not all of them and the Fetts retreated.

Yet before they fell back, a pair of Rebel units advanced and all three brought fire against my AT-ST. As it was a large vehicle, Renaud needed a one-in-three chance hit and then a one-in-six chance confirmed hit to destroy it. Whaddaya know, he tossed the dice and after several attempts, rolled the one-in-six golden BB. The Walker exploded.

Meanwhile, I had shot up the Rebel trooper units, but Renaud pulled them back to avoid complete destruction. As this game scores VPs for unit destruction, I fell behind.

The Boba Fett brigade (foreground) jets from the shadows.

Halfsies Effect

I should point out that unlike *C&C*, this *RUSE* version mandated that when half or more of the figures in a unit were eliminated, the unit fired at half effect. I liked that idea.

Most trooper units were 6-5-4-3-2-1 dice, with 6d6 at one-hex range and 1d6 at six-hex range. If the firer moved, 1d6 was subtracted for each hex moved.

This penalized the smaller dice-tossing units. My speeder bike unit only tossed 4d6 maximum, but if it moved two hexes, then it tossed a maximum of 2d6.

If the range was long enough, it didn't toss any dice. So, a little advantage for the defense.



Note that some units had extra benefits, like no retreat, had armor that ignored the first hit, and so on.

The Wookiee brigade (left) led the attack.

Back To The Battle

On my left, Renaud advanced the Wookiee Brigade into the teeth of my AT-ST and Stormtroopers. I shot the walking carpets down to half right quick and then forced them back with further losses until only a single figure of the six original remained.

Early game Imperial advance.

Meanwhile, my Stormtroopers in the center were being hammered, with one unit splattered all over the crystal field. Even my elite Stormtroopers (which ignored the first hit taken) took a couple hits, but remained above halves level.

Renaud was in the lead, concentrating fire on a few specific units until they were shot into oblivion. In this game, first player to eliminate six complete units wins.

I chose a slightly different strategy. I tried to knock a unit down to halvesies and then moved onto another unit. So, even though figure losses were about even, as the game progressed, I had more eliminated units but he had more units down to one or two figures.

The Rebel Speeders came out on the left and right flanks, but I was able to shoot one of them up into flames. A Rebel AT-RT likewise was blown to bits. A pair of Rebel troopers suffered elimination and the Wookies bought the Wookiee-farm, too.

I finally put the kibosh on a Rebel unit that gave me the final VP for the victory. It was close, but the Imperial March prevailed.

Card Play

I gotta hand it to Renaud, this command card fusion of *RUSE* and *C&C* makes for a better game. At least I think so -- and maybe Renaud too because he doesn't have to listen to me whine about lack of cards for one section or another.

Since us commanders chose the units, it seemed to allow for more of a thrust and counter-thrust battle.

I also liked the halvesie effect. More losses equal less firepower.

I'm sure Renaud might tweak a few things, but I think this is a step in the right direction for *C&C*. Well done, Renaud.

Thanks for the game.

Rebel smile at smoking my Walker!

Postscript

Renaud later tried the same game with another player and made one change. In the game I played, you needed a one-in-three chance hit to hit the AT-ST and then a one-in-six chance confirmed hit to destroy it. In the new game, he upped the confirmation hit to a one-in-three chance.





Rebel advance (left) is met by Imperial wrath (right). Accurate fire flames the Speeder and topples the AT-RT.

If my math is correct, and that's a big if, the original was 1 in 3 times 1 in 6 = 1 in 18 chance to destroy an AT-ST. With the confirmation die change, it's a 1 in 3 times 1 in 3 = 1 in 9 chance to destroy an AT-ST. In this game, both Walkers were destroyed.

Fate of the Fellowship: LOTR

by Russ Lockwood

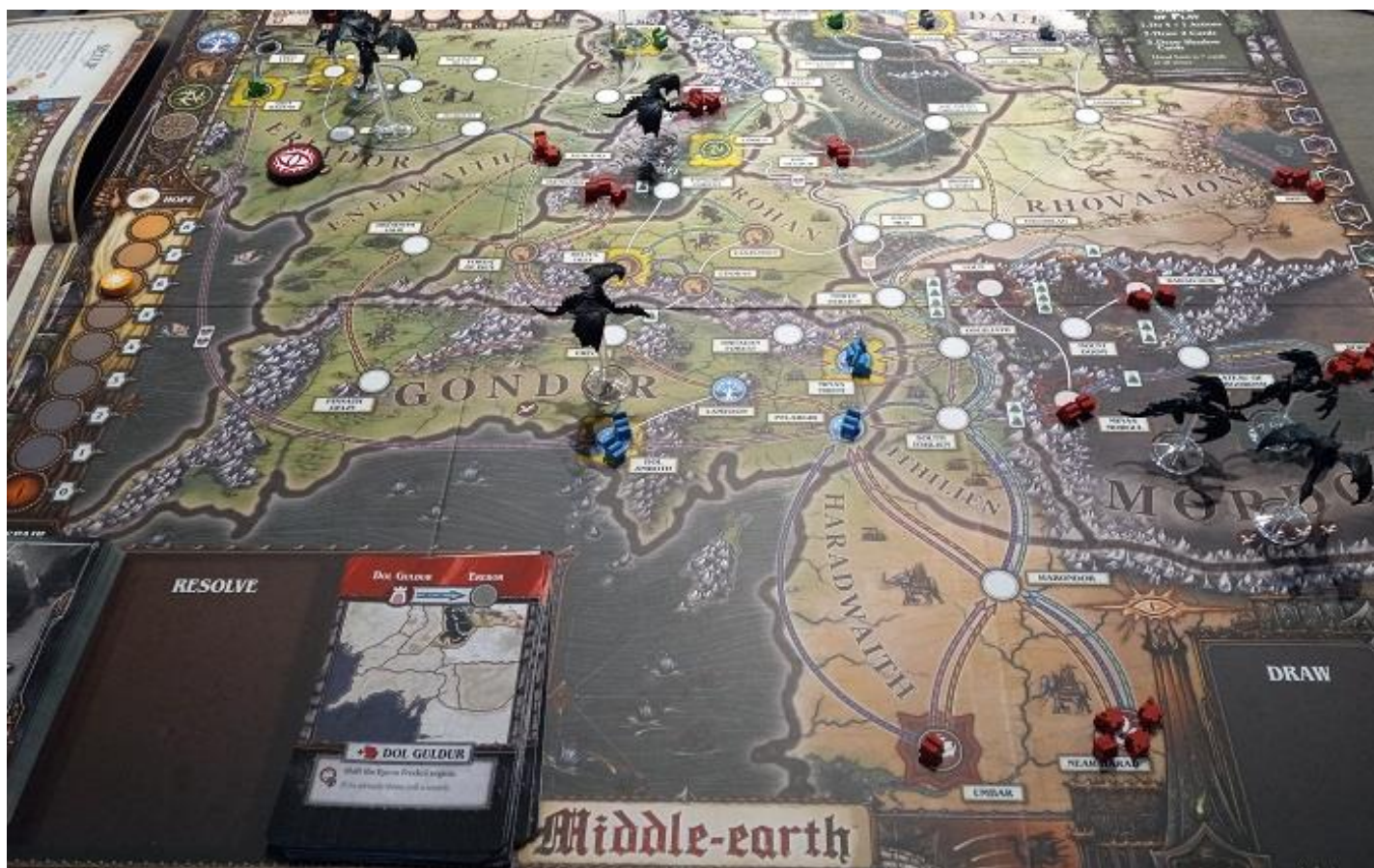
We had some time left, so we tried a *Lord of the Rings* boardgame called *Fate of the Fellowship*. Per usual, you need to get Frodo to Mount Doom to dump the ring (in this game, five ring tokens) for a win. It's a cooperative game, or I suppose a solitaire game, that also has an army component to it.

A deck of Sauron cards controls the building and movement of the evil armies -- cheapo teeny-tiny meeples instead of cool plastic figures. Movement is via colored arrow between point-to-point spaces. When a Sauron card calls for movement from a specific space, you just start there and move the orc meeples one space along the colored arrow on the board that matches the colored arrow on the card. If an evil army runs into a free people's army, they battle one round using dice with special icons.

Meanwhile, if the Sauron card doesn't move armies, it moves the "Eye" and Nazgul plastic figures to the general province where Frodo is located. That triggers a search die or dice which can slip the ringbearer closer and closer to the dark side (technically, I think it's called the Hope track, so when it hits "0," it's game over).

Apparently, only the Frodo/Sam marker is subject to such searches. Every other member of the Fellowship can ignore and be ignored by orcs and other evil armies.





The starting set up. Red orc meeples. Black nazguls. Blue Gondorians. The Eye of Sauron starts in the Shire.

The Fellowship player has three interim goals to accomplish, which we did in about half a game, and there are various resources like hearts, swords, and cloaks gained from a different card deck that can be used to avoid searches and beef up armies, and so on. This other card deck serves as a clock mechanism. You better get to Mount Doom before that deck runs out.

Frodo/Sam is yellow. Legolas is green. Isengard has been captured by the Rohanians (brown meeple). Notice the colored arrows for orc movement.

Run, Hobbit, Run

I took Frodo/Sam and Legolas. Renaud took Merry/Pippin and Eowyn. We coordinated our efforts, splitting up instead of staying together in order to draw the Eye and Nazguls away from Frodo. It's not exactly the book or movie plot, but it works.

I managed to get Frodo across the mountains, into Lothlorien, and then down to Helm's Deep. Here I was pinned between Nazguls and Orcs, but within striking distance of Minas Tirith and Osgiliath, which can lead to the hidden path. Eowyn was at North Ithilien and ready to draw the Eye, Nazguls, and evil armies to her, but I had to get Frodo past the baddies, first. I had cloaks, so I was but a move away.

The North Ithilien battle: Rohan, Gondor, and Elves (green) are victorious versus orcs.

If all would go well, the evil armies would flock to North



Ithilien and leave the back door open. I needed more cloaks, though, to slip past Shelob and orcs inside Mordor. I also needed one more ring token.

The Dash

We weighed our options. I had enough cloaks for Frodo/Sam to hide and also pass into Mordor. In they went as far as the Plains of Gorgoroth. Here, I had to wait. I only had four ring tokens.

Frodo/Sam slip past Minas Morgul using many elven cloaks (map icons). But the Eye searches. So close!

Meanwhile, the orcs were on the march and captured the northern elves and northern dwarves strongholds. This drops the marker on the Hope track by three each. As we had taken Isengard, which ups the Hope track marker by two, we were still down to the very end of the track -- one more drop of any type and Sauron gets the ring.

Worse, the deck of cards was down to five cards. Once that deck runs out, game over, Fellowship loses. By dint of a good draw, I had six ring tokens.

Five went into dumping the ring into Mt Doom. Ah, but Sauron gets one last toss of the search dice. In our case, that was 7d6!

Renaud tumbled the dice into a literal cardboard dice tower. Three of the dice were no effects, two of the dice were ignored with heart icons (Sam's special ability), and one was detrimental to Nazgul. That left one last die -- and Frodo had one last ring to force a re-roll.

Here it was, win or lose, all on the last die roll. The cube tumbled through the tower and dropped with the no effect face showing. Amazing. We had won...

Frodo tosses the ring into Mount Doom as a Nazgul fails to grab it. Ring counter from another game.

Fate?

First things first: This was the "easy" level, harder levels turn over more cards that increase searches and orc army attacks.

After that, I found it an interesting resource management game, especially the use of arrows to guide the orc armies. This mechanic has been used before, notable in *Pandemic*, but playing this for the first time, I didn't know when any specific army would move. Since there were multiple arrows (different colors), the random cards sent the orcs far and wide. Neat adaptation.

The resource cards can be cruel or kind, but since you can save them or turn them in for tokens to save other cards, it works.

That said, the best strategy seems to be to split the Fellowship up. For example, Merry/Pippin helpfully distracts the Eye from Frodo to their region. If all were together, that tactic is useless. So even though the Fellowship starts in HobbitShire, it breaks up before even reaching Rivendell. Go figure.

The sheer number of *LOTR* game designs amazes me. They all use the same general plot with combos of cards and dice, but the mechanics behind the game systems offer considerable variety.

Thanks for the game, Renaud. Frodo Lives!





Dennis (left) plays the West (US and UK) while Renaud plays the Soviets in Axis & Allies: Europe. End German Turn 1.

Axis & Allies Europe: Boardgame

by Russ Lockwood

I cracked the shrinkwrap of the Axis & Allies: Europe box and set up the game. I've had this a while, but it's nice to finally put it on the table. I expected it to play like the rest of the series and it generally did. Dennis was the West (UK and US), Renaud played the Soviets, and I was the Axis (Germany and Italy). Set up is fixed, although each player gets a certain number of pre-Turn 1 Industrial Production points to build and deploy units direct to the map.

End of German Turn 2.



Set up is a bit off from history, but never forget this is a game, not history. Germany has yet to invade the USSR (June 1941 in history), but the US is in the war (historically Germany declared war on the US on December 11, 1941). No matter. Germany had the first turn, followed by the USSR and then the West.

Opening Battles

The first thing Germany needed to do, sez me, is overrun all the "Convoy" boxes in the Atlantic Ocean and cut the flow of British and US IPs. This I did and even launched attacks on US and British destroyers and merchant ships. I knew this was a one-turn, one-shot deal, but worth the loss of the U-boat fleet.

Next stop: Malta. It only had one aircraft for defense and was quickly captured. Then I grabbed Libya with a second turn goal of Egypt.

But all this is a sideshow. The real battle is in the USSR. I attacked the three closest areas: Baltic States, east Poland, and Bessarabia, and amphibiously assaulted that space north of Leningrad. All were successful, albeit at some cost. Replacements and reinforcements were on their way.

The Soviets counterattacked in some areas as they built up in others. They were mostly successful, but the attrition war had started. The most notable success was Romania, where I lost the only German bomber. A bit of a dumb placement on my part. I didn't expect the Soviets to attack there.

The West recaptured most convoy zones and delivered significant losses to the U-boat fleet via air strikes. Production would surge for the next turn. In the Middle East, the British consolidated their scattered infantry.

Offensive Spirit

I spent a lot more on aircraft than I wanted, but still set aside IPs for tanks, artillery, and infantry.

In the Atlantic, I did the best I could. I managed to sink the destroyer guarding Gibraltar and turned the Mediterranean Sea into an Axis lake. Rommel took Egypt. Mussolini rode his white horse into Cairo.

In the East, I continued to attack, grabbing Ukraine and Belarus to join with the Baltic States to make my front line. I lost that little area north of Leningrad. Finland was recaptured for the moment. It was a race against time to capture and hold Moscow for the win. At least I was in the area next to it.

Alas, the Soviets threw me out of Belarus and Baltic States, but not Ukraine. They took Finland for good measure.

End German Turn 3.

Grinding Forward

The Atlantic was an Allied lake for the most part. I could see the US buildup but do little about it. My production was all land and air oriented.

I swept into the Middle East with overland attacks from Egypt and amphibious assaults.

Sideshow, but every IP gained helped. At least I still held the Straits of Gibraltar with the last two submarines of the German Navy.

In the USSR, I grabbed the oil field of Maikop and Baku, but had run out of spare troops. My reinforcements were hoofing it as fast as they could from Berlin and the Balkans. I abandoned the Baltic States and Ukraine.



The Soviets took back Baku and Maikop. Easy come, easy go. They built up Belarus and grabbed the Baltic States with one infantry. They finally sank the German transport which had funneled troops to Finland. Oh well.

Torch showed up and western Africa fell. Worse, carrier aircraft and bombers combined to hit and sink my German subs in the Strait and then land in Gibraltar. The place never saw so many aircraft!

Soviet counter-attack on Turn 4.

Desperation

The Atlantic was empty of German subs. The Italian fleet was in the eastern Med. Rommel swept forward to grab all but one area -- Iraq -- of the Middle East. The Sideshow was doing well.

In the East, I grabbed Belarus back in another horrific battle of attrition. I recaptured Finland, again, this time from Norway. I beefed up the Baltic States to pressure Leningrad.

The Soviets counter-attacked in the Middle East and defeated Rommel. Fortunately, the British stayed in Iraq. Finland fell, again, to the Soviets. Moscow beefed up its defense.

US and British troops surged across North Africa, taking Tunisia and threatening Italy. Uh-oh.

All or Nothing

Well, it was Turn 5 and time for Germany to attack Moscow. Either I took it for the win or not for a slow loss.

Germans attack towards Moscow. Image from web.

But first, an amphibious assault that succeeded in retaking Tunisia -- although the Middle East was weakened.

