World War II Wargames Rules

BOLT ACTION

SECOND EDITION

CAMPAIGN
THE
WESTERN
DESERT

WARLORD GAMES

OSPREY GAMES

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WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

When compared to the enormous campaigns waged on the Eastern Front and in Western Europe during World War II, the struggle in North Africa between the British Commonwealth and the Axis might seem an unimportant sideshow. However, its influence and impact were far reaching and dictated many strategic decisions that influenced the course of the war. This *Bolt Action* campaign book will focus on the conflict in the area most commonly referred to as the Western Desert – a campaign theatre reaching from the Libyan city of Tripoli, to Cairo, and the Egyptian Nile valley, a distance of some 1300 miles, featuring some of the most hostile terrain on Earth. It covers a period of time from September 1940 when Mussolini's Italian Army invaded British-held Egypt to the final retreat of Rommel's *Afrika Korps* from Egypt during October 1942. During that period the conflict witnessed much hard fighting resulting in spectacular victories and the capture of territory, equipment, and prisoners for both sides whilst also subjecting them to a series of demoralising retreats where final and irrevocable defeat seemed assured.

This campaign, like many others, saw examples of cruelty and inhumanity perpetrated by both sides, but they were relatively rare and the war in the Western Desert has often been referred to as the 'War without Hate'. Perhaps the biggest reason for this was that the soldiers of Germany, Italy, and the British Commonwealth faced a much greater common enemy – the harsh unforgiving terrain and climate of the Western Desert.

This book is split up into sections covering the entire campaign and within you will find a selection of historical scenarios, new Theatre Selectors, new units, and special rules to allow you and your opponents to play challenging and interesting games of *Bolt Action* in this unique theatre. We include an entirely new army list for the Free French who fought so bravely at Bir Hakeim as well as optional rules for a more aggressive Italian Army in the style of the Ariete and Trieste Divisions that fought so well as an element of *Panzerarmee Afrika*.

As the Western Desert terrain lent itself to the wide scale usage of armoured, mechanised, and motorised troops we shall be providing plenty of additional material that can be used to enhance your games of *Tank War* and allow you to fight out some of the huge tank duels that so dominated battles in the desert.

We shall also be providing information on the special forces units that preyed on the enemy's vulnerable supply lines and raided airfields and other vital installations. In addition to a Long Range Desert Group army list, you will also find lists for the Special Air Service and Axis special forces including the Italian *Auto Sahariana*.

Kradschützen lead an Afrika Korps column

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

Why was the conflict in North Africa so important that it dominated the attention of the British Commonwealth, tantalised the Fascist leader of Italy, and demanded the attention of Germany?

For Britain – and especially its Prime Minister Winston Churchill – it was the key to the survival of the British Empire. Whilst Britain had been made safe from immediate invasion thanks to the barrier of the English Channel and the sterling efforts of the RAF and Royal Navy, it was still an isolated island that could not hope to challenge the continental power of the Third Reich. Britain's resolve to carry on resisting and eventually becoming a springboard for an intervening United States depended on her overseas holdings, their vast resources and the manpower provided by the British Empire.

Imperial armies were bolstered by contingents of troops from the overseas dominions of India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The Middle East holdings centred on Egypt and the Suez Canal were a critical choke point allowing a short cut via the Mediterranean for supplies and manpower from the Far East and India to reach Britain and vice-versa. The control of the Canal Zone along with the important fortresses of Gibraltar and Malta were essential to maintain this tenuous route through the Mediterranean.

The Imperial Middle East holdings also provided an important land bridge to India, the 'Jewel of the Empire'. An isolated India already disrupted by rising nationalism and cries for autonomy might easily slip from British grasp and with its loss the British Empire would collapse. This was the nightmare that haunted Winston Churchill and, for the first few years of the war, became an obsession. From his perspective, the loss of Egypt would have been as catastrophic as German landings in the British Isles.

In contrast, Britain's main enemy, the Third Reich, saw the struggle for the Mediterranean and Egypt as an unimportant sideshow to the real struggle: the subjugation of the Soviet Union. Hitler had convinced himself that Britain even without invasion was powerless to disrupt his European ambitions. He largely ignored Britain, believing that the Battle of the Atlantic would starve it into

submission or that the inevitable conquest of the Soviet Union would make continued resistance pointless.

However, what changed this were the machinations of Hitler's ally, Benito Mussolini, who triggered a chain of events that would turn the Western Desert into a bloody battlefield.

Italian Bersaglieri advance

A NEW EMPIRE

As early as 1911 Italian colonists had settled in Libya as the new Italian state clamoured for its 'place in the sun' and an overseas empire. With the rise of the fascist state in Italy, Mussolini had dreams of creating a 'New Roman Empire'.

The unexpected collapse of France in May 1940 relieved any pressure on the western borders of Libya as a Vichy-controlled government took control of Tunisia. Italian forces in Libya could now concentrate on the Egyptian border. Like Hitler, Mussolini was convinced that Britain was a beaten nation. Surely nothing would stop the addition of Egypt to the new Roman Empire. Mussolini's dream was to ride into Cairo on the back of a white charger, a new Caesar. In reality, things went somewhat differently.

OPERATION COMPASS: THE FIGHTING BEGINS

Whilst Mussolini might have had no doubts on the success of his Egyptian enterprise, his commanders in the field held different opinions. Italian commander General Graziani was well aware that his army had only been tested putting down native insurrections and was yet to face a modern well-equipped mobile force. On the British side, there was no lethargy. Churchill had already made it clear to the commanders of the Western Desert Force (WDF) that Italian forces in Libya should be harassed with cross-border hit-and-run raids. Many of the field commanders in the WDF had been in Egypt a long time and in peacetime had been explorers of the vast Sahara, which gave them good experience of the unique environment.

SCENARIO 1: FRONTIER BATTLE

Raids across the border required a fast motorised force. Fortunately, one resource the WDF was not lacking was armoured cars. British cavalry formations had swapped their horses for vehicles at the end of World War I and in the post-war world had found them excellent mounts for scouting and raiding.

Small armoured car squadrons comprised of vintage Rolls-Royce or Morris CS9s would cross the Libyan border, flattening the barbed wire fences that marked it. Then they would drive deep into Italian territory on the lookout for supply convoys and isolated units to 'beat up'. In most contacts the raiders would be in and out in minutes, leaving burning vehicles or shaken garrisons behind them.

However, on a few occasions, mobile forces of the Italian Army would be in place to intercept the intruders. The British would then find themselves in a fast moving firefight. In this scenario, a force of British armoured cars of the 11th Hussars are heading towards a small Italian fort in the late evening. However, unknown to them, several patrols of L3 tankettes from the 1st Italian Division are close by attempting to intercept the raiders. Flares arc into the sky and battle begins.

Italian Infantry of the 'Brescia' Division attacking the Gazala line, 1942, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Warrior 169: Italian Soldier in North Africa.

FORCES

The British force should be chosen from the Western Desert Force Reinforced Platoon Selector with Rolls-Royce or Morris CS9 armoured cars (see here). Alternatively, the Jock Column Reinforced Platoon Selector can be used (see here).

The Italian force should be chosen from the 1940–41 Italian Reinforced Armoured Platoon Selector in this book (see here). The only tank choice can be L3 CV33/35 tankettes.

TOP SECRET

11TH HUSSARS WESTERN DESERT

The 11th Hussars, with their proud traditions as a cavalry unit, took to the role of motorised reconnaissance in their armoured cars like ducks to water. Nicknamed 'The Cherry Pickers' on account of their crimson dress trousers, they had been deployed to the Western Desert for several years before the outbreak of hostilities. They had become well used to the operation of their new 'chargers' in the harsh and difficult Egyptian desert. Operations against renegade tribesmen and deep patrols into the sand wastes meant that when it became time to fight the Italians they were experienced troops. Whilst cherishing their beloved but obsolete 1924 pattern Rolls-Royce armoured

car they also received a number of the more modern Morris CS9, which improved their capabilities. As part of the fledgling 7th Armoured Division, they were fully involved in operations against the Italians from the beginning of hostilities on 11 June.

SET-UP

The 6' x 4' table should be set up representing arid North African countryside. There should be a scattering of rocks, scrub, and patches of rough ground to break it up and a road stretching across the table from the centre of one long side to the other. A few patches of soft sand should complete the table.

DEPLOYMENT

Both players roll a die and the winner picks a long side of the table and declares which of his forces (if any) are being left in reserve; this can be up to half of his units rounding down. The other player then does the same. No units are set up on the table at the start of the game. Any units not left in reserve form each player's first wave.

Tankettes of the 1st Division pass Italian machine gun emplacements

Scenario 1: Frontier Battle

SPECIAL RULES
PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
Neither side is prepared for this engagement. Off-board preparatory bombardment is not available.

AIR SUPPORT
Neither side may call in air support. This is a hit-and-run raid and aircraft would not arrive quickly enough to influence the engagement.

NIGHT FIGHT
This scenario uses the night fighting rules found on page 219 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. The scenario should use the rules for a flare game.

OBJECTIVE
Both forces are attempting to immobilise or destroy the enemy.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1 both players must bring their first wave onto the table. The units can enter from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given a Run or an Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6 roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends. On a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Italian player scores 2 victory points for each Commonwealth unit destroyed and 1 victory point for any armoured car immobilised. (Operating behind enemy lines means that any immobilised Commonwealth vehicles would be destroyed the next day.)

The Commonwealth player scores 2 victory points for any Italian unit destroyed.

THE ITALIANS INVADE!

General Graziani was finally forced to act when an annoyed *Il Duce*, bruised after a meeting with Hitler, informed the dithering general that he would be sacked if he did not begin the invasion of Egypt.

In the early hours of 13 September, the Italians started the offensive with artillery barrages on Musaid and the coastal town of Sollum. Italian forces entering these towns expected strong resistance from the Western Desert Force, yet they found them deserted.

By the third day of the invasion, the Italians reached and captured the small, dusty town of Sidi Barrani, which Italian propaganda reported to be a large and modern city as it trumpeted its army's continuing successes. Whilst the Italians continued to advance facing minimal resistance it was certainly no blitzkrieg and they had only covered a mere 60 miles when they finally came to a halt.

Eight positions were identified by Italian engineers and construction commenced on defensive fortifications. These were tactics the Italians had developed to combat native tribesmen in the past, but they were completely inappropriate in the age of mechanised combat. Too far apart to be mutually supportive they also lacked the mobile forces required to reinforce each other.

Il Duce was overcome with joy at the advance of Italian forces into Egypt and even lamented that he would not have time for any further glorious victories as he believed Great Britain was on the verge of surrender.

The British on the other hand were extremely pleased that the offensive had come to a halt, as they would have found it extremely hard to stop any determined energetic assault further into Egypt. By December the overall commander of the Middle Eastern theatre, Archibald Wavell, assessed that the Italian advance was over for the foreseeable future and that it was time for the Commonwealth forces to take stock and start to plan offensive operations. A headlong attack against the forts was sensibly discounted and a plan using fast mechanised forces and a strategy of envelopment was chosen. Local command was given to the very experienced Richard O'Connor who had a good understanding of mechanised warfare and would be one of few Commonwealth

senior commanders to prove his worth in the Western Desert.

The 'raid' would bypass and cut off the forts – which could then be reduced at a leisurely pace – and then to strike deep into Libya targeting the port of Tobruk, an essential supply point for the Italians and a critically important site for supporting any deeper Commonwealth movements into Libya. Wavell was also on the verge of receiving a very important Christmas present in the form of 50 Matilda II infantry tanks.

The first stage of Operation *Compass* was to isolate the Italian forts. The initial move was to send two armoured brigades south of the fortress at Nibeiwa and then turn north to cut off the coastal roads isolating the Italian defenders from their supplies and reinforcements. Meanwhile, the Matildas of the 4th RTR and the infantry of the 4th Indian Division would engage the forts from the rear taking out each in succession. The operation was due to start on the night of 9 December.

Italian infantry move through an Italian town, supported by a Semovente assault gun

SCENARIO 2: FORT NIBEIWA, 9 DECEMBER 1940

The Indian infantry and the Matildas were able to form-up in the dark, undetected, as the Italians were being distracted by harassing fire from the 7th Rajput Regiment to the east. Just after 06:00 the assault force moved towards the north-west corner of the fort and its entrance. In the gloom, the Commonwealth forces picked out the unmistakable silhouettes of at least 20 tanks, a completely unexpected and unwelcome sight. Unluckily for the Italians, this force of 23 M11/39 medium tanks was largely unmanned with its crews asleep. The Matildas were soon among them shooting up the helpless vehicles whilst gunning down sleepy crews as they scrambled to their vehicles. A few M11s were started up but they proved to be no match for the infantry tanks and were quickly destroyed or overwhelmed by the Indian infantry advancing with fixed bayonets. Although the perimeter was quickly breached, the camp itself was a warren of trenches, small emplacements, and piles of stores providing cover for desperate Italian troops as they tried to hold back the enemy swarming through the camp. Antitank guns were turned to face inwards whilst small groups of Italian infantry attempted suicidal grenade attacks against the lumbering Matildas. For the next two and a half hours, a desperate battle was fought in what one Italian described as "the nearest thing to hell he had ever seen."

Italian medium mortar team

OPPOSING FORCES

The scenario is designed to be played with unequal forces, the Commonwealth player having a 25% points advantage over the Italian player (e.g. if the Italian player has 1000 points, the Commonwealth player may have 1250 points). Although, historically, the Commonwealth forces were greatly outnumbered they were able to concentrate their attack on an enemy distracted by feints.

The Commonwealth force is chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. As the infantry are mostly Indian troops, you may use the Commonwealth national characteristics (see here). If the Commonwealth player takes tanks, Matilda IIs should be chosen.

Italian forces are picked from the 1940–43 The War in Africa Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* book. Note if tanks are taken only CV 33/35 and M11/39 may be selected.

Italian infantry defend the perimeter of Fort Nibeiwa

SET-UP

The scenario is played on a 6' x 4' table. The barrier that represents the perimeter of the Fort Nibeiwa road stretches from the middle of one short side of the table to the middle of the opposite side, bisecting the table. Various rough

wall pieces, sandbag emplacements, and barbed wire can represent this.

The top half of the table represents the interior of the fort and the bottom half the exterior whence the Commonwealth attack. The lower half should be should be set up representing arid North African countryside. There should be a scattering of rocks, scrub, and patches of rough ground to break it up. Some of these should be small rock outcrops giving hard cover.

The fort interior should include various items of cover; these can be tents, and other camp paraphernalia, piles of stores, crates, barrels, and static vehicles (parked up for the night and just used as terrain pieces). In general, these should all give soft cover.

Two small buildings should be placed within 12" of the top long edge of the board representing some hastily built barracks and officers' quarters.

Up to four sandbagged circular emplacements no more than 4" wide can be placed in the perimeter but they must be placed no less than 12" from each other. Finally, a gap 12" wide should be placed in the middle representing the main entrance to the fort.

Scenario 2 : Fort Nibeiwa

DEPLOYMENT

The Italian player must deploy first. Half of his units must be deployed anywhere within the fort perimeter (top side of the table). The remaining units begin off table and may enter the Italian long table edge on Turn 1 using an Advance or Run order, or they may be brought on as reserves.

The Commonwealth player starts on the table and may choose up to 50% of his forces as reserves. The remainder, which make up his first wave, will enter the table on Turn 1 using Advance or Run orders from the Commonwealth edge of the table.

SPECIAL RULES

FORT NIBEIWA PERIMETER

The perimeter wall of Fort Nibeiwa is constructed of piled stones, sandbag walls and a good amount of barbed wire. For the purposes of this game, the following rules should be used:

- The perimeter is an obstacle.
- Tracked vehicles crossing destroy a section 4″ wide on passing through.
- Engineers crossing may remove a section of the perimeter 6″ wide.
- Infantry and artillery units directly behind the perimeter gain hard cover. Vehicles gain soft cover.
- The perimeter does not block line of site but will give a soft cover modifier to any unit which takes fire from a unit whose line of sight crosses it.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Commonwealth player rolls a die, on a 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the Italian positions (see page 131 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). On a result of 1, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIR SUPPORT

Neither side has air support so no forward air observers should be chosen.

NIGHT FIGHT

This scenario should be fought as a dawn assault scenario (see the night fighting rules on page 220 in the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

OBJECTIVE

The Italian player must hold position and eliminate the enemy. The Commonwealth player must capture Fort Nibeiwa and destroy the defending force.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many game turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up the victory points as follows. If a side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and the honours are shared – a draw!

The Italian player scores 2 victory points for each enemy unit destroyed.

The Commonwealth player scores 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed. A controlled objective building is worth 3 victory points and a contested building is worth 1 victory point. To contest an objective you need only have some of your infantry models within 2" of it after the final turn. To control an objective building there must be some of your infantry models in it during the final turn and no enemy infantry within 2". Victory points for an objective building are not cumulative, it either can be controlled or contested, not both.

AFTERMATH

Despite the Italian defenders fighting with a fierce determination, once the Matildas and their supporting infantry were inside the perimeter the issue was never in any doubt. The British tanks smashed all defences and proved invulnerable to Italian anti-tank fire. Resistance collapsed and 4,000 Italians surrendered.

There was little time for celebration for the tank crews as they were due to support the next attack on Fort Ummar West within the hour. This was also a hard fought battle but marked the end of resistance with Rabia and Sofafi falling

without a fight and the final objective, Sidi Barrani, taken the next day. Despite thousands of Italian prisoners being taken, other Italian units streamed westwards towards the supposed safety of the Libyan border.

Compass was progressing far better than expected and when Fort Capuzzo was retaken the Italians had been evicted from Egypt.

O'Connor now saw the potential for pursuing the demoralised Italians perhaps as far as Tripoli.

However, large numbers of Italians who had managed to retreat into the ports of Sollum and Bardia would need to be evicted if the advance were to continue.

With the withdrawal of the 4th Indian Division from the front, O'Connor received reinforcements from the 6th Australian Division which had recently arrived from Palestine and was already acclimatised to the desert conditions. The Australians were determined and hard fighters and had been waiting to get at the enemy for some time.

Italian Infantry Squad

SCENARIO 3: THE BATTLE FOR BARDIA, 4 JANUARY 1941

Italian forces might have pulled out of Bardia of their own accord had not Mussolini intervened urging the garrison to "stand, at whatever cost."

Bardia was an important asset possessing a small harbour and a waterworks, capable of supplying Commonwealth troops advancing into Libya.

Units of the 6th Australian Division were moved to the perimeter surrounding Bardia whilst the 7th Armoured Division harassed the defenders and prowled the lines.

Bardia was a large target of some 55 square miles. The defences on paper were formidable consisting of minefields, a wide anti-tank ditch, and two lines of fortified posts behind a double layer of barbed wire. Each post consisted of a circular concrete trench some 40 yards in diameter with emplacements for a 47mm anti-tank gun and three machine guns.

Estimates of the number of defenders were 25,000, yet it was later discovered to be closer to 45,000 with elements of over five divisions, 300 pieces of artillery and over 100 tanks of which 40 were M11 Medium tanks.

On 1 January, the WDF officially became XIII Corps.

At 02:30 on Friday, 3 January 1941, the infantry moved past the Matilda tanks of the 7th RTR, taking up positions 1,000 yards from the enemy wire. At 05:20, an artillery barrage by 118 guns lit the sky and crashed down on the Italian defenders.

Infantry engineers, who were by that time within 100 yards of the defences, cut the wire for the infantry and created lanes in the anti-tank ditch for the Matildas.

Breaches in the wire allowed the Australians to take the fight directly to the Italian defensive posts. Within an hour enough had been taken to allow follow-up infantry and more tanks to break into the main camp where resistance was fairly light. Over 8,000 shocked troops surrendered to the formidable-looking Aussies.

Over the next two days, the Commonwealth forces continued mopping up the defences around Bardia before turning their attention to the town itself. Bardia stood on the coastal highway and had a large water pumping and treatment plant, vital to support the army in its advance. In the early morning of 3 January, the defensive perimeter was breached and the next day, the Australians entered the town. A moderately built-up area with many solidly constructed single-storey buildings that gave the defenders ample opportunity to set up machine gun posts, anti-tank guns, and snipers in ambush positions. The few remaining L3 CV33/35 light tanks were also present with the narrow streets giving more opportunity to move in safety.

Italian Bersaglieri flank the Australian advance

FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the Italian army.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. The force is Australian, apart from any tanks that are selected, which are British.

Italian platoons should be chosen from the 1940–43 The War in Africa Reinforced Platoon Selector in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* book. All Italian units must be Inexperienced. The following vehicles may be selected: AB 40, L3/35, L3/35cc, L3/35lf, and M11/39.

SET-UP

The 6' x 4' table represents part of the town of Bardia. There should be several buildings placed on the table; most of these will be low and flat roofed. A larger building should be placed in the centre of the table. This is a key objective. Players should use the rules for fighting in buildings in the *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 120.
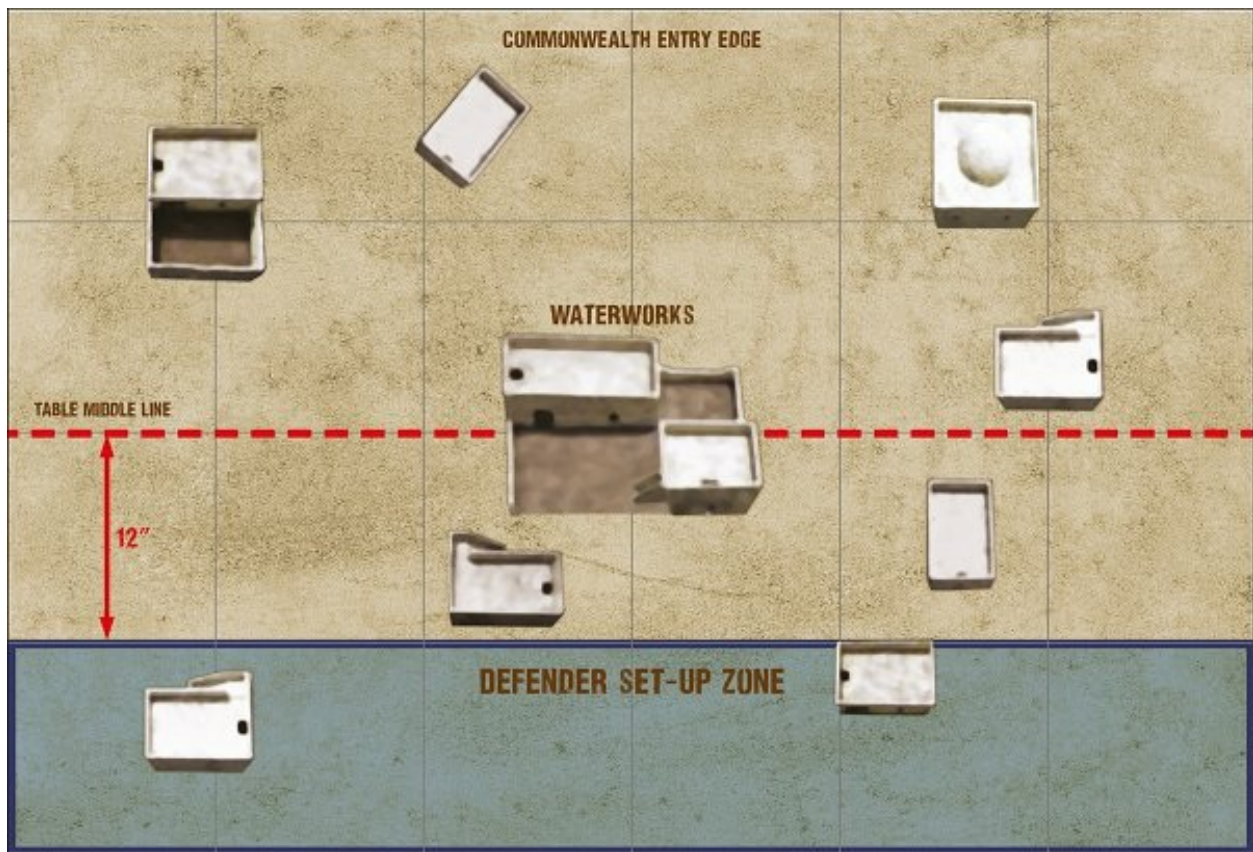
Scenario 3: The Battle for Bardia

DEPLOYMENT

The Italian player is the defender. The Italian side must set up at least half of its force on the table in the set-up zone, but one infantry unit may be set up in the central building. Any units not included are left in reserve.

The Commonwealth side must nominate at least half its force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve. The Commonwealth player may use outflanking manoeuvres.

The players will need five objective markers. Each player takes two markers and the last is placed in the central building. After the defender has deployed, starting with the defender, players take turns to place an objective marker on the table. These must be at least 18" apart and must be at least 6" from the player's table edge.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must seize this area of the town. The defender has to prevent this.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Commonwealth player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

Both sides may use forward air observers.

Italian officers confer beside a Carro Commando vehicle

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, the Commonwealth player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, but may only be given an Advance order if the Italian 'Defensive strategy' trait is being used. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends. On a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for holding objectives. To hold an objective there must be a model from one of your infantry or artillery units within 3" of the objective and there must be no enemy unit of any type within 3" of it. Each objective scores 1 victory point, except for the key objective which scores 2 points.

If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

AFTERMATH

After tough fighting with the Italian 300th Frontier Guard Regiment, resistance was gradually worn down and by the afternoon of 5 January the town and the undamaged waterworks were in Commonwealth hands.

The newly blooded Australians had scored a decisive victory taking Bardia and bagging over 40,000 prisoners for the loss of around 450 killed or wounded. Perhaps the real windfall was the capture of 700 motorised vehicles, the majority in good working order.

British Daimler Dingo

ON TO TOBRUK AND THE RACE TO BEDA FOMM

The plans for the taking Tobruk closely followed those of the Bardia operation with the tanks of the 7th Armoured Brigade moving to the south and west of Tobruk, cutting it off from any reinforcements and capturing the airfield of El Adem. The 'Digger' infantry followed and began the much-practised task of isolating and destroying Italian defensive posts. As at Bardia they were accompanied by Matildas, but this time they also had the support of the Australian A Squadron of the 6th Cavalry which had re-equipped itself with 12 Italian M11 medium tanks now resplendent in white Kangaroo identifying markings to avoid any 'Blue on Blue' fire accidents. After only two days of hard fighting Tobruk fell.

Churchill now encouraged Wavell to push O'Connor on towards Benghazi at best speed. However, this would require a dash of several hundred miles along the coastal road, breaking through the Italian defences at Derna. Such an advance though was beyond the capabilities of the remaining Matilda tanks. O'Connor then came up with a bold and ambitious plan worthy of a Rommel, Patton, or Zhukov. Rather than advancing the tanks along the coastal road, he would send them south west towards Mechili and then westwards across the desert plains until they were well south of Benghazi. They would then move back up to the coastal road cutting the main route between Tripoli and Benghazi. At the same time the Australians would continue up the coastal road to take Derna and then move directly towards Benghazi. O'Connor hoped that the Italians, expecting another envelopment like Bardia and Tobruk, would retreat before they could be surrounded. If that happened and the 4th and 7th Armoured Brigades were blocking the way, the entire Italian army in Libya could be destroyed in the open.

An A12 Matilda infantry tank refuels

SCENARIO 4: TANK CLASH AT MECHILI, 24 JANUARY 1941

Whilst the Australians advanced to the outskirts of Derna, the 4th Armoured Brigade closed in on Mechili. As they advanced cautiously under moonlight, they were completely unaware of an unpleasant surprise waiting for them. At dawn they arrived at their jump-off point to rest and resupply in preparation for their attack on the Mechili fortress the next day. However, disconcerting reports were received of enemy tanks in the area and the disorganised brigade accelerated its preparations though suspecting only a few isolated enemy vehicles.

They were actually facing the only effective Italian Armoured unit in Libya, the *Brigata Corazzata Speciale* or 'Special Armoured Brigade'. With 57 M13/40 medium tanks, its motivated officers and men were eager to get to grips with British armour. On 24 January, the forces met outside Mechili. Unsure of what they were facing, the British sent several Vickers light tanks to scout out the opposition. Within minutes, they were returning at high speed leaving several of their number behind as burning wrecks, ambushed by Italian tanks. The British response was sluggish; they simply could not believe that Italian tanks could pose any threat. The appearance of yet more enemy tanks changed that opinion very quickly and a classic armour battle was joined.

Scenario 4: Tank Clash at Mechili

FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the Italian army.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–41 British Commonwealth Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. The British tanks and armoured cars should be chosen from Morris CS9, Marmon-Herrington, Recce Carrier, Mk VIB, A9, A10, or A13 cruiser tanks.

The Italian platoon should be chosen from the 1940–41 Italian Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. All Italian units must be Regular. The following tanks or armoured cars may be selected: AB40, CV33/35, M11/39, and M13/40. Historically, the infantry should be Bersaglieri infantry sections.

The Brigata Corazzata Speciale heads to intercept 4th Armoured Brigade

SET-UP

The 6' x 4' table represents the terrain around the small fort of Mechili. The majority of the terrain counts as open ground so the players should scatter various appropriate terrain features on the table to break up the lines of sight such as those suggested in the desert terrain section here, especially sandstone outcroppings and depressions.

DEPLOYMENT

This is a classic meeting engagement and both players roll a die, the highest scorer chooses which long side of the table will be their baseline. Both players then choose up to half of their units to be reserves with the remainder being their first wave.

SPECIAL RULES

CONFUSED FIGHT

The Battle of Mechili was a confused affair with reinforcements from each side turning up from unexpected directions as both forces tried to concentrate and decisively engage their opponents. All units entering the table from reserve can

enter from any point on any table edge, except the one from which the last enemy reserve entered that same turn. This means that at the beginning of the following turn, the first reserve can come in from any table edge!

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
Neither side may use a preparatory bombardment.

AIRSTRIKES
Due to the spontaneous and wild nature of this engagement , no forward air observers may be used.

HULL DOWN
Players are recommended to use the hull down optional rules from page 161.

WORN OUT CRUISERS
The majority of the 4th Armoured Brigade's cruiser tanks were almost on their last legs and mechanically unreliable. Any British cruiser tank (A9, A10, and A13) that is given a Run order should roll a die. If a 6 is rolled then the tank has temporarily broken down or stalled. Replace the Run order with a Down order.

OBJECTIVE
Both sides must attempt to destroy the enemy whilst preserving their own forces.

Bedford Dropside truck

FIRST TURN
During Turn 1, both players must bring their first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge and must be

given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for destroying enemy units. Two points are scored for each opposing unit destroyed. One point is scored for each enemy vehicle which is immobilised. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

Preparing good fields of fire, a British MMG lies in wait.

AFTERMATH

The Mechili engagement developed into a classic desert encounter as 50 British cruiser tanks clashed with a similar number of Italian medium tanks. The account of the battle indicates that the Italians performed well above the expectations of the British tankers who were guilty of not treating them with enough respect. Losses for most of the morning were fairly even and the result remained in some doubt. Unfortunately for the Italians, a tactical error in the early afternoon caused a group of M13s to become sky lined on a ridge against the bright sky. This gave the British gunners something to aim at and in a devastating volley of fire they destroyed seven M13s in just a few minutes. This broke up the Italian attack, and with news that the British 7th Armoured Brigade was approaching from the north, they sensibly pulled back. That night they executed a skilful withdrawal from under the noses of two British brigades, saving their men and vehicles from isolation and destruction.

To the north, the Australians moved on the Derna defences, expecting a hard-fought battle. However, when scouts approached the town the next day, the Italians had packed up and headed off towards Benghazi. Almost the entire Italian 10th Army was now on the road westwards. If the Commonwealth forces could spring their trap the war in North Africa might be brought to a triumphant close.

The dreaded German 88

SCENARIO 5: FOX KILLED IN THE OPEN, 5 FEBRUARY 1941

The 4th Armoured Brigade that would comprise the blocking force set off on its 150-mile adventure on the 4 February. In the vanguard, speeding ahead, were the 11th Hussars, the 1st King's Dragoon Guards motorised infantry, and C Battery of the 4th Royal Horse Artillery. For anti-tank and anti-aircraft support the force took nine Bofors guns mounted on portees and a few truck-mounted 20mm Breda anti-aircraft guns. Led by Lieutenant-Colonel Combe of the 11th Hussars it took the name 'Combeforce'. Charging ahead of the tanks, the formation headed towards the main Tripoli–Benghazi road at Sidi Saleh, just south of Beda Fomm.

At midday on 5 February Combeforce arrived at the road, finding it deserted. Combe immediately ordered the creation of a roadblock and awaited the arrival of the Italian 10th Army. The terrain around the roadblock was mostly flat with little cover and allowed virtually uninterrupted fields of fire. The armoured cars were deployed to the north and south to avoid any outflanking manoeuvres whilst the infantry dug in astride the road supported by the 25pdrs. At 14:30 the leading elements of the Italian forces appeared and stopped in confusion on sighting the roadblock.

The first unit to make any organised attack was the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment which mounted three separate attacks against the road block. These were thrown back, but with the arrival of Italian artillery pieces and a few medium tanks, Combeforce was clearly about to receive a more deadly attack.

However, explosions were seen amongst the Italian vehicles, heralding the arrival of the cruiser tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade. As night fell, the roadblock still barred the retreating Italians.

The most serious and dangerous attack came in the early evening when a group of M 13s along with a sizable contingent of infantry broke past the British tank cordon and threatened the Commonwealth flank. In the fading light, the two forces engaged viciously at extremely close ranges. Italian tanks and Bofors

portees took each other on in a deadly duel, whilst the two infantry forces came together in hand-to-hand combat. Whilst a few tanks and trucks broke through to the west, the attack was repulsed and the Italians fell back.

FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the Italian army.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. Tank choices can be substituted with Bofors portees. (These light anti-tank guns may be deployed en portee or dug-in within the Commonwealth deployment zones.)

British Infantry advance supported by Matilda II infantry tanks, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Warrior 160: Desert Rat 1940-1943.

The Italian platoon should be chosen from the 1940–41 Italian Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. All Italian units must be Regular. The following tanks or armoured cars may be selected: AB40, CV33/35, M11/39, and M13/40.

The Italian player should have a 20% point advantage over the Commonwealth defenders. (e.g. 1000 points versus 1200 points).

SET-UP

The scenario is played on a 6' x 4' gaming surface divided into three zones as shown below. Each zone measures 2' x 3'. Zone 1 is mostly open ground with a scattering of sandstone outcrops and patches of bushes. Zone 2 is similar to

Zone 1 but has a wadi crossing the table from one long edge to the other. Zone 3 should have a couple of depressions and various camp paraphernalia such as tents, crates, fuel drums, etc. A single large tent should be placed in the centre of Zone 3 representing the Combeforce HQ.
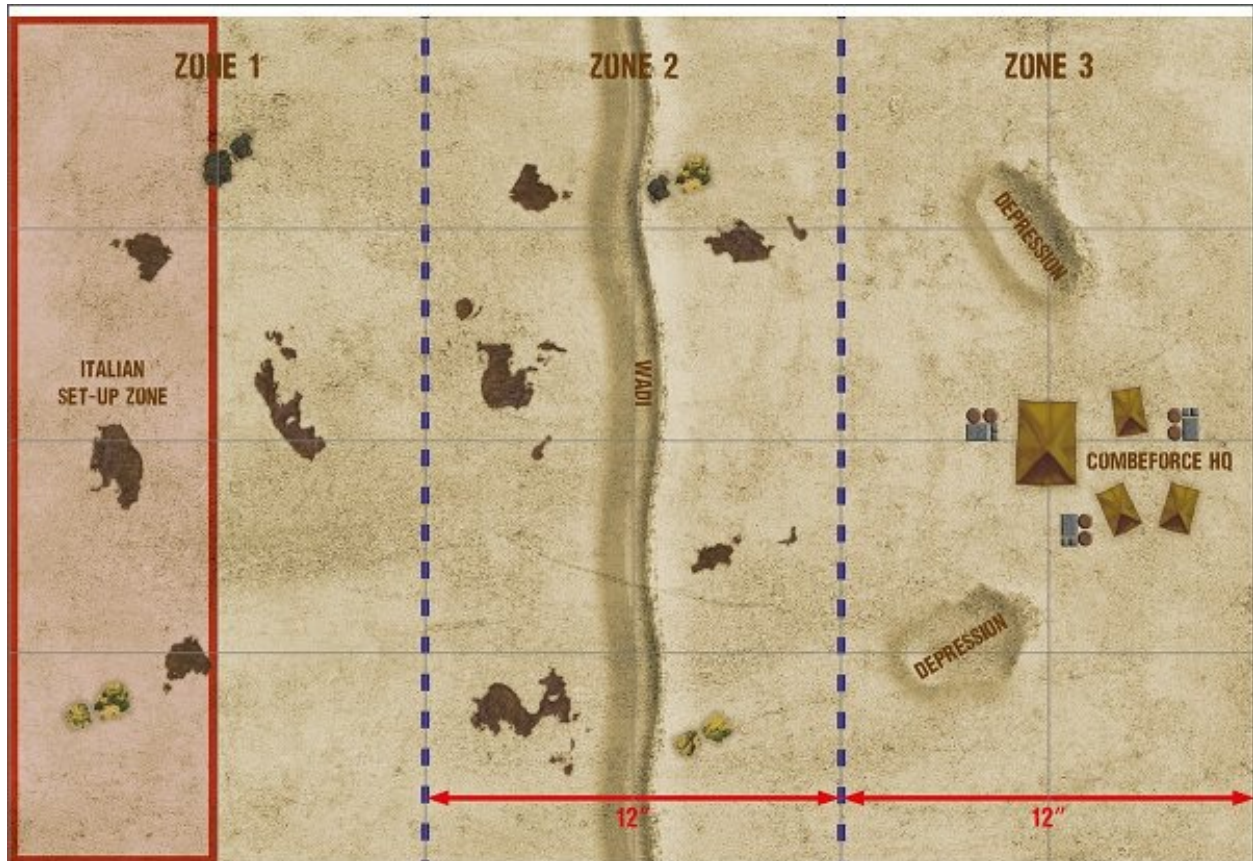
Scenario 5: Fox Killed in the Open

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player deploys first. Half the British units rounded down must be deployed in Zone 2 and the other units in Zone 3.

The Italian player is the attacker and must designate at least half of his units as the first wave and these can be deployed in Zone 1 up to 12" from the short table edge.

SPECIAL RULES
PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
The Italian player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes

the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* page 131). On a roll of 1 or less the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

No forward air observers may be used.

OUTFLANKING

Outflanking Italian units are given a 12" head start, i.e. they have moved 12" along the flanks before the game has begun.

ITALIAN DESPERATION

Many Italians realised that this attack was likely to be their last chance to break through Combeforce and avoid a humiliating defeat. The attacking force was determined to keep advancing at all costs.

All Italian units may use the 'Iron hulls, iron hearts' trait in this scenario – even non-armoured vehicles

OBJECTIVE

The Italians' objective is to push as far forward through the British defences as possible and overrun the enemy HQ. The Commonwealth must stall the Italians' advance and prevent a breakthrough into their rear areas.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 7, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up victory point as follows. The Italian player scores 1 victory point for each unit in Zone 2 at the end of Turn 4 (not including any outflanking units) and a further victory point for any unit in Zone 3 at the end of the game.

The Commonwealth player scores 2 victory points for each unit eliminated.

British Infantry advance over the open desert

AFTERMATH

Back at the roadblock the defenders were coming under increasing amounts of artillery fire, but Italian attacks were uncoordinated with each being defeated in detail. The final attack took place in the dawn light of the third day when the remaining Italian medium tanks supported by infantry desperately assaulted the roadblock. Once again, the fighting was at close quarters with the portees engaging the tanks in a seesaw duel that saw increasing casualties on both sides. The cruiser tanks of 4th Armoured engaging the M13s from hull-down positions took a dreadful toll of the Italian tanks. With the loss of their armour support, the Italian infantry lost the will to fight and surrendered en-masse. All along the column, white flags began to appear as Italian soldiers dropped their weapons and with their hands in the air trudged towards the exhausted Commonwealth units to surrender. The final haul at Beda Fomm was 25,000 prisoners, 216 guns, 1,500 trucks, and nearly 100 tanks, many of which were in serviceable condition. On hearing the news of the total Italian defeat, O'Connor signalled Wavell in Cairo with a message simply stating "Fox killed in the open."

Operation *Compass* had been an incredible success producing results almost beyond belief. The entire Italian army in Libya, except for garrison forces in

Tripoli, had been captured or destroyed. Over 110,000 prisoners including 22 generals were now miserably marching into captivity.

Despite this crushing defeat inflicted on the Italians, O'Connor was eager for more and wanted his troops to push on to the largely undefended Libyan capital, Tripoli. Its capture would remove the last traces of Italian influence and close off the last port the Axis could use to reinforce Libya. However, the situation in Greece now took priority in the British government's eyes and O'Connor was given orders to hold position and consolidate. He was forced to watch his most experienced troops including the Australian 6th Division and almost all of his armour march back east to bolster Commonwealth forces being sent to the European mainland on a doomed operation.

The failure to take Tripoli would be a decision that would come back to haunt the British Empire as a new phase in the Desert War was beginning. Tripoli would now become the gateway for a new and far more challenging threat to the Imperial Middle East: the *Afrika Korps* and its talented and highly resourceful leader, 'The Desert Fox' Erwin Rommel.

OPERATION
SONNENBLUME

Forced to accept that the Italians were on the verge of collapse in North Africa, Hitler authorised the execution of a long-planned reinforcement of Libya with German forces. On 6 February 1941, Rommel was confirmed as the commander of German forces in Africa the 'AUFKLÄRUNGSTAB Rommel', which later Hitler decreed should be renamed the *Deutsches Afrika Korps* (D.A.K). The core of this force which arrived on the frontline in Libya in April 1941 was the 5th Panzer Regiment of the 3rd Panzer Division along with a number of support formations. These units were renamed the 5th Light Division and later took the designation of 21st Panzer Division. As more forces flowed into Tripoli elements of a second Panzer division, the 15th, bolstered its strength. As part of the agreement between Rome and Berlin, Rommel would report to the Italian commander in Libya, General Gariboldi.

Rommel's initial assessment of the Italians was downbeat suggesting that a continued Commonwealth offensive could not be stopped. Fortunately for the Axis, Rommel's analysis was not tested as the *Compass* offensive ended and any additional offensive moves in Libya were put on indefinite hold as Commonwealth forces were siphoned off to take part in the doomed Greek expedition. Rommel now had time to get his forces ready, training them in the heat, and 'tropicalising' his vehicles to operate in desert conditions.

First contacts between German forces and the Commonwealth defenders took place in mid-February as reconnaissance patrols of the two forces began to encounter each other on a regular basis and small skirmishes resulted. These were generally between mixed German armoured car and motorbike units and Commonwealth armoured car and light tank groups. Although the renowned 11th Hussars had now replaced their old Rolls-Royces with Morris and Marmon-Herrington variants, the big German SdKfz 232 and the lighter SdKfz 222 armoured cars armed with their 20mm autocannons proved a nasty shock.

Aggressive reconnaissance by the *Afrika Korps* did not provoke any serious Commonwealth responses. For Rommel this was enlightening and he began to suspect that there may be no significant enemy forces facing him in Cyrenaica. He therefore began to push his Italian superiors to prepare for offensive actions to take back Libya. To the cautious Italians this seemed a step too far and they

called on the German high command to bring their reckless general under control. Amongst the Commonwealth staff, a clear appreciation of the danger that German forces could present was not ignored, but they simply could not believe that Rommel would be ready any time soon. Despite many requests for reinforcements for Cyrenaica, they were all declined. Rommel saw an opportunity and he would not be denied. After gaining Italian approval for a limited offensive, the *Afrika Korps* and the Italians advanced on Commonwealth positions at Mersa Brega on 31 March.

Mersa Brega's British defences falls under attack from elements of the 10th Machine Gun Battalion

SCENARIO 6: MERSA BREGA, 31 MARCH 1941

After heavy dive-bombing by Ju-87 Stukas, a mixed force of Italian and German armour engaged the cruisers of the 5th Battalion of the Royal Tank Regiment in the first armoured clash between German and British tanks in North Africa. Although the attack was initially repulsed, six cruisers were lost whilst three German medium tanks were destroyed.

Meanwhile elements of the German 8th Machine Gun Battalion was held up in their assault on Mersa Brega by a series of minefields and barbed wire obstructions laid in front of the thin Commonwealth defence manned by a support group attached to the 5th RTR. After carefully crossing the minefields and cutting the wire, the Germans were able to assault the Commonwealth defenders who were clustered around a small group of dwellings and a mosque.

FORCES

This scenario is between an attacking German force and a defending Commonwealth force. The German player has a 100% points advantage over the Commonwealth player (e.g. if the Commonwealth player has 500pts, the German player may have 1000pts). Commonwealth platoons are selected from the 1940-42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. German platoons are selected from the 1941 DAK Light Division Reinforced Infantry Platoon Selector. The German player may also take up to one additional Heer Pioneer Squad in addition to any mentioned in the theatre selector.

Scenario 6: Mersa Brega

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' feet gaming surface, with the long edges being designated the Commonwealth and German edges. Four small buildings and one larger representing the Mersa Brega mosque are placed in a Commonwealth set-up in an area 2' x 2' square centred on the Commonwealth table edge (see map). The Commonwealth player may also place three minefields and four 6" strips of barbed wire anywhere on the perimeter of the group of buildings (see map). The rest of the table should be scattered with clumps of vegetation, bits of drystone wall and sandstone outcroppings to provide various levels of cover.

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player begins with at least half of his forces in the Commonwealth set-up area. These may start the game dug-in or inside the buildings. The remainder of the forces are in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt*

Action rulebook). They may outflank. The German player starts with all of his forces off table and must designate at least half of his units as the first wave. The remainder are in reserve. Outflanking can be attempted.

SPECIAL RULES
PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
There are no preparatory bombardments.

AIRSTRIKES
The Luftwaffe owned the sky. The German player may choose a forward air observer.

BARBED WIRE
Since its original introduction in the 19th century, the prospect of getting 'hung up' on its steel thorns gives most infantrymen nightmares.

The effects of barbed wire are as follows:

- Barbed wire counts as an obstacle.
- Impassable to wheeled vehicles. Tracked vehicles crossing barbed wire destroy a section 4″ wide on passing.
- If infantry are given an Advance order to cross barbed wire, they must always roll an order test even if they currently have no pin markers.
- Engineers can choose to remove a section of barbed wire 6″ wide when they cross it.

OBJECTIVE
The German forces must drive the enemy out of Mersa Brega. The Commonwealth forces are trying to eliminate as many German units as possible before retreating.

FIRST TURN
During Turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point along the German player's long table edge and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Commonwealth player claims 2 victory points for each enemy unit destroyed. The German player claims 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed and 2 victory points for every building which is unoccupied by Commonwealth forces at the end of the game.

Historical notes: Any German tanks should be Panzer I or Panzer II. Commonwealth tanks should be limited to the Mk VI light tank.

Afrika Korps MMG team

AFTERMATH

The Commonwealth forces retreated from Mersa Brega during the night leaving Rommel inspecting empty defences. Despite the protests of the Italians, he decided to advance aggressively towards Benghazi. Moving forward the Axis forces met little resistance from an obviously retreating Commonwealth force. Displaying his reputation as a risk taker, Rommel split his forces into two. One element proceeded up the coast road towards Benghazi, the other struck across the desert towards Derna to cut off Commonwealth units in the Benghazi area. This was almost a mirror image of O'Connor's advance on Beda Fomm only a

couple of months earlier with a similar objective of isolating and destroying the enemy's army.

Rommel directed these operations from the air, dropping messages to his commanders urging them to advance.

German armoured reconnaissance forces moving in the deeper desert encountered the understrength 3rd Armoured Brigade which had retreated ahead of the Axis advance. Hearing this news, Rommel sent armoured elements of the 5th Panzer Division to hit the British unit in the flank. Although the brigade escaped encirclement, its rapid retreat resulted in virtual disintegration with the loss of all tanks.

On 4 April Benghazi fell, but not before the defenders had blown up 4,000 tons of captured Italian ammunition. All across Cyrenaica Commonwealth forces continued to fall back with the Australians moving towards Tobruk and the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade concentrating on Mechili. This near rout of Commonwealth forces was christened by some as 'The Benghazi Handicap'.

On 6 April the Commonwealth suffered an unexpected and unwelcome set back when both General O'Connor and his subordinate Neame were captured by German forces when their staff car became lost. O'Connor was a great loss to the Imperial forces, he was a commander who had appreciated the complexities of desert combat and understood the correct use of armoured forces. Had he remained at liberty he might have had the skills to match Rommel and the future course of the desert campaign might have been very different. Rommel left the majority of his forces to advance up the coast towards Tobruk, while he took command of the assault on Mechili to the south as its capture was a key element of his plan to envelop the Commonwealth forces. Not wishing to assault the Commonwealth positions, Rommel ordered his artillery to bombard the outpost and sent an emissary that evening to demand the force's surrender. This was rejected out of hand as were two similar demands the next day. Frustrated, Rommel gathered his forces for an attack. With defeat inevitable, the Indian motor brigade attempted to break out. Several rear-guard units sacrificed themselves to keep the Axis forces at bay whilst the majority escaped eastwards to safety. Although Mechili was back in Axis hands, this two day delay to Rommel's timetable allowed the Australians to fall back to Tobruk where the resourceful 'Diggers' immediately set to work to rebuild and improve its

defences. Despite having retaken the vast majority of Cyrenaica, the continued resistance of the port of Tobruk would become a thorn in Rommel's side.

Australians man their 25pdr artillery piece

THE SIEGE OF TOBRUK

Rommel understood that Tobruk could not just be isolated and starved out. It was a port, and with the British Empire's naval superiority in the Mediterranean, could be supplied and reinforced. Tanks, men, and guns arrived daily to bolster the defences whilst the Royal Navy and anti-aircraft guns took a toll of the frequent Luftwaffe raids. Whilst Tobruk remained in enemy hands the threat of a potential breakout, severing Rommel's supply lines, would continue to be a major concern. For Rommel the capture of Tobruk became an obsession.

Tobruk was finally surrounded by Axis forces on 11 April. Due to poor intelligence Rommel was not aware of the number of troops he faced and believed its capture a foregone conclusion. The garrison was composed of 15,000 Australian, 10,000 British and smaller numbers of Indian troops. The garrison had also just received some welcome reinforcement in the form of 22 cruiser, 12 light and 12 Matilda II tanks. Although few were in particularly good condition, the 'Tobruk Tanks' as they became known would prove useful as dug-in pillboxes or a mobile reserve to plug holes in the defences.

A number of 2pdr portees were also delivered and made available as an anti-tank 'fire brigade', going to wherever they were needed most.

With its extensive trench works, Tobruk resembled a scene from a World War I battlefield. This proved to be the perfect environment for the garrison commander Major-General Leslie Morshead – a former battalion commander with the Australian Imperial Force in Flanders during World War I. An unforgiving disciplinarian, Morshead was nicknamed 'Ming the Merciless' by his troops after the villain in the 1930s Flash Gordon stories. He knew that the key to keeping the initiative was to control no-man's land with aggressive patrolling and to keep the enemy guessing. It was also a form of warfare that perfectly suited the Australian troops.

Rommel called for an immediate attack which he estimated would quickly eject the 'demoralised' defenders. However, he had not reckoned on Australian tenacity.

The attack commenced on 11 April with the vanguard of the newly arrived

15th Panzer Division. As its Panzers were still en-route, the attack was mounted by a brigade of infantry and anti-tank guns. The attack was hastily planned and executed and was easily broken up by Commonwealth artillery fire including the 'Diggers Bush Artillery' – a formation of captured enemy guns.

Later that day, the 5th Panzer managed to gather up sufficient tanks for an attack on the southern perimeter. Twenty-five Panzers and twenty Italian tanks assaulted the defences of the 20th Australian Infantry Brigade. The attack quickly ran into trouble as tanks became bogged down in an anti-tank ditch and an uncharted minefield. Whilst the Axis forces were disrupted, a swift counter-attack by British cruiser tanks forced an untidy withdrawal. Similar attacks 24 hours later produced the same frustrating results for the Axis. It was now clear to Rommel that he faced a determined foe whose defeat would require a more carefully planned approach.

Make every bullet count!

SCENARIO 7: RAS EL MADAUUR, 13 APRIL 1941

Luftwaffe reconnaissance had revealed what Rommel believed to be a weak spot in the defences. He concluded that a full combined arms night attack would penetrate the defences. Once the Panzers had broken through, Tobruk's capitulation was likely to be rapid. An intense artillery barrage fell on the dug-in defenders whilst German infantry and pioneers moved forward to deal with the barbed wire and anti-tank defences.

FORCES

This scenario is between an attacking German force and a defending Commonwealth force. The German player has a 100% points advantage over the Commonwealth player (e.g. if the Commonwealth player has 500pts, the German player may have 1000pts). Commonwealth platoons are selected from the 1940-42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. German platoons are selected from the 1941 DAK Panzer Division Armoured Platoon Selector. The German player may also take up to one additional Heer Pioneer Squad in addition to any mentioned in the Theatre Selector.
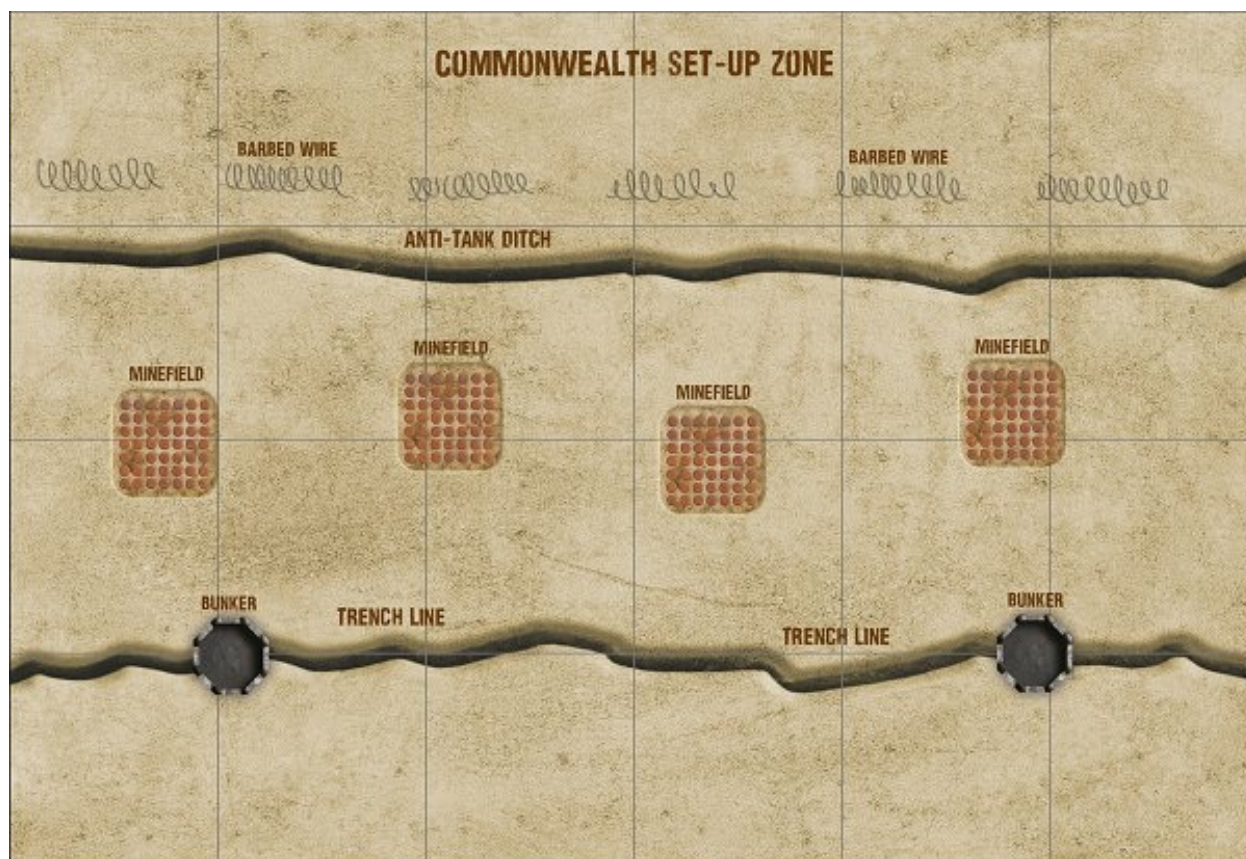
Scenario 7: Ras el Madauur

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' feet gaming surface, with the long edges being designated the Commonwealth and German edges. Two bunkers are placed 6" from the Commonwealth edge, no closer than 12" from each other. The bunkers may only house one unit at a time. A trench line runs from short edge to short edge, 2" in front of the two bunkers. Eight strips of barbed wire, each measuring 6" long, are placed 12" from the German table edge to form a broken line from short edge to short edge, the Commonwealth player places the barbed wire. In between the trench and the barbed wire line, the Commonwealth player may also place four minefields.

Dig In! Commonwealth troops perapre to receive hostiles

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player begins with at least half of his forces set up anywhere between his own table edge and up to and including the trench line. Up to one unit may begin the game inside each of the bunkers in the Commonwealth set-up area. The remainder of the forces are in reserve (see page 132 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). The German player starts with all of his forces off table and must designate at least half of his units as the first wave. The remainder are in reserve. Outflanking can be attempted.

TOP SECRET

THE RULES OF CRICKET TOBRUK STYLE

The rules of cricket between Australian 20th Brigade and the British 107th Royal Horse Artillery, July 1941:

   Rule 1: Play to be continuous until 1800 hours, except by interference by air raids. Play will NOT, repeat NOT, cease during shell fire.

   Rule 2: Shirts, shorts, long socks, sand shoes if available. Italian helmets will not be worn or any other fancy head gear. Umpires will wear a white coat (if available) and will carry a loaded rifle with fixed bayonet.

   Rule 3: All players to be searched for concealed weapons before start of play, and all weapons found, other than S T grenades, Mills bombs, & revolvers will be confiscated. (This does not apply to umpires.)

   Rule 4: The Manager will make medical arrangements & have an ambulance in attendance.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The German player mounts a preparatory bombardment (*Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). Roll a die for each strip of barbed wire. On the roll of a 6, it has been destroyed by the bombardment and is removed.

AIRSTRIKES

Ju-87 Stuka and Ju-88 bombers pounded Tobruk mercilessly. The German player may choose an air force forward observer

TRENCH LINE

The trench line counts as an obstacle for movement purposes but infantry and teams count as dug-in (see here).

BARBED WIRE

Since its original introduction in the 19th century, the prospect of getting 'hung up' on its steel thorns gives most infantrymen nightmares.

The effects of barbed wire is as follows

- Barbed wire counts as an obstacle.
- Impassable to wheeled vehicles. Tracked vehicles crossing barbed wire destroy a section 4″ wide on passing.
- If infantry is given an Advance order to cross barbed wire, they must always roll an order test even if they currently have no pin markers.
- Engineers can choose to remove a section of barbed wire 6″ wide when they cross it.

NIGHT FIGHT

This was an attack at dawn. Use the dawn assault night fighting rules in the *Bolt Action* rulebook page 219.

OBJECTIVE

Commonwealth forces are attempting to stop the German advance. German forces must eliminate the Commonwealth opposition.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the

table. These units can enter the table from any point along the German player's long table edge and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION
Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game are played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends. On a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!
At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other, that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Commonwealth player claims 2 victory points for each enemy unit destroyed. The German player claims 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed and 5 victory points for each bunker which is unoccupied by Commonwealth forces at the end of the game.

OPTIONS
Italian forces also took part in similar attacks on the Australian perimeter.

To recreate this, select the attacking platoons from the Italian Reinforced Armoured Platoon Selector.

AFTERMATH
After some hard exchanges of fire, the Germans secured a breach in the lines. This provoked a completely unexpected sally by large numbers of Australian defenders. A vicious hand-to-hand engagement occurred in the darkness with the Germans temporarily stymied by the unexpected counter-attack. During this action, Corporal John Edmondson won a posthumous VC for his gallantry in holding off a large group of Germans, which allowed the withdrawal of some Australian wounded.

However, despite the counter-attack, German numbers prevailed and by dawn the German pioneers had managed to clear the mines and bridge an anti-

tank ditch which allowed nearly 40 German tanks to pass through the first line of defence. However, unknown to the Panzer crews, the Australian infantry did not run but stayed put in their trenches allowing the tanks to roar past them. The German infantry following up the Panzers were expecting little opposition and suddenly found themselves taking heavy fire from the Australian infantry which stopped them dead. As one German prisoner lamented:

"I cannot understand you Australians. In Poland, Belgium and France, once the tanks got through, the soldiers took it for granted that they were beaten. But you are like demons. The tanks break through and your infantry still keep fighting."

The advancing tanks, unaware of the events behind them, charged forward overrunning a 2pdr defensive position before coming face to face with several batteries of 25pdr field guns of the Royal Horse Artillery which engaged the Panzers with direct fire. Whilst trying to suppress these guns the Germans were attacked in the flank by a number of 2pdr portees. Panzers started to burn and the attack stalled. Finally, Morshead ordered in the 'Tobruk Tanks' and a group of Matildas and A13 cruisers entered the fray destroying more Panzers. This was more than enough for the frazzled crews who withdrew rapidly back through the breach. The hulks of 15 burning tanks were left on the field. The Australians captured a number of Pak 38 anti-tank guns which they added to the ranks of the 'Bush Artillery.'

Over the next two days, the Italians mounted similar tank assaults and although in one case a couple of M13/40 advanced up to a mile through the defences they were hunted down and destroyed by British tanks.

Rommel was almost beside himself with frustration as he saw attack after attack fail and for the next week there were no serious attacks as the Axis forces rested, resupplied, and repaired damaged equipment. However, the nights were anything but quiet as both sides returned to the trench tactics of their fathers and conducted aggressive trench raids to capture prisoners and generally ruin the sleep of their opponents. Whilst both sides had some success, it is generally agreed that the Australians' natural aggressiveness in both attack and defence gave them the upper hand. As Morshead famously remarked,

"We are not here to take it, we are here to give it!"

At this point Rommel received an unexpected visitor in the form of General Paulus. The German OKH (Army High Command) was concerned at

Rommel's apparent recklessness and wanted to know what was happening around Tobruk. He arrived on 1 May in time to witness Rommel's final attack. Although Morshead had positioned his tanks well the Axis attack captured a number of perimeter fortifications using CV-33 light tanks with flamethrowers creating a salient into the defences. Two Australian infantry counter-attacks inflicted casualties but failed to push the Germans back. Despite this relative success, OKH demanded a halt, which the disgruntled general was forced to obey. So the Siege of Tobruk settled down to something of a routine. Air attacks from German and Italian air forces proved to be more of a danger to the troops, with those cycled to the rear for rest finding themselves subject to air attack. At the front lines, the situation varied from casual truces, to constant threat of sniper fire. The Germans became great respecters of Australian marksmanship with the Lee Enfield. Fleas and rats proved a nuisance to both sides. Speaking of rats, German propaganda boasted of the defenders being caught like rats, about to be exterminated. The defenders decided to run with it, and take the name for themselves: 'The Rats of Tobruk.'

The Desert Fox – Rommel surveys his positions

OPERATIONS BREVITY AND BATTLEAXE
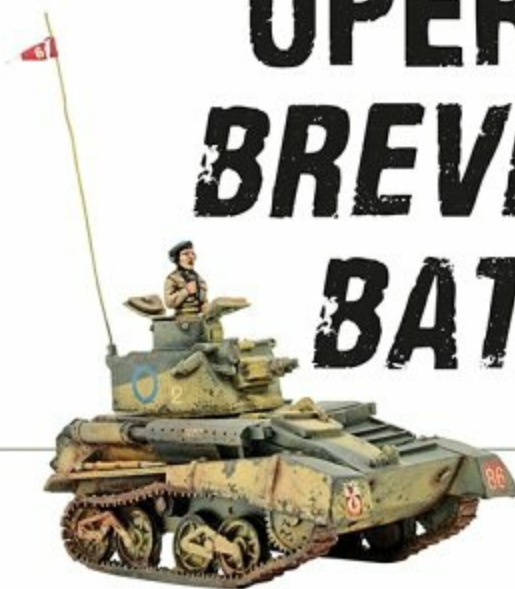
Tobruk was to dominate the strategy of both sides for over a year, as it commanded the vital coastal supply route. Its possession was seen by both sides as crucial to any further advances. The first move was made by the British, under the codename Operation *Brevity*.

Brevity began on 15 May. The operation was mounted on a small scale, with only 53 tanks in support. The aims were limited to capturing key positions to prepare for a larger assault, although an advance towards Tobruk was considered if supplies and opposition allowed. The attack got off to a good start, capturing Sollum, Capuzzo, and the Halfaya Pass. Unfortunately, the British forces became dispersed and vulnerable to counter-attacks, especially as the cruiser tanks had raced ahead of the infantry, which prudently withdrew after two days, leaving only the Halfaya Pass still in British hands. Rommel recognised the importance of this as a supply route and therefore, despite being short of fuel, re-took the pass ten days later.

SCENARIO 8: HELLFIRE PASS, 15 JUNE 1941

A new offensive, codenamed Operation *Battleaxe*, was scheduled to commence on 7 June. It was a good plan, in principle, but there were weaknesses. The previous offensive had demonstrated to Rommel the weakness of his frontier defences and he had taken steps to strengthen them with a series of fortified positions, backed by mines and anti-tank guns, including the first deployment of the feared 88mm guns in the region.

The offensive began early on 15 June and quickly ran into trouble. The attack on Capuzzo by 7th Armoured Regiment began well as they drove off the Italian garrison and after being joined by 22nd Guards, repelled several counter-attacks, with few losses on either side. However the opening attack, which was intended to secure the road through the Halfaya Pass, faced much sterner opposition.

One of the key British objectives of Operation *Battleaxe* was to secure the route through Halfaya Pass. The road linked the coastal plain to the inland desert plateau and was a vital supply route. It had been taken in May 1941 against stiff Italian opposition, but a German counter-attack left the Axis forces in possession of the pass. The capture of Halfaya was assigned to the 11th Indian Brigade and would signal the opening of Operation *Battleaxe*. The plan was to attack the pass from both ends. The main infantry attack, supported by the bulk of the available tanks, would be made from the top of the pass. A supporting attack was to be mounted from the coastal plain. They would have artillery support from the 31st Field Regiment.

Commonwealth armour falls under the sights of Afrika Korps anti-tank guns

FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the German army. The German player picks a force up to an agreed number of points: the British player gets half of these points on top of the agreed number. Thus, if a 1000 point game is agreed on, the British player may select a force of up to 1500 points.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. German platoons should be chosen from the 1941 DAK Anti-tank Gun Reinforced Platoon Selector.

Scenario 8: Hellfire Pass

DEPLOYMENT

The German player is the defender. The German side must place their forces in the set-up area, although any armoured vehicles selected may be left in reserve. The British side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve. Neither side may use outflanking manoeuvres.

The defender must nominate three separate objectives that must be within the defender's set-up zone and at least 6" from the table edge. The objectives must be at least 12" from each other and may not be in rough ground.

SPECIAL RULES
TERRAIN

The landscape is mostly flat and rocky, with a track running through the centre. Infantry and artillery may not be dug in. Terrain that is within 12" of either

table edge is considered to be rough ground; infantry and artillery may claim soft cover, but artillery deployed here may not move.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Commonwealth player rolls a die: on a roll of 4+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 3 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

The Desert Air Force managed to maintain air superiority during *Battleaxe*. The Commonwealth player may choose a forward air observer.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must try to capture the three objectives – the defender must try and stop this.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, the British player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

If the attacker holds two or three objectives, the attacker wins. If the attacker holds one objective then the game is a draw. If the attacker holds no objectives, the defender wins.

All objectives are held by the defender at the start of the game. To capture an

objective there must be a model from one of your units (including tanks and armoured cars) within 3" of the objective at the end of the turn, with no enemy unit within 3" of it. Once you capture an objective, you hold it until the enemy captures it back.

Afrika Korps Opel Blitz truck

AFTERMATH

The attack on Halfaya Pass was scheduled to begin at 05:40 with the artillery bombardment, but the battery had become stuck in soft sand. After waiting for twenty minutes, the British began their attack from the top of the pass. The result was a disaster; out of twelve Matilda tanks, eleven were knocked out. The infantry advanced but, without tank support, were forced to withdraw in the face of a German counter-attack. The attack from the other end of the pass never got started as four Matildas were disabled by mines and blocked the road.

The eleven Matildas were knocked out at long range, which was disturbing as they were the most heavily armoured tank then available. It was speculated that the Germans had a secret weapon, with much talk about a 'Halfaya Gun'. In fact, the damage was done by a battery of 88mm guns; their first deployment in the theatre. After the carnage at Halfaya, it was forever referred to by the British as 'Hellfire Pass'.

The second day saw a renewed assault on Capuzzo by 15th Panzer Division, but they were defeated by fire from a combination of dug in Matilda tanks and 25pdr guns. The attack on Halfaya Pass was renewed but the now surrounded defenders could not be moved.

The turning point of the battle came to the west, where the German 5th

Light Division attacked 7th Armoured Division, which had already taken heavy losses, and forced them to retreat back to the frontier. The way was now open for the German tanks to advance west towards the Halfaya Pass, and while they were held up by a rear-guard action from the remaining British tanks, it was becoming clear to Wavell that he had lost control of the operation. If the German forces succeeded in reaching Halfaya, they could cut off the forces at Capuzzo. Reluctantly, a general retreat to the frontier was begun which was completed by the end of the third day of the operation. Rommel's forces were by now critically short of fuel and unable to pursue.

Churchill was unimpressed by the outcome of the battle and Wavell was reassigned, his place being taken by General Auchinleck, who was convinced that a much larger force was required to relieve Tobruk. It would be another five months before either side was ready to take the field again.

OPERATION CRUSADER

Churchill was still determined that Tobruk should be recaptured, but Auchinleck refused to be rushed into action. He was determined not to repeat the mistakes of Operation *Battleaxe* and wanted to build up superiority in numbers, especially in armour, before making a move.

The main thrust of *Crusader* would be spearheaded by XXX Corps. Leading the way would be 7th Armoured Division reinforced by 22nd Armoured Brigade, with a total of 477 tanks, the majority of which were Crusader tanks and also the new American Stuart tanks, nicknamed 'Honeys', making their combat debut. In addition, there were almost 300, mostly infantry, tanks split between Tobruk itself, and the frontier. Opposing this the Germans and Italians could muster less than 400 tanks although they had a significant advantage in anti-tank guns, which would play a crucial role in the coming battle.

Instead of moving along the coast as in previous attacks, *Crusader* would concentrate a large force of armour to the south, which would head northwest toward Tobruk. Once it was discovered, it was assumed that the German Panzer divisions would be forced to counter-attack and be overwhelmed by sheer numbers. The force would then swing north to the coast and trap the troops defending the frontier. At this point, there would be a breakout from Tobruk itself to link up with the attack.

From the start, the British plan began to unravel, but for an unexpected reason. The weather was bad with freezing temperatures and poor visibility. Little opposition was encountered as the tanks advanced to Gabr Saleh, where the expected showdown was supposed to happen. Unfortunately, Rommel was not aware of the strength of the British force and was convinced that it was a diversion to draw his forces away from Tobruk. He refused to rise to the bait and kept his forces in place. This left Cunningham with a dilemma; he still had the initiative, but would lose it by staying put. He therefore decided to continue the advance, but split the 7th Armoured division into three groups. On the left, 22nd Armoured Brigade would move against the Italian Ariete Division at Bir el Gulbi, while in the centre 7th Armoured Brigade would continue on to the Italian held airfield at Sidi Rezegh. 4th Armoured Brigade would remain at Gabr Saleh.

Tank war! The Italian Ariete Division and 7th Armoured Division scrap in the desert

SCENARIO 9: BIR EL GUBI, 19 NOVEMBER 1941

The British advance towards Tobruk that opened Operation *Crusader* had begun well, but the expected opposition failed to materialise, as Rommel still believed it to be a diversion. General Gott, commanding the 7th Armoured Division was reluctant to relinquish the initiative and sent his forces in search of the enemy. The 22nd Armoured Brigade was ordered south to attack the Italian Ariete Division, holding the Axis flank at Bir el Gubi. Although the 22nd was untried in combat, the Italians were not expected to provide a difficult challenge. The battle opened at noon when the leading British Crusader tanks clashed with the forward company of Italian M13/40 tanks.

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the Italian army. The Italian player picks a force up to an agreed number of points: the British player gets half of these points on top of the agreed number. Thus, if a 1,000 point game is agreed on, the British player may select a force of up to 1,500 points.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–41 British Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. Italian platoons should be chosen from the 1940–41 Italian Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. Note that the Semovente 75/18 may not be selected for this scenario.

Scenario 9: Bir el Gubi

DEPLOYMENT

The Italian player is the defender. The Italian side must set up at least half of their force on the table in the set-up zone. Infantry, headquarters, and artillery units deployed on the table may be dug-in and hidden. Armoured vehicles selected may use forward deployment. Remaining units are left in reserve.

The British side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve. Only the British side may use outflanking manoeuvres.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Commonwealth player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

During *Crusader*, the RAF had the upper hand as the Luftwaffe was struggling with fuel shortages and although they had received more fighter squadrons, they were short of useable airfields. However, the ground war in *Crusader* was so confused that it was hard to identify targets, so the superiority of the RAF was largely nullified. Both players may select an air force forward observer.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the British player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3 the game ends and on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for damaging or destroying enemy units. Two points are scored for a destroyed unit and 1 point for a disabled armoured vehicle. In addition, the British side scores 2 points for each non-disabled unit inside the Italian set-up zone and 3 points for each unit that exits the Italian table edge. If one side scores at least 5 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

AFTERMATH

The British tanks tore into the outnumbered M13/40s and drove them back to the Bir el Gubi defences. The Italian defensive line was breached and there was fierce fighting until an Italian counter-attack forced the British to withdraw. Losses were fairly even but Ariete Division still held Bir el Gubi and tied down British forces that were sorely needed elsewhere. It was apparent that the Italian army was now a force to be reckoned with.

TOP SECRET

THE SCRAP IRON FLOTILLA

Whilst the 'Digger' infantry fought tenaciously in Tobruk, other Australians fought hard to keep them supplied by sea. Alongside a collection of Royal Navy destroyers HMAS *Stuart*, *Vampire*, *Vendetta*, *Voyager*, and *Waterhen* made many runs to Tobruk carrying supplies and men. With the constant danger of Luftwaffe dive-bomber attack, the waters between Alexandria and Tobruk became known as 'Bomb Alley'. Despite the dangers, the ships continued to brave the enemy attacks and were disparagingly nicknamed the 'Scrap Iron Flotilla' by the German propagandist Lord Haw-Haw. Again, German name-calling backfired as the sailors took pride in the label. However, there were inevitable casualties when the destroyer HMAS *Waterhen* became the first Australian warship sunk in World War II during a particularly heavy air raid. Also lost was the sloop HMAS *Parramatta*, which was sunk by the U-Boat *U-559* with heavy loss of life. *U-559* would be famously lost sometime later when she was boarded by the Royal Navy and her ULTRA code machine was captured, allowing the codebreakers of Bletchley Park to break the ENIGMA codes.

Another ship sunk to the great regret of the shore-based defenders was the redoubtable gunboat HMS *Ladybird* which had bombarded the Italians all through Operation *Compass*. However, she sank in shallow waters leaving her 3" gun above water, which continued to operate as a fixed anti-aircraft defensive battery.