Now...Moscow. It was a huge battle. Thankfully, the AA only shot down one fighter of the six I sent. The dice back and forth ultimately had the Germans take Moscow and few Soviet units were left in striking distance of retaking it -- they would be outnumbered by German defenders.

The US and UK could amphibious assault Berlin directly, but given the pile of German troops and the limited Western transport capacity, it was very long odds.

The Allies conceded.

An interesting version. Thanks for the game.



Vikings: Cards

by Russ Lockwood

Last AAR, we played a card game called *Zeus vs. Hera*. The follow-up game using pretty much the exact same mechanics but with Viking illustrations is called *Thunder and Lightning: Thor vs. Loki*. Randomly, I was Loki.

Basically, the same three column layout with one activation point (AP) per column with at least one card in it apply. You can use the AP to draw a card, play a card, or attack an enemy card. The problems come when one or two of your columns become empty, dropping your AP by one or two. Higher value cards defeat lower value cards and ties eliminate both attacker and defender cards. Of course, plenty of specialty cards with special instructions are in each deck to circumvent the straight-up attacks.

As we played cards, I discovered at least one difference -- this Viking version had three Shieldwall cards instead of one equivalent card in the Greek game. Shieldwall defeats all attacks except for a Shield Maiden Archer attack. I learned that when Renaud had two Shieldwall cards deployed in two columns. This slowed the game down to a stalemate until one was destroyed.

At this point, I was down to only one column -- to Renaud's chagrin protected by Renaud's other Shieldwall card. That meant I only had 1 AP to his 3 AP. Worse, he deployed Thor, giving a +1 AP to equal 4. Did I mention I had crap cards? I was drawing one card a turn for quite a few turns. Yet, he couldn't get at me, either.

I slowly built back to three columns for 3 AP and managed to ding Thor off the playing field. I then deployed Loki to get a fourth AP, but Renaud quickly dinged him.

In the middle of the game.

We were in a stalemate, but then Renaud played a Raven card, which among other things we used during the game, may attack a card in my hand. So he did and out of about eight cards, he picked Odin's Crown. Finding that card is an automatic victory.

What I didn't know was that Odin's Crown, as well as Odin's Ring (my instant victory objective), could be played in a column. I should've known -- I played a card that allowed me to look at his whole hand and Odin's Nose Ring wasn't in his hand. As he had run through his deck, the only place it could be is in a column. Doh!

Typical. I figure this stuff out a day late and a crown short...

Thanks for the games, Renaud. Always entertaining.



Allies & Axis: Homebrew WWII Card Game

by Russ Lockwood

Inspired by the card games *Zeus vs. Hera* and *Thunder and Lightning: Thor vs. Loki*, Renaud set about creating a WWII card game using mostly the same mechanics. He called it *Allies & Axis*, a twist on the boardgame name.

He designed two decks, one for the Americans and one for the Germans. Each had a slightly different mix of cards to reflect battlefield prowess. Of course, it's all WWII illustrated with riflemen, bunkers, LMGs, HMGs, anti-tank teams, medium tanks, heavy tanks, air strikes,



flak, scouts, and so on. Randomly, I became the Americans.

It used the same three-column format, one action per column, and a Captain card providing four actions. An action was either draw a card, play a card against the opponent, or play a card to one of your columns.

We started with our nine cards, of which three needed to be placed face down on the table, one per column. Scouts scouted opponent cards, attacks destroyed enemy cards, and reinforcements filled the columns.

Luck was with Renaud and his Hauptman (Captain) came out early. I sent a sniper after him, but a German sniper cancelled my sniper, but I played another sniper, and so did he, until I played my last sniper to eliminate the Hauptman. One thing I learned from the previous card games was that four actions were deadly.

So we continued until he played the Medic, who grabbed his Hauptman back from the discard pile. I was soon whittled down to only one column and hence one action, and really only saved because a German bunker prevented his column from attacking me. Battle back I tried, but it soon became a battle lost.

Early in the WWII card game. I had played a "Scout" card that showed me Renaud's card.

Differences

His version had more movement within columns and rows with specialty cards. Yet the simplicity of the mechanics belies thinking about card selection versus card playing. If you are good at card counting, and I am not, you can keep a tally of what's left in your deck.

When either deck is empty, the game is over. That's the clock mechanism.

Rematch

We started again. Same sides.

This game was closer because I was able to get my Captain out early, although he soon became sniper bait. A clever use of the NCO to swap a card plus his own Hauptman created a tank card that mowed down three of my riflemen cards. At least my anti-tank card blew up his Heavy (Tiger) tank.

Our decks wound down, even as our hands filled to the maximum 10 cards. I was forced to play some cards I really didn't want to drop in a column in order to keep my hand to 10 cards -- including plopping down an objective (VP card) that Renaud's raid found and captured.

In the end, with only a handful of cards remaining, Renaud took out my third column for the win.

Clever adaptation of card mechanics to fit WWII.



Doubleblind Eastern Solomons: Part Two

by Bruce

Continued from Part 1 in the September AAR. --RL

As the sun set on 24 August 1942 the sky became crystal clear, (Weather #1), and would remain so for the entire next day and night. Fleets were in motion in the waters surrounding the Solomons Islands. The only searches were on US radar, submarine periscopes, and high-powered optics for potentially near targets.

The Americans used "Black Cat" PBY Catalina aircraft for long range searches. Despite the clear weather, the only detection for either side during the entire night was a US cruiser/destroyer force 100 miles east of Guadalcanal by IJN submarines, who declined to engage. The lack of detection of opponents by either side continued throughout the day on the 25th (0600, 1000, 1400 Turns).

USS Portland crippled.

1800 Turn

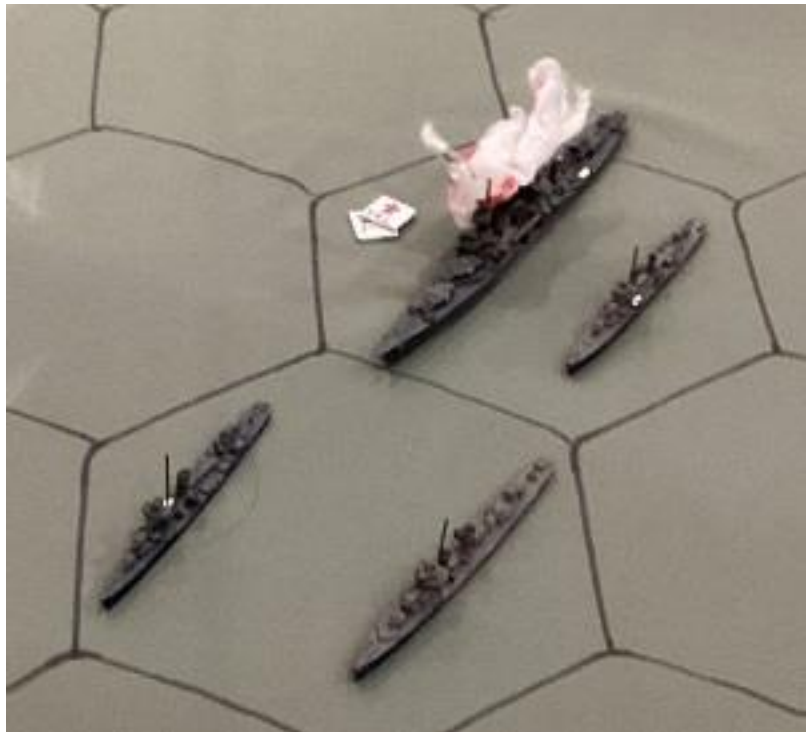
Two IJN I Boat submarines were sighted traveling south off the east coast of Malaita and reported to Admiral Fletcher.

Just southwest of Guadalcanal, a US cruiser/destroyer Task Force was spotted by an IJN Mavis flying boat. That triggered an airstrike upon the heavy cruiser *USS Portland* and destroyers *USS Balch*, *USS Benham*, and *USS Grayson*. The first wave of 18 Kates aborted and missed with their torpedoes, but 18 Val dive bombers crippled the *USS Portland*.

USS Portland sunk and USS Benham crippled.

The second wave of 18 Vals sank the *USS Portland* despite half of them aborting. A third wave of 9 Zeros and 27 Bettys came in on the destroyer *USS Benham*. The Bettys aborted and missed with their torpedoes, but the Zeros strafed and crippled the destroyer.

Simultaneously Admiral Nagumo launched an airstrike on Henderson Field with 36 Vals and 27 Kates escorted by 27 Zeros. While the Zeros tangled with 18 F4Fs and 9 P 39s on CAP, the bombers were attacked by 9 F4Fs and fought through the airfield AAA. Some attackers were made to abort but the survivors made four hits on Henderson, destroying 27 SBDs on the ground.



2200 Turn

In the darkness the IJN entered the sound between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands from both ends. Admiral Abe's Vanguard Force with battleships, cruisers and destroyers came from the east around Florida.

Vanguard force.

Meanwhile Admiral Tanaka's Transport Force with Admiral Hara's *Ryujo* carrier covering force entered from the west at Cape Esperance.

Eight IJN submarines had already taken up station in the sound searching for the absent USN. Facing no opposition, Admiral Abe bombarded Henderson Field, destroying it and 27 F4Fs and 9 P39s.

Up the coast, Admiral Tanaka stood by the unloading of 1,500 Imperial troops and supplies at Cape Esperance,. Simultaneously, 600 miles to the west, an invasion force under Admiral Goto entered Milne Bay, New Guinea, and began landing.

Ryujo carrier joins the covering force.

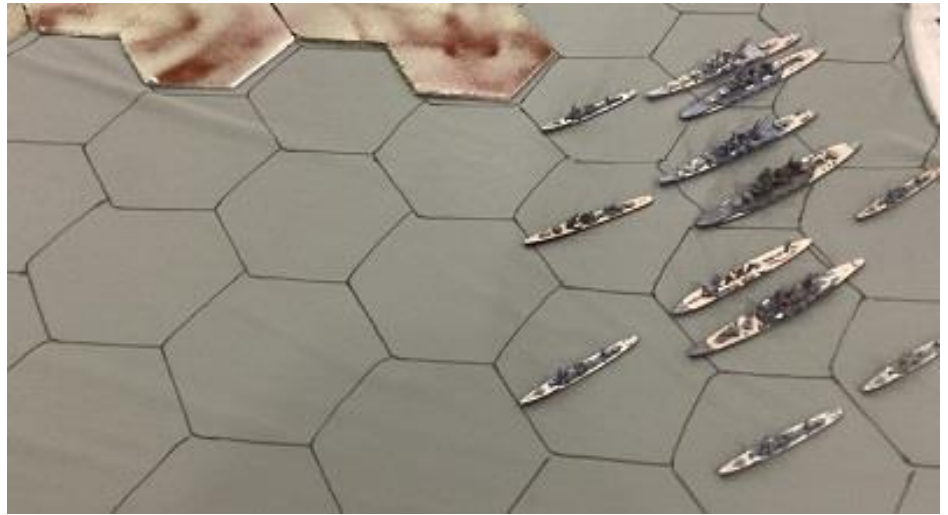
26 August, 0200 Turn

"Black Cats" circled Cape Esperance, reported, and attempted to attack the unloading transports, but were chased away by AAA. Admiral Wright Task Force, with his flag on the heavy cruiser *USS Minneapolis* and with destroyers *USS Grayson*, *USS Maury*, *USS Balch*, and *USS Ellet*, was the only reaction force available in the Guadalcanal vicinity and surprised the IJN unloading at Cape Esperance.

Japanese bombardment of Henderson Field.

The *USS Minneapolis* used radar to sink one APD and cripple another before a Long Lance torpedo sent her to the bottom. In the close-range gunfire and torpedo melee, the IJN lost DDs *Isokaze* and *Yayoi* while the USN lost DD *Ellet*. The three remaining US DDs, all crippled, withdrew.

With no further action, the IJN met the requirements for Guadalcanal reinforcement and Milne Bay landings for 20 victory points each.



0600 Turn

As the sun rose, the point totals for this session were:

Japanese: 114 Points (Sinking CA *Portland*, 14 points, CA *Minneapolis*, 16 points, and DD *Ellet*, 7 points, destroying 3 SBD, 21 points, 1 P39, 4 points, 3 F4F, 12 points, and Reinforcing Guadalcanal, 20 points, and Landing at Milne Bay, 20 points).



Japanese landings.

Americans: 26 Points (Sinking DD *Isokaze*, 12 points, DD *Yayoi*, 9 points, and one APD/Patrol Boat, 5 points)

NOTE: Points for aircraft for *War at Sea* data cards are for a squadron. Aircraft units in this game represent 9 actual planes, so points are reduced to half, rounded up.

Decision and Analysis

The USN decided to call the game at this point with the total IJN victory points = 186 and USN victory points = 89. The IJN attained its dual objectives flawlessly, performing better than historically. The slow transport groups were able to avoid being spotted and attacked by US air and submarine forces, arriving at their objectives in darkness to unload by dawn.

Japanese Aichi D3A shot down.

A point could be made for the USN to continue the game and avenge the IJN landings during the day on the 26th. Given the location knowledge previously lacking, coupled with the large USAAF presence on New Guinea, I think that heavy damage could have been inflicted on the IJN in the Milne Bay vicinity.

Likewise, in the Solomons, the two remaining US carrier TFs could have inflicted heavy damage on the IJN. Unlike the New Guinea area however, the risk to the USN in the Solomons would have been much greater due to the loss of use of Henderson Field and the presence of the IJN carriers and large land-based air assets on New Britain and Bougainville.

Bottom line, regardless of the eventual victor, I think that the point totals would have been closer. Just sayin'...



WWII RUSE: Tweaked Again

by Russ Lockwood

On somewhat of a WWII kick, we tried another playtest of Renaud's *RUSE* rules, this time tweaked a bit for a cleaner command and control sequence.

The deck of command cards, which has a number from one to five representing the number of activations on a turn, now is expanded to become the clock mechanism. When both sides' decks are done, no reshuffling. The game ends.

The terrain. Chips are objectives. US enters from right, Germans from left.

He also made the "?" card a "mirror" card -- duplicate the number of actions shown on the opponent's card.

The Hold action, aka Overwatch, now continues from previous turns to automatically interrupt enemy activations.

The US versus German battle centered around a number of objective markers and the elimination of five enemy units. Units varied in number of figures and attack dice tossed, from two for a LMG or anti-tank bazooka team to five for a fire team.

Dawn finds US and German troops filtering through the battlefield on Turn 2.

Firing was a total of d6s based mostly on weaponry versus the highest defender d6 based on terrain and special attributes. Movement was a fixed amount plus a variable d6 (or 2d6 or 3d6 with firing restrictions).

By random roll, I was the Americans.



Meeting Engagement

We came onto the table from opposite sides, trying to hug cover as much as possible. Renaud's sniper scored a kill first on one of my fire teams. My mortar round was off and ineffective. Fire teams ran forward to grab objectives, only to be shot at by other units.

My second mortar shot landed perfectly in the middle of a German fireteam -- instant kills. A German fireteam shot up all by one soldier in a US fireteam. I finally got rid of a pesky German HMG, but lost a LMG.

Turn 5 after losses.

I was actually ahead with four German units eliminated versus only two US when Renaud brought in his STuG III. The 75mm gun boomed for a direct hit on a US fireteam and blew all five soldiers away. Then, it rolled a d6 to activate again, twisted a bit, and sent a round directly into another US fireteam. Now it was four to four.

I brought in a Sherman tank and along with fire from other units, concentrated on a German fireteam taking cover in a rocky outcropping. It took all the shots I had, but I finally felled the last soldaten of the fireteam. I squeaked by with a victory.

Out came the STuG and the three US riflemen were eliminated.

Thoughts

By now I've played enough to understand most of the system. I still need to look up the special abilities. Die rolls are die rolls, but rolling 2d6 for defense versus 3d6 makes a difference when the attackers are bringing 9d6 of automatic fire on you. Not surprisingly, soldiers in the open roll fewer defense dice than those in hard cover.

It's a good 1 on 1 system. I'm not sure how it would work with multiple players per side. Theoretically, each could go in the typical order of activation cards. The downside of that is a large game would stall when going sequentially. On the other hand, with a one to five units to move, fire, and so on, players can move through a turn fairly quickly. Dunno.

In the meantime, *RUSE's* push-your-luck option can be quite seductive. When it works, you're brilliant. When it doesn't, you're not.

Thanks for the games, Renaud.