Although the Ariete Division had held off the attack from the 22nd Armoured Brigade, the defenders at Sidi Rezegh were taken completely by surprise. The airfield was captured and a large number of aircraft destroyed. By the end of the second day of Operation *Crusader*, Sidi Rezegh and the surrounding hills were in British hands. However, the airfield would be fought over many more times in the coming days.

Rommel was belatedly persuaded that this was a major operation and began to move accordingly. 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions moved south to Gabr Saleh to engage the 4th Armoured Division. The first engagement was a purely tank affair as the German Panzers had advanced ahead of their support units and

ran into the Stuart tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade.

Desert Rats MMG team

SCENARIO 10: GABR SALEH, 19 NOVEMBER 1941

By the second day of Operation *Crusader*, Rommel was beginning to realise that the British tank attack towards Tobruk was more than a diversion. The 21st Panzer Division created a *kampfgruppe* to intervene, moving south to Gabr Saleh. Towards sunset, Kampfgruppe Stephan ran head on into the tanks of the 8th Hussars. The British tanks immediately charged, the speed of the advance taking them into the German force, and a wild melee ensued.

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the German army.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–41 British Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. German platoons should be chosen from the 1941 DAK Panzer Division Reinforced Platoon Selector.

Scenario 10: Gabr Saleh

DEPLOYMENT

Both players pick a table side. The table is open desert.

No units are set up on the table as the battle commences. The German side must place all its forces in the first wave. The British side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES
TERRAIN

The landscape is flat and offers no cover, although vehicles may attempt to find hull down positions.

LOW SUN

The British found themselves attacking into the setting sun and were initially at

a disadvantage. On the first two turns of the game, if any line of fire can be traced beyond the target across the German table edge, it is counted as long-range fire.

Charge of the Light Brigade! British light and cruiser tanks speed onwards

AIRSTRIKES

During *Crusader*, the RAF had the upper hand as the Luftwaffe was struggling with fuel shortages and although they had received more fighter squadrons, they were short of useable airfields. However, the ground war in *Crusader* was so confused that it was hard to identify targets, so the superiority of the RAF was largely nullified. Both players may select an air force forward observer.

SUNSET

On Turns 3, 4, and 5, the sun has set below the horizon. Maximum visibility is limited to 30".

NIGHTFALL

From Turn 6 onwards, night has fallen. Apply the rules for reduced visibility found in the *Bolt Action* rulebook page 220.

OBJECTIVE

Destroy the enemy! At the end of the game, calculate who has won by adding up victory points.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, both players must bring their first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends. On a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up the values of the enemy units that were destroyed. The British player scores 2 points for each enemy unit destroyed or 3 points for an enemy tank destroyed. The German player scores 2 points for each enemy unit destroyed or 1 point for an enemy tank that is disabled. If one side scores at least 5 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

AFTERMATH

Because of the poor visibility, the battle was a confused affair that carried on until darkness brought a halt. The British survivors withdrew, leaving the battlefield to the Germans who were able to recover many of their knocked-out tanks. The British lost a total of 40 tanks, compared to three Panzers permanently lost.

The next day saw a continuation of the action, which proved inconclusive

with both sides withdrawing to regroup and resupply. However, the opposing commanders both drew the wrong conclusions from the battle. Both thought they had won a decisive victory. Rommel therefore ordered his Panzers to move against Sidi Rezegh, while Cunningham, on learning of this move, decided that the Germans were retreating and sent his remaining tanks in hot pursuit. He also ordered the long-awaited breakout from Tobruk to begin.

There then followed three days of confused fighting around Sidi Rezegh. Both sides were taking losses, although the 8th Army suffered most, including the capture of the entire headquarters staff of 4th Armoured Brigade. On 23 November, appropriately enough *Totensonntag* or 'Sunday of the Dead', the Italian Ariete Division joined in the battle and drove the 5th South African Brigade to the south of Sidi Rezegh. A counter-attack by 22nd Armoured Brigade was repulsed with the loss of yet more precious tanks.

Meanwhile Rommel, believing that the British armour had been defeated, sent his two Panzer divisions, plus the Italian Ariete and Trieste divisions, eastwards to engage 8th Army forces on the frontier. This proved to be a disaster; the Italian divisions moved so slowly that they were unable to have any influence on events and the Germans were worn down by air attacks and harried by British 'Jock columns'. The 8th Army still had strong forces on the border and the weakened Panzer divisions could make little impact.

A breakout attempt from Tobruk was made on 27 November and succeeded in meeting the 2nd New Zealand Division at El Duda; the eight month siege had finally been lifted. There was still more fighting to be done as Rommel now ordered his Panzers to return to Sidi Rezegh and they almost succeeded in closing off the Tobruk breakout.

A Pz Kpfw II light tank supports an Afrika Korps patrol

SCENARIO 11: POINT 175, 29 NOVEMBER 1941

There had been a lull in the battles for Sidi Rezegh since Rommel had sent his forces to support the hard-pressed frontier defence, but now they had returned. Point 175, a hill overlooking the airfield at Sidi Rezegh was held by the 21st New Zealand Battalion and had already withstood two attacks by units of 21st Panzer Division. It was therefore a relief when they were informed that the 1st South African Brigade was advancing north to meet them. In the late afternoon, a column was seen approaching from the south and the weary troops emerged from their trenches to greet the new arrivals only to discover, too late, that they were actually units of the Italian Ariete Division.

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the Italian army. The Italian army is the attacker in this scenario.

New Zealand platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. Units may not begin the game dug-in or hidden.

Italian platoons should be chosen from the 1940–43: War in Africa Reinforced Platoon Selector found in *Armies of Italy and the Axis*. Note that the Semovente 75/18 may not be selected for this scenario. Enough transport must be selected for each infantry or artillery unit in the reinforced platoon.
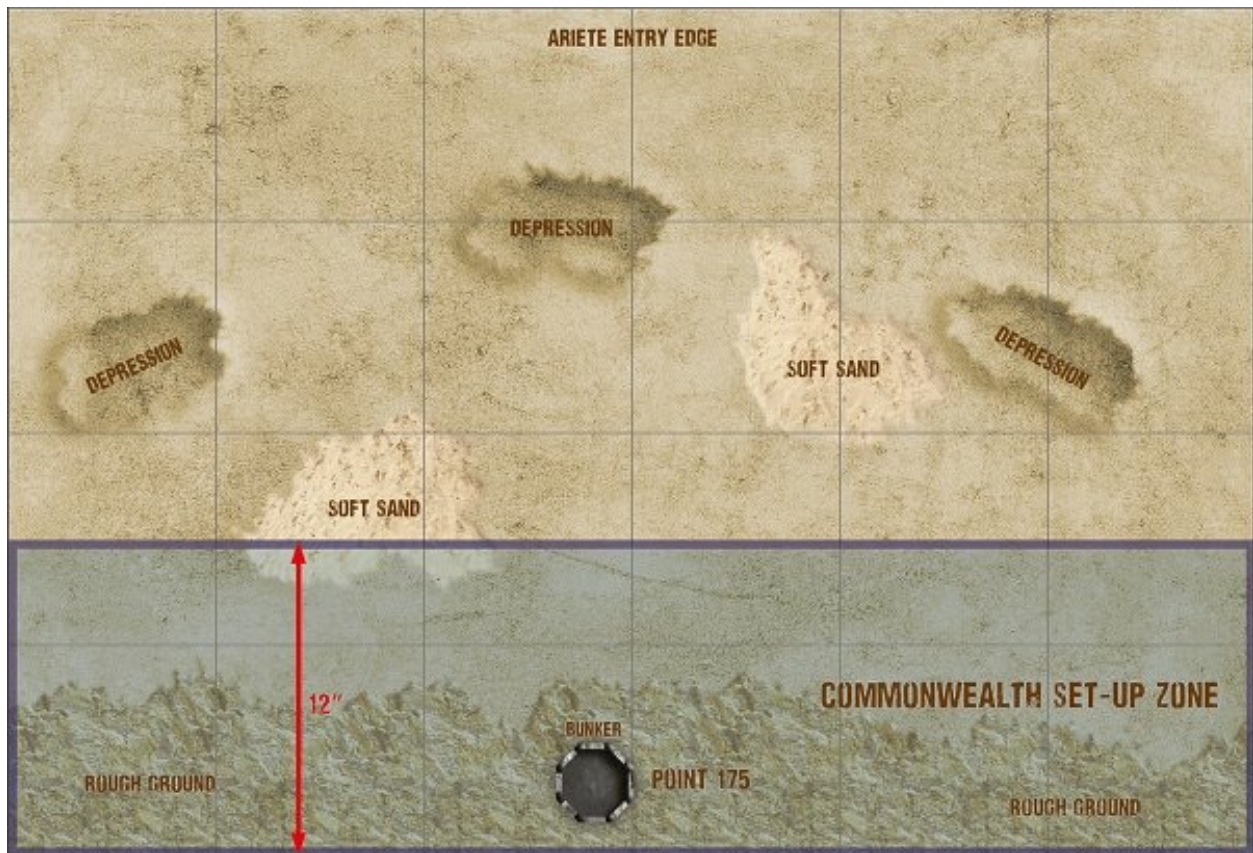
Scenario 11: Point 175

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player is the defender. The entire force must be placed on the table in the set-up zone.

The Italian side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

The Desert Fox

ROMMEL'S GREAT ESCAPE

Erwin Rommel will be forever remembered for the North African campaign, but his war almost came to an embarrassing end in November 1941.

Rommel always liked to command from the front and, much to the frustration of his staff, would often head off on his own, probing for opportunities and enemy weaknesses. Four days into the confused fighting around Sidi Rezegh, Rommel believed that the British armour had been defeated and ordered his forces east to the Egyptian border. He then set off with his staff in 'Max', a captured Dorchester command vehicle, through the border wire and into the British rear area in search of supply dumps. After several hours of fruitless searching, they decided to return, but the command vehicle promptly broke down, stranding them in enemy territory. The vehicle could not be mended but fortunately, General Cruwell, Rommel's second-in-command, happened upon them in the second Dorchester. Here, the large size of the British command vehicle was an advantage as there was room for everyone and they set off once again for the wire. By now night was falling and there followed another fruitless search, this time for a gap in the wire. Unable to find a way through, they were forced to spend a tense and uncomfortable night with enemy troops and vehicles passing by at intervals, presumably uninterested in what must have appeared to be one of their own command vehicles. The next day, they were able to find a way through and return to their own lines, thankful for a lucky escape. A more curious attitude by any of those passing by during the night could have changed the Desert War completely.

Blue skies and Bloodied sand – British and Italian forces clash

SPECIAL RULES

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Confusion reigned in the New Zealand ranks. To represent this, in addition to the order dice for each side, place four order dice of a different colour in the dice bag. When one of these dice is drawn, it should be put to one side. If the next die drawn is for the Commonwealth player, it can only be used to give a Down order. If it is another non-player die, it is discarded. At the start of the next turn, any dice put aside are replaced in the dice bag along with the order dice for each side.

AIRSTRIKES

During *Crusader*, the RAF had the upper hand as the Luftwaffe was struggling with fuel shortages and although they had received more fighter squadrons, they were short of useable airfields. However, the ground war in *Crusader* was so confused that it was hard to identify targets, so the superiority of the RAF was

largely nullified. Both players may select an air force forward observer.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, the Italian player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave. Infantry and artillery units enter the table aboard their transports.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for damaging or destroying enemy units. One point is scored for each destroyed enemy unit and 1 point for each friendly unit that is inside the defender's set-up zone. If one side scores at least 2 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

AFTERMATH

The South African advance had been held up by reports of enemy armour close by. These were tanks of the Ariete Division, which was also moving towards Sidi Rezegh. The Italians were not expecting trouble as they thought that 21st Panzer Division had taken Point 175 and so advanced with hatches open as if they were joining a friendly force. They recovered quickly, however, and were in the New Zealanders' positions before they could react. Point 175 fell to the Italians as the defenders were driven off, leaving 200 men to be taken prisoner.

CRUSADER FINALE

The New Zealand Division had suffered badly and was withdrawn, but Rommel had to face up to the fact that this had become a battle of attrition that he could not win. Despite local successes, his forces were being ground down and on 7 December he made the decision to withdraw.

The withdrawal was made to a defensive line at Gazala, some 40 miles west of Tobruk, but on 15 December, the line was breached and Rommel's forces were in full retreat, eventually halting at El Agheila. Operation *Crusader* ended on 1 January 1942, with both sides in the positions they had occupied nine months earlier when Rommel began his offensive.

Now, the 8th Army suffered from the problems that had beset Rommel. They were worn down by the campaign at the end of a long supply line and resources were being diverted to the Far East to try to stem the Japanese advance. Supplies were finally getting through to the German forces, including new and improved tanks. Only three weeks after the end of *Crusader*, they launched an offensive that took the British by surprise. True to the nature of the desert fighting, with few natural defences to make a stand, the retreat turned into a rout that only ended back at the Gazala line. Here the armies would watch each other until May 1942, when Rommel made his next move.

British armour crests a ridge

GAZALA: ROMMEL'S GREATEST VICTORY

After the *Crusader* campaign, neither side was in a position to launch a major offensive. The 8th Army had made some gains and Tobruk had been relieved, but the Axis forces were nowhere near to being defeated. Both sides spent the first few months of 1942 building up strength for another try.

The front line was now established on the Gazala line, which ran from the coast to Bir Hakeim, some 40 miles to the south. The desert campaign so far had been a series of outflanking attacks, so General Ritchie, the 8th Army commander, decided that an extended line would be a more effective defence, as any attack would have further to go and have more vulnerable supply lines. As the line could not be continuous a series of fortified positions, or 'boxes', was established. These were well-armed and supplied, and protected in front by the most extensive minefields yet deployed. However, like the Italian forts during *Compass*, they relied on the support of mobile armoured forces.

The British anticipated being in a position to launch an offensive in June 1942 but they were also aware that Rommel's supply situation had improved and that he was still intending to re-take Tobruk. Auchinleck did not intend to allow his forces to become besieged again and if forced to retreat, Tobruk would be evacuated and the port facilities destroyed. Churchill was unaware of this directive.

At the beginning of May 1942, Hitler met Mussolini to discuss the problem of Malta, which was a growing threat to the Axis supply routes. It was agreed that an invasion would be mounted, but first the Libyan airfields had to be captured. The 8th Army would have to be driven away from the Gazala line and back to Egypt.

Rommel was now free to take the offensive. The previous *Crusader* battles had shown the importance of gaining and keeping the initiative in a fast-moving operation. The attack began on 26 May, five days before the 8th Army was due to start its own offensive.

The main Axis advance began with a sweep to the south around the end of the Gazala line. This move would be followed by a drive to the north and east to cut off the 8th Army. The left flank of the Axis attack was held by the Italian Ariete Division. They assaulted the strongly held Bir Hakeim box that anchored

the end of the Gazala line, but were driven off.

Meanwhile, 15th Panzer Division had wheeled north when they ran into the leading Grant tanks of the 4th Armoured Brigade, which were heading south. There was some confusion in the German ranks as the 75mm-gunned Grants inflicted casualties, but the British were outnumbered and were forced to withdraw with heavy losses. The same fate befell the other British tank forces. Spread out across the desert, they were outnumbered and brushed aside by the German spearhead. Nevertheless, the constant attacks were wearing down the Panzer divisions. As Rommel later wrote, *'The advent of the new American tank tore great holes in our ranks'.*

Only two days into the operation, Rommel's plan was going astray. Losses were heavier than expected, and – more worryingly – the supply situation was critical. A trickle of supplies was coming forward through gaps in the minefield opened by the Italian Brescia and Trieste Divisions, but the main route was still the long loop around the end of the Gazala line, with constant attacks from the air and by Free French columns operating from the still-defiant Bir Hakeim box. Rommel therefore took a calculated risk and halted the advance, withdrawing westwards to gather his forces. On the face of it, the position was desperate; outnumbered, the bulk of the Axis forces were now pressed into a small area with the 8th Army to the front and the Gazala line minefields to the rear. Had the 8th Army been able to mount a coordinated attack, the battle might have been finished there and then. However, Rommel was lucky and he successfully concentrated his forces and deployed his defences. He was now confident that any further attacks on his position, which came to be known as 'The Cauldron', would be worn down by artillery and anti-tank guns.

Panzer III Ausf J

SCENARIO 12: THE CAULDRON, 1 JUNE 1942

Standing in the way of Rommel's intended supply route was the Sidi Muftah 'box' defended by the British 150th Infantry Brigade, now cut off from the rest of the 8th Army. They had held out for two days against superior Axis forces until 1 June, when Rommel launched a final all-out assault.

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the *Afrika Korps*. The Commonwealth player picks a force up to an agreed number of points: the German player gets half of these points on top of the agreed number. Thus, if a 1,000 point game is agreed on, the German player may select a force of up to 1,500 points.

Commonwealth platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. The Commonwealth player may also select 6" square minefield sections for 50pts each, but only up to 20% of the total force cost. The minefields can be placed anywhere behind the middle line of the table.

German platoons should be chosen from the 1942 DAK Panzer Division Reinforced Platoon Selector. Note that the Panzer IV F2 may not be selected for this scenario.

Scenario 12: The Cauldron

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player is the defender. The Commonwealth side must set up at least half of their force on the table in the set-up zone. Infantry, headquarters, and artillery units deployed on the table may be dug-in and hidden. Remaining units are left in reserve.

The German side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

A British Commonwealth 6pdr anti-tank gun in defensive positions

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The attacker rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

For the start of the Gazala offensive, Luftwaffe HQ was moved to North Africa

and all Luftwaffe assets were used to support the offensive. With the Italians in North Africa, they had numerical and qualitative superiority and the fighting was in range of airfields on Crete. So for the Gazala scenarios, which are set in the early part of the offensive, the Axis should have a marked superiority.

The Axis player can deploy a forward air observer.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1 the German player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

The Commonwealth player scores 2 victory points for each enemy unit that is destroyed and 1 point for each enemy vehicle that is disabled. The German player scores 1 point for each enemy unit destroyed 1 point for each friendly unit within the defender's set-up zone and 2 points for each friendly unit that has exited the table across the defender's table edge. If one side scores at least 5 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

Afrika Korps anti-tank guns lay in wait for the British advance

AFTERMATH

Following repulse of the first attack on Sidi Muftah, General Ritchie sent a message of congratulation to Brigadier Haydon, commanding the 150th Brigade. This was all the help that they received, as Ritchie was still not ready to launch his attack on The Cauldron. Despite fierce resistance, the Axis attack ground down the defenders, with Rommel himself leading a platoon at one point during the day. The 150th Brigade was forced to surrender. Rommel sought out Brigadier Haydon to congratulate him on the stout defence and was saddened to learn that the Brigadier had been killed earlier in the day.

The destruction of the Sidi Muftah position demonstrated the weakness of the defensive boxes. General Ritchie was still planning his attack on The Cauldron, which finally went ahead four days after the 150th Brigade had been destroyed. Operation *Aberdeen*, as the attack was called, got off to a good start as a night infantry attack penetrated the Axis line, but the following tanks once again ran into trouble and took heavy losses. At this point, the counter-attack by 15th Panzer and Ariete Divisions scattered the remaining British armour, leaving the infantry stranded.

Aberdeen had been a major disappointment and Rommel now had some breathing space to deal with the problem of Bir Hakeim and its tenacious Free French defenders.

Crusader II Cruiser Tank

SCENARIO 13: BIR HAKEIM, 27 MAY 1942

The southern end of the Gazala line was anchored on the defensive 'box' at Bir Hakeim. This was the strongest point in the defensive line, defended by almost 4,000 troops of General Koenig's 1st Free French Brigade. Early on the morning of 27 May, the Italian Ariete Division, tasked with the capture of Bir Hakeim, quickly overran the hasty defences, and drove off the defenders. Unfortunately, they had missed Bir Hakeim and instead found the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade. Undeterred, the division wheeled north and descended on the French fortress.

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the 1st Free French Brigade and the Italian Ariete Division. The French player picks a force up to an agreed number of points: the Italian player gets twice this number. Thus, if a 750 point game is agreed on, the Italian player may select a force of up to 1,500 points.

French platoons should be chosen from the Free French Reinforced Platoon Selector. Italian platoons should be chosen from the Italian Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector.

DEPLOYMENT

The French player is the defender. The French side must set up all of their force on the table in the set-up zone, although the 'forward artillery doctrine' special rule may be used. All units may be dug-in and hidden. In addition, the French player may have two bunkers which can be placed anywhere in the set-up zone. Each bunker may hold a headquarters unit or a 2 or 3-man weapons team. The French player may also place one 6" square minefield section for each full 1,000 points of their force and also may purchase further minefield sections for 50 points each, but only up to 10% of the total force cost. The minefields can be placed anywhere between the French set-up area and the middle line of the table.

The Italian side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

No outflanking manoeuvres are allowed.

Free French forces withdraw near Bir Hakeim

SPECIAL RULES
BIR HAKEIM

The ground was criss-crossed by trenches and littered with shell holes and debris. Everything inside the French set-up area is considered to be rough ground. If infantry units in the open are shot at from more than point-blank range, roll a die: on a roll of 4+, they can claim the benefit of soft cover.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Axis player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

Scenario 13: Bir Hakeim

AIRSTRIKES

For the start of the Gazala offensive, Luftwaffe HQ was moved to North Africa and all Luftwaffe assets were used to support the offensive. With the Italians in North Africa, they had numerical and qualitative superiority and the fighting was in range of airfields on Crete. So for the Gazala scenarios, which are set in the early part of the offensive, the Axis should have a marked superiority.

The Axis player can deploy a forward air observer.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1, the Italian player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be

given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION
Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!
At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

One victory point is scored for each unit that is wholly or partly within the French set-up zone. If the Italians have more victory points, they have won. If the French have the same or more victory points then they win. Italian units that exit the French table edge also count for a victory point.

AFTERMATH
The force of the Italian attack carried it through the defences, but they suffered serious losses. The tanks that broke in were finished off by close range artillery fire and close assaults. Although surrounded, Bir Hakeim would be a thorn in the side of Axis operations for another two weeks, until short of ammunition; the garrison broke out and made a fighting withdrawal, allowing 2,600 men to reach safety.

THE JEWISH BRIGADE AT BIR-EL HARMAT

Unknown to General Koenig, an additional British brigade had been sent to bolster up the northern flank of the French line near Bir-el Harmat. Despite lacking any heavy weapons, including anti-aircraft guns, their mission was to lay an extensive minefield to slow down any Axis advance. These troops though were no ordinary Commonwealth troops, being the 400 Jewish Palestinians of the Jewish Brigade under the command of a native of Tel Aviv, Major Liebmann. By 26 May, the minefield was complete and the fighters dug in.

On the 2 June, leading elements of the *Afrika Korps* seeking a path flanking the Bir Hakeim defensive box approached the brigade's position. Realising that he outnumbered the defenders by a large margin the German commander approached the position under a flag of truce and demanded that the position be surrendered. The alternative was annihilation. Despite the threats, Liebmann refused to surrender proudly stating that they were free Palestinian Jews fighting for the British government and that the strange flag fluttering above their position was the flag of the Jewish people.

Within minutes, an assault supported by Axis aircraft began.

SCENARIO 14: BIR-EL HARMAT, 2 JUNE 1942

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the *Afrika Korps*.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1942 British Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. Only headquarters and infantry selections may not be chosen in this scenario (see here).

German platoons should be chosen from the 1942 DAK Panzer Division Reinforced Platoon Selector. Note that the Panzer IV F2 may not be selected for this scenario (see here).

DEPLOYMENT

All the forces of the Jewish Brigade should be placed within 12" of the table centre. *Afrika Korps* units may enter from any table edge.

No units are set up on the table as the battle commences. Both sides must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

TERRAIN

The table represents open desert with cover being limited to small patches of bushes and sandstone rock outcroppings. As shown on the map, the entire area within an 18" radius of the table centre is classed as a mixed anti-tank/anti-infantry minefield. Assume the field to be composed of three 6" wide concentric minefields. Additionally, due to its many foxholes and trenches the entire Jewish Brigade setup area is considered to be rough terrain.

JEWISH BRIGADE

All units of the Jewish Brigade begin the scenario dug-in and hidden.

They are totally familiar with the layout of the minefield and never attacked by it.

As they are fighting a hated enemy, they are classed as being stubborn.

They are also superior tank hunters. They have all the normal benefits of the tank hunter trait but when assaulting a vehicle will hit on a 3, 4, 5, or 6 if it is immobilised, has a Down order or has not yet moved. If the vehicle has an Advance order it can be hit with a roll of 5 or 6.

AIRSTRIKES

For the start of the Gazala offensive, Luftwaffe HQ was moved to North Africa and all Luftwaffe assets were used to support the offensive. With the Italians in North Africa, they had numerical and qualitative superiority and the fighting was in range of airfields on Crete. So for the Gazala scenarios, which are set in the early part of the offensive, the Axis should have a marked superiority.

The Axis player can deploy a forward air observer.
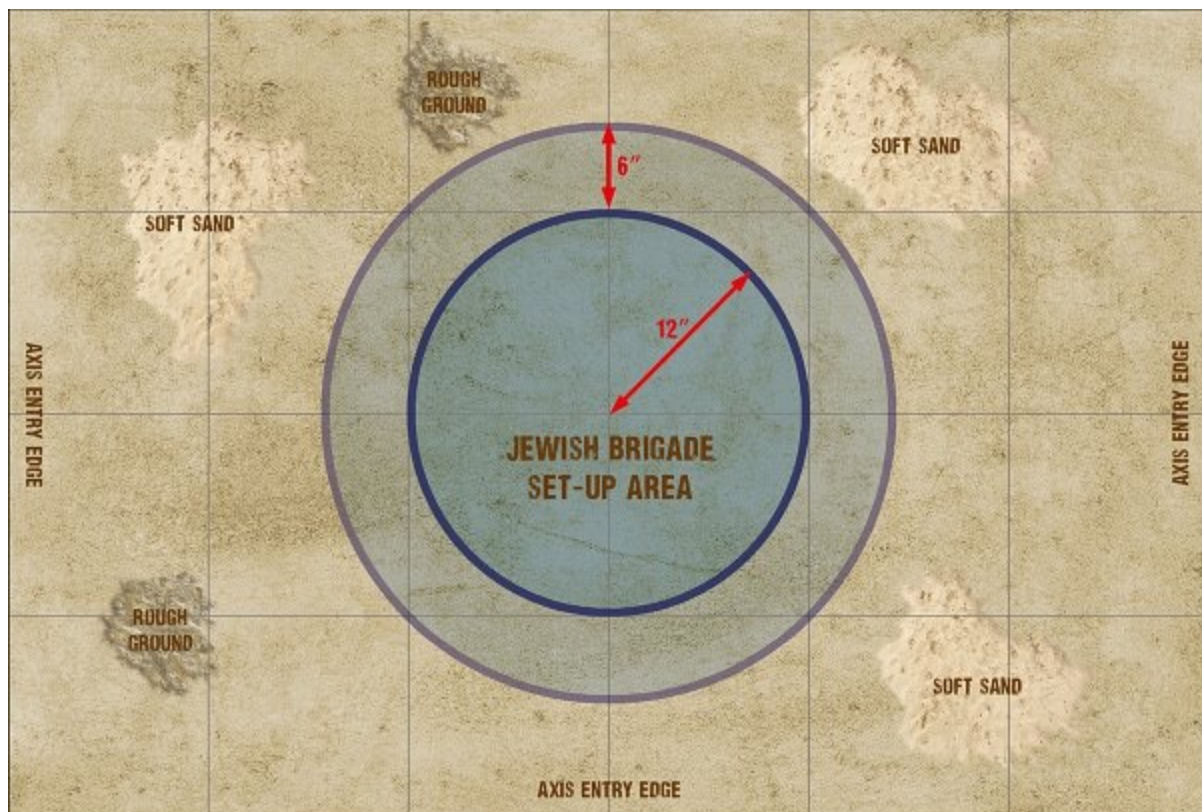
Scenario 14: Bir-el Harmat

OBJECTIVE

The German forces must attempt to get armoured vehicles to the centre of the Jewish Brigade's deployment zone.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1 the Germans must bring their first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

Afrika Korps 2cm Flak 38

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up the number of victory points scored by each side. If one side scores at least 5 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw. The Jewish Brigade receives 2 victory points for each German unit destroyed. The German Player receives 1 victory point for each Jewish Brigade unit destroyed and 3 victory points for each non-immobilised German armoured vehicle within 6" of the centre Jewish Brigade deployment zone.

A dug in Grant tank at Alam Halfa

AFTERMATH

German artillery pounded the brigade's position whilst Stukas continued to bomb and strafe. Many advancing German tanks were destroyed or immobilised on the minefields but a few advanced and penetrated the Jewish perimeter. These were then assaulted by fanatical infantry who jumping on the tanks destroyed many with Molotov cocktails, gunning down any crew who tried to escape the inferno. For eight days this pattern of the attacks was repeated, yet the defenders hung on repulsing each German assault. Had the Brigade's radio been working reliably then some help from Bir Hakeim might have been forthcoming but that was not to be. German artillery eventually destroyed the one working fresh water well in the defenders' positions and dehydration became an issue, but the defenders still hung on. Finally, on 10 June, contact was made with 8th Army HQ and the orders for the defenders to pull out of Bir Hakeim were intercepted. Major Liebmann now knew that there was no longer any need to hold out and his remaining troops escaped into the darkness. Brigade losses were nearly 75%, leaving 300 dead on the battlefield. Whilst the heroic defence of Bir Hakeim by the Free French is rightly praised, this smaller but crucial action at Bir-el Harmat by its Jewish defenders is rarely recognised.

Following the capture of Bir Hakeim, Rommel again turned his attention to dealing with the British armour. He began moving his Panzer divisions north and on 12 June, the tanks clashed again. The British had a small window of opportunity as 15th Panzer Division had become spread out, but they were slow to move and when they attacked, they were caught in the flank by the advancing 21st Panzer. The result was another heavy defeat, with the loss of over half of their tanks. The 8th Army was now outnumbered and outclassed and there was little to stop the Axis forces from pushing on to the coast.

Auchinleck now had a dilemma. It was clear that the troops defending the north of the Gazala line were in danger of being cut off and so they were withdrawn. 'Knightsbridge', the final infantry box, was abandoned and the Commonwealth forces withdrew eastwards. Tobruk became an issue. Auchinleck had not wanted to hold on to the port, but now the situation had altered. Time was needed to rebuild strength and prevent the collapse of the 8th Army. This could only be bought by forcing Rommel to divert forces to invest Tobruk. However, the defences had been depleted to strengthen the Gazala line, and the Australian defenders of the previous year had been replaced by the inexperienced 2nd South African Division, commanded by General Klopper. However, the orders were clear; Tobruk must be held at all costs.

Tobruk, surrounded by Italian troops, prepared itself for a siege, but this was not to be. Rommel's Panzer divisions had turned north and on 20 June they hit the eastern defences of Tobruk. Klopper was taken by complete surprise and there was little resistance. Tobruk, which had withstood an eight-month siege only the previous year, fell in a day!

For Auchinleck, this was a disaster. Although a few of the defenders managed to escape, 33,000 surrendered. There had been no time to destroy the equipment, supplies, and fuel that had been stockpiled, which all fell into Axis hands. Re-supplied and with spirits soaring, Axis troops pressed on into Egypt, now under the command of newly promoted Field Marshal Rommel.

The demoralised 8th Army began a steady withdrawal, first to the defensive line at Mersa Matruh, where Ritchie intended to make a stand strengthened by reinforcements hurriedly brought forward. Rommel's advance was held up here for three days, but Auchinleck, who had assumed direct command of the army on 25 June, was not prepared to risk being cut off and decided that a further

withdrawal should be made, this time to the El Alamein line. Although still a weak defensive line, it was protected to the south by the Qattara Depression, which was virtually impassable to vehicles and prevented the kind of wide-flanking moves that had characterised the Desert War. Rommel's advance was beginning to lose impetus. His forces had advanced beyond the effective range of air support and they were constantly harassed by the Desert Air Force. The 8th Army now had a short supply route, while their opponents' stretched back several hundred miles into Libya. By 30 June, Auchinleck had managed to withdraw the army behind the El Alamein line. The 8th Army had taken a severe beating in the Gazala battles, but ultimately, Rommel had fallen short of victory and the advance into Egypt had left his army critically weakened and at the end of a long and vulnerable supply route. Auchinleck paid the price for the poor performance of the 8th Army and was replaced. The next battles, fought at El Alamein, would prove to be decisive.

British Grant tank

EL ALAMEIN: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

FIRST ALAMEIN

Whilst the fortified defences of the Alamein line were hardly impressive, there were a number of geographical factors that benefitted this position. With the Mediterranean coast to the north and the almost impassable Qattara Depression to the south, the 65-mile wide front could not be outflanked. Rommel's usual tactics of a frontal infantry assault and a sweeping encirclement by the Panzers would not work here. Ideally, he should have waited to resupply and bring up replacements but he simply could not risk giving the 8th Army that time to reorganise itself.

The 90th Light Division and 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions attacked just south of the El Alamein rail junction. Immediately things went wrong. Lost in a sandstorm, the 90th blundered into heavier opposition than expected and the German infantry were caught up in a number of difficult skirmishes. These contacts told Rommel that his enemy was far from demoralised and beaten.

Meanwhile, Auchinleck knew he had to regain the initiative and ordered a number of armoured thrusts into the German flanks whilst pulling back from exposed positions. The only results were a series of largely indecisive clashes.

By the end of the third day, Rommel realised that the *Panzerarmee* simply did not have the strength to break through the 8th Army defences and ordered German units to withdraw and their positions to be occupied by Italian infantry who knew how to defend.

Once Auchinleck became aware of the Axis halt, he decided to go on the offensive to destroy the Axis forces. The resulting attacks on 4 July revealed that the 8th Army was not yet organised enough to make significant headway as the assaults stalled in the face of staunch German antitank and artillery fire. On 9 July, Axis forces probed in the south unaware that a thrust in the north by the 8th Army was also underway. This attack by an Australian and a South African division fell upon the Italians. The Sabratha Division was completely overrun and a good proportion of the Trieste motorised division destroyed. Quick redeployments of German forces stabilised the front.

For the rest of the month the 8th Army made a number of attacks on the Axis

lines but in each case, a lack of coordination between the infantry and armour and the deployment of German 'fire brigade' battlegroups meant that little ground was gained. Despite this, the 8th Army hailed this as a great victory. First Alamein was by no means an elegant victory but nevertheless, after the debacle of Gazala, Rommel and his *Panzerarmee* had been stopped in their tracks at the end of a tenuous supply line.

A Deutsches Afrika Korps anti-tank gun team await the enemy

LAST CHANCE FOR ROMMEL: ALAM HALFA

Despite First Alamein, Rommel was still at the head of an intact army and few in London had any doubts he would again apply his military genius to unravel all that the 8th Army had gained.

New reinforcements were reaching the *Panzerarmee* on a daily basis and it was building its own substantial defensive positions. Whilst the Italian infantry held the front line, the mobile forces of the Panzer divisions and the Italian Ariete and Littorio could be held in reserve to block any breakthroughs or exploit any weakness found in the 8th Army's lines.

Against this backdrop, Churchill lost faith in Auchinleck of ever delivering a decisive victory and had him removed. To be fair to the PM, he had seen the Commonwealth armies receiving the lion's share of the Empire's military resources, yet two years later nothing seemed to have been achieved. In came General Alexander as the theatre commander and General Bernard Montgomery was appointed commander of the 8th Army.

Whilst Montgomery had as many detractors as admirers, his no-nonsense, down-to-earth approach to planning and training soon impressed the 8th Army's officers and men, who now began to believe that their time was coming and that they would finally kick the 'Desert Fox' out of Africa.

Under Montgomery, the 8th Army made very detailed plans regarding the upcoming fight with Rommel. The Commonwealth forces were to take a defensive posture and not take the offensive until they were ready. The 8th Army would no longer allow its armour to be being drawn into any costly ambushes and carefully positioned artillery and anti-tank guns were where they could react to any Axis assault. The 8th Army knew that the Alamein line was Egypt's last hope and had to be held at all costs.

It did not take long for Rommel to determine that he was facing a careful and patient commander who would not attack before he was ready. If he left the 8th Army alone its growing strength and short supply lines would allow it to

eventually attack with overwhelming strength. With his tank numbers now around 400, he would not have a better opportunity to attack. The Panzer divisions had also received additional long-gunned versions of the Panzer III and Panzer IV tanks whose anti-tank capability would again give his forces the edge even over the M3 Grants.

Sd.Kfz 251/10 Ausf C with PaK 36

Rommel's attack commenced around 30 August with infantry and engineers clearing a path for his tanks through the minefields. Although Montgomery was warned by ULTRA intercepts, a plan to bombard the Axis armour as it bunched together waiting for a clear path never happened due to confusion in orders. One hundred and forty tanks of the 15th Panzer Division were now in a position to attack the 8th Army directly. Montgomery, realising that the Panzers might sweep around the defences detached several tank units to draw the Germans north onto prepared defences. The bait was taken and when the 15th

Panzer Division attacked the Alam Halfa defences they found themselves at a disadvantage fighting hull-down British tanks and dug in anti-tank guns.

SCENARIO 15: ALAM HALFA, 31 AUGUST 1942

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the *Afrika Korps*. The Commonwealth player picks a force up to an agreed number of points; the German player gets half of these points on top of the agreed number. Thus, if a 1,000 point game is agreed on, the German player may select a force of up to 1,500 points.

Commonwealth platoons should be chosen from the 1942 British Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. For each tank platoon selected, up to two anti-tank guns may be added.

German platoons should be chosen from the 1942 DAK Panzer Division Armoured Platoon Selector.