NEWS

Fall In! 2025: Comin' Soon

by Russ Lockwood

Fall In! 2025 has 537 scheduled Events, so HMGS made the decision to close Event Submissions at midnight (Eastern) on Tuesday, October 14th. For your enjoyment, Fall In features:

Games: 473
War College lectures: 15
Hobby University classes: 27
Tournaments: 22
Exhibitors: 48
and Wally's Basement.

For a list of exhibitors:
<https://tabletop.events/conventions/fall-in-2025/exhibitors>

NORAD The Third: New Edition

by Russ Lockwood

Back in the day, I had copies of *Conflict* magazine published by Dana Lombardy. One of the games was *Norad*, a game of defending the US from Soviet nuclear attack. Played it a lot back in 1973 and I may, or may not, still have that in the attic in one of my boxes. I never even knew there was a *Norad II*.

Along comes Dana and *Norad Third Edition* in *Banzai Magazine*, a Japanese-language mag. The new version contains: New full-color graphics; Expanded game map that shows the USSR as well as USA targets; New playing pieces that represent USA bombers and USSR fighters; Illustrated rulebook in English that includes solitaire and optional rules for NORAD 3; Dana's 1973 designer's notes; and New rules for the Soviet Home Defense forces and NATO expansion.

As a bonus, Dana has written a backstory about creating the 1973 game and describes its 1977-2024 versions and a mini tournament held in the Basque area of Spain in 2020. \$50 includes FREE shipping to a USA address.

Contact dana.lombardy@gmail.com for shipping to other countries.

Podcast: A Confused Heap of Facts

by Russ Lockwood

One of our AAR readers enjoys episodes of a podcast, *A Confused Heap of Facts*, hosted by Dr. Jonathan Abel and Dr. Bill Nance. These hour to an hour and a quarter episodes cover a wide variety of military history topics with a focus on reassessing commanders who have been given a good or bad reputation by historians.

The latest one at this time, episode 72, reassesses William Westmoreland, US commander in Vietnam during the key years of 1964 to 1968 and frequent punching bag for the ultimate defeat there. Along with Dr. Martin Clemis, they explain the typical view of Westmoreland as a bull-headed, unimaginative commander trying to refight World War II in



Vietnam. He walks through the reality on the ground that Westmoreland faced, discusses difference between insurgency and war, and illustrates how more recent historians have argued that Westmoreland was actually correct in his approach.

The podcast title comes from a quote: "History is only a confused heap of facts." - Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield.

Presumably, you can retrieve the series from your favorite podcast place, but here's the YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHOaD6kQToV34oyQq2P0K1Q>

GHQ New Minis: Batch 5

by Russ Lockwood

GHQ continues to create new vehicles and weaponry for its 1/285th line of miniatures. Here's the Batch 5 products:



Unpainted 1/285/6mm Scale WWII Micro Armour
Nakajima BN5 Kate
AC149 - 1/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285/6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
KW2 Jupiter
SK14 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285/6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
Zulfiqar-3 MBT
TW33 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285/6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
Type 653 ARV
RC37 - 2/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285/6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
Chonma-Ho MBT
NK9 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/2400 Scale WWII Micronauts
CVE Avenger Class
UKN66 - 1/pk - \$19.99USD



Unpainted 1/2400 Scale Modern Micronauts
SSN Virginia
HUS32 - 3/pk - \$12.50USD

Transporting Miniatures: Cases

by Russ Lockwood and Phil

I've wondered about the transporting of miniatures. My 6mms and 15mms are in cheap clear plastic cases from craft stores.

One buddy put magnetic bases under his 25mms and uses metal tool boxes. Another uses plastic tool boxes. Another moves his 25mm by Baggage Train cases (you'll find the BT booth at Historicon and Fall-In conventions). Yet these are all relatively local moves via a car.

So when Phil recently wrote about taking his miniatures on a plane down to Nashcon and previously to Portugal, I asked what he used. He replied:



For the tournament in Portugal, I invested in a "Battlefoam" case. They come in many sizes. The foam cutouts are custom by Battle Foam. They sent me a program that had drag and drop user interface and I created two layouts with 40mm-based holes. They normally handle Flames of War stands that are inch based.

It was not cheap, but the quality is first class. I just put this case in my luggage, and didn't worry about it.

One thing I would change is instead of 40mm, I would go with 41mm or 42mm. The figures are solidly packed, but a little gap would make them easier to pull out.



In my Historicon 2025 convention recap, I noted a wooden case maker, Gil's Workshop. I'll mention it again. So, if you are thinking of wargaming figure cases:

<https://us.battlefoam.com/>

<https://davesbaggagetrain.com/>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/GilsWorkshopLLC>

Legacy Game Tables: Tables and Chairs

by Russ Lockwood

I poked around Legacy Game Tables (LGT) web site that showcases dining room tables that can convert to gaming tables with an inset that allows you to leave games in progress while putting the top on for actual dining.

LGT continues the family tradition started by Carolina Game Tables. Owners Sarah Shearman and James Russ have been involved in the game table business since 2018.

From the web site:

Its wide edges are known to be especially helpful for board games and TTRPGs (tabletop roleplaying games). There's room to write on a character sheet, use a tablet or laptop, and still have room for snacks and drinks outside of the play area.

The tables are built with a frame of solid Indonesian mahogany. This is not "Malaysian Oak," also known as Rubberwood, which can be a problem with latex allergies and is prone to rot, swelling, and insects.

The physical assembly of the table uses screws, nuts and bolts, glue, and mortise/tenon construction. Additionally, there are steel braces at each corner for increased strength. Legs are connected to the table frame with three bolts through that steel reinforced corner. (The furniture industry usually uses two bolts at each corner, but we know gamers!) Each table leg also has an adjustable plastic leveler in case the table might be set on an uneven surface.

Signature Tablezilla Game Table

It's designed to seat 8–12 people comfortably.



The leveler tip is safe for hardwood floors and helps the table glide smoothly on hard surfaces. All of this works together to make a solid stable playing and dining surface. We don't want any wobbles when playing skill games.

Cup holders are made from aluminum and are 3 inches deep, with an inside diameter of 3 1/4 inches. They are easily removable for washing. When the cup holder is removed, a hole exists in your table base so condensation drips to the ground. This also makes for a pretty awesome handle when moving the table base, we've learned.

The table top is strong and super engineered. The outer layers of the top are MDF for support surrounding a honeycomb filler providing both strength and weight reduction. All of this is covered in a mahogany veneer matching the rest of your table. The underside has fabric lining the edges—to protect the wood it covers—and a fabric-covered lip to fit inside the play area to secure it. The middle of the underside is finished with the same mahogany veneer.

The reason for this construction, as opposed to mahogany slabs, is twofold. First, it makes the top lighter than if it were solid hardwood so it's easier to pick up and move.

Second and more importantly, hardwoods will expand and contract based on humidity conditions, especially when one dimension of the wood is notably thinner than the others (such as the thickness of the table top compared to its length and width). This issue could potentially result in the top no longer syncing up with the rest of the table. Our construction avoids much of the issues caused by variances in humidity.

More info: <https://legacygametables.com/>



NashCon: Models

Photos by Phil

While reading about Phil's *L'Art de la Guerre* tournament game at NashCon, I noticed he included some non-tournament photos of interesting figures and terrain. The Blimp, Steampunk, and the Coffin Carriage struck me as quite well done. I keep thinking the Blimp is adapted from something, like a sideways lava lamp, or at least inspired by something like that.

Read about Phil's *LADG* tournament game (and see a couple other photos from NashCon 2025) at:

<https://philonancients.blogspot.com/2025/09/never-go-in-against-sicilian-when-death.html>

Blimp, Carriage, and Steampunk.



A Forlorn Hope: WWI Wargame

by Russ Lockwood

Wharf Rat Games sent me an e-mail news item for their upcoming WWI wargame *A Forlorn Hope*, designed by Charles S. Roberts Award-winning designer Hermann Luttmann. I had previously noted the game in development, so I figured this was related to a Kickstarter launch or such.



The British Are Charging - A Forlorn Hope on Tabletop Simulator.

And it is -- on BackerKit. The launch isn't until February 2026. I was about to say "That's nice, I'll tuck this away until the January 2026 AAR, when I started to poke around.

Ah...WRG is using the pre-launch time to ask about the quality of components. For example, 86% of the backers want to see higher-quality "Linen Finish" cards instead of Smooth Finish presumably because Linen Finish has less glare and better durability.

In any case, it's an interesting way to crowd-poll selections prior to making the finished product.

The current poll asks which of six scenarios are you most excited to play? "All of them" is not an option because all of them will be included.

More pre-launch info: https://www.backerkit.com/c/projects/wharf-rat-games/a-forlorn-hope-can-you-make-it-across-no-man-s-land/launch_party

Custom Die-Cut Counters: Create Your Own

by Russ Lockwood

My buddy Marc wanted cardboard counters for a game he was creating and found Limey Yank Games, which offers a printing service for custom die-cut counters. They arrived the other day and he was pleased with the results.

I poked around the LYG website. Judging from the rows, I believe these are 5/8-inch counters (160 counters per full sheet / 80 counters per half sheet). Other sizes include: 1/2-inch (240/120), 3/4-inch (112/56), and 1-inch x 1/2-inch (120/60).

All counters are printed on matte paper using an inkjet printer. Standard counters are c.1.2mm thick. Packages are insured to £20 (or value of goods, whichever lower) unless you request otherwise. Insurance is your responsibility.

Basic Pricing is as follows: DOUBLE SIDED: Full Sheet: £12.50 and Half Sheet: £7.00. SINGLE SIDED: Full Sheet: £10.50 and Half Sheet: £6.00. LYG also offers a "mixed" sheet. Postage extra. I have no idea what tariffs will cost or not cost.

Marc confirmed they were 5/8-inch square, a little thinner than your typical counter, double sided, and about \$15 (plus tariff) per sheet.

Also, in its Die Cut Showroom, LYG offers reworked counters for many SPI games. You'll find a series of videos about how the Do-It-Yourself die-cutting process works.

More info: <https://limeyyankgames.co.uk/die-cutting>

Countersheets. The orange is reminiscent of GEV (Ogre).



Squad Leader: Games

by Alex

We had nine people show up at American Legion Post 10 in Fort Washington, PA, for some *Squad Leader* wargaming. Of the nine, four were regular players, four were "returning" players after 20 to 40 years of not playing, and one was a totally new player.

We played two setups of "Guards Counterattack" and "The Tractor Works" with four players per board. We mixed the experienced players with the new and returning players so that rules knowledge was available everywhere. Of course, you could just randomly shout a question into the air and a few people would answer.

As this went so well, we're planning another one.



New Wargame: USA/USSR Space Race

by Russ Lockwood

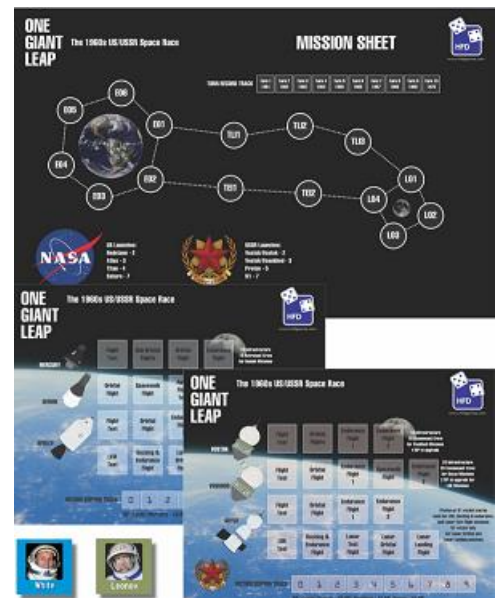
High Flying Dice released the wargame *One Giant Leap: The USA/USSR Space Race to the Moon*, a moderate complexity simulation game of the race between the USA and USSR (Soviet Union) to be the first nation to have a manned space craft land safely on the moon and return to Earth. Players use card play to determine how many activations and assets they can utilize to develop their rockets, equipment, infrastructure, and crews. Events, both fortuitous and adverse, will also occur that affect one or both players during the course of the game.

The game contains: Two 11x17-inch hex mapsheets; 48 playing cards, 95 mounted counters; One 11x17-inch Mission Sheet, and 12 pages of rules. Cost: \$36.00 plus shipping/handling and state sales tax.

Players need to provide an opaque container and a coin.

Designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Bruce Yearian.

Info: <https://www.hfdgames.com/leap.html>

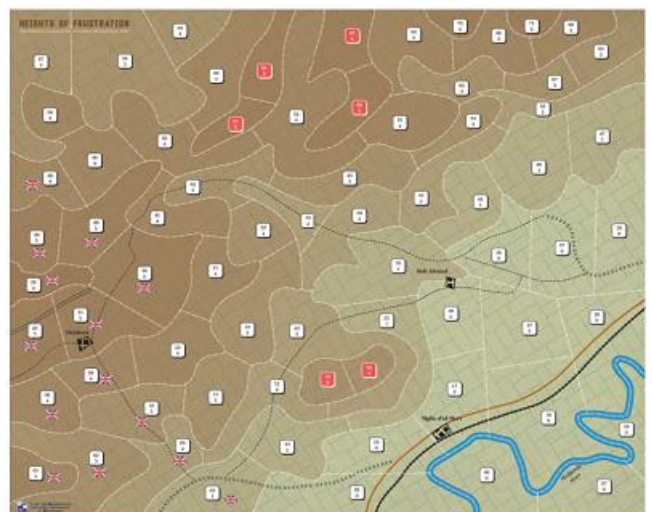


New Wargame: Longstop Hill 1942 and 1943

by Russ Lockwood

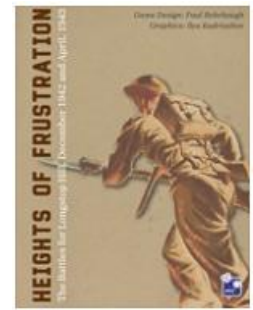
High Flying Dice released the wargame *Heights of Frustration: The Battles for Longstop Hill, December 1942 and April 1943*, a moderate complexity, solitaire-play game on the battles for the crucial heights that barred the Allied advance on Tunis in North Africa. The German-occupied position was actually a series of hills and ridges that dominated the river valley's roads and rail line that the Allies needed to take in order to advance and take Tunis.

Allied units are companies. German units are KG of 150-180 men and tank units represent 10-12 vehicles. An inch on the map is about 100 yards. Each turn represents 1 day of time.



The game contains: Two 11x17-inch hex mapsheets; 184 double-sided counters; One Player's Aid Sheet, and 12 pages of rules. Cost: \$22.95 plus shipping/handling and state sales tax. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

Players need to provide an opaque container and two differently colored six-sided dice.
Designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and features graphics by Ilya Kudriashov.
Info: <https://www.hfdgames.com/longstop.html>



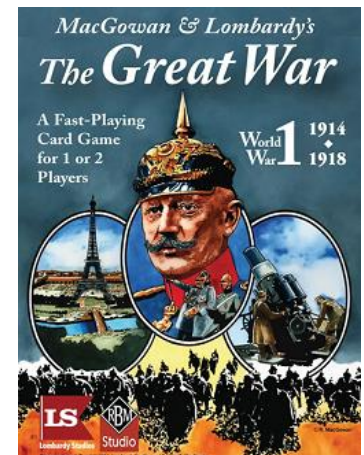
The Great War Card Game: Kickstarter

by Russ Lockwood

Dana Lombardy is releasing a Second Edition of *The Great War Card Game* via Kickstarter. As of Mid-October, the \$2,999 funding goal was reached and the Kickstarter continues until November 17, 2025. MacGowan did the artwork on this card game. The Second Edition includes revised rules for faster learning, larger (tarot-sized) cards that includes historical context for the cards, and a totally new illustrated historical guidebook about the war.

Options include only buying the decks of the new larger cards (\$35), the complete game (\$69), and a variety of add-on mini-games and collectibles. According to Dana, the first edition is in box, and the v2 new larger cards are in a card deck box.

Info: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2030222759/world-war-one-legacy-collection?ref=211ry1>



Rising Dragon 2034 Wargame: Kickstarter

by Russ Lockwood

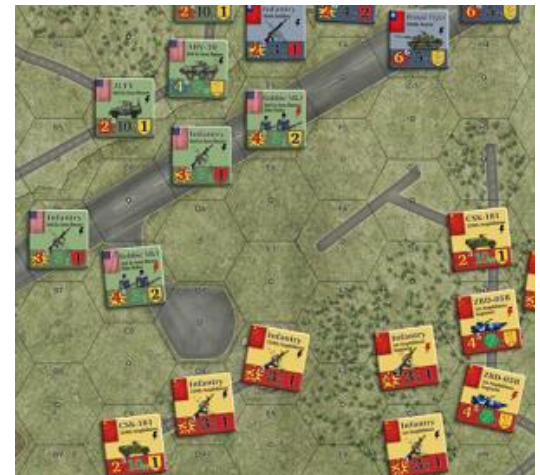
Flying Pig Games plans to release the hex-based wargame *Rising Dragon: Platoon Level Combat in the Invasion of Taiwan* via Kickstarter starting November 11, 2025. This is the sequel to *Armageddon War*.