Bersaglieri light mortar team

DEPLOYMENT

The Commonwealth player is the defender. They must set up at least half of their force on the table in the set-up zone. Infantry and artillery units may be dug-in and hidden. Tanks may be either dug-in or hull down, but not hidden. Note that Grant tanks that use this option will not be able to fire their main gun! Up to half of the British tanks that are set up on the table may be placed outside the set-up zone, anywhere up to the table middle line. Remaining units are left in reserve.

The German side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

Outflanking is not allowed for either side.
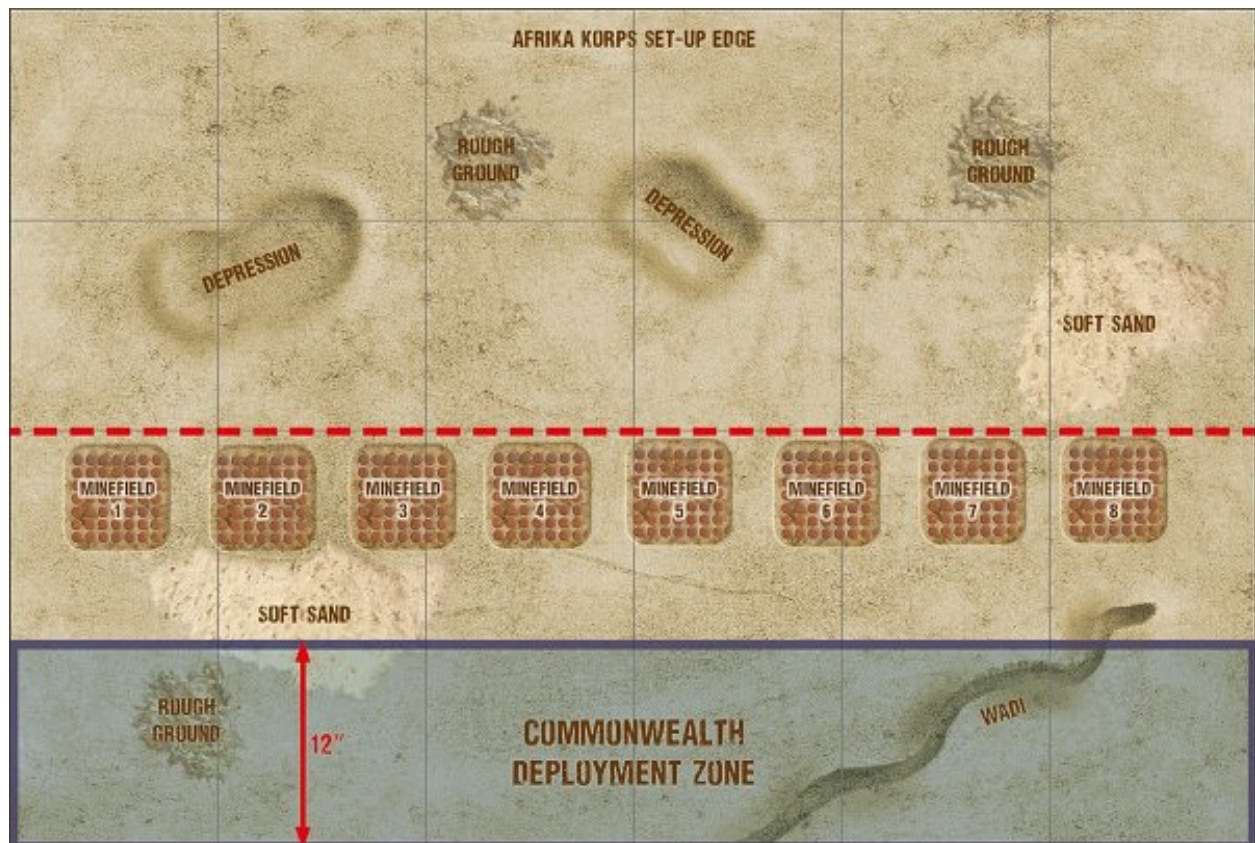
Scenario 15: Alam Halfa

SPECIAL RULES
PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
The Axis player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES
The Desert Air Force was now gaining air superiority over the battlefields.
　The Commonwealth player may deploy a forward air observer.

STRICT ORDERS
Commonwealth tanks were under orders to hold position when attacked by the

Panzers. On too many previous occasions, the Germans had deliberately lured impetuous British tank crews to their deaths, relying on their customary habit of trying to close with the enemy.

In this scenario, Commonwealth tanks must always take an order test for any Advance or Run that would take them closer to an enemy tank at any point in that move.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the German player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for destroying enemy units. One victory point is scored for each destroyed unit. In addition, the German player scores 1 victory point for each unit that exits the Commonwealth table edge. The Commonwealth player scores 2 victory points if no German units exit their table edge. If one side scores at least 2 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

Axis forces in full retreat after the battle of El Alamein, by Steve Noon, © Osprey Publishing, Taken from Campaign 250: The Mareth Line 1943.

AFTERMATH

The 15th Panzer Division had 13 tanks destroyed for little loss to the 8th Army. The 21st Panzer Division found itself in a similar position, losing 15 tanks before it withdrew. By the end of the day, little progress had been made by the Axis forces and the Panzers had had a number of uncomfortable encounters with 8th Army's anti-tank defences.

The following day, pre-planned redeployments of Commonwealth armour foiled another attack costing the Germans 25 tanks in the process. Rommel, trying the keep the initiative and preserve his tanks, planned a coordinated blow combining the infantry of the 90th Light Division with small numbers of the Panzers. Just as the attack was to commence, an extremely strong Commonwealth infantry counter-attack against the 90th ended any chance of the attack. Although the Commonwealth troops were driven back, Rommel conceded that the offensive had failed and he ordered his troops to withdraw behind the minefields. In previous encounters, Commonwealth armoured units would have pursued the Panzers and run into carefully planned ambushes. This time it was different and the defenders held position whilst the artillery shelled

the retreating armour.

Bren Carrier Section

EL ALAMEIN

After the Axis failure at Alam Halfa, Montgomery was able to replenish minefields reduced in the German breakthrough whilst units were reshuffled and reorganised. He was under extreme pressure from Churchill to attack before Operation *Torch,* the Anglo-American landings in Morocco and Algeria, began. However, protected by General Alexander, he was able to resist and not attack before he was ready.

The 8th Army had nearly doubled its firepower during September and October. Receipt of 300 new Sherman medium tanks took the total tank strength up to 1,038. The anti-tank regiments were also benefitting from the arrival of the new and effective 6pdr, capable of destroying any Axis armour at range. Supply was also no longer an issue with copious quantities of fuel and ammunition. In the air, the Desert Air Force had gained air superiority and was relentlessly harrying enemy supply lines.

Panzerarmee Afrika was in a much poorer state. No longer dreaming of reaching the Suez Canal, it sat behind its defences waiting for the inevitable hammer blow to fall. The once free-ranging mobile strike force was dug-in behind vast minefields. Amongst its Italian formations there was a growing desire to just put an end to all this and go home. Relentless interdiction of Axis supply convoys in the Mediterranean meant that fuel and ammunition was strictly rationed and to make matters worse their inspirational leader Rommel was forced to return home to recuperate from a liver infection and physical exhaustion, leaving General Georg Stumme in command.

Despite this, the Axis defences were formidable and in depth with forward outposts of infantry machine guns and anti-tank guns ahead of huge minefields sown with nearly half a million mines.

Behind these, and out of range of most of the Commonwealth artillery, lay the fortified defences with machine guns and larger anti-tank pieces. Finally behind them, waiting to plug any gaps and where possible counter-attack, lay the Italian tank and Panzer forces which at this time had been reduced to 249 German and 278 Italian tanks.

Unable to outflank Rommel due to the lay of the land, Montgomery planned simultaneous attacks by infantry divisions preceded by a massive artillery barrage. These attacks were to sweep up the forward defences and penetrate the minefields creating a path for the following armoured forces which would pass forward and meet what Montgomery believed would be an inevitable counter-attack by the Panzer forces. With the enemy armour neutralised, the infantry formations could begin grinding down the Axis defences in a battle of attrition they would surely win.

British Crusader tanks take up hull-down positions

OPERATION *LIGHTFOOT*

The attack began under the full moon on the evening of 24 October with a massive artillery barrage targeting enemy artillery and then commencing a rolling barrage in front of the advancing infantry. As pictures at the time revealed, the entire eastern horizon seemed to light up in a false dawn. Eight hundred and eighty-two guns fired for nearly five and a half hours, each gun on average firing 600 rounds. Above, the Desert Air Force flew non-stop raids through the night against Axis positions, dropping 125 tons of bombs and hitting supply dumps and forward defences.

The initial infantry attack gave Operation *Lightfoot* its name, the tread of the men unlikely to set of any off the many emplaced anti-tank mines. As the infantry moved through, engineers swept the ground and removed the mines where they found them, clearing lanes 24 feet wide for the following tanks. The rich mix of British, New Zealander, Australian, South African, and Indian infantry formations supported by Valentine tanks were generally successful in penetrating the German outer defences. However, the minefields proved much larger than expected. In the half-light of dawn, with vast amounts of dust thrown up by the hundreds of tanks, visibility dropped to nil and many tanks lost their way or were caught in lengthy traffic jams.

For *Panzerarmee Afrika* the attack had been a shock. Despite their seemingly careful preparation, the Commonwealth artillery and radio jamming efforts had stopped any meaningful response to the assault. General Stumme succumbed to a heart attack whilst scouting the front and for a crucial number of hours the Axis forces were essentially leaderless. Rommel was urgently recalled from Europe but would not return for another 24 hours.

The dawn of 24 October had brought hopes that the 8th Army would be able to exploit its progress during the night and push forward bringing the Panzers to battle. However, the failure to clear the minefields meant the armour had not been able to deploy into its forward positions under the cover of darkness. Any move forward would now be in daylight and subject to fire from Axis anti-tank guns.

The New Zealand Division was tasked to seize the important Miteirya Ridge whilst the 10th Armoured Division would move forward to protect the New Zealanders' flank. However, the move by the two armoured brigades was then called off after a rare Luftwaffe attack. The New Zealanders' General Freyberg was incandescent with rage, as he could not advance without the armoured support. Many 8th Army infantry commanders had now lost all confidence in the tank forces, an uncomfortable situation that would persist for some time to come.

EL ALAMEIN – 1942
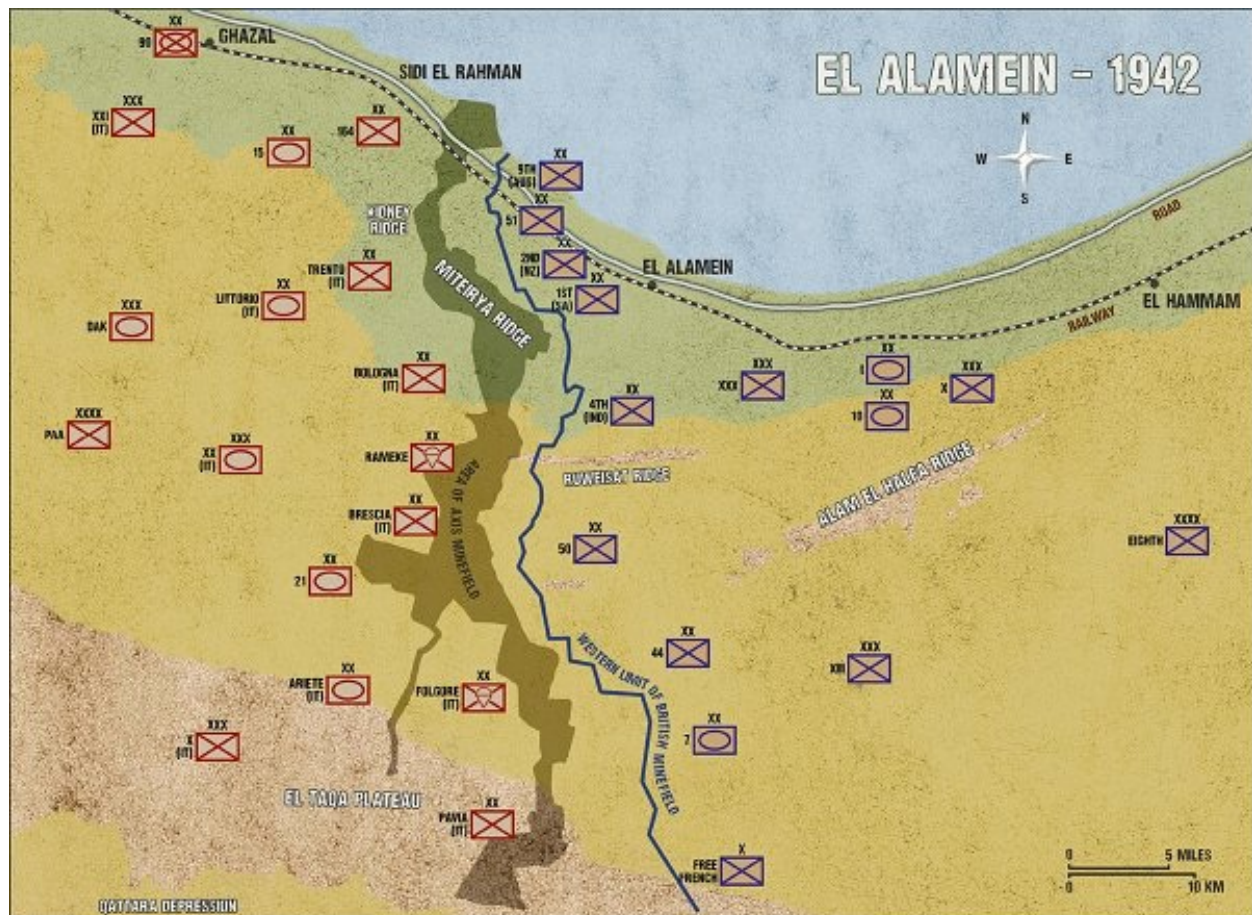
THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Things were not going as expected for the 8th Army, casualties were rising amongst the infantry units and the bulk of the *Panzerarmee* had not yet been committed.

With the planned thrust to the south in danger of stalling, Montgomery changed the direction of the attack to the north. The 1st Armoured Division would move forward and screen the Australians who would start grinding down the German and Italian defences. The British tanks moved out and engaged the German antitank defences. The 75mm guns of the Grants and the new Shermans gave the 8th Army a realistic chance of neutralising the deadly 88s. Plumes of dust to the west heralded the arrival of Axis armoured forces. In the first mass tank battle of El Alamein, formations of German and Italian tanks threw themselves against the division, but now the British tankers had technical parity due to their new American-built medium tanks which could hold their own against the best that the *Panzerarmee* could throw at them. Despite losing 34 tanks, they forced the enemy to withdraw, leaving many of their vehicles burning wrecks on the battlefield. During the night of 25/26 October, the Australians took the important Point 29, a 20-foot high artillery observation post southwest of Tel al-Essa that provided an excellent vantage point over the whole northern section of the battlefield.

Rommel had returned and was appalled to hear about Point 29. Even more worrying were the fuel shortages that severely limited his actions. Normally, he would have brought up the rest of his armour to counter-attack, but fuel shortages meant he had few tactical options.

German armour assaults the defences south of Kidney Ridge

SCENARIO 16: OUTPOST SNIPE, 27 OCTOBER 1942

During the night of the 26 October, the 1st Armoured Division's infantry attacked and secured two enemy strongpoints north and south of Kidney Ridge. The southern target, codenamed 'Snipe', was a blasted expanse of featureless ground. Here the 2nd Rifle Brigade and the 239th Anti-tank Battery, Royal Artillery dug in and awaited the arrival of friendly tanks. Unfortunately, this activity had been spotted by elements of the Littorio Division, which informed *Panzerarmee* HQ. Rommel decided that this was a decisive moment and ordered a full-scale attack with as many armoured units as he could muster. At 'Snipe', the small force had established a defensive position as an anchor from which the Shermans of the 24th Armoured Brigade could launch an attack on Axis positions. British scouts reported enemy tanks close by and there was some skirmishing during the night. At dawn, a mixed group of Axis tanks, which had come to investigate, were ambushed and destroyed by the battery's 6pdr anti-tank guns. It was soon clear to the force that they were an island in a sea of enemy armour. Later in the morning, two tank columns passed by their position, apparently unaware of their presence, until the anti-tank guns opened up. Taken in the flank many vehicles were destroyed but not before fire from the Panzers had knocked out some 6pdrs. At that juncture, Shermans from the 24th Armoured Brigade finally arrived, somewhat late but in time for the next Axis assault.
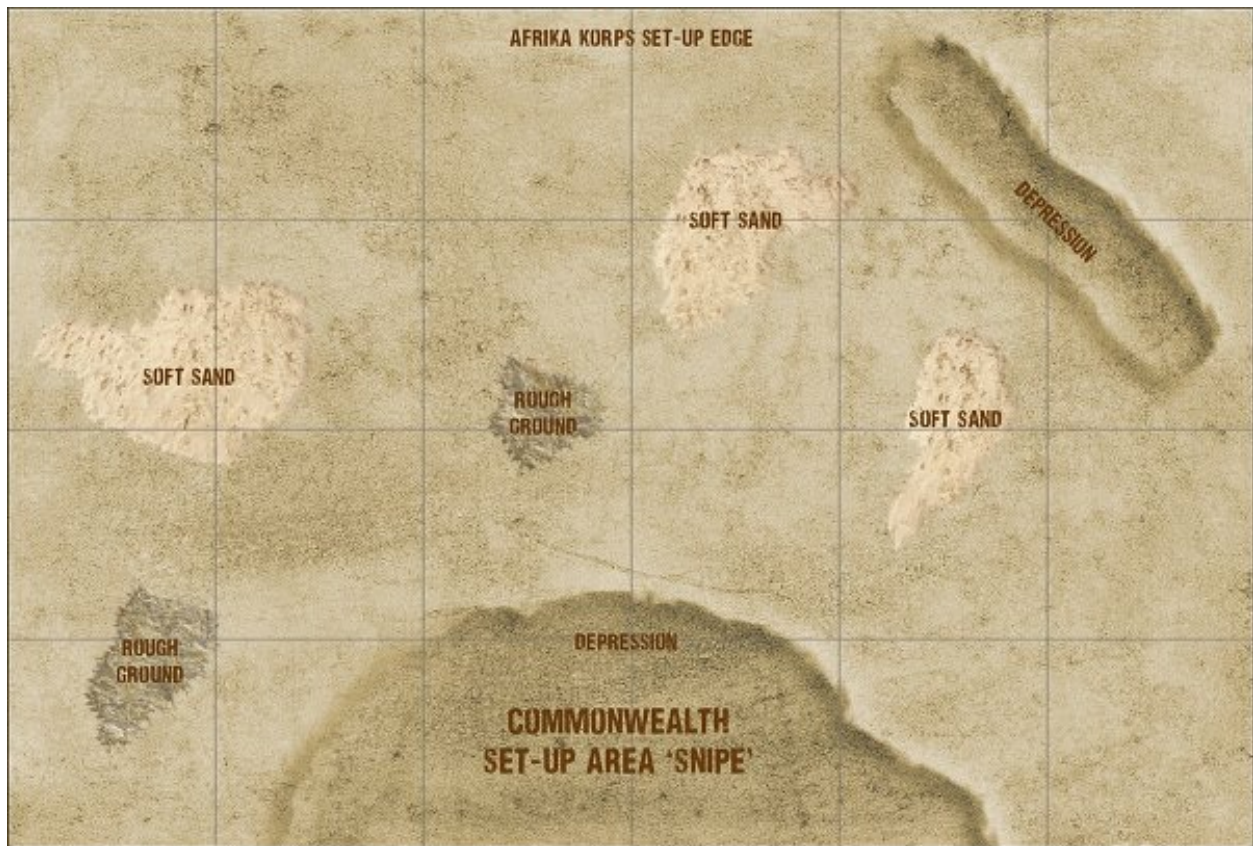
Scenario 16: Outpost Snipe

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and those of Germany or Italy. The British player picks a force up to an agreed number of points; the Axis player gets twice this number of points. Thus, if a 500 point game is agreed on, the Axis player may select a force of up to 1,000 points.

British platoons should be chosen from the 1942 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. The 2nd Battalion had an anti-tank gun company attached, so up to four 6pdr medium antitank guns may be selected for each platoon. In addition to the specified tanks in the selector, the British player may also select Sherman tanks rather than the standard infantry tank choices. The medical officer was left behind and was not able to re-join the battalion, and the forward artillery officer disappeared during the first night. The British player may not select these officers.

German platoons should be chosen from the 1942 DAK Panzer Division

Reinforced Platoon Selector. Italian platoons should be chosen from the 1942 Italian Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector. The Axis player may select platoons from either or both selectors, but may not mix nationalities within a platoon.

The French Foreign Legion strike

DEPLOYMENT

The British player is the defender. They must set up all of their force apart from any tanks on the table. The set-up zone is a semi-circle of 15" diameter centred on the middle point of the British table edge. Infantry and artillery units deployed on the table may be dug-in and hidden. British tank units must be left in reserve.

The Axis side must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve. Axis units in the first wave may enter the table from any edge within the Axis half of the table.

SPECIAL RULES

TIME FOR A BREW

The 2nd Battalion faced a series of attacks spread throughout the day. At the start of each turn, if there are no Axis units within 12" of a British unit, all British units may remove one pin marker.

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

The British gunners proved incredibly adept at keeping their 6pdrs out of sight.

If both players agree, the hiding during a game option (*Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131) may be used for British anti-tank guns.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Axis player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned. (The defenders at Snipe came under fire from Commonwealth artillery and tanks several times during the engagement.)

AIRSTRIKES

Due to the difficulties identifying the 2nd Battalion's position no player may deploy a forward air observer.

CONFUSED FIGHT

The 2nd Battalion had unknowingly positioned themselves in the midst of a large gathering of enemy armour. All units entering the table as reserves can enter from any point on any table edge except the British table edge! Additionally, a friendly reserve cannot enter the table from the same edge as that from which the last enemy reserve entered that same turn.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the Axis player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any edge within the Axis half of the table, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave. Axis reserves can also enter from any edge within the Axis half of the table.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

The British player scores 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed or disabled and one victory point for each British unit on the table. The Axis player scores 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed (not disabled) and 1 victory point for each unit that exits the table across the British table edge.

AFTERMATH

Outpost Snipe was subjected to attacks by German and Italian armoured forces throughout the day. The confusion about their actual location also saw them shelled by British artillery and tanks. Several attempts to relieve the outpost were driven off by the Axis armour. Several attacks by tanks and Italian infantry were repulsed. Ordinarily the position should have been overrun but clever repositioning of the guns and reduced visibility due to dust and the smoke from burning vehicles made it difficult to target the defenders. By nightfall though, the 2nd Battalion had been virtually wiped out. They finally withdrew under cover of darkness, taking only one of their 19 anti-tank guns. However, when the battlefield was examined a couple of days later it was revealed that the gunners had accounted for at least 60 German and Italian armoured vehicles – nearly 10% of Rommel's entire tank force! These were losses that the Axis could not afford.

By the 28 October, Montgomery had shifted the weight of the attack northwards and launched 9th Australian Division towards the coastal road

causing much damage to the units of German 164th and 90th Light Divisions. This also pulled forward armour from 15th Panzer to help stem the attack. By the end of the day, the Commonwealth still had 800 tanks operational versus 148 German and 187 Italian tanks. Rommel, now convinced that 8th Army was on the verge of breaking out to the north as part of a grand encirclement to destroy the *Panzerarmee*, moved as many of his forces as he could to the area. However, Montgomery's slightly unpredictable nature came to the surface again as he changed his mind and dictated that the breakout would be in the south!

British Stuart I 'Honey'

OPERATION *SUPERCHARGE*

Supercharge was the name given to the new breakout operation. Similar to *Lightfoot*, with an infantry assault creating a path through the minefields for the armour, it applied lessons learned in the previous operation. This time the armour would not allow itself to be delayed. The attack would come from the area just south of the Australian-held Point 29.

Freyberg's New Zealand Division, strengthened by attached units from other divisions, would lead the attack. To avoid any misunderstandings between armour and infantry, Freyberg was given command of the 9th Armoured Brigade. The brigade was to advance behind a rolling artillery barrage and overrun the Axis defences on a ridgeline near the Rahman track. The breach would then be exploited by the entire 1st Armoured Division, which would attempt to join battle with Rommel's remaining tanks.

At 01:05 on 2 November, *Supercharge* began behind an artillery barrage laid down on Axis positions. Two infantry brigades again supported by tanks of the 8th RTR advanced towards the Axis lines flanked by the 28th Maori Battalion. Both brigades fought through a mile of enemy defences whilst armoured cars of the 1st Royal Dragoons broke through the enemy lines.

What came next was the extraordinary sacrifice of the 9th Armoured Brigade as they gave their blood to deliver a critical blow to the *Panzerarmee Afrika*.

British commonwealth reinforcements head to the frontline

SCENARIO 17: THE CHARGE OF THE 9TH ARMOURED, TEL EL AQQAQIR, 2 NOVEMBER 1942

At 06:15 it was time for the 9th Armoured Brigade to take up the baton. This was a powerful formation with two medium regiments of Shermans and Grants and a light regiment of Crusaders. Their targets were the German anti-tank gun defences occupying a low ridge in front of the Rahman track. If the brigade could break these defences, Rommel would have to commit his tank reserve and fight a numerically superior 8th Army on open ground. However, the difficulty of assaulting prepared German defences along a large stretch of open ground was fully understood and the brigade's commander, Brigadier Currie, was not enthusiastic about their chances. However, he was informed by his division commander that Montgomery was prepared to accept 100% losses if the brigade reached its objective and secured a breach. Currie accepted his mission with no further objections and ordered his troops forward. Along the line, the British armour arrayed in its troops and squadrons started its advance. What then followed were scenes too reminiscent of the Charge of the Light Brigade.
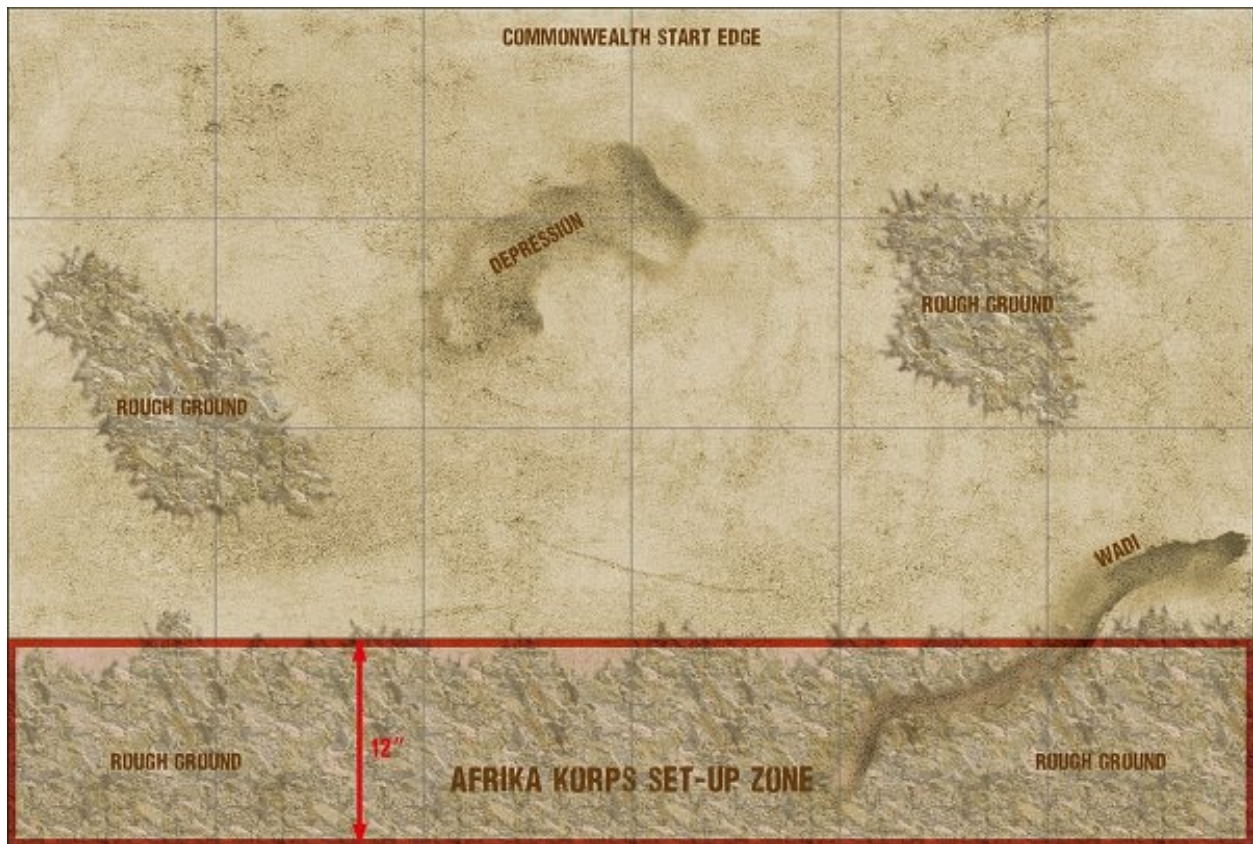
Scenario 17: The Charge of the 9th Armoured

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between the forces of the British Commonwealth and the *Afrika Korps*. The German player picks a force up to an agreed number of points; the British player gets half of these points on top of the agreed number. Thus, if a 1,000 point game is agreed on, the British player may select a force of up to 1,500 points.

Commonwealth platoons should be chosen from the 1942 British Armoured Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector.

German platoons should be chosen from the 1942 DAK Anti-tank Gun Reinforced Platoon Selector. The German player may also place one 6" square minefield section for each full 1,000 points of their force and also may purchase further minefield sections for 50 points each, but only up to 10% of the total force cost. The minefields can be placed anywhere between the German set-up area and the middle line of the table.

DEPLOYMENT

The German player is the defender. They must set up at least half of their force on the table in the set-up zone. Infantry, headquarters, and artillery units deployed on the table may be dug-in and hidden. Remaining units are left in reserve.

The British side must nominate at least half its force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES
DAWN ASSAULT

The attack begins early in the morning. Play the game as a dawn assault, using the rules for night fighting in *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 219.

Italian anti-tank rifle team

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Commonwealth player rolls a die: on a roll of 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 131). On a roll of 1 or less, the barrage fails to materialise, but you have your orders and the attack must go ahead as planned.

AIRSTRIKES

The RAF have massive air superiority, as they have overwhelming numbers and fuel shortages have grounded the Axis air forces. The Commonwealth player may deploy a forward air observer.

OBJECTIVE

The attacker must overrun the defensive position – the defender must try to stop this.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the British player must bring the first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends; on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, calculate which side has won as follows.

Victory points are scored for taking and occupying ground. The British player scores 1 victory point for each unit that either is in the German set-up zone, or has exited the table across the German table edge. The German player scores 1 victory point for each unit anywhere on the table. No points are scored for disabled vehicles. If one side scores at least 2 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw.

AFTERMATH

Following an artillery bombardment and numerous airstrikes on the German defences, the tanks of the 9th Brigade began a headlong charge against the dug-in anti-tank guns. Occasionally staggering under the heavy defensive fire, the charge continued until the brigade overran the outer defences. Although they did not manage to achieve a breakthrough, they had weakened the defences to such an extent that units following behind them took the ridge.

The worst fears of Brigadier Currie were confirmed, losses had been horrendous, with 70 out of 94 tanks 'knocked out'. Montgomery was satisfied and the remains of the 9th dug in on the ridge waiting for relief and the expected counter-attack from Rommel.

1st Armoured Division raced to the gap encountering a German armoured force determined to plug it. This became the largest tank engagement of the El

Alamein battle. In what has been described as the 'death ride' of the 15th Panzer Division, heavily outnumbered Panzer III and IVs took on nearly 400 Commonwealth tanks. 1st Armoured were held up and Montgomery's grand breakthrough was delayed. But the cost to the 15th was catastrophic. As the division fell back, it left every single one of its tanks either destroyed or immobilised on the battlefield. Rommel continued to feed the battle, ordering sacrificial attacks by the Littorio and Ariete whose 'armoured coffins' stood no chance against the Grants and Shermans. Despite the breakout being held, the end of the battle was now in sight. All along the lines, the Axis defences began to come apart. In the north, the Australian 9th Division pushed forward along the coast and by the afternoon of 3 November, Rommel could see the writing on the wall and took the decision to withdraw the Italian XX and XXI Corps behind the *Afrika Korps* itself.

Hitler, who had shown little interest in North Africa, then intervened and insisted in his inimitable way that the *Panzerarmee* should not retreat and fight to the death.

Although Rommel tried to follow these orders, he had little control as individual units simply could not hold their ground and began to retreat westwards. The *Panzerarmee* was on the verge of catastrophic defeat.

Montgomery now chose to commit 8th Army to a full breakout and pursuit following a strict set of carefully planned routes. Unfortunately, such plans cannot survive confusion, congestion, breakdowns in communication, or bad weather. The breakout stuttered and eventually started nearly two days later. But it was too late, their grand enveloping manoeuvre only caught stranded Italians and swathes of empty desert.

Whilst the 8th Army tried to manoeuvre, the remaining Axis transports and a few tanks were in full retreat whilst infantry on foot marched quickly westwards. Many of the Italians who had defended so impressively were stranded when German troops commandeered their trucks. However, despite the battering they had taken, the *Afrika Korps* were retreating in good order: this was not a rout. After eleven days of battle, Montgomery was the victor of El Alamein and the war in the Western Desert was to all extents and purposes over. However, in hindsight, the chance to destroy the *Panzerarmee Afrika* had been missed and the legacy of that failure would cost many American and Commonwealth lives in

Tunisia the following year.

Sherman Tanks of the 8th Armoured Brigade link up with members of the New Zealand Division by Steve Noon, © Osprey Publishing, Taken from Campaign 250: The Mareth Line 1943.

RAID SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 18: DAWN RAID

This mission represents an action by a raiding party striking an unprepared enemy position. The aim of the attacker is to destroy specific objectives, then retreat while sustaining minimal losses.

SET-UP

The mission is played across the width of a 6' x 4' table. After terrain is placed, players roll off to see who will be the attacker and defender. The winner chooses whether to attack or defend. The other player then picks which table side to deploy on.

The defender's deployment zone is any point in their own half of the board, measuring no more than 8" from the centre line running the length of the table.

The defender places three objective markers in his deployment zone. Objectives should be round markers measuring 50mm in diameter and be placed at least 16" away from each other. Objectives cannot be placed in buildings.

DEPLOYMENT

The defender chooses three of their infantry or artillery units to begin the game on the board. These units may begin the game hidden. All of the defender's other units begin the game in reserve (outflanking is allowed).

After the defender has deployed, the attacker chooses at least half of his force to form a first wave and any remaining units deploy in reserve (outflanking allowed).

There is no forward deployment or preparatory bombardment allowed in this mission.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of the attacker is to destroy as many objectives as possible, and if successful, to flee the board by moving into contact with a table edge.

Objectives are destroyed if one of the attacker's infantry or artillery units is in

base contact with it at the end of a turn. An attacking unit wishing to exit the board can do so at any time and is removed as soon as it makes contact with the edge of the board (note – every model in the unit must be able to reach the edge). Its order dice is removed from the bag.

The defender seeks to preserve the objectives and to inflict maximum losses on the enemy.
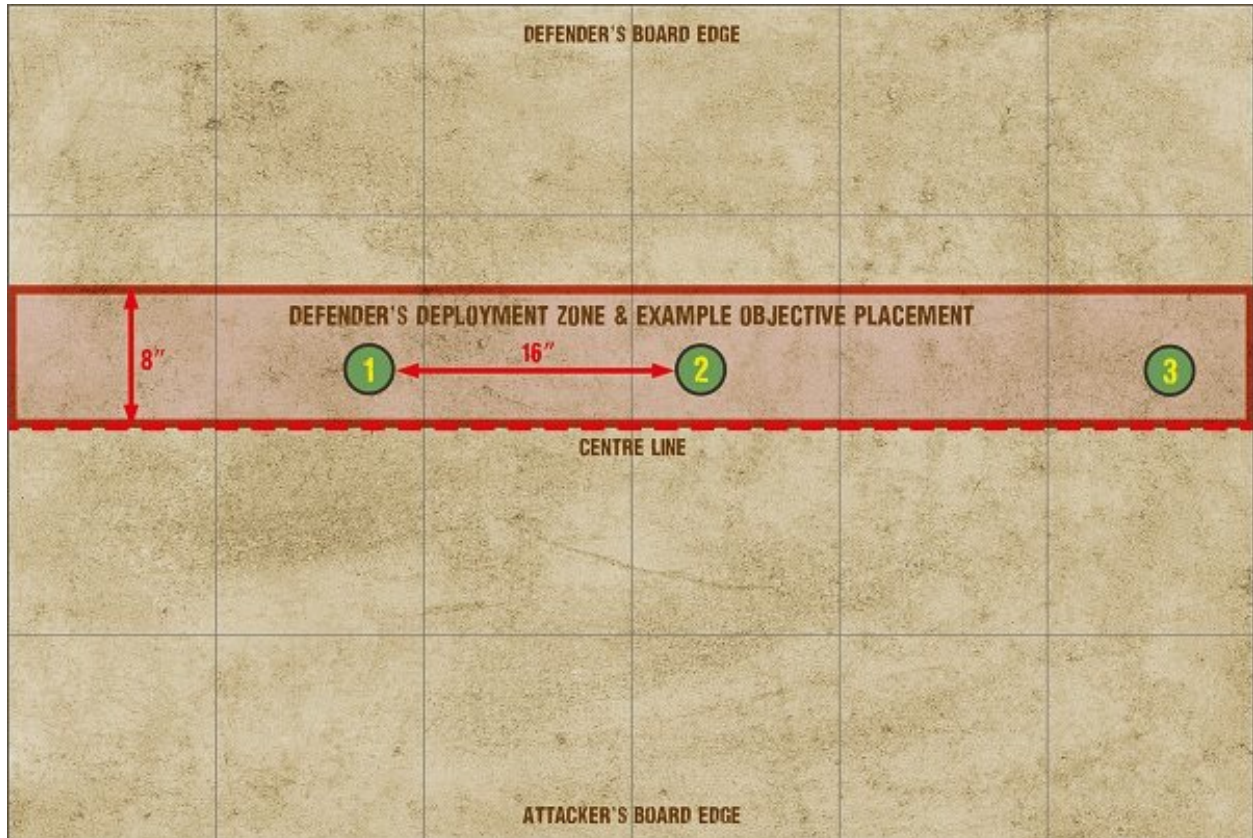
Scenario 18: Dawn Raid

MISSION DURATION
The game ends after 6 turns. However, at the end of Turn 6 roll a dice. On a 4+, play one more turn.

A combined SAS and LRDG force traverses rocky desert terrain

VICTORY!

The attacker receives 3 victory points for each objective destroyed. If he destroys at least two objectives, he will also receive 1 victory point for each of his units that exit the board via any table edge before the end of the game.

The defender receives 2 victory points for each enemy unit destroyed.

Attacking units that remain in reserve at the end of the game count as destroyed (they have been separated from the raiding party and picked off).

OPTIONAL SCENARIO RULES

Although small round objectives work best for balanced general play, players may wish to use different terrain pieces to represent specific targets, such as grounded aircraft, enemy gun batteries, or even buildings.

Here we present alternatives to the 'Dawn raid' mission where the attacker and defender are determined in advance.

DESERT RAID

In this scenario, the attacking player constructs a list using the LRDG, Compagnie Sahariana, Camionetta Arditi X, or SAS force selectors (see here).

The objectives must include at least two grounded planes (Cr-42s, SM-79s, Ju-87 Stukas, or Ju-52 transports are perfect). These aircraft count as immobile soft-skin (6+) vehicles and can therefore also be destroyed through shooting.

However, objectives destroyed in this way only grant the attacker 2 victory points, as it is harder to be certain that the damage caused is irreparable. The defender's deployment zone is also increased to any point in his own half, up to 12" from the centre line.

COMMANDO RAID

In this variant, which recreates a few Hollywood classics, the target of the raid is a coastal gun battery or AA position and the objectives themselves should be modelled as artillery pieces.

The defending player will not receive victory points for killing enemy units, but for each turn after the first that the guns are allowed to fire on their off-board targets. From Turn 2 onwards, each gun that survives at the end of the turn grants the defender 1 victory point.

PARTISAN ATTACK

Whilst not strictly a Western Desert scenario, these options would allow you to use the scenario in other theatres. In this scenario, a unit of resistance fighters is seeking to sabotage an area of importance to the foreign occupiers. The objectives should include at least two buildings and the attacker must use a Partisan army. In the case of buildings, an attacking unit must end the turn on the ground floor to destroy it. Once the building is destroyed, the attacking unit immediately makes a D6" move out of the building and goes down. The building then counts as rubble and any units in upper floors are destroyed. If a building is destroyed by any other means the objective also counts as destroyed.

The attacker is allowed to use units that forward deploy as part of his first wave.

SCENARIO 19: THE *VIA BALBIA* RAID, 27 MAY 1942

The most important supply route for both sides in the North African campaign was the *Via Balbia*, being the only modern, paved road in the region. This highway, running along the Libyan coast from the Tunisian border in the west to the Egyptian border, was opened by Benito Mussolini in 1937. When, in 1940, Italo Balbo, the Governor-General of Italian Libya, was killed in an air crash, the road was named *Via Balbia* in his honour.

As a prelude to the Gazala offensive in May 1942, Rommel planned to cut the *Via Balbia* east of the main British defensive positions to disrupt the flow of supplies from Tobruk. This was to be an amphibious operation by a special unit assembled for that purpose. The unit was named Kampfgruppe Hecker, led by Oberst Herman-Hans Hecker. It consisted of the 13th Brandenburger Company, elements of 33rd and 39th Panzerjäger Battalion, 778th Pioneer Landing Company, and was accompanied by the Italian 3rd San Marco Marine Battalion, over 700 men in total. Armoured support was provided by two StuG III assault guns, along with a number of captured British Crusader tanks and armoured cars.

One tank would be carried by one of the impressive *Land-Wasser-Schlepper*s whilst the other equipment, which included Pak 36, Pak 38 and 2pdr anti-tank guns, ten British trucks and a number of armoured cars would be transported on four landing barges and two boats, escorted by five torpedo boats and five submarines. There were supplies for up to three days, by which time Rommel's main attack would have broken through. Resupply from the sea by night was considered difficult, but possible. The landing would be made some 20 miles west of Tobruk on 27 May, the day after the initial assault on the Gazala line was launched.

The SAS hit an Italian airfield at dawn

OPPOSING FORCES

This battle is fought between a Commonwealth force and a combined German–Italian force. British platoons should be chosen from the 1940–42 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Reinforced Platoon Selector.

Axis platoons should be chosen from the Kampfgruppe Hecker Reinforced Platoon Selector.

Scenario 19: The *Via Balbia* Raid

SET-UP

Both players pick a table side. The table represents open desert, but with enough scattered scrub to provide soft cover. The *Via Balbia*, a paved highway, runs along the table centre line.

DEPLOYMENT

No units are set up on the table as the battle commences. Both sides must nominate at least half the force to form the first wave. This can be the whole army if desired. Any units not included are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING OVER THERE…

The landing has gone smoothly and units are moving inland while it is still dark. Unfortunately, they have been discovered. If both players agree, the scenario can be played as a 'Night fight', 'Flare!', or 'Dawn assault' scenario.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT
There is no preparatory bombardment.

AIRSTRIKES
For the start of the Gazala offensive, Luftwaffe HQ was moved to North Africa and all Luftwaffe assets were used to support the offensive. With the Italians in North Africa, they had numerical and qualitative superiority and the fighting was in range of airfields on Crete. So for the Gazala scenarios, which are set in the early part of the offensive, the Axis should have a marked superiority.

The Axis player can deploy a forward air observer.

OBJECTIVE
Kampfgruppe Hecker must attempt to block the *Via Balbia*. The Commonwealth force must try to prevent them from doing so.

FIRST TURN
During Turn 1, both players must bring their first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a Run or Advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of a first wave. Both sides may use outflanking manoeuvres.

GAME DURATION
Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of Turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2, or 3, the game ends: on a roll of 4, 5, or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!
At the end of the game, calculate which side has won by adding up victory points. Each side scores 1 victory point for each enemy unit destroyed and 1 victory point for each unit that is wholly on the opposite side of the *Via Balbia*. If one side scores at least 3 more points than the other does then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise, the result is deemed too close to call and the battle is a draw

OPTIONAL SET-UP

Had the *Kampfgruppe* been able to get ashore and established before discovery they would have blocked the *Via Balbia* in both directions, digging in and preparing to defend against the first Commonwealth forays and the inevitable main push to dislodge them. To simulate this use Scenario 11: 'Surrounded' from the *Bolt Action* rulebook, page 146.

Long range SAS jeeps in line abreast formation

AFTERMATH

Kampfgruppe Hecker was embarked on the landing barges by 26 May when Rommel gave his final order for the attack. However, it never went ahead and the troops were disembarked with the intention that the operation would now be carried out on the next day, 28 May. Shortly afterwards it was cancelled. Kampfgruppe Hecker, minus its captured British equipment, was sent south and saw action a few days later during the capture of Bir Hakeim.

Various reasons have been put forward as to why the plan was aborted. It has been suggested that the operation had been compromised and reconnaissance had detected British forces moving into the landing area, or that one of the landing barges had suffered damage. Rommel may have reached the conclusion that it would take longer to reach the coast and Kampfgruppe Hecker would be stranded. This did turn out to be correct, as it was almost three weeks before Axis forces reached the coast at Tobruk, by which time the troops defending the Gazala line had been withdrawn to Egypt.

BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH NEW UNITS

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

INFANTRY
ROYAL ENGINEERS INFANTRY SECTION

The Royal Engineers (RE) can trace their origins back to the fifteenth century, but the first reference to a Corps of Engineers is in 1716. The Royal Engineers were a specialised branch of the army, well versed in the arts of creating defensive fortifications, mining, demolition, and the neutralisation of obstacles.

In the Western Desert their primary roles were the clearance of minefields, wire and other obstacles, and where necessary the demolition of enemy fortifications. Similar to other pioneers/engineers, the Royal Engineers were trained in the use of flamethrowers but there are few recorded incidents of them being used.

Cost	70pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 men with rifles at +14pts each - Up to one man can have a light machine gun for +20pts – another man becomes the loader - Up to one man can have a flamethrower for +20pts – another man becomes the assistant - The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man
Special Rules	- Mine clearance experts: The unit is equipped with mine clearance equipment. - Engineers: The unit gains a +1 mine clearing modifier. Engineers can choose to remove a section of barbed wire 6" wide when they cross it. - Demolition charges: Once per game, an engineer unit issued a Down order can place a demolition charge at any point adjacent to one of its members. Note an order test must be made to issue the Down order. The engineer unit may detonate the charge after being issued an Advance, Fire, or Ambush order. The charge may not be detonated if the placing unit is currently Down. The charge is treated as HE (3"). A demolition charge may be defused if at least one of its members is adjacent to the charge and a Down order has been issued. Note an order test must be made

	to issue the Down order.

Tanks of the 24th Armoured Brigade fall on the German flank

VEHICLES

TANK
SCORPION FLAIL TANK

One of the most interesting tank variants deployed in the Second Battle of El Alamein was the Matilda Scorpion Flail Tank. This was a standard Matilda II fitted with a rotating cylinder mounted on two arm-like structures 1.8 metres in front of the tank. The cylinder, which rotated about 100 times per minute, was powered by a 105-horsepower Ford V8 engine mounted in an armoured box on the right side of the tank. Twenty-four flail chains pounded the ground as the tank advanced, setting off any mines they came into contact with.

The process was very slow with the tanks creating massive dust clouds, which on one hand made them difficult to target by German anti-tank guns, but on the other forced the Scorpion crews to resort to their gasmasks. As many as 25 Scorpions were available for Montgomery's *Lightfoot* attack at El Alamein. Although not very successful, the Scorpion laid the groundwork for the much more effective CRAB flail variants that entered service later in the war.

Cost	160pts (Regular) 192pts (Veteran)
Weapons	1 turret-mounted light anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Special Rules	- Slow - Mine flail: When you give this unit an Advance order, it automatically clears any anti-personnel minefield sections it moves into. If it moves into an anti-tank minefield section, it clears it automatically but the owning player must roll a D6. If a result of 5 or 6 is rolled, the mechanism is destroyed and cannot be used any longer in the game. The tank cannot fire into its front arc if it is using its flail.

TRANSPORT
'DORCHESTER' COMMAND ARMOURED TRUCK

The need for a secure, mobile command post was met in the British Army with a class of vehicles built on a lorry chassis. Probably the most famous example of

this type was the AEC 4x4 ACV, more popularly known as the 'Dorchester' after the luxurious London hotel. The lightly armoured compartment contained enough room for a commander and a small staff of three to organise and control an engagement. Two wireless operators handled the communications equipment, maintaining good contact with both upper and lower level echelon formations. Whilst popular with Commonwealth forces they were also appreciated by the *Afrika Korps* who captured several examples. Nicknamed 'Mammoths' by their new owners, two of these became Rommel's preferred command vehicles.

Cost	87pts (Regular) 104pts (Veteran)
Weapons	None
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Transport	Up to 6 men
Special Rules	- Command vehicle

ITALIAN NEW UNITS

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

HEADQUARTERS
BERSAGLIERI MG COMMAND TEAM

Cost	Second Lieutenant (Veteran) 86pts or First Lieutenant (Veteran) 111pts
Composition	One officer and one man mounted on motorcycles
Weapons	Pistol, rifle, or submachinegun as depicted on the models
Special Rules	- Avanti! - Motorbikes - Prudente - Testardo

FOLGORE PARACADUTISTI SQUAD

Cost	84pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 5 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 men with rifles at +14pts each - The NCO can have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3pts - Up to 3 men may replace their rifles with submachine guns for +3pts each
Special Rules	- Avanti! - Prudente - Testardo - Tank hunters

INFANTRY
AS42 INFANTRY SQUAD

Cost	78pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 5 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 5 men with rifles at +13pts each - The NCO can have submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3pts - Up to 2 men may have a light machine gun instead of their rifles for +20pts each

	Another man acts as the loader, one for each MG
Special Rules	- Avanti! - Prudente - Testardo

BERSAGLIERI MG SQUAD

Cost	102pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 5 men mounted on motorcycles
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 6 men mounted on motorcycles for +17pts each - The NCO can have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3pts - Up to 2 men may have light machine gun instead rifles for +20pts each. Another man acts as the loader for each weapon
Special Rules	- Avanti! - Motorbikes - Prudente - Testardo

Italian infantry prepare a defensive perimeter around their camp

ARTILLERY

ANTI-TANK GUNS
75/50 MEDIUM ANTI-AIRCRAFT/ANTI-TANK GUN

Germany supplied the Italians with a number of Czech built 75mm anti-aircraft guns that also proved handy in the anti-tank role using Italian-made ammunition. Its only real downside was its complex Bofors-type carriage, which made emplacement an arduous task.

Cost	70pts (Regular) 84pts (Veteran)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 Medium anti-tank gun
Special Rules	- Team weapon - Fixed - Flak - Forza d'animo - Complex emplacement: The unit may not shoot if given an Advance order.

VEHICLES

TANK DESTROYERS
SEMOVENTE CARRO COMANDO

The Semovente Carro Comando is a converted M13/40 with its turret removed but still retaining the hull twin MMGs. Most of the production versions were converted M14/41, which had the MMGs replaced by a single HMG.

Cost	145pts (Regular) 174pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing MMG
Damage value	9+ (medium tank)
Special Rules	- Command vehicle - Tank hunter command: The unit may use forward deployment where the mission permits. - Vulnerable: All shots to the side and rear of the vehicle get an additional +1 penetration modifier.

SELF-PROPELLED ARTILLERY
MORRIS CS8 65/17, FIAT 634N 76/30, OR TL37 75/27

The Italians proved very adept at mounting a variety of light howitzers and other field pieces on various truck chassis. These were both domestically produced and captured Commonwealth vehicles.

Cost	65pts (Regular) 78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing light howitzer
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Add a forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts
Special Rules	- Howitzer - Forza d'animo

Semovente Carro Comando

ANTI-AIRCRAFT VEHICLES
LANCIA 3 RO BREDA 20MM OR SPA 35 DOVUNQUE

As the Desert Air Force became more effective, the Italians required mobile anti-aircraft trucks armed with the excellent 20mm Breda autocannon. These vehicles also proved a menace to Commonwealth lightly armoured vehicles.

Cost	50pts (Regular) 60pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Light autocannon with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Add a forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts
Special Rules	- Flak

FIAT 634N 102/35

The 102/35 was a World War I vintage naval gun used on many ships of the *Regia Marina*. Some of these guns lay unused in Tripoli until in 1941 the local FIAT factory mounted them onto FIAT 634N trucks. Although a slightly clumsy arrangement, it proved an excellent antitank gun, matching the 90/53 in power.

Cost	190pts (Regular) 228pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing super-heavy AT gun
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Special Rules	- Flak - Slow

| | - Stabiliser jacks: The unit may not shoot if given an Advance order. |

Italian mortars lay down suppressing fire

GERMAN NEW UNITS

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS

INFANTRY
MG34 LMG TEAM

This represents an MG34 team in the light machine gun role. Unlike the medium machine gun, which required a tripod, the LMG only required a light bipod mount, which allowed a good deal more manoeuvrability and flexibility at the expense of rate of fire. The LMG team could also operate in the anti-aircraft role using a simple tripod stand. In North Africa, the Germans often used LMG teams to bolster the defences of antitank gun positions.

The German LMG team counts as a machine gun option for the purpose of the generic Reinforced Platoon Selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook.

Cost	50pts (Regular) 65pts (Veteran)
Team	3 men
Weapons	1 light machine gun
Options	- May add anti-aircraft mount for +5pts
Special Rules	- Team weapon - Fixed (if anti-aircraft mount taken) - Flak (if anti-aircraft mount taken)

AFRIKA KORPS KRADSCHÜTZEN SQUAD

Cost	60pts (Regular) or 72pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 3 men in two motorcycle/sidecar combinations
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 2 men with rifles riding pillion on the motorcycles for +15pts per man (Regular) or +18pts per man (Veteran) - Add up to one man with a rifle riding a motorcycle for +15pts (Regular) or +18pts (Veteran) - The NCO can have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3pts - Up to one man may have a light machine gun instead of his rifle for +20pts. Another man acts as the loader
	- Motorbikes

Special Rules	- Sidecar combinations: Each sidecar combination may carry up to three men (driver, sidecar passenger, and pillion passenger). Single motorbikes carry one man but keep the same rules as combinations. Models armed with LMGs may shoot those weapons as part of an Advance order. Any member of the squad may shoot when using a Fire order (including Ambush).

German infantry and armour on the move

SCHÜTZEN SQUAD

The German army had learned many lessons regarding the importance of the firepower in infantry units and had continued to build their squad structure around the highly capable MG34 LMG. Many squads carried two of these weapons into action and those in the DAK were no exception. Invariably motorised, and capable of laying down a withering amount of fire, they were opponents who had to be given a great deal of respect.

Cost	60pts (Regular) or 78pts (Veteran)
Team	1 NCO and 5 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 2 additional men with rifles at +10 points each (Regular) or +13 points each (Veteran) - The NCO can have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3 points. - Up to 2 men may have a light machine gun instead of their rifles. Another man acts as the loader, one for each MG. The first LMG is free; the second costs +20 points

| **Special Rules** | - Feuerkraft: The first LMG in a Schüzten squad is free |

VEHICLES

AUFKLÄRUNGS GRUPPE

This unit can be taken as an armoured car choice for any 1942 *Afrika Korps* army selector. The *Gruppe* is composed as follows:

1 Aufklärungs Command Kübelwagen
1-3 Aufklärungs MG Kübelwagen
1 Aufklärungs Kübelwagen

Every unit in an Aufklärungs Gruppe must be of the same experience level.
Aufklärungs Gruppe vehicles have the following special rule:

AUFKLÄRUNGS COMMAND KÜBELWAGEN

Cost	50pts (Regular) 60pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Two rifles with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Special Rules	- Aufklärungs command vehicle: +1 morale bonus to any Kradschützen, or Aufklärungs unit within 6". - Recon Vehicle - Open-topped

AUFKLÄRUNGS MG KÜBELWAGEN

Cost	35pts (Regular) 42pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Pintle-mounted MMG with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Special Rules	- Flak - Recon Vehicle - Open-topped

AUFKLÄRUNGS KÜBELWAGEN

Cost	25pts (Regular) 30pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Two rifles with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Special Rules	- Recon Vehicle - Open-topped

DAK Panzerjäger I

ARMOURED CARS
SDKFZ 265 KLEINE PANZERBEFEHLSWAGEN

This light armoured tracked command vehicle was based on a lengthened Panzer I chassis. As the standard tank was unable to accommodate a radio, transmitter and operator the vehicle had no turret, which was replaced by a roomier armoured box type structure. The 265 remained in service with Panzer divisions until 1942.

Cost	90pts (Regular) 108pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing medium machine gun
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Command vehicle

SDKFZ 254 MITTLERE GEPANZERTER BEOBACHTUNGSKRAFTWAGEN

Undoubtedly one of the strangest looking vehicles in the Wehrmacht, the SdKfz

254 armoured mobile observation post had a dual mode suspension fitted with both wheels and separate tracks. Depending on the ground conditions, the driver could select which mode of movement to use.

Cost	80pts (Regular) 96pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Rear-facing pintle-mounted medium machine gun
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Transport	3 men
Special Rules	- Dual mode suspension: This vehicle can count as either tracked or wheeled each turn – declare just before moving. - Recce

SDKFZ 251/6

Command version of the SdKfz 251 equipped with map boards, cipher and encoding machines, and ENIGMA equipment. This is an extremely valuable asset that should never fall into enemy's hands!

Cost	115pts (Regular) 138pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Pintle-mounted, forward-facing MMG
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Command vehicle - Communications vehicle: While this vehicle is present on the table, friendly vehicles in reserve or outflanking ignore the usual -1 penalty for entering from reserve. - Open-topped - Recce

SDKFZ 251/4

Cost	65pts (Regular) 78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Pintle-mounted, forward-facing MMG
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Ammunition carrier: If this vehicle makes a successful Rally order when within 6" of any friendly artillery unit, that gun may be re-crewed with D3+1 men. The carrier is then treated as destroyed and a wreck (abandoned as the men rush to help their comrades). - Artillery support vehicle: The unit may only fire its MMG on a Fire order and may

never voluntarily move closer to an enemy unit than the nearest friendly artillery unit.

SELF-PROPELLED ARTILLERY
SIG 33 PANZERKAMPFWAGEN II

Cost	185pts (Regular) 222pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing heavy howitzer and crew-carried MMG with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	8+ (light tank)
Special Rules	- Crew-carried MMG: Either the howitzer or the MMG may be fired, not both. - Open-topped

GW LORRAINE SCHLEPPER

Cost	160pts (Regular) or 190pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing heavy howitzer and crew-carried MMG with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Crew-carried MMG: Either the howitzer or the MMG may be fired, not both. - Open-topped

SDKFZ 6/3 DIANA

Cost	185pts (Regular) 222pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing heavy anti-tank gun and one crew-carried MMG with a 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Crew-carried MMG: Either the anti-tank gun or the MMG may be fired, not both. - German optics - Open-topped - Tank hunter: This unit may Advance and go into Ambush instead of shooting. However, whenever it has an Ambush order assigned, only the heavy AT gun may be fired.

TANKS
PANZER III AUSF G, H, J

As per *Armies of Germany*

When in 1942 the late model Panzer III Ausf L was delivered to the *Afrika Korps* it was fitted with a 50mm L/60 main gun. This was markedly superior to the earlier 50mm L/42 mounted on the Panzer III Ausf G, H and early J models. The British came to know and respect these new tanks as 'Mk III Specials'

However, in *Armies of Germany* both guns are classed as medium anti-tank guns.

As an optional rule to better reflect the performance difference, reduce the penetration of the medium Antitank gun of the Panzer III Ausf G, H, and J by -1.

If this option is taken reduce the points value of a Regular tank by 15 points and a Veteran tank by 20 points.

Panzer III Ausf J

ARTILLERY

ANTI-TANK GUNS
7.62CM FK36(R) AND PAK 36(R) ANTI-TANK GUN

During the early stages of Operation *Barbarossa*, the Wehrmacht captured large numbers of Soviet 7.62cm field guns. These had an excellent anti-tank capability and it was decided to adopt the gun for German service. There were two versions of this gun, the FK36(r), which was the basic model, and the Pak 36(r) which had a number of enhancements. The gun saw service in North Africa and on the Eastern Front. Its first usage was recorded at Bir Hacheim in Libya in March 1942 where it took a heavy toll of Commonwealth tanks. The gun remained in German service until the end of the war.

Cost	110pts (Regular), 132pts (Veteran)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 Heavy anti-tank gun
Special Rules	- Fixed - Gun shield

German MMGs take up position in the ruins of an ancient temple

THEATRE SELECTORS

BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH

1940 BRITISH WESTERN DESERT FORCE

This force selector is representative of a WDF Armoured Car troop, a force which was often used on 'hit-and-run' raids across the Libyan–Egyptian border. Occasionally small infantry contingents would accompany them to demonstrate to the Italians that they were not safe from the British anywhere and if time allowed the fort walls would be peppered with machine gun fire and the odd mortar bomb tossed inside.

1940 WESTERN DESERT FORCE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Command armoured car from Rolls-Royce, Morris CS9 with the command vehicle rule for +25pts.
2 Armoured cars from: Rolls-Royce, Morris CS9

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Lieutenant – First or Second
0–1 Captain or Major

Infantry

0–3 Infantry squads: Early War Regular infantry squads
0–1 MMG team
0–1 Light mortar team

Vehicles

0–2 Armoured cars from: Rolls-Royce, Morris CS9

The Western Desert platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from Bren Carrier, 15cwt, 30cwt, 3-ton truck, or Utility car.

SPECIAL RULES

• "They did not expect that!: The armoured cars units of the Western Desert Force were renowned for attacking from unexpected directions. Any outflanking armoured car units may arrive from 12" further forward than usually allowed on the turn they arrive - e.g. up to 36" from the players edge on turn 3.
• Desert Fighters

'JOCK' COLUMN

British tank tactics developed since the end of World War I had decided that the fast medium tank, the so-called 'cruiser' type, would be the primary fighting force in any land battle. It would spar with its opposite numbers, bypassing any static defences. Battles were imagined to be similar to naval engagements with opposing tanks driving around each other in an attempt to outflank whilst shooting on the move. Although British tank regiments possessed their own infantry, anti-tank guns, and artillery, units these tended to be looked down upon and relegated to being 'harbour guards'; they would be ordered to protect the home base taking no offensive actions.

The concept of combined arms seemed beyond the tankers' imagination. In France, the BEF had been beaten by the German use of tanks, infantry, guns, and aircraft in close cooperation, but the lessons were not learned.

So, whilst the tanks and armoured cars of 7th Armoured and especially its 11th Hussars were having so much fun 'up the Blue' (as the British referred to ventures into the desert), across the border certain senior officers in charge of the under-used support formations chafed at the boredom. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the eccentric and skilled Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. 'Jock' Campbell of the 4th Royal Horse Artillery, part of the 8th Armoured Division's Support Group. In late 1940 he began to devise the idea of a fully motorised all-arms mobile column travelling without tanks which could probe into enemy territory, seeking out enemy supply convoys and other soft targets. These formations soon picked up the nickname of 'Jock Columns' in honour of their originator.

'JOCK' COLUMN REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Infantry squads

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Lieutenant – First or Second
0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic

Infantry

0–4 Regular infantry sections

Artillery

1–2 Light artillery: 25pdr
1–2 2-pdr anti-tank gun
1–2 40mm Bofors gun

Vehicles

0–3 Armoured cars from Rolls-Royce, Morris CS9, Recce Carrier

The Jock Column must include enough Transports and or Tows (armoured or soft-skin) to transport all models in the infantry and artillery units, with a maximum of one vehicle per unit.

0–1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the Reinforced Platoon from: Bren Carrier, 15cwt, 30cwt, 3-ton truck, Utility car.

0–1 Tow from: Bren Carrier, 15cwt truck, 30cwt truck, Quad tractor.

SPECIAL RULES

• "Let's get at 'em!": All units in a 'Jock Column' may make a free Advance move before the start of any scenario where they are entering as part of a first wave. No firing may be done as part of this special move.

• Desert Fighters

1940–42 COMMONWEALTH INFANTRY BRIGADE

The infantry formations of the Commonwealth in the Western Desert differed from their home-based equivalents in that they were almost entirely mechanised or motorised.

Poor communications and relations between the infantry and the armoured forces generally meant that the infantry brigades could not always count on tank support, so on many occasions the infantry formations had attached groups of infantry tanks to support them in their assaults.

Before the start of *Compass,* the 4th Indian Division and their later replacements, the 9th Australian Division practised very closely with the Matildas of the Royal Tank Regiment. This close cooperation proved invaluable in taking down the Italian forward forts and later in the assaults into Libya at Bardia and Tobruk.

1940–42 COMMONWEALTH INFANTRY BRIGADE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Regular infantry sections (Early War)

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry sections: Regular infantry sections (Early War)
0–1 Machine gun team
0–1 Anti-tank team: Boys anti-tank rifle team
0–1 Sniper
0–1 Mortar team: light or medium
0–1 Royal Engineers section

Artillery

0–1 Artillery unit:
Field artillery: 25pdr light howitzer
Anti-aircraft gun: 40mm heavy automatic cannon
Anti-tank gun from:
    1940–41 2pdr light anti-tank gun
    1942 6pdr medium anti-tank gun
Portee from:
    1940–41 2pdr Portee
    1942 6pdr Portee, Deacon

Armoured Car

0–1 from:

1940–41 Marmon-Herrington, Morris CS9, Recce Carrier, Mk VIB, Morris LRAC.
1942 Marmon-Herrington, Morris LRAC, Humber armoured car, Daimler armoured car, Daimler Dingo, AEC Mk1, Recce Carrier.

Tank

1 Infantry tank may be chosen for each two infantry sections chosen from:

1940–41 A10, Matilda II
1942 Valentine II, Churchill III

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: Bren Carrier, 15cwt, 30cwt, 3-ton truck, Utility car.

0–1 Tow from: Bren Carrier, 15cwt truck, 30cwt truck, Quad tractor.

SPECIAL RULES

- Sound of the guns: If a field artillery option is chosen this platoon may also select an additional 25pdr light howitzer (not free).
- Desert Fighters of this book.

1940–41 BRITISH ARMOURED BRIGADE

In 1939, a British armoured brigade consisted of three regiments of tanks, having a mix of Mk VI light tanks and A9 and A10 cruisers. Little if any infantry support was provided as the tanks were expected to operate independently. Experiences in France showed the light tanks to be almost useless and more cruisers including the new A13 were added. It was also clear that some of form of motorised infantry should be included and a battalion was added to the brigade. However, as the creation of the 'Jock Columns' proved, the infantry were largely ignored. Only after Operation *Crusader* did the value of this element become appreciated and fully incorporated into the brigade's tactics. This selector represents a typical armoured brigade during *Compass* and *Crusader*.

1940–41 BRITISH ARMOURED BRIGADE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Command tank from Mk VIB/C, A9, A10, A13, Crusader I/II, M3 'Honey' with the command vehicle rule for +25pts.

2 Tanks from: Mk VIB/C, A9, A10, A13, Crusader I/II, M3 'Honey'.

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward observer (Artillery)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry squads: Early War Regular infantry squads

0–1 Machine gun team

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

Artillery

0–1 Artillery unit:

Field artillery: 25pdr light howitzer

Anti-aircraft gun: 40mm heavy automatic cannon

Anti-tank gun: QF 2pdr light anti-tank gun, 25mm light anti-tank gun

Armoured Car

0–1 Armoured car: Rolls-Royce, Morris CS9, Marmon-Herrington, Recce Carrier.

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–2 Mk VIB/C, A9, A10, A13, Crusader I/II, M3 'Honey', Machine Gun Carrier, 2pdr Portee.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from Bren Carrier, 15cwt, 30cwt, 3-ton trucks, Utility cars, and Quad tractors.

SPECIAL RULES

- Balaklavering: Harking back to their cavalry ancestry, British tanks in the early war period were prone to charge at top speed towards enemy formations. Whilst presenting quite a spectacle it often resulted in disastrous losses against static anti-tank defences. It was not restricted to the cruisers either, with units of ponderous Matildas also joining in. All tanks in this selector (including Inexperienced tanks) can use the 'Up and At 'Em' national characteristic.
- Firing on the move: A common dilemma for tank crews was whether to fire on the move or when halted. Moving and firing might be less accurate but it made the firing tank a more difficult target. Firing while stationary might bring better accuracy but it also made the firer an easier target. For the British, who sought maximum mobility in their tank forces, the former was preferable. Any tank or armoured car from this selector may fire at any enemy vehicle when performing a Run move with a to hit modifier of -3.
- Desert Fighters of this book.
- Crusader I/II from June 1941, M3 'Honey' from November 1941

TOP SECRET

THE AUSTRALIAN 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION

In 1939, in order to fulfil its imperial commitments, the Australian government raised an all-volunteer expeditionary force to be known as the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF). The division raised was the 6th Infantry on 28 September 1939. It was composed of three brigades and its men came from the states of New South Wales and Victoria.

Sent to Palestine in 1940 they were intended as reinforcements for the BEF in France. The collapse of Allied resistance in May and the French surrender ended that plan. Held in reserve in Palestine, the division was kicking its heels waiting for a chance to get at the enemy.

The Division was led by Major General Ivan Mackay. Its three brigade commanders had been

regimental commanders in World War I, so a wealth of experience and knowledge was passed on to the junior officers. The men themselves were well trained with their weapons, confident in their tactics and generally very fit. They enjoyed a camaraderie that made them extraordinarily resistant to hardship and they could always be relied upon to give a good showing.

1942 BRITISH ARMOURED BRIGADE

By 1942, the British tank formations were evolving. The Mk VI light tanks had been phased out and the Crusader had replaced the A10 and A13. Large numbers of M3 Stuarts were entering service with the 8th Army. Although officially classed as light tanks they were being used in the cruiser role by the 'Desert Rats'. However, only with the arrival of the American-built M3 Grant and Sherman medium tanks did the armoured brigades receive a weapon that could compete with the latest Panzers.

The usefulness of motorised infantry was also now appreciated and the old 'support groups' were replaced by attached units of motorised infantry that now worked more closely with the tanks.

Valentine III tank

1942 BRITISH ARMOURED BRIGADE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Command tank from Crusader I/II/III, M3 Honey, Grant, or Sherman with the command vehicle rule for +25pts.
2 Tanks from: Crusader I/II/III, M3 Honey, Grant, or Sherman

Plus:

Headquarters
0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward observer (Artillery)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry squads: Mid War Regular infantry squads
0–1 Machine gun team
0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

Artillery

0–1 Artillery unit:
Field artillery: 25pdr light howitzer
Anti-aircraft gun: 40mm heavy automatic cannon
Anti-tank gun: 2pdr light anti-tank gun, 6pdr medium anti-tank gun

Armoured Car

0–2 Armoured car: Marmon Herrington, Humber armoured car, Daimler armoured car, Daimler Dingo, AEC Mk1, or Recce Carrier.
Tanks, Tank destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles
0–2 Crusader I/II/III, M3 Honey, Grant, Sherman, Deacon, Bishop, or Priest.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from: Bren Carrier, 15cwt, 30cwt, 3-ton trucks, Utility cars, and Quad tractors.

SPECIAL RULES

• Cool Heads: During 1942, the Commonwealth armoured brigades took some terrible beatings from Axis anti-tank fire. Yet despite the losses they stuck to their missions and gave as good as they got. When firing, Commonwealth tanks ignore the die roll modifier for pin markers.
• Desert Fighters of this book.

British Grant Tank

COMMONWEALTH ARMIES IN *BOLT ACTION*

The Armies of the Commonwealth comprised of forces drawn from all over the British Empire. Although fighting under a single command structure they nevertheless each had their own strengths and idiosyncrasies.

If you decide to take a reinforced platoon from an Australian, New Zealand, South African, or Indian brigade then you may either take one national characteristic from page 18 of the *Armies of Great Britain* book or take one of the following national characteristics instead.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING
The Australian player automatically wins the first roll-off for who places their first 'forward deploying' (i.e. snipers, observers, spotters) unit. In addition, no enemy that forward deploys may set up within 18" of an Australian unit already deployed. Also, Australian infantry spot hidden enemies at a range of 18" rather than 12".

NEVER GIVE UP
When defending in an assault scenario, Australian infantry and artillery units count as having the Fanatic special rule.

TOP SECRET

AUSTRALIAN CAVALRY CHARGE

The first Australian unit to go into action during World War II was a regiment of cavalry belonging to the 6th Australian Division which fought a spirited engagement with the Italians at Fort Maddalena on 12 December 1940. When news of the engagement reached Churchill, he was delighted and at the first opportunity announced that a famous Australian cavalry regiment had charged the enemy sword in hand! This prompted the theatre commander Wavell to retort that he hoped the Prime Minister was aware that the Australian Light Horse was a mechanised unit with carriers and light tanks and NO HORSES!

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
BLOODY MINDEDNESS
Whenever a South African infantry or artillery unit receives hits from non-HE fire, place a pin marker as normal. If, however, no casualties are subsequently caused the pin is automatically removed.

QUICK REACTION
A South African infantry or artillery unit is always allowed to react to being assaulted. The surprise charge rule on page 76 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook does not apply.

NEW ZEALANDER NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
STEADFAST UNDER FIRE
After rolling for the number of pins caused by HE fire, if the target is New Zealand infantry or artillery halve the number of pins rounding down.

SUPERB JUNIOR OFFICERS
New Zealander First and Second Lieutenants have a morale bonus range of 12". Snap to Action ranges remain 6".

SPECIAL RULES FOR MAORI TROOPS
A New Zealand force may add Maori units to its choice of troops. Any Infantry or HQ unit may be selected and for the cost of +1pts per man, the unit gains the formidable fighter trait.

FORMIDABLE FIGHTERS
The Maori do not benefit from any New Zealand national characteristics; instead, they always have the 'Blood curdling charge', 'Up and at 'em' and 'Tough as boots' national characteristics.

INDIAN NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

UNSURPASSED BRAVERY

Churchill paid tribute to "the unsurpassed bravery of Indian soldiers and officers." To reflect this, whenever a unit of infantry or artillery fails a morale check and would otherwise be destroyed as a consequence, take the test again, and apply the second result.

THE MANPOWER OF THE EMPIRE

To represent the vast manpower available from the Indian subcontinent, the Indian force gets a free ten-man Regular infantry section (Early War), armed with rifles. Any additional equipment for this section may be purchased as normal.

ITALIAN THEATRE SELECTORS

## THE ITALIAN ARMY IN THE '*ARMATA CORAZZATA AFRICA*'

During the early stages of the Desert War, the Italians were a much-maligned army. They were in most cases second-line troops and suffered from a woeful lack of transport forcing a foot borne invasion of Egypt. This made them largely static when facing the Western Desert Forces and left their supply lines increasingly vulnerable to their more mobile adversaries. They were also deficient in armour in both number and quality. The L3 CV33/35 and M11/39 proved to be death-traps and whilst the Italian Army had 14 infantry divisions, there was only one armoured brigade. Italian basic defensive strategy was sound with its network of fortified positions, trench lines and minefields, but the junior officers and NCOs were clearly out of their depth in both experience and skill. The lack of leaders with any sort of combat experience meant they were completely unable to react to the manoeuvres of the flanking British mobile columns.