It features: Platoon Level; Scale of 150 meters per hex; 15 minutes per turn; Continuous Chit-pull Activation; Naval, amphibious, and urban conflicts; Age: 14+; Players: 2; Playing Time: 1-3 Hours; and 16 Scenarios.

Each game includes: Two mounted, 22x33-inch full color mapboards; Four sheets of die-cut 1-inch counters; Full-color rule and scenario book; Play Aid Cards; and 18 colored stamped dice.

No price yet, but *Armageddon War* retails for \$125.

Info: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/markwalker/rising-dragon-platoon-level-combat-in-2034>



Napoleon Block Game 5th Edition: KickStarter Success

by Russ Lockwood

As of Oct 23, 2025, Columbia Games raised \$19,722 to print a Fifth Edition version of its block game *Napoleon: Waterloo Campaign 1815*. It has a rebalanced OOB and the rules are being tweaked. The game is \$89 on KS (campaign ends Nov 1) and \$188 for the game and 39 x 34-inch neoprene mat. Blocks are 1 inch.

Info:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/columbiagames/napoleon-enhanced-edition>



HMGS Next Generation: Gaming Extravanzas

by John Spiess

HMGS-NG was active over the last three days with games at three different libraries and three different historical periods.

Weston Castle Siege.

Medieval Siege in Weston

HMGS-NG signed with a new library in Weston, CT this month. On Thursday, we "invaded" the D&D group and put on the popular Castle Siege game with Henry V.

Aztecs in Greenwich

On Friday, we were back in Greenwich, CT running another Aztec game for Hispanic History Month.

Greenwich Aztecs.

American Revolution in Simsbury

On Saturday, I drove up to the library in Simsbury, CT to run the Battle of Monmouth as part of the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution celebrations that the library is sponsoring.

Someone rolled well in Simsbury.

American Revolution in New Canaan

We played today in New Canaan with an American Revolution game on the Battle of Monmouth. Many kids had already played these rules when we ran the Battle of Ridgefield and Battle of Bunker Hill a few months ago. I was also fortunate to have Jim Stanton help out as well. We made some special scenario rules regarding the heat at the historical battle, which worked out really well.

We played in the big conference room and had a lot of older library patrons stopping by the windows and looking in. Frank Luberti was also on hand for a bit and talked up HMGS and our conventions. I think you can see him in one of the photos behind the windows talking to the parents and patrons.

Battle of Monmouth in New Canaan.

New Canaan has now approved a second adult program, so our first adult game will be the Battle of the Bulge on 12/7. We will run the adult game in the morning, break for lunch, and then the reset for the kids game in the afternoon.



Aztecs vs. Mayans in Stamford

HMGS Next Gen was invited back to run another game for the Dealey Division of Sea Cadets in Stamford, CT. We had 21 cadets playing in our popular Aztec/Maya rainforest game.

It's always a pleasure to run these games for the cadets. The amount of respect and politeness was off the charts. HMGS Board member Frank Luberti also attended and observed the game. It was also no surprise that the cadets picked up the rules and tactical advantages before we even started rolling dice.

They were having a great time and it got very loud at times. However, if I needed to get their attention, all I had to say was "Cadets," and you could instantly hear a pin drop. I have to say, that was pretty cool.

We had a hard stop at 9pm for parent pickup. The captain asked if I needed help cleaning up. Before I could even respond, the cadets were packing everything up and lining up to carry all the boxes out to the car. The last group photo with the empty cleaned up table was taken at 9:12pm. Great kids.



HMGS Outreach: CamelCon 2025

by Hayes Wauford

The Camel City Wargamers hosted the first CamelCon in Winston-Salem, NC, on October 18, 2025. This was a one day mini-con intended to allow newer and younger gamers the opportunity to see different periods, scales and types of games. The event was hosted at Maple Chase Golf and Country Club, and the venue worked well with the game room being adjacent to the bar and grill for easy access to food and drinks.

From 9:30 am until 10:00 pm there were 40 attendees playing games including 28mm Vietnam, 28mm *Saga/Dark Ages*, 15mm *Battle Cry*, *Wings of War*, *Sails of Glory*, 28mm *Battlesuit Alpha*, *Fearsome Floors*, 28mm *Chain of Command 2* and 1/600 *Oak & Iron*.

Of the 40 attendees, 16 were either past participants in the Tabletop Battles summer camp or their parents and grandparents. One mom, a dad, and a grandfather gamed who had never seen a wargame before the event. Gamemasters came from the local area, Charlotte, the Triangle, and Wilmington.

It was great to see new gamers being hosted and supported by more seasoned gamers. Ken Ellis had boardgames for sale and many of the young participants took home new games to learn and play.

It was a great day of gaming and fellowship and we look forward to hosting folks again in Winston-Salem.



CamelCon gamers.





Sea of Dust Adventure. Counter-clockwise from left: Steve, Russ, GM Sean, Ed, and Jordan. Photo by Dan.

Letters From The Edge: D&D

by Russ Lockwood

During a "year" of working to rebuild and improve Sheffield and revitalize the province we now call Sunstone, our A-Team received several diplomatic missives. Oh sure, now that we shredded the lich, destroyed the portal to the undead, and swept the province mostly clean of monsters, now they all want to talk?

From the Head Prince of Sea Princes

Flattery will get you somewhere, I suppose, but the well-known greed of the Sea Princes shines through their words. "Together, we may ensure that the darkness which once held sway will never return ... dispatch envoys to formalize your integration into the Hold."

Sorry. We're not interested in being integrated into anyone's Hold. You want the river as a dividing line? Fine. We've made it navigable again. No more frozen water from an ice dragon with delusions of grandeur. No more undead spouting up on decks of ships. We can even start to think about rebuilding the bridge upriver to link Sunstone and the Sea Prince lands.

As I understand it, Hammer journeyed there to politely decline the invitation and negotiate a frontier.

From the Clan of the Dwarves

A letter from the Chieftain of the Clan remembered that we did the Dwarves a solid in cleaning out some bad actors and returning some revered Dwarven items. He proposed a pact between Sunstone and us. We gladly accepted. The Chieftain then sent 50 Dwarven masons to help us rebuild the walls around Sheffield. Those dwarves certainly know stone...

From Damazzo the Wizard

A bit of raving here, but he offers some news about the land beyond Sunstone. I'm not sure what to make of it, but it seems like a foreshadowing of the future.

Working...

by Ed

The Hammer said “no thanks,” diplomatically, to the Sea Princes' efforts to add us to their confederation, and discovered very strong evidence that Scarlet Brotherhood (Red Brotherhood?) advisors are now commonly assisting minor Sea Lords, the faction most interested in expanding into our area. Hammer also spent three months creating a counter-intelligence group to face the expected infiltration of agents from neighboring powers, most particularly the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Rufus spent the year building on his temple and a spaceship.

Cristof researched ways to get to Orcus' plane: The dusty way, the The Hammer gets a favor way, the Attack Iuz who we now know is working with Orcus way and must therefore have a portal to the right number plane, and the we have Miraxador take us way.

Balian worked on infrastructure projects in Sheffield and installed a noble from his retinue as the “noble in charge.” The Hammer provided three months of “you can do better” training. Balian and Cristof went to the dwarves, where we earned much diplomatic credit by returning the ancient dwarven artifacts and were gifted some Very Nice Armor in return for Skurg to have in exchange.

Tazan Rell continued expanding the HQ and recruiting tradesmen and women to repopulate Sheffield and re-establish an economy.

Intel From a Dragon

by John

The red dragon Pyrofiraxis told us of a Drow lord named Drax whom our winged ally absolutely hates. Apparently, Drax is unaffected by the sun and wields a sunblade.

The dwarves are known as Clan Iron Heart. They warned us about nearby drow and giants. They have a way into the underdark below their hold. It's open as an emergency escape but drow sometimes attack it too. They have a chief mage named Balgar Ironmantle. Our dwarf guide is named Khorin Ironflame. Iron seems a theme.

Rufus' new building in Sheffield is a multi-purpose facility, part Pelor temple, part stellar observatory, and part shipyard. The core group has 34 acolytes. The observatory is a magical copy of the “Eye of Sterling.”

Rufus wondered if a “spelljammer engine” could be hidden in the Sea of Dust ruins.

Rufus voted against the sally to Iuz, as the Iuz capital Daraka is rumored to include a vast necropolis, home to the undead.

Infrastructure and Logistics

by Fred

Most of Balien's work was in Stirling directing the re-building. Tazan was also working diligently on restoring Sheffield. We have a surprisingly good relationship with Pyrofiraxis if we keep it simple and don't overstep. We said we would work on having livestock driven to his location at his request – cattle, sheep, pigs, etc. as his food choices have become limited, apparently mostly Iuz diplomatic corps.

Reger, who is Balien's associate, was placed in charge of the re-building of Sheffield plus maintaining patrols/defense using the Iron Wolves, the mercenary group retained by Balien. This includes making sure the goblins in West Sheffield remain polite and are working arduously on the agriculture.

Never Say Never

by Dan

Nevar finished supervising the building of the new laboratory, made some scrolls and potions, and then discovered how to use the four-headed Troll parts to make a Regeneration potion. He helped with infrastructure, and joined Balien and Cristof to pay a visit to Pyrofiraxis to acknowledge the red dragon's latest gift: a Gauntlet that provides fire immunity and a “free” Firebolt spell per day, which Nevar accepted -- since Nevar was the only name ever inscribed on the “Welcome Ledger.” We found several common adversaries that would continue to “impress” Pyrofiraxis and grant us future gifts: Drow, Emissaries from Iuz, and a Green Dragon that resides in a nearby swamp.

Several of these activities were responses to several letters from various local factions. The second letter was an invitation to ally with the Dwarves of the nearby mountain realm, which the group accepted. The Dwarves provided 50 soldiers/stone-masons to employ as we wish, primarily to restore the damaged fortress.

The last letter was a summary of fictitious threats from anonymous sources, although Hammer acknowledged a couple of them. The Dwarves apparently had a "history" with Pyrofiraxis from conversation with Corwin -- but nothing current.

Thanks, Sean, for a well-prepared game session!

Sterling Sliver: D&D Adventure Continues

by Ed

Today's "small" team of five players (one more than the ideal number of four in a party) ran through a "year" of game play in a Sheffield saved from the threat of the Lich Charis Bonebreaker Stirling, or whatever that actual name was -- and will be again, until we destroy that phylactery talisman of his.

A phylactery is a small sliver of the lich's physical body that retains his essence should he be destroyed. This sliver can be used to reincarnate the lich. One of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies used this idea somewhat -- a heart in a box. - RL

How Now, Brown Drow?

Though The Hammer strongly pitched the "get to Orcus through Iuz" route to Sterling's phylacteric talisman, the group opted for the "let's go to the Dust Bowl" route. This had two options: Either a difficult over-mountain route or a dangerous path through the underdark.

We shamed the dwarves into providing a guide -- a very tough underdark ranger named Corwin. A few uneventful days down there had us run into ropers and five "conveniently placed" Drow (working together? Or the Drow took advantage of the ropers in our path? We'll never know).

Two Drow swordsmen cast Silence which shut down some of the spell casters, but they didn't have enough to shut down all the spell casters. Cristof was able to help turn the tide.

The main leaders of the Drow party escaped the fray after blowing a horn as an alarm. After some hasty healing, we "beat cheeks" deeper into the underdark. An hour later, we seemed to have shaken off pursuit. The two dead bodies of Drow swordsmen were recovered and their magic items confiscated -- all of them significant but perhaps prone to instant disintegration when exposed to sunlight.

After several more days, we managed to find the deep gnomes, who warned us about a pack of Beholders some days farther along our march. We gifted them some of the trade goods we'd brought (the Drow missed their chance to be bribed by launching their surprise attack, the cads) and carried on.

Then our watchful familiar friends spotted strange rats with brains outside their skulls that thought "hungry! hungry!" and after some cogitation we recognized this was a sure sign of Mind Flayers and a Nether Brain (yes, that thing from BG 3). We pulled back, studied some strong mental concealment magic, and with Nevar's stock of stored Invisibility spells and Corwin's Pass Without Trace we ghosted the whole collection of foes.

Cristof was tempted (baited by the umpire might be a better description) to cast "Imprisonment" on the Nether Brain as we lurked past, but did not, and after an hour we were well past the foe. From then on we scuttled through the darkness without further problems.

Corwin informed us, once we saw sunlight and looked out upon the dust bowl, that some naughty monsters had been on our trail. Nightgaunts? Nightshades? Something very large and not nice, and creatures known to serve Orcus to boot. Divination revealed that Orcus "maybe" knew we were coming, which Cristof declared meant we should assume he knows...which raises all kinds of issues with the caper, because if Orcus knows we're coming, he surely knows WHY we're coming, which makes finding the phylactery an iffy proposition.

While Corwin, who single-handedly made our transit through the underdark relatively easy, could have returned home via a Teleportation Circle, he opted to remain with us for the time being as we traveled towards the Dust Bowl and its the fabled ruins which contains, so it is said*, a big silver ring with a keypad onto which we can type "333" to open a stargate to Orcus country.

* Actually, I said that. Some ancient fabled race used to live here until they were destroyed by some massive magical disaster, and the ruins of their great city, some 200 miles away through the Dust Bowl, contains the path we need to tread to finish the Lich killing job.



Sea of Dust Adventure. Counter-clockwise from bottom: GM Sean, Ed, Fred, Jordan, Mike, John, Dan, and Steve.

Into The Sea of Dust: Wasteland

by Russ Lockwood

Our party consisted of Hammer the ArchMage, Balien the Fighter/Wizard, Frank the Cleric, Saurus the Wizard, Rufus the Cleric, Nevar the Alchemist, Cristof the Wizard, and Tazan Rell the Archer.

Our goal was some ruby tower that allegedly had the portal into Orcus' 333rd dimension and Charis' talisman.

We chose to descend from the mountains into the Sandpit, which wasn't sand, but ash. I suppose I should call it the Ashpit. Or the Ash Bowl.

Apparently, some long ago magic battle turned this place into an ash desert with necromatic emanations that caused us not only fatigue, but lost hit points (HP). As this ash desert was eight times faster to travel through than the mountains, we did a yo-yo of descending into the ash in the morning and scurrying up into the mountains in the evening. We needed a few magic spells each night to mitigate the effects of the necromatic emanations.

Balien also withdrew a Drow magic longsword from his Bag of Holding, but discovered that as soon as the sun's rays struck it, the whole sword disintegrated. The Drow magic items gained in the UnderDark tunnel remained in the Bag of Holding.

Eventually, we came across a red-robed priest of some sort face down in the ash. He was long dead, but did possess magic boots and a ruby worth 100 gold pieces (GP). He was not wearing ruby slippers. I took the ruby and deposited the boots into one of our bags of holding. One of our magic users performed a séance, but we learned little other than this ruby temple was a WeWork space dedicated to someone named Wejazz.

Never heard of her. Or him. Dunno. I guess ceremonies involved jazz hands.

Meanwhile, Hammer's raven familiar, whose name was Heckel or Jeckel, I'm not sure which, arrived. He took one look at the Ash Bowl, removed the cigarette from his beak, and cawed, "No way. I'm not flying in there. The whole place stinks of infernal magic! I'm outta here! Nevermore."

Hammer tossed a True Reality spell and discovered that the fabric of time and space were ruptured in the Ash Bowl. Cracks and slices provided views of other places, some rather unnerving.

Attunement

The *D&D* system allows each character to "attune" up to three magic items. For example, my character's three items are SkyBow, Ring of Regeneration, and Belt of Giant Strength. I also have a Ring of Charisma, but can't use it

unless I "unattune" one of these three items, and then "attune" the Ring of Charisma, which takes time. I switch between the two rings depending on where I'm standing.

While I would like the magic boots, which basically double movement across all sorts of terrain, I would need to unattune the Belt. I'd rather have the strength of a giant and rely upon my innate dexterity.

Such are the decisions a player needs to make when faced with an abundance of magic items after many, many sessions of adventuring.

Dawn Of The Dune

As we plodded through the ash, we were warned by a rumbling. I immediately cried "Sandworm!" The good news: I was spot on. The bad news: the thing popped up next to me -- save versus being swallowed.

Ooops. Failed. Down the gullet I went, taking damage, too. Immobilized in the belly of the beast. Now what do I do?

Our wizards battered it with fireballs, magic missiles, and flames. Balien had the bright idea of using a Dimension Door spell to hop inside the beast. We could not see each other -- it was a mighty long worm.

It also had a poisoned stinger, which hit Rufus and then Cristof.

Now, the insides of the worm were as armored as the outside. What?! That's what it was and it is what it is. I fired at disadvantage from inside. Disadvantage? How could I miss?

"Thunder. Thunder. Thunder!" I howled. I hit all three times and finally put the damage total over the top. The worm sounded three thunderous burps and keeled over.

Inside, we found five 5,000GP gems and one +2 magic armored breastplate. I suppose its original wearer had been dissolved.

Followed

As we trudged through the desert, we discovered six red-robed figures following us. We took up positions in a set of ruins as they came towards us. One was the leader and the other five his troops.

These were monks of some sort dedicated to the ruby red Wejazz and they had been following us for some time. Indeed, during our conversation, we learned that they had been following us for more than quite some time.

The leader, Tholian, explained they wanted Charis' talisman as much as we did, except they wanted to use it to control Charis. We wanted to destroy it and Charis along with it.

With the two goals at an impasse, they attacked us. That just won't do. So the dust up began.

Dust Up

One thing about bad guys in *D&D* -- they often have a gimmick to equalize relative combat/magic strength of the party.

Monks attack from left while we use the cover of ruins. Tazan far right.

For monks, this has you make a saving roll versus

Stun. If a monk pops you one, you roll versus getting stunned (i.e. do nothing) for a turn.

The monks of Wejazz spread out and attacked all of us one-on-one except me. To be fair, I was cowering in the ruins and by happenstance of direction of travel, I was left alone. Suits me. I learned long ago that I belonged in the back of the pack, twangin' away with SkyBow.



"Thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder," I shouted as each release of the bowstring generated a rumbling in the sky. Sadly, two of my magic flame arrows flew wide, but two others struck two different monks. Hmmm. The buggers stayed upright. Hmmm. Hey, Boo-boo, stronger than your average acolyte.

Meanwhile, Tholian wove his fists in a web, pounding on Hammer and switching to jazz hands for a series of spells. As our wizards sometimes cancelled the spells and sometimes not, a Harm spell slammed into Hammer. A monk also came up and pounded Hammer for some more damage.

While most avoided being stunned, Rufus failed to block a particularly effective punch to the solar plexus that took the wind out of him. That's not easy to do to a Hippo-like giff. The monk continued to flail away at Rufus, who could do naught but take it. I yelled the battlecry, "Hippo in the Library!" and Rufus snapped back into action. Works every time.

Nevar conjured up an Ice Elemental, which began to drip even as it pounded a monk. Tholian cast a Disintegrate spell on Nevar, who had to use all his tricks and spells to barely save. The red robed boss still socked it to Nevar, but that was minor compared to being turned into ashes to ashes and dust to dust.

Slowly, our party whittled away the underlings, killing three of them before Tholian grabbed the two wounded monks and teleported somewhere. So the battle came to an end.

Our pickings were slim: 300GP, a trio of magic +1 quarterstaffs, and magic bracers of defense.

The Journal

We did find a journal being kept by one of the underlings. Apparently, we were not only watched, but followed for the prior seven months in our quest to defeat Charis the Lich.

As for an entry on me, it said "make deals with him cautiously." The reference harkens back to the Genie that incapacitated most of our party, including keeping Kuel underwater to drown while allegedly trying to make a deal. Genies are apparently legalistic nitpickers, so I continued our negotiations with a pair of magic arrows that finally sent it back to its conch shell and released Keul. Subsequent interactions found that the genie tried to kill us as much as any enemy of ours.

Technically, we had gone an entire year, so the three wishes we should be able to get from the genie should have regenerated.

I discussed with Hammer what our three wishes should be. My thoughts were one of them would release the genie in exchange for agreeing never to attack us directly, or, indirectly using others. He gets freedom and we get a couple of to be determined wishes. Hammer suggested making that the first wish, contingent of the other two wishes being fulfilled following intent and without tricks or legal nit picking. We'll see.

To The Tower

We finally reached the tower, which was mostly buried by ash that had piled up against it. A second tower had collapsed. I climbed up the first tower, tied up a rope and helped the rest of the party reach the trap door. We all entered and headed down the spiral stairs in single file.

As we hit the first corridor, five Shadows attacked. Some sort of evil tripwire, I suppose. They proved an annoyance, but not too damaging.

We descend the spiral staircase and get attacked by transparent shadows.

As we moved through the temple, we found a room with two sarcophagi and a ruby pendant laying atop one. Oh no, I made sure I was out of the room and away from the door. It just smelled like a trap. Alas, and happily, my nose was off. Saurus walked in and grabbed the magic pendant.



We wandered around, Cristof translating old script etched into the walls. Nothing usable, just more jazz about the power of Wejazz.

Another room contained a shallow pool of water that generated images and allowed at least one banshee to rise from wherever it was. Our wizards soon shredded the undead. Another ruby pendant was found, this time fished out of the pool.

Frank and Rufus found a safe room and opened a sarcophagus. Inside was a magic mace, which Frank took.



The giant Nightstalker Kolchak and twin Shadowbeasts pop out and defend the portal at right.

Now we came to a room filled with necromatic energy and a hole in the floor. We piled down to find a portal -- and a huge Nightstalker emerging from it. I called it Kolchak. It took all our combined spells and arrows to slow Kolchak down and then kill it off.

Meanwhile, two Shadowbeasts skulked around to try and surprise us. Well, the surprise was on them -- Frank pulled out the magic mace and immediately illuminated the room, exposing the Shadowbeasts. Thunder filled the room as I pasted one with magic arrows. The rest of the party eliminated them.

From Damazzo the Wizard

In re-reading this letter, one thing he noted that turned out to be accurate: the stirring of the Scarlet Brotherhood, or as we came to know them, the red robed ones we battled in the Ash Bowl. It turns out they have infiltrated the courts as courtiers, including the Hold of the Sea Princes. That may mean trouble. But first, we need to sort out this 333rd dimension and whack Charis for good. Then we can worry about other events, such as giants on the march again, "the Eight" (whoever they are) remain missing, the closing off of some city I never heard of, and fragments of info about yet another big Wiz clad in darkness passing through the lands.

Sheesh! Whatever happened to good ol' orc bashing by adventuring newbies?

Left It There

And that marked the end of our adventure session. Well done to Sean for running another great session. Thanks to Fred for again hosting. And thanks to all for making this a lovely day of monster bashing.

Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Washington's Lieutenants. by Douglas M. Branson. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 258 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Major Versus Brigadier Generals in the Revolutionary War*

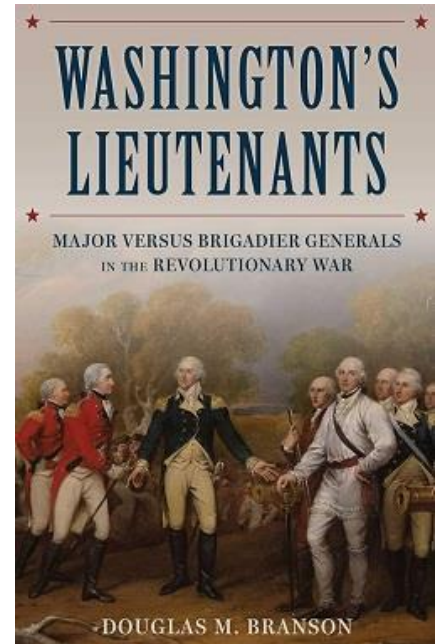
The concept is quite interesting: comparing and contrasting the performance of American major generals with American brigadier generals. The focus is on 11 leaders, seven major generals and four brigadier generals.

These are: Arthur St. Clair, Adam Stephen, Robert Howe, Charles Lee, Horatio Gates, Thomas Mifflin, and Thomas Conway versus Hugh Mercer, William Lee Davidson, Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, and William Woodford. All receive a mini bio and a maxi look at their battlefield performance.

I already had some knowledge of three major generals and their leadership transgressions: Charles Lee, Horatio Gates, and Thomas Conway. The rest were generally new to me. Ditto with Mercer and the other three brigadier generals.

Besides the jockeying for power and position, itself a distraction from winning the war, I enjoyed the insights into their battlefield prowess or lack thereof. That George Washington would persevere in the face of backbiting, jockeying for power, and incompetence is a miracle. That's the difference between placing country over self and being a self-serving narcissist.

Enjoyed it.



War in Ukraine: Europe at War 50. by Joseph Mathers. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 97 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 8: The Battle of Kyiv, February-April 2022*

The series is up to eight volumes and this volume is quite readable, understandable, and thankfully offers detailed maps to place the obscure villages within Russian offensive and Ukrainian defensive operations.

That said, this often covers operations mentioned in Volume 2. The difference is a couple years of additional information, making it quite valuable in understanding how the Ukrainians blunted and then stopped a pair of Russian pincers before both could get to Kyiv. Then, it explains the Russian retreat before a Ukrainian counter-attack.

Despite massive Western information and warnings, the Russian invasion towards Kyiv from the northwest and northeast came as a surprise. If it wasn't for a few key units, notably at the airport, and a lot of Ukrainian militia and National Guard determination to defend villages and key terrain along the Russian invasion routes, the Russian invasion might have succeeded.

Add incompetent Russian planning, including a veil of secrecy from their own troops until the day of the invasion, and poor logistical support and you can start to see how small numbers of defending troops inflicted massive casualties on Russian forces.

There's more to it than that and here's where insightful analysis punctuates the recaps of small-scale battles and hit-and-run attacks. Pick a village and you can generate a skirmish scenario. The photos linked to the defensive battles will help to lay out terrain, as will the maps.

One typo: "competed the destruction" (p26) should be "completed."

The book contains 92 color photos, one black and white map, six color maps, and four jet, four helicopter, three uniform, one drone, and 15 vehicle color camouflage illustrations for all the modelers and miniature painters out there.

For a battalion-centric book interspersed with strategic assessments and individual combats, this volume covers that northern invasion with style and substance. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.



Nations in Arms: Five Armies That Made Europe. by Barney White-Spunner. Hardback (6.3x9.4 inches). 360 pages. 2025.

The five armies chosen represent not just tactical expertise, but the strategic advancement of their national interests over time. The armies are: Roman Army under Constantine in the 300s AD/CE that lasted over 1,000 years, Ottoman Army of 1402 that led to widespread conquests including much of Eastern Europe, Cromwell's New Model Army of 1644 that set the model for British armies, Prussian Army after 1806 with formal structure and respected by civilian population, and American Army of 1940s that paired overseas operation with mobilized industry.

Those broad accomplishments receive detailed examination within each respective chapter. For example, the Constantin reforms included separating army from policing, creating smaller maneuver units of 1,000 soldiers, reworking cavalry into a strike force instead of flank guard, organized training of infantry and cavalry working together, incorporating "barbarian" forces within Roman structure as part of training, and revamped recruiting, pay, terms of service, and equipment. The argument is not that bits and pieces weren't done before, but that a holistic approach yielded long-term benefits.

Lots of factoids pepper the text. For example, during 1940-1941, the US Army rejected 40% of recruits that didn't meet the minimum requirements of being 5 feet tall, weight of at least 105 pounds, free of venereal disease and hernias, and having 12 or more natural teeth. Also, that more than two million were rejected for psychological reasons (p142).

Yet some Waterloo Campaign factoids seem wrong. It was the first to inoculate soldiers for smallpox (p293). As I recall, it was George Washington during the American Revolution that mandated the Continental Army soldiers be inoculated -- with Washington being the first to show it was safe. It was the first time howitzer shells were used -- I would think it was earlier, like during the Marlborough era or even a bit earlier. These factoids are a pair that I believe are incorrect, but whether more lurk within the text, I don't know, but these were the only ones I found overly odd. I never had a question with the vast majority of factoids offered.

One non-fatal typo: "pages xx-xx" (p321) apparently slipped by the editor.

The book contains six black and white maps, nine color photos, 11 color illustrations, five black and white photos, and one black and white illustration.

Obviously, some notable armies, like Roman Republic and Napoleonic France, are not mentioned but I followed the reasoning. As this only concerns Europe, Mongol armies under Ghengis Khan or ancient Chinese armies are not included, although they seemed to fit the general criteria of competent, socially respectable, and long-term. Maybe there's a book about Armies That Made Asia is in the offing?

In any case, I found the premise and criteria fascinating and likely open to debate. It made me think and that's a good thing. It may make you think, too.

Enjoyed it.

Danes on D-Day. by Jakob Tottrup Kjaersgaard. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 247 pages. 2025 reprint of 2019 book.

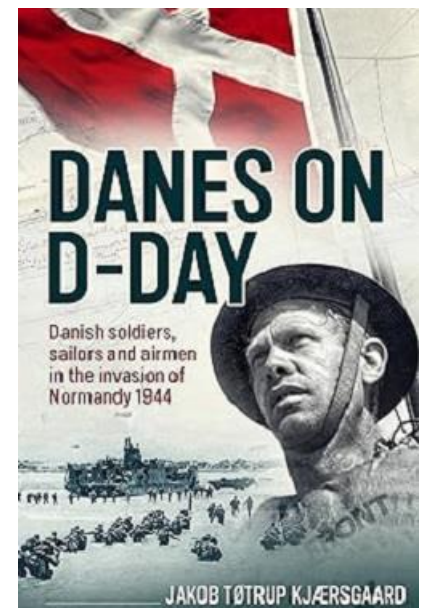
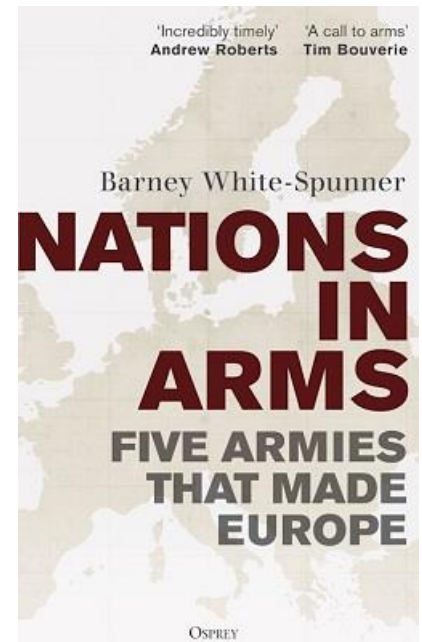
Subtitle: *Danish Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen in the Invasion of Normandy 1944*

About 1,000 Danes served with the Allies on D-Day (p192), of which 800 were sailors (p99). Some Danes were pilots in the British RAF and the USAAF.

During the D-Day invasion, four of the 31 Danish ships were sunk, with 20 sailors losing their lives (p191). Beach sector by beach sector, this overview spotlights the wartime efforts of Danish individuals, primarily on June 6, 1944, but also in the Battle of the Atlantic and in the air and ground through the end of WWII. All the mini-bios and first-person accounts are of men except one: a nurse named Elsie Hansen.

Of interest was that one Danish ship, the Alf, carried part of the \$450 million in "invasion dollars" -- newly issued French francs to supersede existing francs (p167). I never thought about planning to stabilize the currency after the invasion, but someone did.

During the war, 128 of 245 Danish ships were sunk and about 2,300 of



13,000 sailors killed in action (p193).

One factoid: German E-boat S204 surrendered to the British in Felixstow on May 13, 1945 (p202) -- a week after hostilities ended. That's an E-boat, not a U-boat. Where were they and what were they doing for a week? The book doesn't say.

I was unaware of a twist: Denmark's government continued after the 1940 German invasion, leading the Allies to consider it not in the Allied camp. It wasn't until 1943 that the Danish government was replaced by a German occupation government and quite a bit of politicking was needed to formally declare it an Allied country.

The book had one non-fatal typo: the superscript used for footnote 80 (p172) was in full-size text.

The book contains 206 black and white photos, four black and white illustrations, and four black and white maps.

I suspect this may be an English translation and it generally reads fine. Certainly, the prose gets the information across. It's a narrow focus book but well done on that focus.

Enjoyed it.