They had neither the weapons nor the tactics to handle the direct Commonwealth infantry assaults on their fortified positions, which were usually preceded by heavy artillery barrages and ably supported by Matilda infantry tanks that the Italians did not have the firepower to stop. The disasters of the winter of 1940–41 created an unfair stereotype of the Italian soldier as a shirker far too ready to throw up his hands in surrender than fight. However, by 1942, a number of reforms within the Italian army which had been underway when the invasion of Egypt had been ordered started to come to fruition.

The Army Selectors offered here cover the Italian Army which fought alongside the Germans in the Western Desert as part of the *Armata Corazzata Africa* (*Panzerarmee Afrika*). It is an attempt to represent how this revived and changed Italian army fought in the second half of the Western Desert campaign.

A player with a collection of Italian Army miniatures can now play *Bolt Action* with his troops fighting in a subtly different manner from those provided in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement. Usage of this selector is of course purely voluntary and must be agreed upon by all players.

For those wanting to play historical games, this selector is suitable for the Western Desert throughout 1942 and 1943.

Australian forces enter the jaws of an Italian ambush

NATIONAL SPECIAL RULES

If you decide to take an Italian force based on any of the Late Desert War Italian Selectors then the following force characteristics replace all of the Italian national characteristics found in the *Armies Italy and the Axis* supplement with the following.

AVANTI!

The Italian army learned many hard lessons during the disastrous battles with the Commonwealth forces during Operation *Compass*. Those troops and officers that escaped capture had seen how modern war worked and had picked up valuable experience which they were able to pass on to the reinforcements who were now coming over from Italy in large numbers. Better training, better organisation, and taking note of how their German allies conducted themselves began to create a new confident atmosphere. Throughout 1942, Italian forces no longer crumpled when setbacks were suffered, they held their ground relentlessly

and when fortunes on the battlefield improved then so did their morale.

Italian infantry units may reroll failed orders tests to Advance or Run if the Italian player is currently winning the game (use the victory points accrued by both sides already when a unit takes the orders test for the purposes of this rule).

AVANZARE

The Italians learned a number of lessons from studying German tactics in the early months of the war determining that the anti-tank gun was the best weapon for killing tanks. Italian tactics emphasised the importance of having them placed as far forward as possible so that they could have an early influence on the battle.

Italian anti-tank guns may forward deploy as per snipers and forward observers (see *Bolt Action* rulebook page 131) in any mission (even those that prohibit forward deployment) and does not count towards totals for determining first waves, if they do.

POOR OFFICERS

Despite the army reforms in tactics and organisation, the Italian officer class still exhibited a reluctance to make bold forward moves and kept a defensive mind-set.

Italian officers may only add their command value to Ambush, Fire, and Rally order tests.

PRUDENTE

The letters sent home from all fronts by Italian soldiers revealed that despite their willingness to defend their homeland many of them were unsure as to why they were fighting and dying so far from home. Many saw the bluster of Mussolini for what it was and were aware that ultimately it was Berlin that was calling the shots. Yet even their German allies showed nothing but open disdain for them. This increasingly led to the Italian soldier being less than willing to throw his life away in this increasingly unpopular war.

Italian infantry units take an additional -1 penalty to all orders tests (not morale checks).

FORZA D'ANIMO

Whilst the heroic exploits of the Folgore Division at El Alamein are a standout example of Italian skill and bravery in battle, the performance of the Italian artillery is sometimes overlooked. Throughout the war in the Western Desert there are numerous examples of Italian artillerymen staying with their guns and firing even as the enemy were overrunning their positions.

All Italian artillery, self-propelled artillery, and Folgore Paracadutisti infantry units remove D2 pins whenever they pass an orders test in place of the usual one pin removed.

TESTARDO

Throughout the latter half of the Desert War, the Commonwealth forces began to develop a grudging respect for the Italian troops who tenaciously hung onto ground they were ordered to defend. Had it not been for the actions of Italian forces at El Alamein blocking 8th Army advances the vast majority of the *Panzerarmee Afrika* might have been enveloped and destroyed.

Italian infantry units have the stubborn special rule. You will require the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* for details of units in these Theatre Selectors.

1940–41 ITALIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE

When the Italians began their ill-fated invasion of Egypt in 1940 the armoured formations deployed were of low quality and were saddled with inferior equipment. They stood no chance against the professionals of the Commonwealth armoured brigades whose cruiser tanks were far superior to the L3 Light tank and the M11/39 medium tank. Only the Special Armoured Brigade under the command of General Bambini with its new M13/40s made any positive contributions during Operation *Compass*.

However, things changed in early 1941 with the arrival of the Ariete, the first Italian armoured division. Notes for scenarios: For games set during Operation *Compass* Italian tanks should be classed as Inexperienced and limited to M11/39 and L3 variants unless the scenario says otherwise.

For any scenarios set after Operation *Compass* all tank choices may be chosen at any experience level.

1940–41 ITALIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Command vehicle from L3 tankette (any version), M11/39,
M13/40 with the command vehicle rule for +25pts 2 Tanks from L3 Tankette (any version), M11/39,
M13/40,

Plus:

Headquarters

0-1 Captain or Major

0-1 Medic team

0-1 Forward observer

Infantry

1–3 Infantry squads: Regular infantry squads, Inexperienced infantry squads, Bersaglieri infantry squads

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: light

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

0-1 Gun from:

Field artillery: light

Anti-tank gun: 47/32 Elefantino

Anti-aircraft gun: Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun, 75/36, heavy AA gun, 90/53 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun

0–1 Anti-aircraft guns of identical type and experience from: 75/50 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun

0–1 Anti-tank guns of identical experience from: 47/32 anti-tank gun

Armoured Cars

Armoured Cars and Recce vehicles from Autoblinda 40, Autoblinda 41

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–2 Vehicles from 0-2 L3 tankette (any version), M11/39, M13/40, or 0-1 100/17 on Lancia Ro, BREDA 20mm on Lancia Ro.

Transports and Tows

The Platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units from FIAT 508 CM, truck, Wheeled artillery tractor.

Italian IZ Armoured Car

SPECIAL RULES

- Iron hulls, Iron hearts: Despite the disparaging opinions of the Italian armoured forces held by Commonwealth soldiers and even their German allies there were numerous examples of extreme bravery and initiative that have been conveniently left out of many popular accounts. Had their equipment been up to the same standards as that of the other armies in North Africa things could have been different. An Italian medium or light tank with the 'Iron hulls, iron hearts' rule may reroll any failed order tests to Advance or Run as long as this would bring them closer to an enemy unit.

Italian L6/40 light tank

1942 AS42 INFANTRY PLATOON

The so-called AS 42 (North Africa 42) programme reflected a more modern appreciation of how contemporary armies should fight. It was in many ways very similar to German tactical organisation and tactics. Its adoption was further

enhanced by the Italian Army's close cooperation with Rommel's *Afrika Korps* after its arrival in 1941. Unlike the old colonial tactics, AS 42 placed an emphasis upon the importance of firepower and mobility over manpower. The first '*Divisione fanteria tipo AS 42*' sent to North Africa was the Trieste.
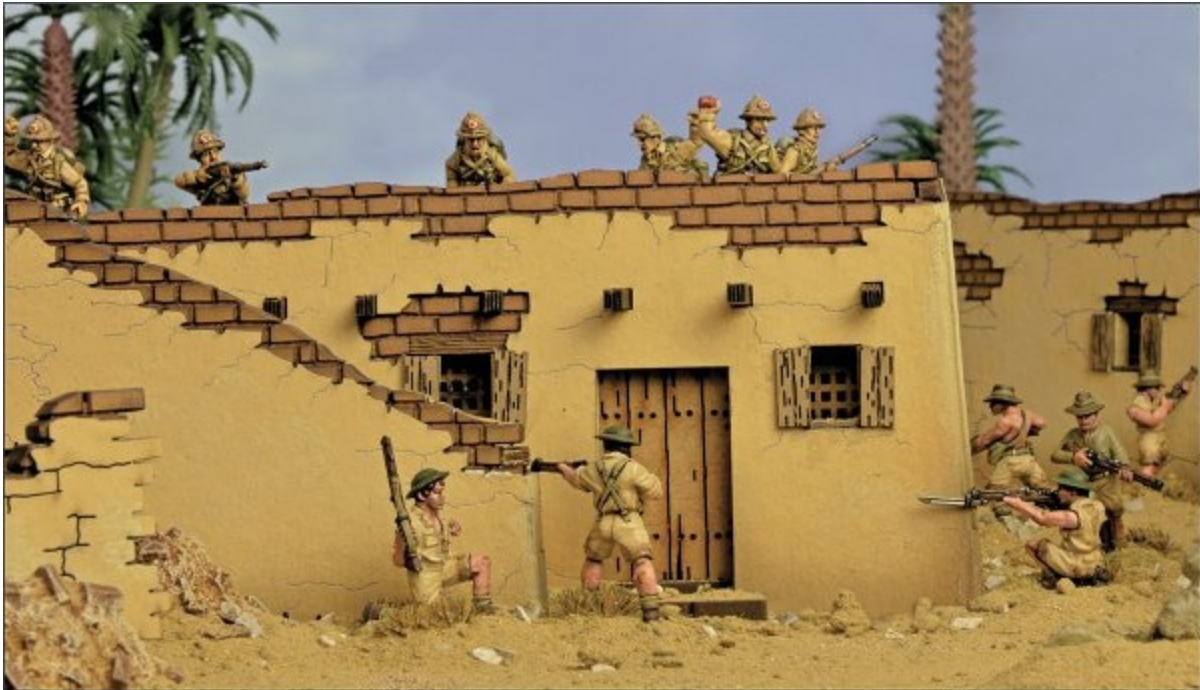
Mussolini's boys spring a trap on the Aussies

1942 AS42 REINFORCED INFANTRY PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2–3 AS42 infantry sections

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–2 Infantry sections: AS42 infantry squad
2–3 MMG team
0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

Artillery

0–2 Artillery from:

0–2 Light field artillery of identical type and experience from: Cannone da 65/17 light howitzer or Cannone da 75/27 light howitzer

0–1 Medium field artillery from: Obice da 100/17 medium howitzer or Cannone da 105/32 medium howitzer

0–2 Anti-aircraft guns of identical type and experience from: 90/53 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, 75/50 medium anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun

0–2 Anti-tank guns of identical experience from: 47/32 anti-tank gun

Armoured car

0–1 Autoblinda AB41

Tank

0–1 Tank, Tank destroyer, Self-propelled artillery, AA vehicle, or Armoured car from: M13/40, M13/41, Semovente 75/18, Lancia 3 Ro 100/17, Lancia 3 Ro Breda 20mm, Lancia 3 Ro 90/53, SPA 35 Dovunque , Autoblinda 41, FIAT L6/40.

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: AS37, FIAT 508 CM, or truck

0–1 Tow from: AS37, Truck, Artillery Tractor

1942 FOLGORE PARACADUTISTI

The Italian 1st Parachute Division was formed in September 1941 with the intention that its first mission should be the invasion of Malta in the proposed Operation *Hercules*.

With the cancellation of *Hercules*, the division was moved to North Africa to fight as regular infantry. Here the unit's designation was changed to 185th Airborne Division '*Folgore*' (Lightning').

The division's performance at El Alamein was almost legendary where its dogged defence against 8th Army armoured and infantry assaults allowed much of *Panzerarmee Afrika* to escape encirclement. Such was the respect of the Commonwealth troops for these brave men that they were allowed to surrender with honour and Churchill was later to quote, "We must honour the men that were the Lions of the Folgore."

1942 FOLGORE PARACADUTISTI REINFORCED INFANTRY PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second

2 Folgore Paracadutisti infantry squads

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry sections: Folgore Paracadutisti infantry squads

0–1 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

Artillery

0–2 Artillery from:

0–2 Light field artillery of identical type and experience from: Cannone da 65/17 light howitzer or Cannone da 75/27 light howitzer

0–1 Medium field artillery from: Obice da 100/17 medium howitzer or Cannone da 105/32 medium howitzer

0–2 Anti-aircraft guns of identical type and experience from: 90/53 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, 75/50 medium anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun

0–2 Anti-tank guns of identical experience from: 47/32 anti-tank gun

Armoured car

0–1 Autoblinda AB41

Tank

0–1 Tank, Tank destroyer, Self-propelled artillery, AA vehicle, or Armoured car from: M13/40, M13/41, Semovente 75/18, Lancia 3 Ro 100/17, Lancia 3 Ro Breda 20mm, Lancia 3 Ro 90/53, SPA 35 Dovunque , Autoblinda 41, FIAT L6/40.

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: AS37, FIAT 508 CM, or truck

0–1 Tow from: AS37, Truck, Artillery Tractor

Italian M13/40 Medium tank

1942 BERSAGLIERI MG PLATOON

Often described as 'Italy's toughest troops' the Bersaglieri were formed in the late 1860s as light infantry skirmishers and marksmen. In the early years of the 20th century they became mobile, first on bicycles and later with motorcycles. This mobility often paired them with the fledgling Italian tank formations such as Ariete and Littorio taking on a role similar to the German Panzer grenadiers.

In-keeping with the AS42 programme, which promoted an increase in firepower, the Bersaglieri incorporated more machine guns into their platoons during 1942 and proved to be fearsome opponents on the desert battlefield.

1942 BERSAGLIERI MG REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Bersaglieri MG Command team
2 Bersaglieri MG Squads

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Note: if chosen as part of a 1942 Bersaglieri MG Platoon these Headquarters units may be mounted on Motorbikes for free

Infantry

0–4 Infantry sections: 1942 Bersaglieri MG Squads

0–1 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

Artillery

0–2 Artillery from:

0–2 Light field artillery of identical type and experience from: Cannone da 65/17 light howitzer or Cannone da 75/27 light howitzer

0–1 Medium field artillery from: Obice da 100/17 medium howitzer or Cannone da 105/32 medium howitzer

0–2 Anti-aircraft guns of identical type and experience from: 90/53 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, 75/50 medium anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun

0–2 Anti-tank guns of identical experience from: 47/32 anti-tank gun

Armoured car

0–1 Autoblinda AB41

Tank

0–1 Tank, Tank destroyer, Self-propelled artillery, AA vehicle, or Armoured car from: M13/40, M14/41, Semovente 75/18, Lancia 3 Ro 100/17, Lancia 3 Ro Breda 20mm, Lancia 3 Ro 90/53, SPA 35 Dovunque , Autoblinda 41, FIAT L6/40.

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: AS37, FIAT 508 CM, or truck
0–1 Tow from: AS37, Truck, Artillery Tractor.

'Trento' Division strongpoint, El Alamein, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing. Taken from Warrior 169: Italian Soldier in North Africa.

1942 ITALIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE

By 1942 the fully equipped Ariete Division was a force to be reckoned with. This was confirmed with the bloody nose given to the British tank formations at Bir el Gubi during Operation *Crusader*.

Despite being generally forgotten in most histories of the Desert War, which focus on the German Panzers, Ariete and later Littorio proved to be important elements of the *Panzerarmee Afrika*. Both divisions were wiped out at El Alamein whilst conducting a heroic rear-guard action.

1942 ITALIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Command vehicle from M13/40, M14/40, L6/40 with the command vehicle rule for +25pts, Semovente Carro Comando

2 Tanks from M13/40, M14/41, L6/40, Semovente 75/18

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward observer

Infantry

1–3 Infantry squads: Regular infantry squads, 1942 Bersaglieri MG infantry squads

0–1 Sniper team

0–1 MMG team

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

0–1 Gun from:

Field artillery: light

Anti-tank gun: 47/32 Elefantino

Anti-aircraft gun: Breda 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun, 75/36, heavy anti-aircraft gun, 90/53 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun

0–1 Anti-aircraft guns of identical type and experience from: 75/50 heavy anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, BREDA 20/65 light anti-aircraft gun

0–1 Anti-tank guns of identical experience from: 47/32 anti-tank gun

Armoured cars

Armoured cars and Recce vehicles from: Autoblinda 40, Autoblinda 41

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–2 Vehicles from: M13/40, M14/41, L6/40, Semovente 75/18 or 0–1 100/17 on Lancia Ro, Breda 20mm on Lancia Ro **Transports and Tows**

The Platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units from FIAT 508 CM, Truck, Wheeled artillery tractor.

SPECIAL RULES

• Iron hulls, iron hearts: Despite the disparaging opinions of the Italian armoured forces held by Commonwealth soldiers and even their German allies there were numerous examples of extreme bravery and initiative that have been conveniently left out of many popular accounts. Had their equipment been up to the same standards of the other armies in North Africa things could have been different. An Italian medium or light tank with the 'Iron hulls, iron hearts' rule may reroll any failed

order tests to Advance or Run as long as this would bring them closer to an enemy unit.

Semovente 75/18 assault gun

THE *AFRIKA KORPS* IN *BOLT ACTION*

Such a famous formation as the *Afrika Korps* deserves its own Army Selectors and those given below are representative of the types of formations that fought in the Western Desert during 1941. The use of these in a Desert War battle is of course totally optional and you may use the selectors found in the *Armies of Germany* book.

1941 DAK PANZER DIVISION

The Panzer forces deployed to Africa in 1941 were very little changed from those that had conquered Poland, the Low Countries, and France. The PzKpfw I had been mostly retired whilst the PzKpfw III medium tank was becoming the core of the Panzer formations, largely replacing the PzKpfw II. Whilst the extreme temperatures of the Western Desert coupled with the destructive attributes of sand made acclimatising vehicles a lengthy task, the wide-open terrain perfectly suited the Panzer division's main role to move fast, exploit breakthroughs, and hit the enemy hard.

There were few things more feared by Commonwealth troops in this campaign than the knowledge that Rommel's Panzers were coming their way. This selector is representative of the 5th Panzer Regiment of the 5th Light Division.

Afrika Korps Horch Field Car

1941 DAK PANZER DIVISION ARMOURED PLATOON

1 Command vehicle from: Funkspahwagen SdKfz 263 (8-Rad), SdKfz 265 Panzerbefehlswagen, Panzerbefehlswagen Panzer I, Panzer I, and Panzer II. Any vehicle without the command vehicle trait must buy it for +25pts.

2 Tanks from: Panzer I, Panzer II, Panzer III Ausf G or H

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major

0–1 Medic team

0–1 Forward observer (Artillery or Air)

Infantry

1–3 Infantry squads: Heer infantry squad, Kradschützen squad, a maximum of one Heer pioneer squad.

0–2 MMG teams

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

0–1 gun from:

Field artillery: light or medium

Anti-tank gun: Pak 36, Pak 38

Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38, Flak 36 or 88mm AA/AT Flak 36

Armoured cars and Recce vehicles

0–1 SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), Kradschützen squad Tanks, Tank destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–2 vehicles from: Panzer I, Panzer II Ausf C or F, Panzer III Ausf G or H, Panzer IV Ausf D or E, Panzerjager I, StuG III Ausf D, SiG 33 PzKpFw II, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from: Kübelwagen, Truck, SdKfz 7, SdKfz 10, and SdKfz 251/1. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10. Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kettenkrad, Heavy field car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES

- Forward the Guns: German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns when testing for an Advance or Run order.
- German Optics: German sights had no better quality glass than those of most other nations but they offered much better fields of vision, which made it much easier to calculate range than those of any other nation. German tanks and tank destroyers do not suffer the long range -1 modifier to hit with

their antitank guns when using a Fire order (including Ambush).

1941 DAK LIGHT DIVISION

The concept of the German Light Division was resurrected for the deployments to Africa with the creation of the 90th Light Division. The Germans had witnessed the Italians' transport difficulties during Operation *Compass* and only deployed units to Africa with appropriate transport.

These divisions were fully motorised like a Panzer division but without the Panzer regiments.

The selector below is representative of the 90 Leichte Division.

Afrika Korps flak gunners search the sky for the RAF

1941 DAK LIGHT DIVISION REINFORCED INFANTRY PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Infantry squads: Heer infantry Squads, Heer Veteran infantry squads

plus:

Headquarters
0–2 Captain or Major
0–2 Medic
0–2 Forward observer (Artillery of Air)

Infantry
0–4 Infantry squads: Heer infantry squads, Heer Veteran infantry squads, a maximum of one Heer

pioneer squad.

0–2 MMG teams

0–1 Mortar team: light or medium

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

0–1 Sniper team

Artillery

0–1 Artillery unit:

Field artillery: Light, Medium, LG40

Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38, Flak 36 or 88mm AA/AT Flak 36

Anti-tank gun: from Pak 36, Pak 38, Panzerbüchse 41

Armoured car

0–1 SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), Kradschützen squad

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery, and Anti-tank vehicles

0–2 vehicles from: Panzer I, Panzer II Ausf C or F, Panzer III G or H, Panzer IV Ausf D or E, Panzerjager I, Panzerjager 38(t), StuG III Ausf D, SiG 33 PzKpFw II, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from: Kübelwagen, Truck, SdKfz 7, SdKfz 10, SdKfz 251/1. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10. Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kettenkrad, Heavy field car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES

- Forward the Guns:German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns (artillery units only) when testing for an Advance or Run order. This also includes anti-tank guns being towed and moved into position.
- Desert Fighters: (Due to the inclusion of ethnic Arab and former Foreign Legion personnel in the 90th, they get the Desert Fighters trait.)

Afrika Korps 5cm PaK 38 anti-tank gun

1941 DAK ANTI-TANK GUN PLATOON

The *Afrika Korps* employed infantry anti-tank guns, as attachments to smaller

platoon and company level units, as well as standalone larger units at divisional level. The divisional anti-tank *Abteilung* (battalion) typically consisted of a HQ and three companies, supported by transportation and a maintenance section. The organisation below shows a typical such unit that would be used in North Africa. The 'Forward the guns' special rule represents the German tactic of moving forward the anti-tank guns aggressively, often keeping pace with Panzer assaults.

1941 DAK ANTI-TANK GUN REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Anti-tank guns from: Pak 36, Pak 38, or Panzerbüchse 41

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (Artillery or Air)

Infantry

0–1 Infantry squads: Heer infantry squad
0–3 LMG teams

Artillery

0–2 guns from:
Field artillery: light
Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38, Flak 36 or 88mm AA/AT Flak 36
Anti-tank gun: Pak 36, Pak 38, Panzerbüchse 41

Armoured cars

0–1 armoured car from SdKfz 222, SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), Kraftradschützen squad.

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Assault Guns, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–1 vehicles from: Panzerjager I, StuG III Ausf D, sIG 33 PzKpFw II, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from: Kübelwagen, Truck, SdKfz 7, SdKfz 10, SdKfz 251/1. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10. 0-1 Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Heavy field car, Horse-drawn limber, Artillerie Schlepper VA 601(b).

Afrika Korps Sd Kfz 233 armoured car

SPECIAL RULES

- Forward the Guns: German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns (artillery units only) when testing for an Advance or Run order. This also includes anti-tank guns being towed and moved into position.

Rommel inspects the front

1941 DAK ARMOURED RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON

In the vast expanses of the Western Desert theatre, Rommel appreciated the value of good intelligence gathered on enemy positions and forces. Whilst the Luftwaffe provided some of this information, many *Afrika Korps* attacks were set up based on information from the far-ranging armoured cars of the reconnaissance platoons. Whilst designed as a scouting unit, these platoons also carried enough firepower to make them difficult opponents for enemy forces lacking armoured vehicles. This formation is based on the 3rd Armoured Reconnaissance Company of the 5th Light Division.

1941 DAK ARMOURED RECONNAISSANCE REINFORCED PLATOON

Heavy Platoon

1 Command armoured car from: SdKfz 263 (8-Rad)
2 Armoured cars from: SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad)

Or

Light Platoon

1 Command armoured car from: SdKfz 223
2 Armoured cars from: SdKfz 222
Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (Artillery)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry squads: Kradschützen squad, Heer infantry squads, Heer Veteran infantry squads
0–1 MMG
0–1 Mortar: light or medium

Artillery

0–2 Artillery unit:
Field artillery: light
Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38
Anti-tank gun: Pak 36, Pak 38

Armoured car

0–2 armoured cars from SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), Kradschützen squad.

Tank

0–1 vehicles from: Panzer I, Panzer II, Panzer III Ausf G or H.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from: Kübelwagen, Truck, SdKfz 7, SdKfz 10, SdKfz 251/1. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10. Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kettenkrad, Heavy field car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES

- Forward the guns: German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns (artillery units only) when testing for an Advance or Run order. This also

includes anti-tank guns being towed and moved into position.

Armour of the Deutches Afrika Korps crosses a wadi

1942 DAK PANZER DIVISION

By 1942, the Panzer III and IV were the main fighting vehicles of the Panzer regiments. 1942 also saw the introduction of the Panzer 'Specials' which greatly enhanced firepower. While reconnaissance battalions were usually by this time mounted almost exclusively in Kübelwagen (*Aufklärungs Gruppen*), Panzer battalions still had units mounted on motorbikes with sidecars.

The 21st Division was also the first Panzer division to include Panzergrenadier elements.

The selector below would be typical of the 21st Panzer Division.

1942 DAK PANZER DIVISION ARMOURED REINFORCED PLATOON

Heavy Platoon

1 Command tank from: Panzer IV Ausf D, E, F, or F2 (Special)

2 Tanks from: Panzer IV Ausf D, E, F, or F2 (Special)

Any command vehicle must buy the Command vehicle trait for +25 pts

OR

Medium Platoon

1 Command tank from: Panzer III Ausf G, H, J, or L (Special)
2 Tanks from: Panzer III Ausf G, H, J, or L (Special)
Any command vehicle must buy the Command vehicle trait for +25 pts

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (Artillery)

Infantry

0–3 Infantry squads: Regular or Veteran Schützen squads.
0–2 MMG teams
0–1 Mortar team: light or medium
0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

0-1 Artillery unit:
Field artillery: light, medium, LG40
Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38
Anti-tank gun: 50mm Pak 38

Armoured car

0-1 SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), or Kradschützen squad

Tank, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-tank vehicles

0-2 vehicles from: Panzer II Ausf C or F, Panzer III Ausf G, H, J, or L, Panzer IV Ausf D, E, F or F2
(Special), captured Matilda II, Panzerjager I, SdKfz 6/3 Diana, StuG III Ausf D, sIG 33 PzKpFw II,
Lorraine Schlepper, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

The platoon must include enough transport vehicles to transport all infantry and artillery units, from:
Kübelwagen, Truck, SdKfz 7, SdKfz 10, SdKfz 251/1. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a
251/10. Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kettenkrad, Heavy field car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES

Forward the guns

- German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-
tank guns (artillery units only) when testing for an Advance or Run order. This also includes anti-tank
guns being towed and moved into position.
- German optics: German sights had no better quality glass than those of most other nations but they
offered much better fields of vision, which made it much easier to calculate range than those of any

other nation. German tanks and tank destroyers get a 'Do not suffer the long range -1 modifier to hit' with their anti-tank guns when using a Fire order (including Ambush).

- Desert Fighters

1942 DAK LIGHT AFRICA DIVISION

In 1942, the two light divisions with the *Afrika Korps* were re-designated as Light 'Africa' Divisions.

During this period, the motorised infantry in Africa began the transition into the grenadier structure that would become widespread in the rest of the Wehrmacht during 1943.

The selector below is representative of the 90th or 164th Leichte Division.

1942 DAK LIGHT AFRICA DIVISION REINFORCED INFANTRY PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Infantry squads: 2 Schützen squads

Plus:

Headquarters
0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic
0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry
0–4 Infantry squads: Schützen squads, a maximum of 1 Heer pioneer squad
0–2 MMG teams
0–1 Mortar team: light or medium
0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

Anti-Tank Guns
0–1 Panzerbusche 41
0–1 Pak 38
0–1 7.62cm FK36(r) and Pak 36(r) heavy anti-tank gun

Artillery
0–1 Gun from:
Artillery unit: light, medium, LG40
Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38, Flak 36 or 88mm AA/AT Flak tank gun

Armoured car

0–1 Armoured car from SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), SdKfz 263, SdKfz 250/10, SdKfz 251/11, Kradschützen squad or Aufklärungs Gruppe

Tank, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-tank vehicles

0–1 vehicles from: Panzer II Ausf C or F, Panzer III Ausf G, H, J, L or M, Panzer IV Ausf D, E, F or F2 (Special), Panzerjager I, SdKfz 6/3 Diana, StuG III Ausf D, SiG 33 PzKpFw II, Lorraine Schlepper, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kübelwagen, SdKfz 251/1, SdKfz250/1, Heavy field car. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10.

Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Maultier, Kettenkrad, Heavy field car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES

- Forward the Guns: German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns when testing for an Advance or Run order. This includes anti-tank guns towed and moved into position. .
- Desert Fighters

1942 DAK ANTI-TANK GUN PLATOON

The *Afrika Korps* employed infantry anti-tank guns, as attachments to smaller platoon and company level units, as well as standalone larger units at divisional level. The divisional anti-tank *Abteilung* (battalion) typically consisted of a HQ and three companies, supported by transportation and a maintenance section. The organisation below shows a typical such unit that would be used in North Africa. The 'Forward the guns' special rule represents the German tactic of moving forward the anti-tank guns aggressively, often keeping pace with Panzer assaults.

1942 DAK ANTI-TANK GUN REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Anti-tank guns from Pak 36, Pak 38, Panzerbüchse 41 or 7.62cm FK36(r) and Pak 36(r) heavy anti-tank gun

Plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward observer (either Artillery or Air)

Infantry
0–1 Infantry squads: Schützen squad
0–3 LMG teams

Artillery
0-2 Guns from:
Field artillery: light
Anti-aircraft gun: Flak 38, Flak 36 or 88mm AA/AT Flak 36
Anti-tank gun: Pak 38, Panzerbüchse 41 or 7.62cm FK36(r) and Pak 36(r) heavy anti-tank gun

Armoured Cars
0–1 Armoured car from SdKfz 222 or SdKfz 231 (8-Rad), SdKfz 263, SdKfz 250/10, SdKfz 251/11, Kradschützen squad, or Aufklärungs Gruppe.

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles
0–1 vehicles from: Panzerjager I, SdKfz 6/3 Diana, StuG III Ausf D, sIG 33 PzKpFw II, Lorraine Schlepper, Opel Blitz with Flak 38, SdKfz 10/4 with Flak 38.

Transports and Tows

Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Kübelwagen, SdKfz 251/1, SdKfz 250/1, Heavy field car. One SdKfz 251/1 per army may be upgraded to a 251/10.
Tow from: SdKfz 10, SdKfz 7, Truck, Maultier, Kettenkrad, Heavy Field Car, Artillerie Schlepper VA601 (b).

SPECIAL RULES
- Forward the Guns: German anti-tank units were highly aggressive. The player may reroll failed order tests for his anti-tank guns (artillery units only) when testing for an Advance or Run order. This also includes anti-tank guns being towed and moved into position.
- Motorised: Unless specifically stated in a scenario, if the *Afrika Korps* are the attackers they should have transport and tows for all their infantry and artillery units. In open play they are always motorised.
- Desert Fighters

Sd.Kfz 139 Marder III

FREE FRENCH FORCES IN THE WESTERN DESERT

"In the whole course of the Desert War, we never encountered a more heroic and well sustained defence. Generalmajor Friedrich von Mellenthin, staff officer in the Panzer Armee Afrika"

France's defeat and occupation did not mean the end of the fight for all Frenchmen. Many units not in France when it fell took refuge in Great Britain. Under Charles De Gaulle, they formed the Free French Brigade. In early June 1942, the 1st Free French Brigade found itself on the extreme southern flank of the fortified Gazala line in Libya. For 15 days, they stubbornly defended the fortress of Bir Hakeim against constant German and Italian assaults.

This fortress was holding up Rommel's swirling armoured thrust to outflank the entire Gazala line.

General Koenig's 1st Free French Brigade (3723 men) was besieged from 26 May, and was outnumbered ten to one by Rommel's 37,000 German and Italian troops. The defence of Bir Hakeim was truly a matter of honour for the Free French. They had to prove they could fight after the disastrous fall of their homeland in 1940. To this end, General Pierre Koenig spent three months fortifying this stronghold, protected by minefields and dug-in artillery. It was used as a base for the Brigade's Jock Columns, which harassed the Axis troops until the total encirclement of the perimeter.

His men came from all over the French Empire. *Tirailleurs* from Senegal and Morocco, tough veterans of the Foreign Legion, and Marines from the Pacific. They used a mixture of old French equipment, some British, and some improvised combinations of both. The French defenders fought off the Italian Ariete Division, knocking out 70 tanks, but by 10 June, the garrison's ammunition was exhausted (with only 22 howitzer shells left in reserve).

Around midnight, General Koenig ordered the garrison to break through the encirclement and force their way through enemy lines. Led by Legionnaires in Bren Carriers, the hard-fought breakout allowed 2619 men to escape.

TOP SECRET

BIR HAKEIM

Rommel's flanking move had been blunted and the Allied armies were able to fall back in good order to positions near El Alamein.

This Theatre Selector allows you to field the 1st Free French Brigade from the Bir Hakeim siege in June 1942. You will need a copy of *Armies of France and the Allies*, as well as *Armies of Great Britain* to use this army list.

ARMY SPECIAL RULES

To represent the special nature of these troops the following army special rules should replace those in this book and the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

FIGHTING FRENCH

Allied planners expected the 1st Free French Brigade to hold the Bir Hakeim position for 10 days. They held out for 15 days, and twice refused formal requests for their surrender before fighting their way out of the encirclement. Winston Churchill declared that from this point on, they should be known as the 'Fighting French'.

All units re-roll unsuccessful morale checks, the second result stands.

COLONIAL VETERANS

All members of the 1st Free French Brigade were professional soldiers from the French colonial forces, or Foreign Legionnaires, veterans of the Spanish Civil War and the 1940 expedition to Norway.

No Inexperienced troops of any kind may be used.

FORWARD ARTILLERY DOCTRINE

As described in the *Armies of France and the Allies* book, with the exception that the types of gun are limited to light howitzers, or light and medium anti-tank guns only.

SOUS-OFFICER

Most of the Free French NCOs had seen action as officers in many wars. A great number of the 13DBLE (13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion) were veterans from the Spanish Civil War or Norway, and promoted as NCOs in the 13DBLE or in the Senegalese units. A lot of the junior officers were quickly promoted, and NCOs quickly became officers.

If your last officer is killed, an NCO or even a trooper will try to take command of the troops.

Once per game, as soon as an officer has been removed as a casualty, the NCO of the nearest infantry squad within 12" of the officer when he became a casualty takes over command of the reinforced platoon. He gains the benefits of a Second Lieutenant, thus granting +1 to all order and morale tests to his own unit and those within 6" of himself. The newly promoted NCO remains with his original squad and the officer is still removed as a casualty as per normal. The newly promoted officer is also granted the "You men snap to action!" ability.'

DESERT FIGHTERS

All Free French units have the Desert Fighters trait.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
FREE FRENCH REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Lieutenant – First or Second
2 Infantry squads (any mix of infantry squads below)

Plus:

Headquarters
0–1 Captain or Major
0–1 Medical Officer

TOP SECRET

A PROMINENT MEMORIAL

In Paris, several of the bridges across the River Seine have names that commemorate famous French military victories. The Pont de Passy, opened in 1905, crosses the river close to the Eiffel Tower. In 1948 it was renamed Pont de Bir Hakeim, in honour of those who defended the desert

Infantry

0–3 Infantry squads (any mix of infantry squads below)

0–1 Machine gun team

0–1 Mortar team

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

0–1 Marksmen

Artillery

0–1 Anti-tank gun, Anti-aircraft gun, or Field artillery from French 25mm AT gun, 2pdr, French 47mm gun, 6pdr.

0–2 Armoured car or Self-propelled gun from Dodge Tanake, Recce Carrier, Canon de 75 Portee, Dervische Portee, 25mm Carrier, Anti-aircraft truck.

0–1 Transport vehicle or Tow per infantry or artillery unit in the reinforced platoon from: Bren Carrier, 3-ton truck, 15cwt truck, 30cwt truck, Jeep, Quad tractor.

French gun teams prepare for action

FREE FRENCH UNITS

HEADQUARTERS
OFFICER

The Free French military was organised identically to the French army of 1940. However, there was a distinct over-representation of junior officers in the Free French units, as many of them were well-educated volunteers. The lack of experience and the romanticism of the young junior officers were off-set by the presence of veteran NCOs. If the last officer in the unit becomes a casualty, a senior NCO will take over command.

Cost	Second Lieutenant 50pts (Regular) 65pts (Veteran) First Lieutenant 75pts (Regular), 90pts (Veteran) Captain 110pts (Regular), 125pts (Veteran) Major 150pts (Regular), 165pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 Officer and up to two further men
Weapons	Pistol, rifle, or SMG as depicted on the models
Options	- The officer may be accompanied by up to 2 further men at a cost of +10pts per man (Regular), or +13pts per man (Veteran) - Give one of the men a VB grenade launcher for +20pts

MEDIC

Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

FORWARD OBSERVER (ARTILLERY)

During Bir Hakeim, the sky belonged to the Germans, so no air observers can be taken. Artillery observers can be taken as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
FOREIGN LEGION VETERAN INFANTRY SECTION

The Foreign Legion was normally deployed in North Africa, but at the outbreak of the war, some units were directed to France. The 13th Legion half brigade

fought hard in the failed Norwegian campaign before France itself fell. This unit decided to pursue the fight and formed the nucleus of the 1st Free French Brigade.

Cost	70pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 7 additional soldiers at +14pts each - Add up to 1 additional soldier armed with pistol only at +11pts - NCO may have a submachine gun for +3pts - Up to 2 soldiers may have submachine guns for +3pts each - One soldier may have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another soldier becomes the loader (always the pistol-armed soldier if present) - One soldier may have a VB launcher for +20pts
Special Rules	- Stubborn: Legionnaires don't give in easily! Veteran Legionnaires count as stubborn.

SENEGALESE BATAILLON DE MARCHE SECTION

Senegalese *Tirailleurs* are native colonial troops that served throughout the French Empire. Although called 'Senegalese' this term was used to describe all the troops recruited from France's sub-Saharan colonies in east, central and western Africa. These *Tirailleurs* were not issued the best weapons and sometimes lacked LMGs and VB launchers. These African troops proved to be tough and determined fighters. They formed the bulk of the Free French infantry.

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 6 soldiers at +11pts each - Add up to 1 soldier armed with pistol only at +8pts - One soldier may have a light machine gun for +20 pts. Another soldier becomes the loader (always the pistol-armed soldier if present) - One soldier may have a VB launcher for +20pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters

NORTH AFRICAN INFANTRY SECTION

Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian *Tirailleurs* are troops raised from the natives

of the North African French territories. These troops were raised from the mountainous areas of North Africa and were formidable light infantry.

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 6 soldiers at +11pts each - Add up to 1 soldier armed with pistol only at +7pts - NCO may have a submachine guns for +3pts - One soldier may have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another soldier becomes the loader (always the pistol-armed soldier if present) - One soldier may have a VB launcher for +20pts
Special Rules	- Mountaineers: Treat all rough ground as open ground. The players should discuss and agree before the game which terrain this rule should not apply to, such as water features and other terrain elements that obviously mountain troops would have no advantage in crossing.

REGULAR INFANTRY SECTIONS

The 24th Colonial Infantry Regiment was partly garrisoned in Cyprus and Syria. Part of this regiment refused the armistice and joined the British in Egypt. They became the first fighting unit of the Free French Force renamed 1st Marine Infantry Bataillon. A *Bataillon* was also raised from volunteers of French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

Cost	50pts (Regular)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Add up to 7 soldiers at +10pts each - Add up to 1 soldier armed with pistol only at +7pts - NCO may have a submachine guns for +3pts - One soldier may have a light machine gun for +20pts. Another soldier becomes the loader (always the pistol-armed soldier if present)

SAPPERS-MINERS SQUAD

The French spent three months fortifying the Bir Hakeim strongholds, covering and linking them with deep minefields. The 1st company of Sapper-Miners (*1e Compagnie de Sapeurs-Mineurs*) were trained in laying and clearing the land

mines.

Cost	50pts (Regular), 65pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- NCO may have a submachine gun for +3pts - Add up to 6 soldiers at +10pts at Regular or 13pts at Veteran each
Special Rules	- Engineers. This infantry unit has the same advantages as pioneers in terms of navigating and clearing minefields.

MARKSMAN

In the French army, there were no 'sniper' teams. Instead, the best shot of a section was provided with a sniper rifle, performing his role alone. A good marksman can pick off unsuspecting soldiers or their officers without giving away his position.

Cost	40pts (Regular), 50pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 marksman
Weapons	Rifle
Special Rules	- Sniper

LIGHT MORTAR TEAM

Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

MACHINE GUN TEAM

Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

MEDIUM MORTAR TEAM

Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

BOYS ANTI-TANK RIFLE TEAM

Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France and the Allies* book.

ARTILLERY
LIGHT HOWITZER

The famous Canon de 75, formed the backbone of the defence of Bir Hakeim and had access to new AT shells. After the loss of these guns during the garrison's withdrawal, the artillery of the 1st Free French Brigade were equipped with British 25pdr guns.

Use the Regular or Veteran light howitzer options as per the *Armies of France* book with the following options.

- Options: Can be upgraded with the option for AT shells for +5pts. These give the Canon de 75 a Pen value of +4 – the same as a light anti-tank gun. The Canon de 75 can shoot either HE or AT – if put into Ambush the player must specify which kind of shell is loaded.

LIGHT ANTI-TANK GUN
This entry represents both the French 25mm AT gun and the British 2pdr, which replaced the French gun after the siege.

Use the Regular or Veteran light AT gun options as per the *Armies of France* book.

MEDIUM ANTI-TANK GUN
This entry represents both the French 47mm APX gun and the British 6pdr, which replaced the French gun after the siege.

Use the Regular or Veteran medium AT gun options as per the *Armies of France* book.

25MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN
Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of France* book.

Special Rules: 'Tenir vos armes!' The brave crews of these guns kept firing even at Stukas making direct strafing runs on them. These units may never voluntarily use the Down order.

40MM BOFORS ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN
Regular or Veteran as per the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

Special Rules: 'Tenir vos armes!' The brave crews of these guns kept firing even at Stukas making direct strafing runs on them. These units may never voluntarily use the Down order.

ARMOURED CARS
DODGE TANAKE

Captain Bich, an artillery officer in command of the Army Vehicle Fleet in Beirut, proposed in 1940 a model of a lightly armoured car built on a 1½ ton Dodge truck chassis obtained as commercial purchase from Egypt. At least 20 Dodge Tanake were built, the name *Tanake* meaning 'jack-of-all-trades'. These vehicles were captured after the fall of Vichy-held Levant, and put into action by the 1st Free French Brigade in the Western Desert. They were crewed by the Moroccan Spahis and performed aggressive patrols and raids from the Bir Hakeim fortress.

Cost	115pts (Regular), 138pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Low velocity light AT gun (+3 pen) with co-axial MMG in an open turret, pintle-mounted LMG
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Special Rules	- Open-topped - Low velocity AT gun - Recce

French Dodge Tanake armoured car

RECCE CARRIER

As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

SELF PROPELLED ARTILLERY
CANON DE 75 PORTEE

Captains Bayrou and Belan modified Ford or Chevrolet trucks to mount a Canon de 75 on the flat bed of the truck. It could be removed using two loading ramps.

Cost	65pts (Regular), 78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	One rear-facing light howitzer
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Can be upgraded with the option for AT shells for +5pts. These give the Canon de 75 a Pen value of +4 – the same as a light anti-tank gun. The Canon de 75 can shoot either HE or AT – if put into Ambush the player must specify which kind of shell is loaded.

DERVICHE LIGHT ANTI-TANK PORTEE

A 25mm anti-tank gun on a naval mount and fitted to the bed of a 15cwt truck.

Cost	65pts (Regular), 78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Light anti-tank gun on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)

ANTI-AIRCRAFT VEHICLES
ANTI-AIRCRAFT TRUCK

The Fusiliers-Marins Regiment, who were in charge of the anti-aircraft defence of the 1st Free French Division, mounted some naval anti-aircraft HMGs on trucks.

Cost	60pts (Regular), 72pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Dual-mounted AA HMG on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Upgrade to quad-mounted AA HMG with 360-degree arc of fire for +40pts
Special Rules	- Flak

25MM CARRIER

Some British Universal Carriers were fitted with a modified French 25mm AT gun.

Cost	105pts (Regular), 126pts (Veteran)
Weapons	One front-facing light anti-tank gun
Damage value	7+ (armoured carrier)
Options	Add a pintle-mounted LMG for +5pts
Special Rules	- Open-topped - Turn on the spot - Flak

TRANSPORTS
BREN CARRIER
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

3-TON TRUCK
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

15CWT TRUCK
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

30CWT TRUCK
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

JEEP
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book without the pintle-mounted MMG option.

QUAD TRACTOR
As per the Regular or Veteran options in the *Armies of Great Britain* book.

SPECIAL FORCES IN THE WESTERN DESERT CAMPAIGN

The majority of the battles fought in the Western Desert campaign were confined to a narrow strip of coastal land hugging the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The coastal roads were the only way to keep the large armies of the Commonwealth and Axis supplied and for them to wander too far away from these lifelines would have been disastrous. However, to the south lay the forbidding expanse of the Sahara Desert. It was an arid and extremely hot environment that proved hostile to both man and machine.

Yet, if a small fighting force could successfully navigate the dune seas, it could safely swing around the enemy's flanks. It would then be free to strike northwards and attack the opposition's vulnerable rear areas. Even a relatively small amount of damage to a critical supply centre or line of communication could have a significant impact on the progress of the main armies. The raiders could then fade back into the desert safe from all but the most determined pursuit.

At the start of the Western Desert campaign both the Commonwealth and the Italians had small units acclimatised to the Sahara and capable of accurately navigating by day or night. Initially these were the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) and the *Auto Sahariana*, but they would be joined by others as the conflict continued. Unlike their colleagues in the main armies to the north, these groups fought no large pitched battles, but if they met their opposite numbers there would be a violent skirmish between the heavily armed vehicles favoured by the patrols. There was in many ways a parallel desert war being fought by these special forces units every bit as desperate and dangerous as the struggles in Cyrenaica and Egypt.

SAS jeeps

SPECIAL FORCES IN *BOLT ACTION*

The actions undertaken by the LRDG and others during the desert battles of World War II are not typical of those normally represented in games of *Bolt Action*. It could be suggested that creating special forces rules to work in 'all comer' *Bolt Action* match-ups is something of a fool's errand. However, our aim here is to develop selectors that are historical in composition and can also be taken to an open event to face various opponents. The aim of the special forces in such a scenario wouldn't be to wipe out the enemy – just to knock out their targets and escape without any losses (and it wouldn't be a fair fight in terms of points!). Therefore, the army lists following are designed to cope with open play while retaining a historical make-up and feel. We have also included a special 'Dawn raid' scenario designed specifically for these armies (see here).

BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES IN THE WESTERN DESERT

THE LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP (LRDG)

The Long Range Patrol (LRP), was formed in Egypt in June 1940 by Major Ralph A. Bagnold who had been a great pioneer of automobile exploration in the Western Desert during the 1930s. The majority of the first volunteer recruits came from New Zealand, Southern Rhodesia, and Britain. Never exceeding a roster of 350 the unit's name was quickly changed to the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG).

Newly formed patrols would include one experienced officer as navigator, and a veteran LRDG radio-operator and mechanic. These were critical roles in the deep desert and performing them at a consistently high standard was paramount. Other units were also trained in desert work by the LRDG and served elsewhere in the Near East.

The LRDG was created to carry out clandestine reconnaissance patrols deep behind the Italian lines. Experts in desert navigation, they also ferried other units, including the SAS and spies, across the desert wastes. Their main mission though was the 'road watch', in which they covertly observed and reported on Axis traffic using the Tripoli to Benghazi road. However, they were also well armed and would carry out raids if required. The most famous example was Operation *Caravan*, the attack on airfields near the town of Barce.

Within the scope of this campaign book, the LRDG operated in two distinct 'phases'.

The first, from their creation until late 1941, saw large patrols of up to a dozen vehicles operating often in conjunction with Free French forces, as for example at Murzuk and Kufra.

The second phase saw wide scale raiding, often transporting the SAS, and culminating in the Barce Raid.

SAS and LRDG patrols rendezvous at a tranquil oasis

LRDG FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

A British force based on the LRDG Selector should not use the national characteristics found in *Armies of Great Britain*. Instead, they have the following force characteristics.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

All units in this list have no penalty to their roll to enter the board when outflanking.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Any vehicles that are outflanking may enter on their designated board edge one turn earlier than normally permitted (e.g. from up to 24" on Turn 2, 36" on Turn 3, etc.).

HIT AND RUN

Vehicles that are currently assigned an Advance order may react to enemy shooting or assaulting by executing a single 9" move with one 90-degree turn if they pass a special morale test. If the test is failed, the opposing player gets to choose what happens: either the driver loses control and the opposing player may move the vehicle instead, or the vehicle stalls, remains stationary, and takes

a pin. Either way, its die is then changed to Down.

DEFLATE THOSE TYRES!
Techniques mastered by the LRDG allowed experienced drivers to negotiate extremely difficult terrain in their hardy wheeled vehicles. All vehicles in this army may Advance through rough ground designated as sandy or rocky at a rate of 6", with a single 90-degree turn.

DESERT FIGHTERS
All LRDG Troops are considered Desert Fighters.

All LRDG infantry also have the following special rules:

- Scouts: The unit may use forward deployment where the mission permits.
- Timely withdrawal: Instead of reacting with a Fire order against an enemy assault, this unit can react with an Advance order (firing is allowed as part of this).

For clarity, all special rules are listed with their appropriate units.

PERHAPS A BIT OF PIRACY
WESTERN DESERT, SEPTEMBER 1940 TO OCTOBER 1941
A British LRDG force chosen from the Perhaps a Bit of Piracy Selector must comprise one or more patrols picked from the following selector. Each patrol is made up as follows:

PERHAPS A BIT OF PIRACY REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Pilot car
2 Gun trucks (Early)

Plus:

Vehicles
0–4 Gun trucks (Early)
0–1 Support truck (Bofors)
0–3 Transport trucks

Infantry

0–4 LRDG foot patrols
0–1 LRDG light mortar team

The force must have sufficient transport capacity to carry all its infantry models.

VEHICLES
15 CWT CHEVY OR FORD 01 PILOT CAR

Cost	73pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Replace the forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG with a pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMG for +10pts - Add a side or rear-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak - Hit and run - LRDG command vehicle (+1 morale bonus to any LRDG vehicle within 12") - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

LRDG Chevrolet gun trucks

30 CWT CHEVY OR FORD GUN TRUCK (EARLY)

Cost	66pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG and pintle-mounted MMG with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Replace one of the pintle-mounted MMGs with a pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMG for +10 - Up to four gun trucks per patrol may add a forward- or side-facing pintle-mounted anti-tank rifle for +25pts - One gun truck per patrol may be upgraded with the LRDG command vehicle special rule for +25pts
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak - Hit and run - LRDG command vehicle (+1 morale bonus to any LRDG vehicle within 12", if the option is taken) - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Over-gunned: A maximum of two weapon systems may be fired via an Advance order, three on a Fire order, including Ambush, obviously. (Only applicable if the anti-tank rifle option is taken). - Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

30 CWT CHEVY OR FORD SUPPORT TRUCK (BOFORS)

Cost	108pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG and a rear-facing light anti-tank gun
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Replace the forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG with a forward-facing pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMG for +10pts
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak (pintle-mount only) - Hit and run - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

30CWT CHEVY OR FORD TRANSPORT TRUCK

Cost	62pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Transport	Up to 10 men
Options	- Add a side- or rear-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts - Replace one of the pintle-mounted MMGs with a pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMG for +10pts
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak - Hit and run - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
LRDG FOOT PATROL

Cost	48pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 2 men
Weapons	One man with a rifle, one with an SMG and one with a pistol
Options	- Replace the NCO with a Second Lieutenant (+1 morale bonus) for +40pts or a Lieutenant (+2 morale bonus) for +65pts or a Captain (+3 morale bonus) for +90pts
	- Behind enemy lines
Special Rules	- Scouts
	- Timely withdrawal

The LRDG prepare their ambush

LRDG LIGHT MORTAR TEAM

Cost	51 pts (Veteran)
Team	2 men
Weapons	Light mortar, both men have pistols in addition.
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Scouts - Timely withdrawal

SOWING MAYHEM

Western Desert, November 1941 to September 1942 A British LRDG force chosen from the Sowing Mayhem Selector must comprise one or more half-patrols picked from the following selector. Each half-patrol is made up as follows:

SOWING MAYHEM REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Jeep (Bantam)
2 Gun trucks

Plus:

Vehicles

0–1 Bantam

0–1 Gun truck

0–1 Support truck (Breda)

0–3 Transport trucks

0–3 Bedford 3-ton truck (only if SAS teams are taken)

Infantry

0-1 LRDG foot patrol

0–1 LRDG light mortar team

0–4 SAS teams

The force must have sufficient transport capacity to carry all of its infantry models.

VEHICLES
JEEP (BANTAM)

Cost	73pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Add a pintle-mounted MMG covering the side and rear arcs for +15pts - Replace one of the pintle-mounted MMGs with a pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMGs for +10pts
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak - Hit and run - LRDG command vehicle (+1 morale bonus to any LRDG vehicle within 12") - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

30 CWT CHEVY GUN TRUCK

Cost	66pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG and pintle-mounted MMG with 360-degree arc of fire
Damage	6+ (soft-skin)

	value	
Options	- Add a rear or side-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts - Replace any two pintle-mounted MMGs with pintle-mounted twin Vickers K MMGs for +10pts each - Up to two gun trucks in any one patrol may replace the 360-degree arc pintle-mounted MMG with a 360-degree arc pintle-mounted Vickers .50 HMG for +10pts	
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak - Hit and run - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue - Over-gunned: A maximum of two weapon systems may be fired via an Advance order, three on a Fire order, including Ambush, obviously. (Only applicable if the additional side- or rear-facing MMG option is taken is taken). Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG. - Vickers .50: This HMG suffers -1 from its penetration value at ranges over 15", not the usual 18" for a HMG.	

30 CWT CHEVY SUPPORT TRUCK (BREDA 20MM)

Cost	84pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG and rear-facing light autocannon
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- Replace the forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG with a pintle-mounted twin Vickers K LMG for +10pts
Special Rules	- Behind enemy lines - Flak (pintle only) - Hit and run - Deflate those tyres! - Out of the blue Recce - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

SAS Infantry Team

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
SAS TEAM

Cost	76pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 3 men
Weapons	Rifles and anti-tank grenades
Options	- Add up to 4 men with rifle for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts - One man may have a light machine gun for +20pts. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader. - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts - If the platoon is led by a Captain or Major, up to 2 SAS infantry sections may be augmented by the presence of a First or Second Lieutenant for 95pts or 70pts, respectively. This officer does not replace the NCO.
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Behind enemy lines - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE IN THE WESTERN DESERT
ORIGINS

Captain David Stirling had been a member of Layforce, a Commando organisation that had recently been disbanded after a number of largely futile and costly actions against enemy held positions in the Mediterranean theatre.

Layforce's demise left many combat specialists and highly trained men contemplating an unwelcome return to their original units. In mid-1941, Stirling conceived the idea of a small, covert parachute regiment that could raid enemy lines of communication and logistics assets. Stirling pitched his proposal to General Auchinleck, who rather liked the idea.

SAS L DETACHMENT

The first SAS formation 'Detachment L' was fictionally part of a fabricated paratrooper regiment in an attempt to deceive the enemy that a large and active airborne unit existed in the Mediterranean theatre. Stirling fervently believed that a unit of highly trained and dedicated men could cause havoc if they could infiltrate the enemy's vulnerable rear.

The original unit consisted of 66 men, the majority being ex-Layforce.

Stirling was joined by the Australian, Jock Lewes, an officer in the Welsh Guards, who was pivotal in organising the SAS. Lewes is also famed for devising the SAS's delayed-charge demolitions device 'the Lewes Bomb'. Another key member was Blair 'Paddy' Mayne who was known to have possessed a mean temper after a bottle of whisky. On the battlefield, however, Mayne demonstrated leadership and bravery without peer, becoming one of the most decorated British soldiers of World War II.

After extensive training in Egypt, the SAS's first mission in November 1941 was in support of Operation *Crusader*. They were to parachute behind enemy lines, targeting airfields near Gazala before being picked up by the LRDG. Unfortunately, an alert enemy and bad weather conditions caused chaos during the jump; the mission was a disaster. Thirty-four men were either killed or captured.

However, the leader of the LRDG patrol that had brought them home suggested that the LRDG, experts in desert navigation, would be a more reliable method of getting the SAS to where they needed to be. In the final months of 1941, the LRDG and SAS achieved great success in raids, destroying dozens of enemy aircraft on airfields across Libya. However, it annoyed the SAS that they had to rely on others for transport.

This galvanised Stirling to acquire a small fleet of 15 Willy's 'Bantam' Jeeps. During an eventful raid at Bagush, Stirling and Mayne discovered that machine-

gun fire from a jeep could be just as effective in destroying parked enemy aircraft as were incendiary demolition charges.

By mid-July 1942, Sterling requested 25 more jeeps armed with twin Vickers guns and six Ford three-ton trucks so that the SAS could become an independent force.

Their most famous raid came in July 1942; 18 jeeps descended in a tight, rehearsed formation upon an airfield at Sidi Haneish, destroying 30 enemy aircraft with concentrated machine-gun fire. The SAS would go on to destroy over 250 enemy planes during the Desert War.

Who Dares Wins – the SAS speed down the narrow streets of a North African town

ARMY SPECIAL RULES

A British force based on the SAS Selector should not use the national characteristics found in *Armies of Great Britain*. Instead, they have the following force characteristics.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

The SAS used brazen tactics to strike at the enemy's vulnerable rear lines.

All units in this army ignore the -1 modifier to orders tests when outflanking.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Any vehicles that are outflanking may enter on their designated board edge one turn earlier than normally permitted (i.e. from up to 24" on Turn 2, 36" on Turn 3, etc.).

DESERT FIGHTERS

All SAS Troops are classed as Desert Fighters.

DEFLATE THOSE TYRES!

Techniques mastered by the LRDG allowed experienced drivers to negotiate extremely difficult terrain in their hardy wheeled vehicles.

All vehicles in this army may Advance through rough ground designated as sandy or rocky at a rate of 6", with a single 90-degree turn.

HIT AND RUN

The SAS conducted raids at night, striking at speed and relying on the element of surprise to get in and out, causing maximum damage for minimum losses.

Any vehicle in this list that is currently assigned an Advance order may react to enemy shooting or assaulting by executing a single 9" move with one 90-degree turn if it passes a special morale test. If the test is failed, the opposing player gets to choose what happens: either the driver loses control and the opposing player may move the vehicle instead, or the vehicle stalls, remains stationary, and takes a pin. Either way, its dice is then changed to Down. When assembling an SAS force, you must choose whether to use the Early or Independent Selector; each of these selectors has its own special rule to reflect the nature of 'L Detachment' SAS at that time.

REINFORCED PLATOON – EARLY: NOVEMBER 1941 – MAY 1942

The earliest incarnation of the SAS saw Stirling's men undertake parachute drops to attack airfields near Gazala. However, when this proved to be a total

disaster they were to employ the services of the LRDG to reach their targets in the enemy's rear lines. Stirling's men would be dropped off in small groups to approach the raid sites by foot, before returning to a rendezvous point.

Any infantry units designated outflanking at the beginning of the game count as scattered. When attempting to outflank, a unit must make a successful orders test as normal – if the test is successful, roll a dice and the unit must enter from any point on the corresponding board edge: 1-2 the player's left; 3-4 the player's right; 5-6 the opponent's board edge.

1 Officer – First or Second Lieutenant or Captain
2 SAS Infantry sections

Plus:

0–4 SAS Infantry sections
0–4 SAS demolition teams
0–3 LRDG transport vehicles

REINFORCED PLATOON – INDEPENDENT: JUNE 1942 – APRIL 1943
MUST BE MOBILE

By July 1942 the SAS had acquired its own small fleet of American Willy's Jeeps and 30cwt trucks and could begin to operate more independently. There must be enough transport vehicles in your force for every man to fit inside a vehicle.

1 Officer – First or Second Lieutenant, Captain, or Major
2 SAS Infantry sections

Plus:

0–4 SAS Infantry sections
0–2 SAS demolition teams
3–6 SAS jeeps
0–1 Blitz buggy
0–1 Transport vehicle per Infantry unit in the reinforced platoon

HEADQUARTERS UNITS
OFFICER

The SAS contained a high percentage of officers from other distinguished units, several of whom emerged as legendary figures of the Western Desert,

demonstrating supreme leadership in the face of overwhelming odds.

Cost	- Second Lieutenant 70pts (Veteran) - First Lieutenant 95pts (Veteran) - Captain 130pts (Veteran) - Major 170pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 Officer and up to 3 further men
Weapons	Rifles and anti-tank grenades
Options	- The officer may be accompanied by up to 3 men with rifles for +19pts per man - Any man may be given an SMG for +2pts each - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts.
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Behind enemy lines - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
SAS INFANTRY SECTION

Though his men were rigorously trained in desert operations, Stirling threw out standard military tactics and relied upon tenacity and improvisation in the field. He recruited only the toughest and most canny men to join the SAS, many of whom were former members of Layforce Commando units. An SAS troop would usually consist of eight men, broken down into two self-sufficient sub-units of four men, each with a specialist navigator, medic, and explosives expert (though all SAS members had to be versatile in these duties).

Cost	76pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 Officer and up to 3 further men
Weapons	Rifles and anti-tank grenades
Options	- Add up to 4 men with rifle for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts - One man may have a light machine gun for +20pts. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader. - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts - If the platoon is led by a Captain or Major, up to two SAS infantry sections may be augmented by the presence of a First or Second Lieutenant for 95pts or 70pts,

	respectively. This officer does not replace the NCO.
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Behind enemy lines - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

SAS DEMOLITION TEAM

Devised by one of the founding members of the SAS, an Australian named Jock Lewes, the Lewes Bomb was an improvised combination of plastic explosive, thermite, and diesel oil. This mixture of ingredients meant that a small package, weighing about 1lb, could be detonated on a delayed-timer fuse, resulting in a fierce explosion as well as an incendiary effect. They were used frequently by Stirling's men to destroy enemy aircraft, fuel supplies, and other important targets.

Cost	50pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 1 man
Weapons	Rifles, anti-tank grenades, and Lewes Bombs
Options	- Add up to 2 men with rifle for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Behind enemy lines - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself. - Lewes Bombs: If forward deployment is allowed, the SAS player may do so with any demolitions teams chosen: these men have planted Lewes Bombs just prior to the beginning of the battle. Although the bombs are not used to target enemy units directly, the erupting columns of flame may cause panic and confusion to spread. When one of these units is deployed, a round 25mm marker is also placed within 6" of the unit. At the start of Turn 2 (and each turn thereafter), roll an individual dice for each Lewes Bomb on the table: on a 1, the bomb fails to detonate and is removed from play; on a 2-3, the timer is delayed and nothing happens this turn; on a 4-6, the bomb detonates and all enemy units within 2D6" takes D3 pins. Note – if a mission forbids forward deployment, this rule cannot be used.

VEHICLES

All weapons mounted on SAS vehicles are to be considered pintle-mounted for the purposes of flak.

SAS JEEP

Undertaking deep penetrating missions into the desert meant that room for water and fuel supplies had to be prioritised aboard the SAS jeeps, as well as outrageous amounts of firepower. The Vickers K gun VGO (Vickers Gas Operated) was originally designed as an aircraft weapon. Whilst the very high rate of fire was an advantage it did cause the gun to overheat and it was also very likely to run out of precious ammo whilst hundreds of miles behind enemy lines. The mountings and combinations of weapons found on the SAS Jeeps were extremely varied, but the most well documented options are presented here.

Cost	70pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Front-facing twinned Vickers K MMGs
Damage Value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- May replace the forward-facing Vickers Ks with a single HMG for free. - May add a forward-facing wing-mounted LMG for +10pts or MMG for +15pts (these may only shoot with a Fire or Ambush order). - May add a rear-facing LMG for +5pts, MMG for +10pts or twinned Vickers K MMGs for +15pts. - One Jeep per platoon may be given the lead vehicle special rule for +20pts (this confers a +2 morale bonus to other SAS vehicles in the platoon within 6" and +1 within 12").
Special Rules	- Recce - Behind enemy lines - Deflate those tyres! - Hit and run - Twinned Vickers - Flak - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

An LRDG patrol prepares for action

STIRLING'S BLITZ BUGGY

It is not clear where this C11ADF station wagon came from, but it seems that there was a C11ADF with a damaged roof in Cairo which Stirling 'appropriated'. The roof and windscreen were cut off and it was painted dark grey, with a German recognition panel on the bonnet, to make it look like a German staff car (but with a large SAS emblem on each front door). Originally, it mounted two concealed machine guns; in June 1942, these were replaced with four Vickers K machine guns.

Affectionately known as the Blitz Buggy, it was an important component of the early SAS raids.

Cost	90pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Front-facing cowl-mounted twin-linked Vickers K MMGs
Damage Value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- May add twinned Vickers K MMGs covering the forward, left and right arcs for +25pts.

Special Rules	- Recce - Behind enemy lines - Deflate those tyres! - Hit and run - Flak - Command vehicle: Confers a +2 morale bonus to any other SAS vehicles within 12". - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

An SAS Patrol takes note of the enemy positions

TRANSPORTS
FORD/LRDG CHEVY 30CWT TRUCK

Cost	78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Forward-facing pintle-mounted MMG
Damage Value	6+ (soft-skin)

Transport	Up to 10 men
Options	- Replace the pintle-mounted MMG with pintle-mounted twinned Vickers K MMGs for +15pts - Add a side or rear-facing pintle-mounted MMG for +15pts or LMG for +10pts
Special Rules	- Recce - Behind enemy lines - Deflate those tyres! - Flak - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

TRANSPORT JEEP

The SAS jeep also served as a transport, life support system, and weapons platform for its men. The SAS stripped their jeeps of all non-essential parts, such as the windscreen and the bars from the radiator grille. As was the case historically, these vehicles are permitted to squeeze in an extra man over the number generally considered normal to jeeps found in other army lists.

Cost	55pts (Veteran)
Weapons	None
Damage Value	6+ (soft-skin)
Transport	Up to 4 men
Options	- May add front-facing twinned Vickers K MMGs for +25pts. Note – this vehicle does not lose transport capacity if upgraded with this option and remains a transport choice (and is subject to the transport rules).
Special Rules	- Recce - Behind enemy lines - Deflate those tyres! - Hit and run - Flak - Vickers K gun: The Vickers K gun was developed for aircraft, but also favoured by special forces. A Vickers K gun shoots with +1 dice compared to a regular LMG.

SAS Jeep

ITALIAN SPECIAL FORCES AND DESERT RAIDERS

The Italian army in North Africa at the start of World War II was essentially equipped and trained to fight colonial wars against the Libyan tribesmen whom they had defeated during the early 1930s. This army when fighting in the relatively benign coastal regions was completely outclassed by the aggressive and highly mobile Commonwealth forces after the Italian invasion of Egypt. The defensive fortress mentality may have worked against low-tech tribesmen but not against the Western Desert Force.

However, when the LRDG and the Free French began to raid the Italian rear-areas infiltrating through the great desert to the south, the Italian command realised that it had forces relatively forgotten in the current conflict that might just prove an effective counter to the raiders. The camel-mounted *Meharisti* and the motorised *Sahariana* had spent years in the desert honing their skills and learning to use the environment to the best advantage. Being able to use their knowledge of the terrain to choose the battlefield and to carefully consider who they fought they were able to avoid being caught and trapped like many of their army colleagues. Only the opposing LRDG and SAS special forces mounted a threat to them, with the two enemies often swapping the roles of hunter and hunted. Unfortunately, the Italians were playing catch-up on this style of warfare and the appearance of the highly trained and effective *Arditi* X raiding groups was too little and too late as the strategic balance shifted and the Axis armies began their long retreat to Tunisia.

The following Army Selectors allow a player to create *Bolt Action* forces representing these fascinating special forces groups. They are designed to be matched against similar Allied special forces or be used in dedicated raid-type scenarios.

The Auto Sahariana pass an Italian held town

COMPAGNIA SAHARIANA

The *Compagnia Sahariana* had been created in 1923 and had achieved a number of impressive victories against Libyan tribesmen in the early 1930s. In 1938, Marshal Balbo dictated that they be consolidated and given motorised transport and their firepower enhanced.

With the outbreak of war and the commencement of damaging raids by the LRDG and Free French it was determined that the only counter to these special forces was a similar motorised force. In November 1941, a fully motorised force was created, including infantry mounted in seven all-terrain AS 37 light trucks and truck-mounted anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns. Although most of the command structure was Italian, the majority of troops were Libyan, well experienced in desert warfare and exploiting the special conditions of that theatre. For over a year, the *Compagnia Sahariana* clashed with the LRDG and the SAS, and even the hard-nosed veterans of the LRDG grudgingly recognised the *Sahariana* as worthwhile opponents. In late 1942, the arrival of the *Arditi Camionettisti* special forces teams added a new dimension to the fighting in their

impressive AS 42 vehicles and their organisation is described later in this book.

The following army selector allows you to create *Compagnia Sahariana* force, which is an ideal opponent for Allied special forces.

COMPAGNIA SAHARIANA PATROL SPECIAL RULES

To represent the special nature of these troops the following army special rules should replace those in this book and the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

The *Sahariana* would use infiltration tactics to strike at the enemy's vulnerable rear lines. All units in this army ignore the -1 modifier to orders tests when outflanking.

SGONFIARE LE GOMME!

Techniques mastered by the *Sahariana* allowed their experienced drivers to negotiate extremely difficult terrain in their hardy wheeled vehicles. All vehicles in this army may Advance through rough ground designated as sandy or rocky at a rate of 6", with a single 90-degree turn.

MUST BE MOBILE

Sahariana Infantry, HQ and, Artillery units must be provided with transport.

DESERT DWELLER

As 'Desert Fighters'. Additionally, if the weather effects table is used then units with this trait ignore the effects of haze and mirage. If a sandstorm is rolled up, the unit only gains 1 pin marker and still retains the 'Desert Fighters' rule.

COMPAGNIA SAHARIANA PATROL
COMPAGNIA SAHARIANA PATROL REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Officer –First or Second Lieutenant, or Captain
2 Autocarro Sahariano AS 37 Gun trucks

Plus:

Headquarters

0-1 Major

0-1 Forward observer (Air)

0-1 Team medic

Infantry

0-4 Sahariana infantry sections

0-1 Sahariana MMG team

0-1 Sahariana light or medium mortar team

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery, and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0-4 Autocarro Sahariano AS 37 Gun trucks

Transport and Tows

0-1 transport vehicles from: AS 37, FIAT 508CM, Truck

Italian AS42 Sahariana armoured car

HEADQUARTERS
OFFICER

Unlike many contemporary Italian officers, those of the *Sahariana* were motivated, having experienced front-line combat and were accustomed to the harsh conditions of the desert.

Cost	- Second Lieutenant 70pts (Veteran) - First Lieutenant 95pts (Veteran) - Captain 130pts (Veteran) - Major 170pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 Officer and up to 3 further men
Weapons	Pistol for the officer and rifles for the additional men
	- The officer may be accompanied by up to 3 men with rifles for +19pts per man

Options	- One man can be designated as the patrol medic for an additional +5pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters -Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
SAHARIANA INFANTRY SECTION

Unlike many Libyan colonial troops, the *Sahariana* were well versed in motorised hit-and-run combat combining their training and natural affinity for the desert, which made them formidable opponents throughout the campaign.

Cost	58pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 3 men
Weapons	Rifles
Options	- Up to 2 men can replace their rifles with a submachine guns for +2pts - 2 men may have light machine guns for +20pts each. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader. - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

SAHARIANA MMG TEAM

Cost	55pts (Regular)
Team	3 men
Weapons	Medium machine gun
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Team weapon - Fixed

SAHARIANA LIGHT MORTAR TEAM

Cost	40pts (Regular)
Team	2 men

Weapons	Light mortar
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Team weapon - Fixed - Indirect fire

VEHICLES
AUTOCARRO SAHARIANO AS37 GUN TRUCK

This variant of the TL37 artillery tractor was specifically designed to give fire support for the *Auto Sahariana*. Despite the arrival later of the very capable AS42, there were never enough available to replace this well-liked and versatile vehicle.

Cost	60pts (Veteran)
Weapons	Pintle-mounted LMG
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Options	- May upgrade the pintle-mounted MMG to HMG for +10pts May add one anti-tank rifle with 360-degree arc of fire for 50pts - May add one light autocannon with the flak special trait with 360-degree arc of fire for 30pts - May add one light anti-tank gun with 360-degree arc of fire for 50pts - May be upgraded with additional armour for 35pts. Treat as 7+ (armoured car) with the 'Open-topped' special trait, but loses the 'Deflate those tyres!' trait.
Special Rules	- Flak (pintle-mounted only) - Recce

TRANSPORTS
SPA AS37 OR SIMILAR CAPTURED COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORT VEHICLE

The AS37 was an Italian military light truck based on the TL37 artillery tractor. Specifically designed to be used in the desert, it was prized by both the Italian army and its 8th Army foes when it fell into their hands. It was sometimes fitted with makeshift armour as it was often used in aggressive patrols. The AS37 could transport eight men and their equipment. Nearly 800 were in service in North Africa by late 1942.

Cost	78pts (Veteran)
Weapons	None
Damage value	6+ (soft-skin)
Transport	Up to 8 men
Options	- Add a forward facing pintle-mounted MMG for 10pts - May be upgraded with additional armour for 35pts. Treat as 7+ (armoured car) with the 'Open-topped' special trait, but loses the 'Deflate those tyres!' trait.

THE *CAMIONETTISTI* – X REGGIMENTO ARDITI

In the early stages of the Desert War, the Italian Army lacked experience in the field of true special-service forces; even the *Arditi* of World War I had been essentially shock-assault units. They had nothing remotely comparable to the Long Range Desert Group. However, it was the example provided by these British units in the Mediterranean and the Western Desert that prompted the Italians to consider the development of a similar special force. Starting from scratch the process of study and evaluation took some time. It was not until April 1942 that it was decided to form a new *Arditi* battalion, which revived the name of the World War I assault units but had nothing else in common with them. The basic mission of the new unit was to strike valuable targets behind Allied lines – railways, roads, bridges, airfields, and petrol and ammunition dumps – mainly with the purpose of compelling the Allies to commit forces to their defence.

All the *Arditi* were volunteers and the recruiters specifically picked troops with combat experience and who demonstrated mental and physical fortitude. As would be expected for a special forces unit, their training included route marches with full equipment, close combat with a knife, and field craft including use of compasses and maps – so important in desert combat. The unit was based at Santa Severa close to the Guastatori assault engineer and Paracadutisti schools.

Initially, three companies were formed: the parachutists of the 101st Arditi Paracadutisti; the assault swimmers of the 102nd Arditi Nuotatori; and finally, and most important for the desert campaign, the light vehicle mounted 103rd Arditi Camionettisti. An HQ unit and special *Carabinieri* military police completed the formation. These units became the X Reggimento Arditi, placed at the disposal of the Italian Army Supreme Command (*Comando Supremo*).