US Seventh Fleet, Korea 1950-53: Fleet 12. by Corbin Williamson. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The First Cold War Naval Campaign*

After WWII, the US Navy drew down its manpower from 3.4 million in 1945 to 375,000 in June 1950 when the Korean War started (p36). Meanwhile, the number of operational USN ships fell from 6,700 in August 1945 to 842 in June 1947 (p5). The lack of trained personnel to man existing and reactivated whips was made up with reservists, who took time to become reacquainted with wartime operations.

As per the *Fleet* series, both sides' forces, commanders, command and control, and communications are analyzed against the general background of the period -- in this case, post-WWII events in China.

On the plus side, the only significant naval combat occurred when four North Korean motor torpedo boats and two gunships tangled with the light cruisers *USS Juneau* and *HMS Jamaica* and supporting ships. All six of the smaller North Korean ships were sunk or severely damaged.

Four major operations are covered: Pusan Perimeter of close air support and supply; Inchon and amphibious assault; Interdiction of China with air strikes against bridges, bombardments against troops, and close air support by carrier air groups; and bombing campaign against high-value North Korean targets such as dams and industrial infrastructure.

Interesting that carrier air groups lost 10% of propeller-driven fighters each month to combat damage, accidents, and other write-offs (p45). Also of interest is a look at the logistical operations that brought war material from the US to Japan and then to Korea. In some ways, it was relearning the WWII processes.

The booklet contains 29 black and white photos, three color photos, one black and white illustration, six color maps, six color diagrams, three color two-page action illustrations.

The USN had its work cut out for it in Korea after five years of peace. This volume explains how it re-learned to be as potent during the Korean War as in WWII.

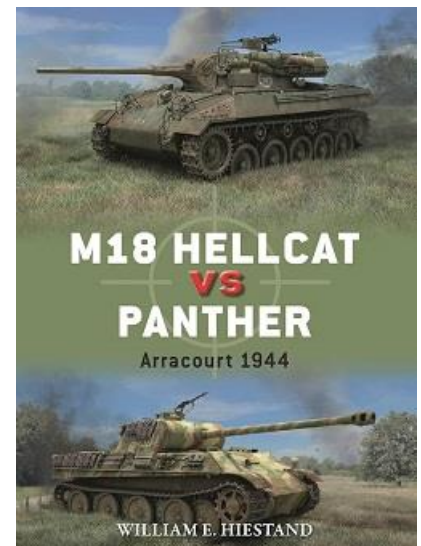
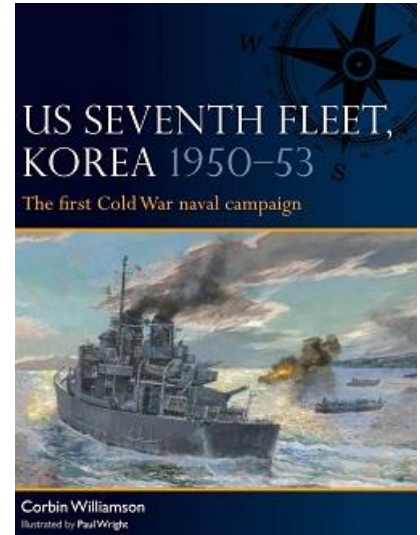
Enjoyed it.

M18 Hellcat vs Panther: Duel 146. by William E. Hiestand. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Arracourt 1944*

The Panther specs and performance are well known, but the M-18 Hellcat's attributes are less so, especially as compared to the earlier M-10 tank destroyer.

The M-10 was built with the idea of quickly putting a 3-inch gun in a turret (as opposed to the sponson of the M3 Grant) to deliver on the tank destroyer concept. The M-18, with the same gun and open-topped turret, was built from the ground-up for speed, sacrificing armor for that speed. The M-18 is incredibly thin-skinned and lacks bow and coaxial MGs, but has a 50cal MG that can be fired from the open-topped turret. Yet it can hit speeds of 55mph (p21) to put into practice the tank destroyer theory of rapid movement to avoid getting hit



and setting ambushes of German tanks. This was of limited use at Anzio when first sent for combat, but proved more useful in France.

Interesting was that the Panther reliability was only 37% in 1943, but was boosted to 60% in September 1944 (p35). The text outlines the problems, especially with the transmission. The text does not give a number for the M-18, only that it had a "high degree of reliability." (p36)

Although the subtitle says Arracourt, other combats are mentioned, including Mairy, Dompierre, and Luneville, at least from a vehicle comparison standard.

Arracourt was a disaster for the new Panzer Brigade of 45 tanks, two Pz Grenadier battalions, 10 STuG IIIs, and eight FlakPz IVs (37mm AA guns). The lack of artillery was a severe handicap. The brigade commanders were all veterans, but the new crews were just out of training and woefully inexperienced. The US forces were generally veteran status and came with considerable artillery and support forces.

The booklet contains 44 black and white photos, five color photos, two color maps, eight color camouflage illustrations (four Panther and four M-18), six color illustrations, and one color two-page action illustration.

Another fine addition to the Duel series.

Enjoyed it.



Kursk 1943: Air Campaign 55. by William E. Hiestand. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Airpower in the Eastern Front's Most Pivotal Battle*

The usual Air Campaign format includes: Chronology, both sides' capabilities and orders of battle, objectives, the actual campaign, and the aftermath. It's all in this volume, too, along with the plethora of photos and illustrations.

Although Kursk has been well covered, the air war provided a bit of a surprise -- German efforts to destroy the rail lines and airfields leading to the salient. It's the same objective as the US had in 1944 ahead of D-Day, only the Germans had fewer aircraft to do it. The results were so-so.

The booklet covers the aerial assaults and defenses divided by north and south pincers. While an overview, the missions and goals intertwine with responses and overall losses. While both sides made a maximum effort, the Soviets eventually started to fight the Luftwaffe to a draw and in some spots flew more sorties than the Germans. However, Soviet air losses were so high, pilots were starting to fly only over their own troops to avoid German flak and fighters (p87).

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

The German close air support remained potent, but it was not enough to pave the way for the panzers. The Soviets did just enough to stymie the Luftwaffe at Kursk before the Germans called off the attack.

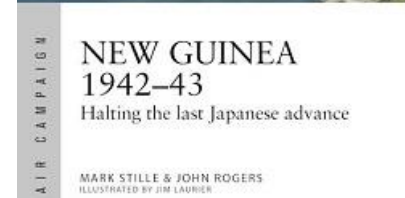
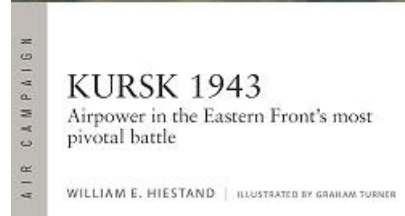
Enjoyed it.

New Guinea 1942-43: Air Campaign 56. by Mark Stille and John Roberts. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Halting the Last Japanese Advance*

My go-to source for WWII air warfare in the South Pacific is Claringbould. His multiple volumes, infused with a significant amount of info from Japanese records, offer valuable analysis of actual records. Those wildly inflated claims from both sides receive a dose of reality as part of the explanation of the 1942-1943 see-saw battles.

Stille, himself an expert with multiple books on WWII Pacific combat, and Rogers use lots of Claringbould books as references as well as lots of official records. The result is one of the best *Air Campaign* books yet published -- no small feat given the series' overall excellence.



It follows the usual *Air Campaign* format: Chronology, both sides' forces and capabilities, objectives, the campaign, and the aftermath. Per usual, lots of photos and illustrations accompany the text. Indeed, some of the photos are credited to Claringbould.

As for the campaign itself, the Japanese efforts were split between Port Moresby and Guadalcanal. As the months went by and the Allies built up their force with newer and better aircraft, the Japanese advantage in pilot training declined. The Allies slowly began to win the air war, which in turn helped thwart Japanese advances across the Stanley Mountains, seaborne invasions 'round the tip of Papua New Guinea, and sea-borne reinforcements.

Only one (continuing) nit about *Air Campaign* volumes -- tiny fonts that make me squint. If Osprey wants a format that leaves 25% to 30% of each page as blank space, that's fine, but don't punish readers with tiny fonts. If you don't want to trim the text, then fill the blank space with text. At least one pair of grognard eyes will be pleased.

The booklet contains 65 black and white photos, eight color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

An overview like *Air Campaign 55* can certainly whet your appetite for more info on South Pacific WWII air warfare. In 96 pages, you get a fantastic overview. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

B-52 Stratofortress: Combat Aircraft 158. by Peter E. Davies. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Units in Combat 1992-2025*

The USAF still has 76 B-52s in service -- not bad for planes originally built in the early 1960s. They have been extensively upgraded over the years with structural and electronic improvements, not to mention modified to carry a new array of acronym weaponry: CALCM, JDAM, JASSM, and the X-51. When the original capacity is 70,000 pounds of bombs, you have the space and capability to do so.

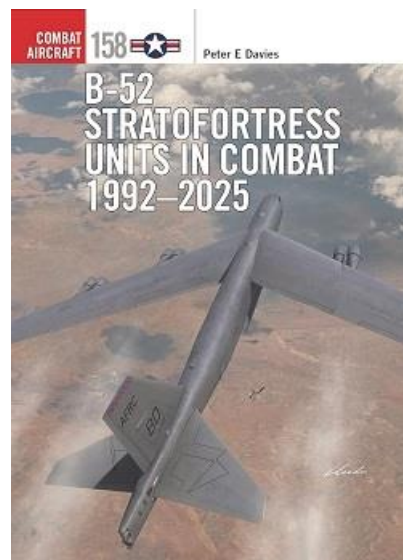
Besides design and development info, the plane receives an overview of the various more modern missions, including Iraq, Serbia/Yougoslavia, and Afghanistan.

I don't know what it is about Osprey air books -- same tiny font and format as the *Air Campaign* series. Sheesh...

The booklet contains one black and white photo, 49 color photos, 22 color camouflage illustrations (admittedly all gray but with different markings), and 22 color nose art illustrations.

The USAF plans to keep 62 B-52H bombers operational until at least 2044. Who knows if they could be 100-year bomber in the 2060s.

Enjoyed it.



Manila Bay 1898: Campaign 419. by Brian Lane Herder. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

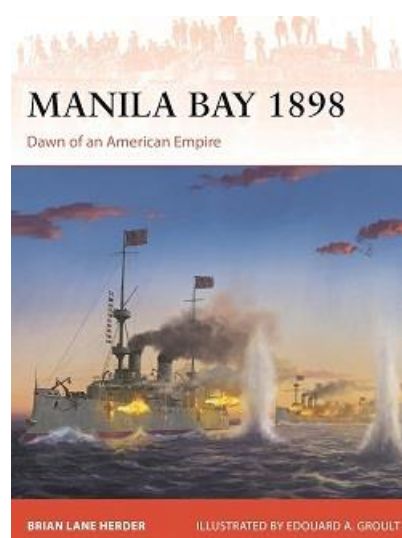
Subtitle: *Dawn of an American Empire*

This *Campaign* volume covers the naval battle and much more, including the political and occupation maneuvers to defeat the Spanish and a Filipino insurgency that eliminated most of the Spanish forces outside Manila (Philippines) and became a third power in a three-sided battle of wills for control of the Spanish colony. Also noted are the Cuban naval battle, the occupation and annexation of Guam, and a variety of other island grabs in the Pacific.

It's quite well told, especially the battle but also the insurgency. In the naval battle, the US fleet under Commodore Dewey fired 5,859 shells and recorded 145 hits on Spanish warships (p57). This excludes shots fired at Spanish coastal forts and batteries.

Amazingly, Spanish law mandated the death penalty for any Spanish commander who surrendered without a fight. Dewey, anxious to capture Manila and the Philippines, secretly made a deal with the Spanish governor to stage a "mock" battle with lots of firing and no casualties to satisfy Spanish law. Alas, they forgot to tell their sailors and soldiers, who started to fire like a real battle. Casualties were low by the time the "battle" was all over.

The same thing happened in Guam. A lot of fire and smoke, but only mirrors as Spanish pride was met.



The booklet contains 41 black and white photos, six color photos, five black and white illustrations, 10 color illustrations, 10 color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and one color 3D map.

Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.

Sinai 1916-17: Campaign 421. by Stuart Hadaway. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Fight for the Suez Canal*

The usual *Campaign* format is followed with a chronology; evaluations of commanders, forces, and plans; the actual campaign; the aftermath; and the battlefield today.

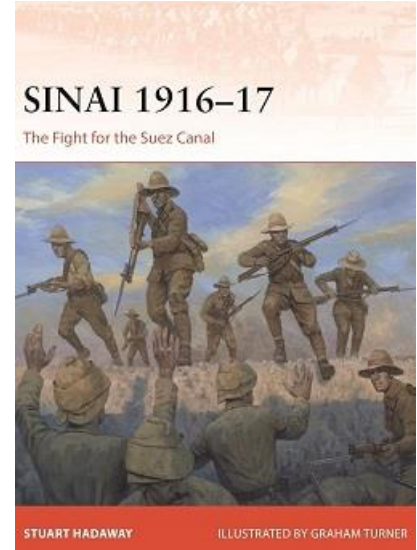
Under German control, the Ottomans pulled off a nice logistical feat of supplying an army through the desert and into Egypt. The attack was well planned and proceeded apace until it didn't. Both sides made over-reaches and paid for them, but the British eventually came out on top as the Germans created a line in southern Gaza. That line repulsed two British attacks. Only after Gallipoli failed were enough troops sent to Egypt for an offensive -- and even then many divisions were sent to the Western Front in France.

The booklet contains 63 black and white photos, four color photos, two color illustrations, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and three color 3D maps.

Campaign volumes offer excellent overviews and this one is no different.

I found this volume interesting because I knew little about the opening drive on the Suez Canal by the Ottomans, the resulting British counter-attack, the Ottoman counter-counter-attack, and the British drive to Gaza.

Enjoyed it.



Luftwaffe Intruder Operations Over the United Kingdom. by Chriss Goss. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 211 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Fernnachtjagd Units 1940 to 1944*

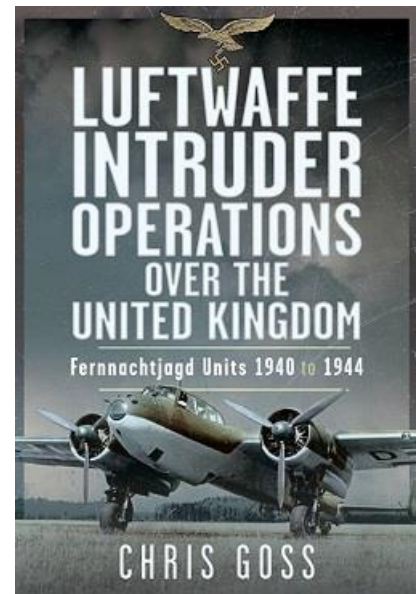
As Allied night bombing increased against Germany, the Luftwaffe started to create Fernnachtjagd night-fighter units that would operate over the UK to shoot down bombers before they reached the English Channel.

This isn't exactly scintillating reading -- it seems mostly short transcribed reports interspersed with first-person accounts from Allied and Axis pilots and air crew. Indeed, the Appendices (p142-202) contain transcribed report and tabular data of ops, including individual aircraft and crew.

While I applaud the research, I found myself increasingly skipping portions of the text. That said, WWII air gamers will find lots of aerial scenarios on just about every page.

One piece of equipment I would have liked more info about is the infrared spotlight called Spanner-Anlage installed through the cockpit windscreen of a DO-17 nightfighter (photo on p45), although the text says it was installed on the tip of the nose (p39). It must have been ineffective because it was replaced by a radar set, but would have been nice to know more about it since Germany fielded effective infrared scopes for MG teams in late 1944 -- effective in directing MG fire against Allied troops at night.

The book contains 172 black and white photos, four black and white illustrations, and one black and white map. A real WWII air buff will appreciate the reference material and the abundant photos.



German Breakthrough in Greece: Then and Now. by Jeffrey Plowman. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 176 pages. 2024 reprint of 2022 magazine article.

Subtitle: *The 1941 Battle of the Pineios Gorge*

From the relatively recent pages of *After The Battle* magazine comes the 1941 battle of the Allied defense of Pineios Gorge in Greece.

My knowledge of the German conquest of Greece is less than ideal. Fortunately, the text explains the situation facing both the Germans and Allies in April 1941. A lightning Axis thrust through the gorge would help cut off Allied

troops in northeast Greece. A successful defense would stall the Germans, perhaps long enough to set up another defense line further south. The end result was partial victories for each side.

One aspect that receives attention was the rain and subsequent mud that slowed the Germans and their logistical tail. German petrol, ammo, and food fell short, although captured British supply dumps helped at times. The majority of Australian and New Zealand troops were able to escape southwards to eventual evacuation to Crete and North Africa.

As per the *Then and Now* format, many of the photos of WWII locations were reshot in the modern era. One cool aspect is how the main terrain, such as hills and rivers, is generally the same, but modern brush and trees are more extensive than in the 1941 photos.

The book contains 144 black and white photos, 78 color photos, two black and white maps, and six color maps.

As I knew little about this campaign other than arrows on a map, I'm glad to learn about at least one of those arrows. While a tactical tabletop scenario might be a stretch for equal chances of victory by both sides, you can certainly give it a try with the info and photos within this book.

Enjoyed it.

Yugoslav Air Force: Europe at War 48. by Aleksandar Radic. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 76 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 2: In the Battles for Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1992*

The majority of this book covers operations by the remnants of the Yugoslavia Air Force against Croatia. As the latter had no real air force, most of the actions consist of air strikes in support of isolated Yugoslav outposts and bases defending against Croat attacks.

The Croats captured the vast majority of their weaponry from Yugoslav warehouses, including WWII-vintage vehicles and weapons. The Croats were able to cobble together an air defense system of sorts, especially to defend Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

The ground combats are nicely described for a book about air forces, allowing you to follow along with the air strikes or lack thereof. You'll need ground forces sources, but you can pull together a number of outpost defense scenarios. Aerial scenarios will require considerable 'what-if' imagination.

The book contains 18 black and white photos, 58 color photos, two black and white maps, five color maps, and 15 jet, three helicopter, and three uniform color camouflage illustrations.

For those interested in the break-up of Yugoslavia and the limited aerial capabilities of Croat and Yugoslav air forces, this is a nice volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.

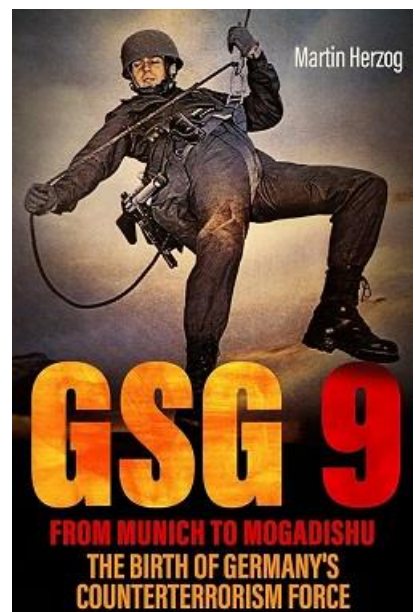
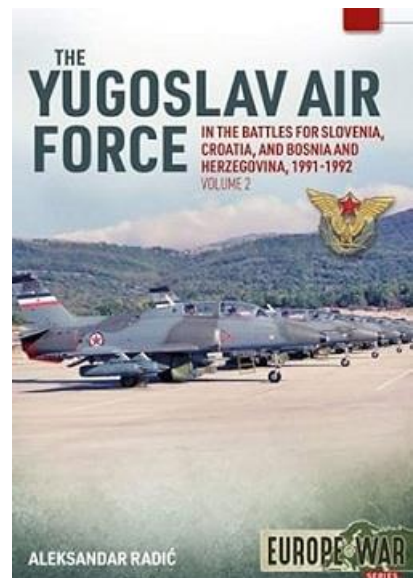
GSG 9: From Munich to Mogadishu. by Martin Herzog. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 275 pages. 2025 reprint of 2022 book.

Subtitle: *The Birth of Germany's Counterterrorism Force*

During the 1972 Olympics, terrorists took Israeli athletes hostage, catching the German police force flatfooted. Amid amateur hour up and down the German government, the Israelis were killed. Germany decided to form a professional anti-terrorist unit GSG 9, which roughly stands for German Border Police Unit Number 9.

This book covers from 1972 to the present day, examining the criteria needed for a special operations force, organization, political interactions, recruitment, equipment, and training. The Germans relied on the Israelis for advice.

In 1977, a hijacked Lufthansa passenger jet gave the unit its first real



test. The GSG leaders followed the jet across the Mediterranean and to Mogadishu Airport in Somalia. Calling in the rest of the unit, they put their training into practice.

The book contains 29 black and white photos, 35 color photos, and one black and white map of the aircraft and 1977 rescue operation. You will have all you need to make a scenario of the situation, including a number of alternative events that could have changed the outcome.

GSG 9 rescued all 86 passengers, although some were wounded, and all but one of the terrorists were killed. The fourth was wounded and taken into custody. While the middle section of political infighting offers the kind of detail needed for a comprehensive account, it wasn't the most interesting prose. Yet once GSG 9 gets the signal to begin rescue operations, it's as taut as a thriller novel.

Enjoyed it.

Hitler's Paratroopers in Normandy. by Gilberto Villahermosa. Softcover (6.2x9.3 inches). 327 pages. 2025 reprint of 2019 book.

Subtitle: *The II Parachute Corps in the Battle for France 1944*

As you might expect from the title, the II Parachute Corps receives an exhaustive examination of its battles in Normandy, from D-Day up through Operation Cobra and also including the defense of the port of Brest.

Considerable period unit histories and plenty of first-person accounts contribute to the level of detail all across the II Para's front. Division by division, and subunit by subunit, the defense and counter-attacks receive battle recaps and analysis on what made the paratroopers difficult to defeat. Despite limited reinforcements and replacements, an often interrupted supply line, and overwhelming US air and artillery attacks, the paratroopers stubbornly defended positions.

The book contains 44 black and white photos and eight black and white maps of limited reproduction quality and use.

The excellent tactical recaps of actions small and smaller, interspersed with a considerable amount of numerical data, offer ample opportunity for tabletop scenarios.

Enjoyed it.

The Final Reflection: Star Trek 16. by John M. Ford. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 253 pages. 1984.

Just about all these *Star Trek* novels are what I called "milled" in that they are turned out as fast as authors can type. I base that in part on a discussion with an author's spouse who said three novels in two months was about average.

Most are never that good and you can almost discern the outline the author wrote to. Yet every once in a while, one or two stand out. Equivalent of fast food novels, I've picked these up for 25 cents or 33 cents each, and that's about what they are worth -- light reading when I don't want to read history.

In this novel, a somewhat disjointed tale involves Klingon commander Krenn tasked with bringing a StarFleet ambassador to the Klingon homeworld. Only a StarFleet admiral has plans to start a war with the Klingons, a desire happily embraced by other Klingons. So begins travel travails and a quirky StarFleet ambassador who wins over our Klingon commander hero to the idea of peace.

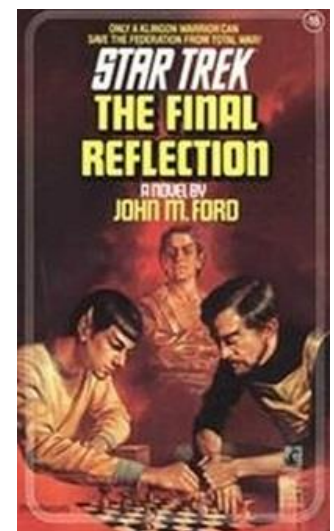
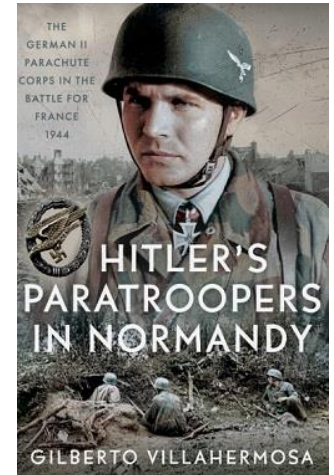
We even meet a young Spock who plays the equivalent of a game of chess with Krenn. Hardly even a cameo worth mentioning, though, but it's on the cover. They would have been better off with three D-4 cruisers exploding.

I slogged my way through this.

A Flag Full of Stars: Star Trek 54. by John M. Ford. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 241 pages. 1991.

A Klingon refugee scientist works as a high school teacher and somehow manages to invent a hyperspace gizmo. Two KGB agents, er, two Klingon agents, try to steal it. So begins a spy vs. spy game of cat and mouse between the Klingons and soon Admiral Kirk.

Alas, Kirk's chief of Staff Riley bungled the security for the scientist on Apollo Day, which celebrates the US landing on the moon. Transporters are such lovely kidnapping devices...and rescue devices, too. And somehow, only one StarFleet flitter is



available in the entire hemisphere for the getaway ship. Nothing else around. Even the USS Enterprise is in drydock and barely spaceworthy. No one else is home. Go figure.

Enter the 1980s Space Shuttle *Enterprise*, newly outfitted with impulse engines for the Tranquility Base flyby, that shows up for Kirk. Nice foreshadowing, that, earlier in the book, even if it's an absurd notion that Kirk can commandeer the only NASA shuttle left on the planet.

It's a typical *Star Trek* novel and about average in terms of plot and prose. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

China's Fighter for the World Vol. 1: Tech at War 4. by Holger Muller.

Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 84 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: The F-7/FT-7 Family - Origins, Evolution and Variants*

This Chinese fighter traces origins from the USSR's MiG-21. On again, off again relations between the two Communist powers sped up and slowed down development of the initial copies and later variants. Note that the USSR ceased production of the MiG-21 yb 1986 while the Chinese continued to produce F-7s until 2016.

The system reverse engineering and cloning took longer than expected, but produced a fighter of comparable performance. Exports to third-world countries soon followed.

Covered are the original and numerous variants, as well as variants of engines, equipment, avionics, ejection seats, and armament (guns, missiles, rockets, and bombs). All of this will be sweet info to aerial simulation designers. It's not called *Tech at War* for nuthin'.

The book contains 122 color photos, one color map, and 21 color camouflage illustrations of aircraft used by various countries.

Not being particularly into modern warfare, I can only appreciate the barrage of details even as I skipped through the systems and subsystems. If you want to delve into the tech specs of this family of fighters, here's a great start.

War in Ukraine: Europe at War 52. by Wen Jian Chung. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 79 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 9: Soviet-Designed Artillery Systems 2014-2024*

This spec-heavy booklet covers a variety of towed and self-propelled artillery systems currently in use by Russia and Ukraine. This includes: D-20, D-30, Tyulpan, Giatsint, Pion, Nona, and Msta. Each receives design and development info, tech specs, and context of operational use.

The book contains 137 color photos, 10 black and white photos, 19 black and white illustrations, one black and white map, eight color illustrations, two color diagrams, and 18 color camouflage illustrations (14 self-propelled artillery and four towed guns).

I admit I tended to skim the tech specs part, but found the operational use section the most interesting.

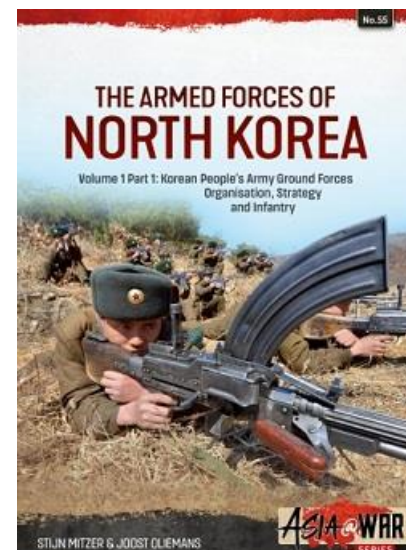
Enjoyed it.

The Armed Forces of North Korea: Asia at War 55. by Stijn Mitzer and Joost Oliemans. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 56 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Volume 1 Part 1: Korean People's Army Ground Forces Organisation, Strategy and Infantry*

I'm not sure why upcoming *Part 2* couldn't be integrated with this current *Part 1* to form one volume considering that this has far fewer pages compared to other books in the series. The text hints at four more volumes.

That said, this seems comprehensive, or at least as comprehensive as I can tell -- which is minimal not being a modern warfare buff. The North Korean Army has 89 divisions (p10) with 7.62 million active and reserve soldiers (p9), of which



1.2 million are active military. South Korea has 3.75 million active and reserve troops (p12) plus some US troops.

Indigenous weapon production, including infantry firearms, man-portable missiles, and anti-tank missiles, is well advanced in North Korea. This volume covers a multitude of them as well as APCs and fire support vehicles.

One typo in Footnote 22 (p56) "acquisition of 70 units fell through" should be fell through.

The book contains 68 color photos, three black and white photos, one color map, three color uniform illustrations, 21 color infantry weapon illustrations, and one color camouflage illustration of an APC.

This is an excellent place to start for information about the history of the North Korean armed forces and especially infantry weapons and some armored vehicles.

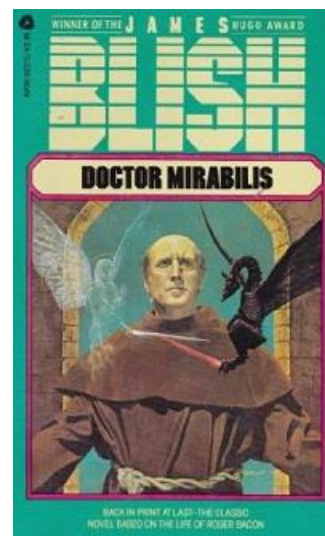
Enjoyed it.

Doctor Mirabilis. by James Blish. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 271 pages. 1964.

I suppose this is historical fiction, in that some characters are author's creations, but the marketing blurb claims this is an examination of Roger Bacon's life in the 13th century.

The gist is that Bacon thinks like a scientist, not a theologian, and rises in prominence until accused of sorcery and dumped into a dungeon.

I don't know. I only got through the first 50 pages or so before abandoning this deadly dull novel. I know Blish from his *Star Trek* novels, so I expected better.



The Final Nexus: Star Trek 43. by Gene DeWeese. (4.2x6.9 inches). 282 pages. 1988.

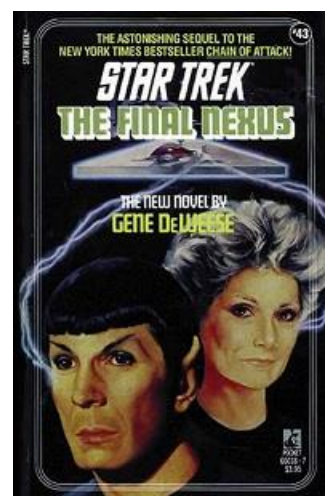
Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and the rest of the *USS Enterprise* crew find themselves confronting some sort of wormhole and an increasingly agitated Captain Chandler of the *USS Cochise* who is ready to fire on the *Enterprise*. Soon, it is the *Enterprise*'s turn for irrational fear to strike crew members, including the bridge officers.

So begins a better than average *Star Trek* novel sending the *USS Enterprise* in and out of the wormhole that turns out to be part of a vast, if slowly decomposing, intergalactic network of worm tunnels.

Of course, there's emanations of fear that strikes one crew member before releasing him or her and going to the next.

For about three-quarters of the book, it's a fascinating effort to figure out why fear and paranoia sweeps over individuals. The resolution seems at odds at the beginning of the book. You might say, illogical.

So a good RPG beginning and middle, but a lackluster payoff.



Ishmael: Star Trek 23. by Barbara Hambly. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 255 pages. 1985.

Spock infiltrates a suspicious Klingon cargo ship disguised as a low-level tech when the ship disappears into a space anomaly. His last cryptic message seemed to indicate the Earth year 1867. Sure enough, Spock -- with loss of memory -- finds himself outside Seattle in Washington Territory in 1867. Thanks to some local help in an isolate log cabin, he's trying to regain his memory before the Klingons try to kill a human who is ultimately responsible for the formation of the future Federation.

The most illogical part is the "faxing" across space of *Star Fleet* archive material from Earth to the *Enterprise*, followed by the printing of the faxes for key crew members to search through. If pages are already digitized to "fax" then they are already digitized for display on a 23rd century computer screen -- and for the computer to analyze the text for references to 1867 and a man named Aaron Stemple. Sure, this novel was written in 1985, but I was already writing consumer-oriented columns about modems and telecommunications in 1983 (*A+ Magazine* for all you Apple II fans) and I wasn't the first.

The compressed ending has a number of "conveniences," including how Spock came to memory loss, the on-again-off again limp, and especially the cavalier way the *Enterprise* performs time travel back to 1867.



The funny part is a time travel quote by Kirk "we haven't got the capability to do it" (p200). Aren't you contemplating a rescue of 1867 Spock? Fast enough, *Enterprise* is over Earth in 1867 (p233). Sooooo, when Scotty sent the *Enterprise* back to 1984 to save the whales, it wasn't his first time travel rodeo?

Now, as to the Klingon ship, no sign of it (p236) except for anti-matter particles four days old. They leave? They still out there? Presumably the former because the *Enterprise* went back, er, forward, to its own time period without a space search.

Now, this was a pleasant enough read about the Old West, early Seattle, imported brides, and Spock stumbling around slowly getting his memory back, but this wasn't entirely thought through.

The Disinherited: Star Trek 59. by Peter David, Michael Jan Friedman, and Robert Greenberger. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 261 pages. 1992.

This turned out to be one of the better *Star Trek* novels, albeit one with more plotlines than you can fire a phaser at. You've got a volcano threatening a planet's only birthing complex. You've got speedy mercenaries blowing up Federation colonies. You've got Uhura transferred to the starship Lexington. You've got Chekov in the throes of self-doubt. You've got the equivalent of the Death Star ready to blow up a sub-warp civilization.

As you might expect, these all eventually fit into one narrative -- a little bit of an overloaded narrative but one narrative nonetheless. My guess, and it's only a guess, is that these three authors came in with three book proposals and the editor decided to mash them all together. That's why it seems a bit crowded as the plot shifts like a pinball bouncing between all these story targets.

Of note, there's a reference to the Kobayashi Maru test at the Academy and how Cadet Kirk reprogrammed the computers to beat it. Fair enough. Of surprise is a mention of Cadet Chekov beating the Maltusian Maze (p198) at the Academy.

What maze? I'm familiar with TV show canon except the animated series. If any other pre-1992 book mentioned a maze, I'm unaware of it. So I thought this might be an Easter Egg pun. Nope, a theory called "Malthusian Catastrophe" (also known as a Malthusian Trap among other terms) by 18th-century political economist Thomas Robert Malthus was about how resource abundance triggers population growth that leads back to scarcity and misery.

I did like the way the Rithramen communicated by speaking for most communication and using hand gestures for nuances. Nice detail and use of Uhura that that also led to revelations towards the end.

Enjoyed it.



German Logistics 1939-1945: Casemate Illustrated Special. by Simon Forty and Richard Charlton Taylor. Hardback (8.2x10.3 inches). 192 pages. 2025.

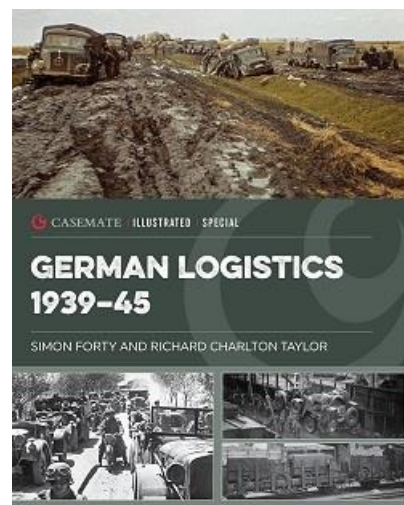
From production to delivery, this book provides an overview of land, sea, and air transport of supplies. German logistics, especially the train system, worked well in the West with its modern road and rail systems. In the East, eventually not so much.

A considerable number of tables, charts, and graphs accompanies the text, providing numerical weight to bolster analysis. Essentially, and despite the German penchant for detailed organization, logistics became robbing Peter to pay Paul.

For example, the WWII German rail system went to war with less locomotives and rolling stock than in WWI. And that was the main way to move war material from factory to the front line -- to army-level depots and optimally to division railheads. From these, truck transport headed supplies to regiment and battalion depots.

The problem started with the trucks -- not enough of them for all the formations. Capturing vehicles in occupied countries helped, but left the German Army and related Transport organizations with 2,000 different types of vehicles (p16). No wonder a shortage of spare parts became a problem throughout the war. The above only got worse with the increase in Allied bombing and strafing as the war progressed.

Never mind loss of factory production, so too were rail shipments reduced: while 900,000 freight cars were loaded for the week ending August 19, 1944, that went down to 700,000 cars in the week ended October 31, 1944, and down to 550,000 cars for week ending December 23, 1944, and down to 214,000 cars for week ending March 3, 1945 (p50).



Ignoring the trains needed to move raw materials (such as iron and coal) and sub-assemblies of finished products (engines, trousers, helmets, armor plating, pots, etc.), that had a significant impact on tactical military train loads: Type R trains needed 50 to 60 cars to haul 2,000 replacement troops; Type I trains needed 55 cars to haul 350 to 800 troops, 10 light and 10 heavy vehicles, 70 horses, and associated equipment (i.e. a full infantry battalion); Type Sp trains needed 33 cars to haul 20 medium tanks, personnel, and equipment (i.e. tank company); Type S train needed 30 to 35 cars to haul four to six Tiger tanks or similar Self-Propelled guns, six to eight Panther tanks, personnel, and equipment; and Type I trains needed 51 cars to haul 250 troops, 20 light and 20 heavy vehicles, and equipment (i.e. motorized infantry company)(p93).



One possible typo regarding a reorganization: after explaining the reorgs through November 1944, the text says "at the end of January 1944, all units were deleted...registered with new numbers by January 29, 1945" (p70). Seems like the "1944" should be "1945."

The book contains 215 black and white photos, eight color photos, four black and white illustrations, three black and white maps, four color maps, 10 color diagrams, and a plethora of tables, charts, and graphs.

There's plenty of nuts and bolts analysis and numbers of German supply within. If you want to understand the strengths, weaknesses, and operation of WWII German logistics, start with this excellent book. Well written, well chronicled, and well numbered. Well done!

Enjoyed it.

Fighting the Kaiser's War: The Saxons in Flanders 1914/1918. by Andrew Lucas & Jorgen Schmieschek. Softcover (7.5x9.7 inches). 256 pages. 2025 reprint of 2015 book.

Year by year and corps by corps and division by division, the history of WWI Saxon units on the Western Front unfolds in trenchline detail. Each chapter contains the OOB of a corp or division and traces its location and major operations. Plenty of report excerpts and first-person accounts pepper the text.

One interesting point: extensive use of mining and mines. Most WWI histories talk about a few mines that were exploded, usually big ones, but in several parts of the book, smaller shallower mines are mentioned. For example, 12 British and 28 German mines were exploded in the Saxon 53rd Rifle Division sector in June 1916 (p105).

One typo: "Calvary" instead of "Cavalry" (p25).

The book contains 265 black and white photos, 17 black and white illustrations, and 39 black and white mostly period maps. I would have liked more of the maps to have a scale on them, but if you're in the Saxon command bunker. you probably already know the scale.

You'll need Allied sources to set up a tabletop scenario, but here's the Saxon resource for various Flanders scenarios.

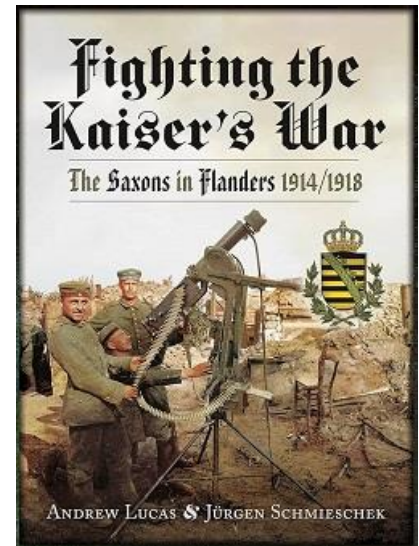
Enjoyed it.

Norbert Hannig: Luftwaffe Fighter Ace. by Norbert Hannig and edited and translated by John Weal. Softcover (6.0x9.3 inches). 212 pages. 2022 reprint of 2004 book.

Subtitle: *From the Eastern Front to the Defence of the Homeland*

Memoir of a young WWII Luftwaffe pilot from glider training to jet fighters covers his life during wartime. Lots of dogfighting explained, especially about the post-training learning process under the wing of experienced German fighter pilots.

Interesting point: he purposely made sure he got a lower grade on communications tests because high scorers were sent to bomber units and he wanted to be a fighter pilot. This wasn't the only subterfuge he used in the military to obtain better positions.



As his score improved, so he was transferred around the various fronts, including a stint as an instructor, the Western Front, back to the Eastern Front, and finally taking jet training. The latter apparently made him a valuable commodity to the Soviets, who kept him around instead of sending him to a USSR labor camp.

The book contains 86 black and white photos, two black and white maps, and one black and white illustration.

It's a smooth read about learning to fly and gaining enough experience not only to survive, but to recognize aerial opportunities. He also had a bit of luck along the way, but some of it was created by him.

Enjoyed it.

Hood's Defeat Near Fox's Gap. by Curtis L. Older. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 210 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Prelude to Emancipation*

Prior to the Battle of Antietam, the Union Army met the Confederate Army covering the flank at Fox Gap, where the Rebels were defeated and pushed back. Here is a hyper-detailed tactical look at the movements, terrain, and Battle of South Mountain. Chapter 2 is basically the Union perception of the battle and Chapter 3 is basically the Confederate perspective. At the end of each chapter is a round-up of pertinent facts and figures to support the analysis.

Using official reports, memoirs, and letters, the Battle of South Mountain receives critical terrain analysis to match written recaps with particular features. All of this comes down to timing out the movements, especially of Gen. Hood's two brigades.

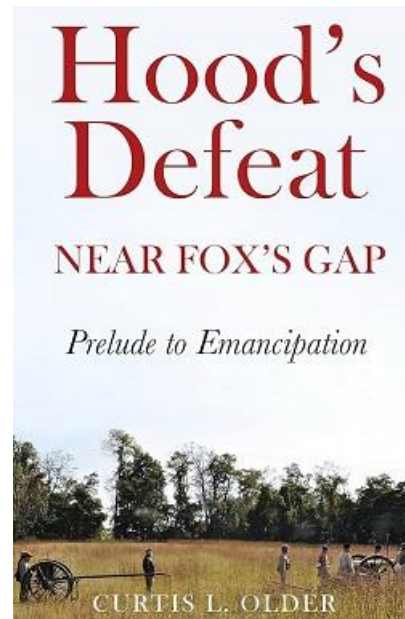
Interesting tidbit about brigade frontages when deployed in two ranks: reduce the number of troops by 15% to account for officers and others not on the main battleline and that's the number of feet across. Technically, the calculation is half the number in each rank and two feet of space per soldier. So, a 1,000 man brigade would have 850 men deployed in two 425-man ranks and $425 \times 2 = 850$ feet across (p40).

Another rule of thumb tidbit: Six cannon produce as much firepower as 1,000 men (p53).

The book contains 34 black and white photos, 41 black and white maps, and four black and white illustrations. The maps often superimpose individual regiments atop the terrain features and thankfully are paired with the appropriate section of the text.

Part of this is to examine and correct previous narratives about the battle. Admittedly, other than playing the SPI wargame decades ago, I have not read much about this particular battle. I did appreciate the exception detail. Makes me want to encourage my ACW gamers to pop a scenario on the tabletop.

Enjoyed it.



The True Story of Catch-22. by Patricia Chapman Meder. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 240 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Real Men and Missions of Joseph Heller's 340th Bomb Group in World War II*

Catch-22 is one of the many books foisted upon high school teenagers in the name of literature classes. *Of Mice and Men*. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. *Flowers for Algernon*. Don't even get me started on Shakespeare.

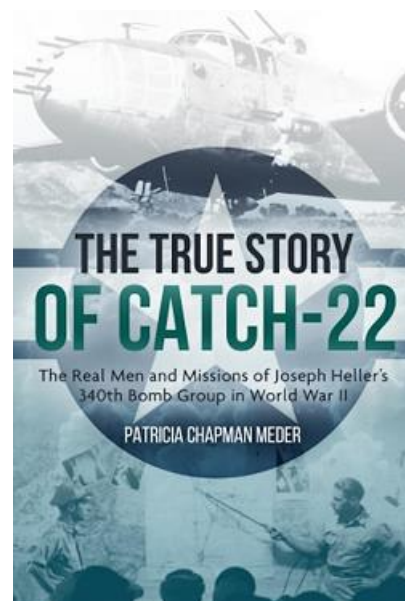
The problem with such great literature is that teenagers, or at least this teenager back in the day, held a complete disinterest in such subjects. What makes sense to an adult makes little sense to a teenager.

In any case, this true story offers the historical basis for the novel by following the 340th Bomb Group in Italy through its missions and the men who flew them or ground crew who took care of the aircraft. Specific historical men and missions are linked to specific characters and events in the novel.

A possible typo: "working lightly delivering telegrams" (p39) is likely "working nightly."

A greater typo: Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese on "December 7, 1942" (p101) should be 1941.

In the Appendix, the full mission booklet of pilot George Wells is transcribed with all 102 missions he flew. That's not a typo: 102 missions.



The book contains 106 black and white photos, two black and white maps, and four black and white illustrations.

To be fair, I still do not enjoy reading Shakespeare, but I rather enjoy attending live theater productions and watching movies of the plays that use original language (sorry "modern" adaptations). As for *Catch-22* and other classic literature, maybe, but doubtful, that I will pick them up again. I have too many other books I want to read.

As for this history of the 340th BG, some anecdotes are repeated a number of times, but other than that, it's clean prose by someone more familiar with the novel than I.

Enjoyed it.

Imprisoning the Enemy. by Nikolaos Theotokis. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 280 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *How 12 Million Axis POWs Were Held in Captivity During WW2 and After*

What I thought this book was about was how the US and Allies processed 12 million prisoners of war (POWs), with a third of them in the USSR, after capturing them. Not as such.

The book lists name, rank, war crimes, and changes of status of mostly high-ranking Nazi and German officers. Italy, Japan, and other Axis officers are also covered.

It is not exciting reading, but it does have its moments: Sgt. Schubert was sentenced by Greece to death 27 times (p46); Joanna Langfeld was dismissed as a concentration camp guard for showing excessive sympathy to Polish female prisoners, who later aided Joanna's post-war escape from a Polish prison and kept her hidden in a convent for 10 years before helping her escape to West Germany. She is the only SS guard who was saved from the death penalty by her victims (p87).

Typos: Vice Admiral Huffmeier remained in captivity until 2 April 1948...died 13 January 1942 (p34). Maybe 1952? 1962?

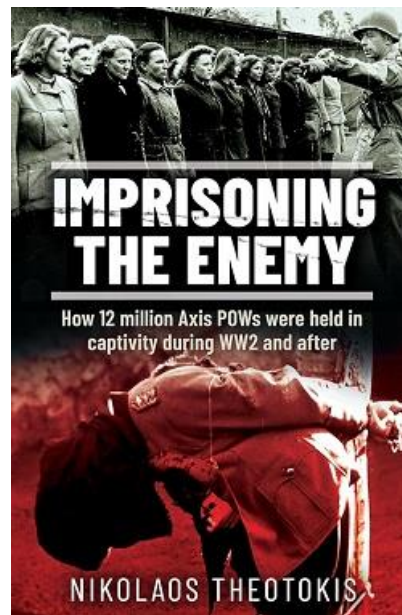
Hitler's gold watch and Party badge (p46) should be badge.

Woods left the Army in 1947...died in 1999...aged 39 (p78). Maybe 79? 89? 99?

In the photo section, the caption "This photo and caption to be used for the dustjacket" was given for not one, but two photos. Another caption mentioned a pilot by his "by-plane" which should be biplane. This is just plain sloppy.

The book contains 33 black and white photos.

Obviously, the book doesn't contain 12 million entries, just the big wigs, generals, and some others. No use on a tabletop. I only skimmed the Italian and Japanese entries and ignored the rest.



War Without Mercy: Liberty or Death in the American Revolution. by Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 296 pages. 2025.

While the book explains how Patriots and Loyalists waged a barbaric war against each other far from the organized battlefields, the more important aspect is why neighbors turned on each other during the American Revolution.

A Peckham study found that of the 1,331 land actions during the war, fewer than 100 involved regular armies battling each other. The rest were local militias, irregular forces, and ordinary families defending hearth and home (p28).

Of note, 238 of these were in NJ, 228 in NY, and 155 in SC (p29). Each receives their own chapter explaining how sympathy and tolerance diminished and the steady escalation of brutality.

Additional chapters explain the ruthless prosecution of genocide on the frontiers involving Indians (Native Americans) egged on by British agents.

The book contains eight color illustrations, five black and white maps, and six black and white illustrations. I knew about SC excesses from a previous book I reviewed and other books hinted at general burnings and killings, but this book covers a wider area. If you believe Mark Twain, history doesn't repeat itself, but its sure rhymes. In a more modern era of today, this book can also serve as a warning how quickly name calling and altered images and videos can escalate to much worse.

Enjoyed it.