Primary small arms included the compact Beretta M38A sub-machine gun with special 40-round magazines or the versatile M91 Mannlicher-Carcano carbine along with six hand-grenades. The *Arditi* were also trained in tank hunting with a variety of grenades and anti-tank mines. Each patrol was well equipped with support weapons including Breda M30 LMGs and the Brixia M35 light mortar. Some patrols even carried flamethrowers. For sabotage, they were trained to carry and use a wide range of explosive charges.

As befitted their mobile role in the harsh conditions of the desert, the *Camionettisti* were provided with a vehicle specifically designed for that environment, the *Camionetta Sahariana* AS42. Based on the chassis of the AB42 armoured car, its powerful engine and large tyres allowed it to negotiate even the toughest desert terrain. Despite being late to the Western Desert special forces party, the Italians possessed perhaps the best vehicle for the role. Whilst the AS42 generally bristled with machine guns, the *Camionettisti* also knew they would encounter other lightly armoured forces such as armoured cars. To counter these threats, *Sahariana* were often fitted with either a Solothurn anti-tank rifle, a 20mm Breda or a 47mm antitank gun.

Unfortunately, for the *Camionettisti* only a few of these vehicles actually made their way to North Africa by late 1942. However, it can be fun to play scenarios including the *Camionettisti* as they were intended to perform.

ARDITI X PATROL SPECIAL RULES
To represent the special nature of these troops the following army special rules should replace those in this book and the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* supplement.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES
The Arditi X would use infiltration tactics to strike at the enemy's vulnerable rear lines.
All units in this army ignore the -1 modifier to orders tests when outflanking.

OUT OF THE BLUE
Any vehicles that are outflanking may enter on their designated board edge one turn earlier than normally permitted (i.e. from up to 24" on Turn 2, 36" on

Turn 3, etc.).

SGONFIARE LE GOMME!

Techniques mastered by the *Sahariana* allowed their experienced drivers to negotiate extremely difficult terrain in their hardy wheeled vehicles. All vehicles in this army may Advance through rough ground designated as sandy or rocky at a rate of 6", with a single 90-degree turn.

HIT AND RUN

The *Arditi* trained to conduct raids after dark, striking at speed and relying on the element of surprise to get in and out, causing maximum damage for minimum losses.

Any vehicle in this list that is currently assigned an Advance order may react to enemy shooting or assaulting by executing a single 9" move with one 90-degree turn if it passes a special morale test. If the test is failed, the opposing player gets to choose what happens: either the driver loses control and the opposing player may move the vehicle instead, or the vehicle stalls, remains stationary, and takes a pin. Either way, its dice is then changed to Down.

MUST BE MOBILE

Arditi X infantry, headquarters, and artillery units must be provided with transport.

DESERT FIGHTERS

All Arditi X troops should be classed as Desert Fighters.

ARDITI X PATROL

1 Officer –First or Second Lieutenant, Captain, or Major
2 Gun trucks from: Camionetta AS42 Sahariana or 2 Autocarro Sahariano AS37 gun trucks

plus:

0-4 Gun trucks from: Camionetta AS42 Sahariana or 2 Autocarro Sahariano AS37 gun trucks
0-4 Camionettisti infantry sections
0-1 Camionettisti demolition teams
0-1 Camionettisti sniper team

0-1 Camionettisti flamethrower team
0-1 Camionettisti light mortar team

HEADQAURTERS
OFFICER

Camionettisti officers were highly motivated having experienced front-line combat and were certainly a match for their opposite numbers.

Cost	Second Lieutenant 70pts (Veteran) First Lieutenant 95pts (Veteran) Captain 130pts (Veteran) Major 170pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 Officer and up to 3 further men
Weapons	SMG and anti-tank grenades as depicted on the models
Options	- The officer may be accompanied by up to 3 men with SMG for +19pts per man - One man can be designated as the patrol medic for an additional +5pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

INFANTRY SQUADS AND TEAMS
CAMIONETTISTI SECTION

The Italians learned a great deal from studying the methods and tactics of the LRDG and the SAS in the Western Desert and much of this was incorporated when the *Camionettisti* units were being put together.

Cost	76pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 3 men.
Weapons	Rifles and anti-tank grenades
Options	- Add up to 4 men with rifles for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts - 2 men may have light machine guns for +20pts each. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader. - One man can be designated as the team medic for an additional +5pts
	- Tough fighters

Special Rules	- Stubborn - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself, and is not subject to the Geneva Convention rules.

CAMIONETTISTI DEMOLITION TEAM

Pulled from the ranks of engineer units and the specialised *Guastatori*, these men were experts in demolitions in the field. Trained to move forward under fire and place their charges on critical targets, these were extremely dangerous opponents.

Cost	50pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 2 men
Weapons	Rifles, anti-tank grenades, and demolition charges
Options	- Add up to 2 men with rifles for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts
Special Rules	- Tough fighters - Stubborn - Tank hunters - Team medic (if option taken): While the appointed team medic model is in the unit, he may use the medic special rule on any member of the team, including himself. - Demolition charges: If forward deployment is allowed, the Camionettisti player may do so with any demolition teams chosen. These men have planted their charges just prior to the beginning of the battle. Although the bombs are not used to target enemy units directly, the erupting columns of flame may cause panic and confusion to spread. When one of these units is deployed, a round 25mm marker is also placed within 6” of the unit. At the start of Turn 2 (and each turn thereafter), roll an individual dice for each charge on the table: on a 1, the charge fails to detonate and is removed from play; on a 2–3, the timer is delayed and nothing happens this turn; on a 4-6, the charge detonates and all enemy units within 2D6” takes D3 pins. Note – if a mission forbids forward deployment, this rule cannot be used.

CAMIONETTISTI FLAMETHROWER TEAM

The *Camionettisti* through their elite status had access to special weapons not normally available to the average Italian unit. Some missions that required the destruction of enemy assets could be more readily achieved through the usage of this vicious weapon. Commanders were also mindful of its profound shock effect.

Cost	58pts (Veteran)

Composition	2 men
Weapons	1 flamethrower
Special Rules	- Flamethrower - Team - Tough fighters - Stubborn

CAMIONETTISTI SNIPER TEAM

Unlike standard Italian units, the *Arditi* trained specialist snipers, some of whom received their schooling in Germany.

Cost	67 pts (Veteran)
Composition	2 men
Weapons	Sniper has a rifle and a pistol, spotter has a pistol
Special Rules	- Sniper - Team - Tough fighters - Stubborn

VEHICLES

CAMIONETTA SAHARIANA VB42

The VB42 *Sahariana* was perhaps unique amongst its special forces contemporaries in being a vehicle specifically designed for desert conditions. In their projected role, the X Reggimento Arditi would mount deep penetration raids behind the enemy front line, attacking supply dumps, logistics convoys and exposed headquarters units. Based on the AB40 armoured car, its powerful engine, large tyres and sturdy chassis made it ideal for special forces missions. Rather like the SAS and LRDG 'gun trucks', the AB42s would provide fast and mobile fire support for the rest of the patrol that would usually be mounted in capable AS37 trucks. Normally armed with two pintle MMGs, the AB42 also had a central mounting that could accommodate a wide variety of weapons from a simple HMG through to autocannons and light anti-tank guns.

Cost	85pts (Veteran)
Weapons	2 pintle-mounted MMGs
Damage	6+ (soft-skin)

value	
Options	- May add one HMG on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire for 20pts - May upgrade one of the pintle-mounted MMG to pintle-mounted twin MMG - May add one Solothurn anti-tank rifle on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire for 20pts - May add one light autocannon on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire for 30pts - May add one light anti-tank gun on open platform with 360-degree arc of fire for 50pts
Special Rules	- Recce - Flak (pintle-mounted only) - Off-road specialists: The AS42 was an exceptional all-terrain vehicle that allowed its drivers to negotiate extremely difficult terrain. An AS42 may Advance through rough ground designated as sandy or rocky at a rate of 9", with a single 90-degree turn.

AUTOCARRO SAHARIANO AS37 GUN TRUCK

See entry in the Sahariana Army Selector. Must be taken as Regular.

TRANSPORTS

SPA AS37 OR SIMILAR CAPTURED COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORT VEHICLE

See entry in the Sahariana Army Selector. Must be taken as Regular.

GERMAN SPECIAL FORCES

KAMPFGRUPPE HECKER
KAMPFGRUPPE HECKER REINFORCED PLATOON
1 Officer
2 Brandenburger special forces squads

Plus

Infantry
0-6 Infantry squads from:
0-4 Brandenburger special forces squads
0-3 San Marco (Marines) infantry sections
0-2 Heer pioneer squads
0-2 MMG teams
0-1 light or medium mortar
0-1 Sniper

Artillery
0-2 guns from:
Anti-tank gun: 2pdr, Pak 36
Artillery: 25pdr light howitzer
Anti-Aircraft gun: 40mm Bofors

Armoured cars
0-1 Armoured car from: Humber Armoured Car Mk II, Marmon Herrington Mk IV

Tanks, Tank destroyers, Assault guns, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0-3 vehicles from: Crusader II, StuG III Ausf D, 2pdr Portee

Transports, and Tows
0-1 Transport vehicle per infantry unit in the Kampfgruppe from: Truck, Kübelwagen, Bren Carrier, AEC Dorchester, Land-Wasser Schlepper, Heavy field car
0-1 Tow from: Truck, Quad tractor

SPECIAL RULES
Although the Italian San Marco Brigade represents a different nationality, for the purposes of this game they are fully integrated into the German force and

will use whichever German national characteristics are chosen.

German reinforcements push through a North African town

INFANTRY
BRANDENBURGERS SPECIAL FORCES SQUAD

For a bold operation like the *Via Balbia* raid to succeed, a special type of force was required and the Wehrmacht had such men – the Brandenburgers. This unit was trained in unconventional warfare – specialising in infiltration, covert operations, and commando raids. The training facility for these men was in the Brandenburg area and this gave the unit its name. The Brandenburgers were recruited amongst men of many ethnic backgrounds and nationalities, as an important requisite for their missions was to be fluent in different languages. The unit grew in size from a battalion to a regiment and then a division and its men were used in all roles on every front where Germany was engaged. Many times, they took part in the highly specialised small-unit missions they were trained for, but often they ended up being deployed as elite combat troops when the need arose. In the Mediterranean theatre, the 13th Lehr Regiment

Brandenburg was attached to a special battlegroup known as *Sonderverband 288*. They were considered for a number of operations that ultimately were never executed. These include the *Via Balbia* incursion and the planned invasions of Malta and Gibraltar. After the *Via Balbia* operation was cancelled, they were transferred to the Bir Hakeim assault and used as a special reconnaissance unit.

The Brandenburgers count as an infantry squad and 0-1 Brandenburger squad can be added to platoons from all selectors in the *Armies of Germany* book and this campaign book.

Cost	Infantry 95pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 NCO and 4 men
Weapons	Pistol and rifle
Options	- Add up to 5 men with pistols and rifles for +19pts each - Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts - Up to two men may have light machine guns for +20pts each. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader - The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man
Special Rules	- Elite of the elite! To represent their special training and motivation, Brandenburger units have the fanatic special rule - Behind enemy lines: When outflanking as described on here of the Bolt Action rulebook, Brandenburger units ignore the -1 modifier to the order test for coming onto the table. - Sabotage! Enemy units in reserve suffer an additional -1 modifier on the test to come onto the table. In addition, outflanking enemy units must take another test when they become available (still with an additional -1 modifier), and if they fail it, they can only be deployed up to 12" from their table edge along the chosen short table edge. - Paranoia: When the enemy rolls on the FUBAR chart, they suffer a -2 modifier to the roll, such is the paranoia induced in the enemy by the Brandenburgers' irregular activities. - Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)

Afrika Korps infantry squad

HEROES OF
THE WESTERN
DESERT

BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH

FLYING OFFICER C.F.C. LEE

Christopher Lee was born into a rich and aristocratic family, but his privileged upbringing did not stop him for travelling to Finland to volunteer to fight against the Russians in the Winter War.

Returning to Britain, he joined the RAF as an intelligence officer where he filled several intelligence-gathering roles all over the world. Very often he was involved in adventurous risky operations tasked with identifying sensitive targets for the RAF – from striking at fuel depots in Africa to working alongside resistance in the Italian campaign. His amazing command of languages and extensive network of highly placed contacts across Europe always made him very effective in these delicate assignments.

At the battle of Monte Cassino, he was attached to the Gurkhas and he almost got killed while trying to get them the best-possible close-in air support. Rumours abound that this most mysterious character might have participated in other actions during the war, actions 'of the kind one is not at liberty to discuss'.

Alessio has written rules to include Flying Officer Lee in your games of *Bolt Action* if you so wish to do so. We would just like to point out this is a fun, optional set of rules which we've created as a homage to one of our favourite actors. Please give them a go, have fun with them, and let us know your thoughts on the forum!

C.F.C. LEE

Cost	140pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 C.F.C. Lee (forward air observer)
Weapons	Pistol, concealed knife.
Options	- Lee may be accompanied by up to 2 men, armed with pistol, submachine gun or rifle (as depicted on the models) at a cost of +13pts per man
Special Rules	- Tough fighter (note, this rule does not apply to his men) - First-class target intelligence. When C.F.C. Lee calls an air strike, you can re-roll the result on both the air strike chart and on the chart to determine which airplanes

'JOCK' CAMPBELL V.C.

Major General John Charles 'Jock' Campbell was born in Thurso in 1894. In World War I, he served in the Royal Horse Artillery, winning the Military Medal. At the outbreak of World War II, he was commanding a battery, but by June 1940, when Italy entered the war, he had been promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, in command of the artillery of the 7th Armoured Division.

During the early part of the Desert War, Campbell was instrumental in the establishment of mobile columns of artillery, infantry, and supporting weapons, which were used to great effect when roaming behind enemy lines looking for targets of opportunity. These became known as 'Jock' columns and they continued to be used in the *Crusader* and Gazala battles, being particularly useful when most of the tanks had been used up.

He won a V.C. during Operation *Crusader* and the following citation describes him perfectly:

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to

Brigadier (acting) John Charles Campbell, DSO, MC (135944), Royal Horse Artillery,

In recognition of most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Sidi Rezegh on the 21 st and 22nd November 1941.

On the 21st November Brigadier Campbell was commanding the troops, including one regiment of tanks, in the area of Sidi Rezegh ridge and the aerodrome. His small force holding this important ground was repeatedly attacked by large numbers of tanks and infantry. Wherever the situation was most difficult and the fighting hardest he was to be seen with his forward troops, either on his feet or in his open car. In this car, he carried out several reconnaissance for counter-attacks by his tanks, whose senior officers had all become casualties early in the day. Standing in his car with a blue flag, this officer personally formed up tanks under close and intense fire from all natures of enemy weapons.

On the following day, the enemy attacks were intensified and again Brigadier Campbell was always in the forefront of the heaviest fighting, encouraging his troops,

staging counter-attacks with his remaining tanks, and personally controlling the fire of his guns. On two occasions, he himself manned a gun to replace casualties. During the final enemy attack on the 22nd November he was wounded, but continued most actively in the foremost positions, controlling the fire of batteries which inflicted heavy losses on enemy tanks at point blank range, and finally acted as loader to one of the guns himself.

Throughout these two days, his magnificent example and his utter disregard of personal danger were an inspiration to his men and to all who saw him. His brilliant leadership was the direct cause of the very heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. In spite of his wound, he refused to be evacuated and remained with his command, where his outstanding bravery and consistent determination had a marked effect in maintaining the splendid fighting spirit of those under him.

In February 1942, Campbell was promoted to Major-General and given command of the 7th Armoured Division. Sadly, later that month, he was killed when his jeep overturned in the Halfaya Pass. One of the most capable commanders in the Desert War, his loss was sorely felt.

'JOCK' CAMPELL

Cost	165pts (Veteran)
Composition	1 officer (Major) and up to 2 further men
Weapons	Pistol
Options	- Campbell may be accompanied by up to 2 men (Veterans armed with rifles) for 13pts each - Campbell and his escort may use a Utility car for transport for +25pts
Special Rules	- Inspirational: If he is included in your reserve force, units in reserve may reroll a failed reserve order test. - Artillery officer: If your side receives a preparatory bombardment at the start of a game; the die rolls for effect made against each unit are made with a +1 modifier. However, the maximum effect against units in bunkers or fortifications is still only two pin markers. - Forward observer: Campbell may act as a forward artillery observer (see page 83 of the Bolt Action rulebook).

TROOP SERGEANT MAJOR 'NOBBY' CLARKE

A troop commander of A Squadron of the 11th Hussars, TSM Nobby Clarke

was given the task on the night of 12 June of crossing the frontier and performing a reconnaissance mission to the Italian-defended Fort Maddalena. His orders were to simply observe and keep a low profile. However, in keeping with the traditions of the 11th Hussars during his 'clandestine' journey to the fort he managed to skirmish with a number of Italian vehicles before arriving at Maddalena.

The fort remained silent and no useful information could be gathered. Despite orders to lay low, Clarke decided that there was a better way of determining the fort's strengths. Leading two of his troop's cars Clarke drove at full speed towards the fort, opening fire with a mix of Bren, Vickers, and anti-tank rifles, waking up the defenders. Almost at once, a storm of machine-gun fire came from the fortress, rattling the armoured cars and causing superficial damage. The Italians never left the fort whilst the troop drove around firing sporadically at the defenders. Only after the arrival of six bombers and nine fighters of the Italian air force did Clarke decide that retreat was the better part of valour.

For the next hour, the troop was under intensive air attack as it made its way back to the frontier, the armoured cars zig-zagging and turning away as each bomb fell. But for a few bomb splinters, the troop crossed the border to safety. The next day Maddalena was deserted. The Italians had abandoned the fort after the attack by the 'madman' the night before!

NOBBY CLARKE'S ROLLS-ROYCE ARMOURED CAR

Cost	Cost: 100pts (Veteran)
Weapons	One turret-mounted anti-tank rifle with a coaxial LMG
Damage value	7+ (armoured car)
Options	- Campbell may be accompanied by up to 2 men (Veterans armed with rifles) for 13pts each - Campbell and his escort may use a Utility car for transport for +25pts
Special Rules	- Open-topped - Recce - Command vehicle - Breakneck Charge: Once per game Nobby Clarke's armoured car may make an Advance move at double movement rate (24") for a wheeled vehicle.

GERMAN

GUNTHER HALM

Gunther Halm was a 19-year-old anti-tank gunner with the 104th Panzer Grenadiers in charge of one of the powerful ex-Soviet 76.2mm Pak 36(r) guns which the *Afrika Korps* had been recently provided.

During the First Alamein battle the 104th were dug in on the edge of an extensive defensive minefield when a heavy artillery barrage fell on them, heralding the beginning of an 8th Army assault. As the shelling stopped and the clouds of smoke and dust began to settle dark, squat shapes slowly emerged, advancing on the guns. These were the 50 Valentine II tanks of the 23rd Armoured Brigade which had somehow avoided the mines and were now almost among the anti-tank gun defences. Halm's first shot took the turret off the leading command tank, but by this point the British tanks were amongst the guns and several were crushed. Rather than running, the crew stayed with their gun bodily swinging it on its trail legs to engage the tanks now swirling around them. At these ranges, it was difficult to miss and Halm fired shot after shot. Many Valentines were now burning and by the time the tanks had rolled past Halm's gun had personally accounted for 15 of their number. During the engagement, the 23rd Armoured Brigade virtually ceased to exist, losing nearly 90 tanks. Initially awarded an Iron Cross, petitions from his commander saw him presented with the Knight's Cross by Rommel himself. Halm was the youngest-ever recipient of this award. Wounded twice in later engagements he was shipped home where he eventually became a Lieutenant in the 192nd Panzer Grenadiers and was captured at Falaise in 1944.

GUNTHER HALM'S PAK 36(R)

Cost	140pts (Veteran)
Team	4 men
Weapons	1 heavy anti-tank gun
	- Gun shield

Special Rules	- Fixed - Team - Stubborn: Halm's team would not abandon their gun easily - Crack shot: All shots by Halm's gun ignore the -1 modifier for long range - Find weakness: Rolls on the 'Damage results on vehicles' chart can be rerolled (see Bolt Action rulebook, p. 108)

ITALIAN

TENENTE A. M. SCALISE

Tenente Scalise was the second in command of a battery of 'Semovente' tank destroyers, part of the Ariete Dvision, where he earned a posthumous Medal of Honour while commanding a Semovente 75/18.

Lieutenant A. M. Scalise, Medal of Honour, posthumous Commanding his section of Semoventes during the assault against the enemy defence lines, of his own initiative he broke through the first line with great élan. With a skilled manoeuvre and precise enfilading fire he then proceeded to silence several anti-tank positions. Seriously wounded, he carried on with his action, opening the way for the success of the division's attack. Wounded a second time, mortally, he kept directing his unit's fire and with a last strenuous effort he kept spurring his crew on with words of encouragement. Thus ended the life of a brave soldier, a shining example for the new armoured artillery of Italy.
— Ruget al Atash (North Africa), 27th May 1942

Cost	242pts (Veteran)
Weapons	One forward facing hull-mounted medium anti-tank gun
Damage Value	9+ (medium tank)
Special Rules	- Command Vehicle - Vulnerable: because of the riveted construction, all shots to the side and rear of the vehicle get an additional +1 penetration modifier (i.e. in total, +2 for side hits and +3 for rear hits) - HE: Instead of causing D2 HE hits, an HE shell causes D6 hits
Skills	- Follow me! - Motivational Leader - Hair Trigger - Crank Head These skills can be found in the *Tank War* supplement.

WESTERN DESERT SPECIAL RULES

Despite the campaign this book is based on being popularly known as 'The Western Desert', it might surprise some to know that the majority of battles fought in this theatre were not in the wastes of the Sahara itself but rather the arid and rugged terrain that bordered the Mediterranean coast stretching from Tripoli in Libya to the Nile Delta in Egypt.

It was a flat, hot, and dry expanse, often with little terrain or vegetation to break it up, punctuated by rocky sandstone outcroppings and sparse vegetation. Everything was covered in a thin layer of powdery sand that the hot winds would blow into unprotected eyes, mouths, and clog even the most well-protected machinery. Whilst the Axis may have fought the British Commonwealth and the Free French, all participants fought a common enemy: the environment itself.

During the day, the heat could rise to unbearable temperatures which, whilst uncomfortable for the infantry, was often intolerable for the tank crews in their mobile metal boxes already heated with choking engine or cordite fumes. Exposed metal became so hot that crews would fry eggs and bacon on the hulls of their tanks. Add to that the swarms of flies and you can understand why some thought they were fighting in hell.

The vast, trackless terrain should have made spotting the enemy an easy task, but a constant heat haze blurred the horizons making recognition and judging distances difficult, and on occasions opposing forces would blunder into each other on a perfectly clear day.

Sandstorms bringing vast clouds of abrasive stinging sand were also common, usually appearing out of nowhere and within minutes reducing the light to twilight levels, blowing down tents and canopies and covering everything in a thick layer of machine choking sand.

Just as the days could be hot, the nights could be bitingly cold, particularly during the winter months when soldiers who had been wearing shirtsleeves and shorts would now shiver through the night in greatcoats and jerkins.

Bail Out! A Matilda II crewman abandons his burning tank

TYPICAL TERRAIN TYPES FOR THE WESTERN DESERT

SANDSTONE OUTCROPPINGS

Outside of the deep sands of the Western Desert, the arid terrain is scattered with large outcroppings of sandstone that rise above the surface providing both cover and hazards to movement. Constantly eroded by the wind and sandstorms they vary in size from single boulders to substantial promontories.

They can be represented on the table by either single or small groups of pebbles or a more substantive piece of terrain such as wood bark or foam card covered with a rough texture and painted appropriately.

MOVEMENT

Counts as impassable to all vehicles and team weapons with the fixed trait.

Infantry and non-fixed teams treat it as rough ground for movement.

COMBAT

Sandstone outcroppings use all the rules for dense terrain and will provide a -2 hard cover hit modifier for all units partially obscured by it. Infantry and non-fixed teams may fire out of or be fired at as if they are within the terrain.

SAND DUNE

A sand dune is a hill of loose sand built up by wind processes and can be of all shapes and sizes. They can be represented on the table by any size of sand-coloured hill or objects placed under a sand-coloured playing cloth.

MOVEMENT

Sand dunes should be classed as impassable to all vehicles and fixed teams. Infantry and non-fixed teams should treat it as rough ground. Certain special traits will allow vehicles to traverse dunes.

Italian Infantry advance across the desert

DEPRESSION

The arid desert terrain is pitted with many sudden pitfalls and depressions that can provide a problem for movement but cab also be a haven of cover for exposed troops and vehicles. A depression can really be of any size and should be clearly represented on the table either with an irregular shaped piece of cloth or a more intricate terrain piece modelled with a clearly defined edge.

MOVEMENT

Counts as rough ground for movement purpose for all units.

COMBAT

Line of sight is not blocked for units firing across a depression. However, units with at least 50% of their models inside a depression are treated as though they

are in dense terrain with all the rules for firing in and out of such terrain. Units inside depressions gain a -2 hard cover hit modifier.

WADI

Despite the common view of the desert as a waterless wasteland, certain areas – especially those closer to the coast – are subject to seasonal rainfall which can at times be heavy. This creates short-term fast-flowing streams that cut passages through the sandstone surface. Most of the year they will be dry and arid, providing a natural trench line for fighting forces.

A wadi can be represented on the wargames table in a similar method to a small river or stream with pieces of cloth or more elaborate terrain pieces.

MOVEMENT

A wadi counts as rough ground for movement purposes for all units except wheeled vehicles, which treat it as impassable.

COMBAT

A unit with 50% or more of its models in a wadi gains a -2 hard cover hit modifier.

All rules for shooting from cover apply.

SOFT SAND

These are beds of fairly deep sand above the main rocky surface of the terrain. Such fields of sand can sometimes be difficult to detect and will cause a nasty surprise for infantry teams or vehicles moving through them. Soft sand can be represented on the wargames table with a piece of appropriately coloured cloth, or a scattering of actual sand, or some other method of defining a specific area.

MOVEMENT

Soft sand is treated as rough ground for movement purposes.

BOULDER FIELD

Similar to rubble, these small rock fields will cause problems for movement but they also provide limited cover for infantry and support weapons. These can be

represented on the tabletop with small areas of thin gravel.

MOVEMENT

Boulder fields are treated as rough ground for movement purposes.

COMBAT

Any infantry unit or non-fixed team weapon with more that 50% of its models within the boulder field may claim a -1 soft cover hit modifier. It does not block line of sight.

BUILDINGS

The majority of buildings on the desert battlefield will be single-story adobe structures, perhaps a part of as small settlement centred on a well. These buildings were often surrounded by walls or fences in various states of repair. In some of the larger towns, such as Bardia and Tobruk, there would be well-built multi-storied buildings, giving opportunity for street fighting scenarios.

MOVEMENT & COMBAT

All standard rules for buildings in the *Bolt Action* rulebook will apply.

ROADS AND TRACKS

Roads varied greatly in quality from the metalled roads stretching along the long North African coast to barely navigable tracks in the deeper desert.

MOVEMENT

As most roads and tracks were generally pot-holed or in a very poor state of repair, any vehicle attempting to use road movement must roll a D6 with a score of 4+ being required to avoid various potholes and obstructions. On any other roll, the road is treated as open ground.

DESERT CLIMATE EFFECTS

The desert has its own unique climatic conditions for games fought over it and these are reflected in the special rules below.

ICE COLD IN ALEX

Infantry can quickly become dehydrated whilst fighting in the scorching temperatures of the desert. Except in night or dawn scenarios, infantry who intend to Run must roll a D6. If the number rolled is less than the current game turn number, the unit is suffering from increased heat sourced fatigue or dehydration and can only move 6" (but still counts as running).

SAND

Sand has the ability to get absolutely everywhere and was particularly destructive to vehicles operating in the desert. Entering fuel lines, transmissions, and vital engine parts, it caused immediate breakdowns or through constant abrasion caused moving parts to fail prematurely. To reflect this all vehicles and infantry on motorcycles are subject to the unreliable rule.

UNRELIABLE

If the unit suffers one or more pin markers as a result of an enemy attack, it automatically suffers one further pin marker in addition.

Commonwealth armoured cars scout for the enemy

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

At any moment, localised environmental effects can occur making fighting in the desert even more challenging.

BLINDSIDE

The ideal time to mount an attack in the desert is when the sun is low and behind the attackers. The rising sun's rays can dazzle the defenders, giving the attackers an advantage. A wise commander will also try to position his defences in such a way to avoid this. Use the following rules for scenarios set in the desert that involve a dawn assault.

After the set-up phase, each player rolls a D6 and adds the officer morale modifier of their force's commander (i.e. the highest ranking officer). If a player's commanding officer has the Desert Fighters special rule, that player can re-roll the die if wishes. If the attacker scores at least twice the score of the defender, he has successfully coordinated his attack so that the sun is behind his troops.

The player chooses one table edge. This represents the position of the sun during the battle. Any unit firing in the direction of that table edge is firing into the glare of the sun and suffers an additional -1 penalty to rolls to hit. A unit is firing in the direction of the table's edge if a straight line can be drawn from any of the firing models towards the table edge crossing the bases/hull of any of the models in the target unit.

DUST CLOUDS

Vehicles traversing the desert terrain will cause dust clouds that can be spotted for many miles around but also can reduce visibility, especially if a large numbers are involved. Each time a vehicle executes a Run order the owning player rolls a D6. On a roll of 4, 5 or 6 a 4" diameter 'dust cloud' is placed adjacent to the rear of the vehicle. Dust clouds are treated exactly like smoke (see page 97 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

DUST TRAILS

Sometimes the dust trails of enemy vehicles could be spotted from miles away on the flat desert terrain. Use the following rule for any games set in the desert where the attacker has at least one vehicle or an infantry unit with the cavalry or motorbike special rule.

If the scenario being played specifically involves an attacker and defender, the defender can choose to return the first order die drawn for that game and draw again. This represents the advantage the defender has from seeing the attacker approach at a long distance. Note that if visibility is limited due to haze (see here), or the reduced visibility rules are in play (see *Bolt Action* rulebook page), the dust trail effect is ignored.

DEEP BLUE SKY

Lack of natural cover in the desert makes life a lot easier for ground attack aircraft. During a scenario fought in the desert, when a player rolls on the air strike chart (*Bolt Action* rulebook, page 85), he can roll two D6 and choose the highest score as his result. However if there is an enemy air observer on the table that has the Desert Fighters special rule, only roll one D6 for the air strike as normal. The observers have also been trained to act as spotters, detecting enemy aircraft appearing on the desert horizon and giving a chance for a call to disperse or get into cover to be given before the attack.

Additionally with more time to line up on ground targets, aircraft having attacked their first target also can immediately attack another enemy unit that is within 6" of the original target (same type of aircraft of course!). You should ensure that your units are more than 6" apart if you think the enemy may be planning airstrikes!

WEATHER EFFECTS

At the start of a scenario set in the desert, before the set-up refer to the weather effects table to determine which phase each player rolls a D6. If they roll an identical score, weather effects affect the battlefield.

WEATHER EFFECTS TABLE

D6 Roll	Effect
1–2	Something's Brewing on the Horizon: No immediate effect, but at the end of each game turn, one player must roll a D6+1 and refer to the table. He doesn't continue rolling on this table after the weather effect has taken place
3–4	Haze: The temperature causes an intense heat haze to blur the horizon. All weapons firing at a distance greater than 12" count as firing at long range regardless of actual range. Additionally when rolling on one of the barrage tables (Bolt Action rulebook, page 84), a player must roll two D6 and choose the lowest score as their result.
5	Mirage: As haze, above, but in addition, any unit that fails an order test on double 4, 5 or 6 (not just double 6) suffers a FUBAR. This represents the confusion of the unit's misinterpreting mirages for enemy movement.
6	Sandstorm: Fierce winds can rage across the desert, whipping up sand into swirling clouds that obscure visibility and pin down troops foolish enough to be moving in the open. At the start of the game turn when a sandstorm is triggered, each infantry and artillery unit that does not have the majority of its models within terrain or is not dug-in immediately gain D3+1 pin markers. This represents the disorienting and blasting effects of the sandstorm. Additionally, whilst a sandstorm rages, all units on the table are affected by the limited visibility rules. At the end of each game turn where a sandstorm is in effect, one player rolls a D6 adding the game turn number as a modifier. On a 6+, the sandstorm dies down and has no further effect for the rest of the scenario. As soon as a sandstorm is triggered, the 'Desert Fighters' trait has no effect for the rest of the game – sand gets absolutely everywhere confounding the best efforts of even the most well-prepared desert fighters. This means that units with the 'Desert Fighters' rule are now affected by all climate effects above.

British infantry storm the ruins of a North African town

DESERT COMBAT SPECIAL RULES

Humans are an infinitely adaptable species and have learned to live and fight in a range of inhospitable environments across the world. The Western Desert is no exception. Whilst newcomers to the region suffered mightily, those that had been born there or served there for a number of years learned how to protect themselves from its excesses and how to use its unique characteristics for advantage. To represent those so skilled and adapted we have created a couple of new special traits, 'Desert Fighters' and 'Desert Dweller'.

DESERT FIGHTERS

Any unit that is part of a force fighting in the desert can be given the 'Desert Fighters' special trait rule at the cost of +2pts per man. These soldiers have become adept at surviving and fighting in these conditions and ignore the Desert Climate Effects

DESERT DWELLER

As 'Desert Fighters'. Also if the weather effects table is used, units with this trait ignore the effects of haze and mirage. If a sandstorm is rolled, the unit only gains one pin marker and still retains the 'Desert Fighters' rule. This trait is restricted to troops native to the region:

- Italian colonial troops infantry section (*Armies of Italy and the Axis* book)
- Italian Compagnia Sahariana infantry squads, teams and vehicles (see here)

GOING 'HULL DOWN'

Despite the impression that much of the Western Desert where some of the fiercest tank actions took place was almost as level as a billiard table, this was in fact far from the truth. The ground itself was undulating and it was possible for a tank crew, with some skilful driving, to put terrain features between itself and the enemy. The ability to move tanks into positions where the hull of the tank was obscured only leaving the turret visible to the enemy, became known as being 'hull down'. The tank was still able to engage the enemy but only the

turret would be visible to the enemy thus presenting a much smaller and difficult to hit target. Tank commanders became skilled at seeking out these positions that were both useful in the defence and also provided some cover for tanks advancing in an attack.

Important: These rules should only be used if agreed by both players and should only be used in scenarios simulating combat in the desert.

GOING HULL DOWN IN *BOLT ACTION*

If a vehicle is given an Advance order, even if in open terrain, that order may be used to enable the vehicle to find a hull down position. The vehicle must take an order test, even if it has no pin markers. If the test is passed, the vehicle makes an Advance move without firing, and is then hull down. The morale value for the test is modified according to terrain type:

Hull Down Modifier table	
Terrain Type	Modifier
Flat	-1 morale
Undulating	+0 morale
Rolling	+1 morale

Unless specified by the scenario class the open ground as flat.

Morale is also modified by -1 if there is an enemy unit within 12" when the order test is made.

L3/33 Lanciaflamme

If the test is passed, mark the vehicle in some way and place a Down order next to it. If the test is failed, the vehicle must reverse as usual but as it is not going to fire anyway, do not roll on the FUBAR table.

The following rules apply to a hull down vehicle:

- There is a -2 modifier to all shots against the vehicle from the front arc, including indirect fire.
- If a vehicle has a turret, then only turret-mounted weapons may fire.
- A turretless vehicle may choose one weapon that can fire.
- Pintle-mounted weapons may always fire.
- Only weapons that can be fired from a hull down position may react to an assault.

Hull down status is lost as soon as a vehicle moves, although if another Advance order is given, it can attempt to find another hull down position.

A vehicle finds a hull down position at the end of its movement, so if it is subject to ambush fire, it is not counted as being hull down. Note that a vehicle does not need to move to become hull down, but it could still be hit as we consider it to be making small adjustments to its position that are still sufficient to trigger ambush fire.

It is permissible to reverse a vehicle into a hull down position. This may be necessary if it has a rear-mounted weapon, e.g. the Valentine Archer. In this case, the -2 modifier only applies to shots from the rear arc.

DUG-IN: FOXHOLES, TRENCHES, AND GUN PITS

Every professional army since the Romans has understood the importance of digging-in whenever time and terrain permit it. By the twentieth century, soldiers were routinely equipped with entrenching tools so that they could 'disappear' into the ground as fast as humanly possible. The simple truth was that a soldier hiding in a hole was massively harder to kill with bullets, explosives, or shrapnel than a soldier out in the open.

In every theatre with suitable terrain all sides used gun pits, foxholes and trenches to defend their ground. In *Bolt Action* terms, this means that defending units set up on the tabletop at the beginning of the game can have the advantages of dug-in positions. Dug-in positions work a lot like the hidden set-up rules in that regard, but in the case of dug-in positions, the bonuses continue to function during combat.

DUG-IN RULES

Where indicated in the scenario, units can be dug-in at the start of the game (for scenarios where it is not specifically mentioned, as a rule of thumb, a unit that can use hidden set-up is allowed to be dug-in). These units must be deployed on the tabletop at the start of the scenario and may be subject to the hidden set-up rules as well. Dug-n units are still placed on the table in the usual way, and must be marked in some fashion to show that they are hidden – any distinct token or marker will do.

A dug-in unit counts as Down when shot at, even if it's not Down (additional -1 to be hit and the number of hits from HE is halved rounding down). If the unit does go Down while dug-in, the benefits of being Down are doubled (i.e. -2 to be hit and only one-quarter damage from HE). Being dug-in offers no additional protection or benefit against enemy assaults (although tank assaults are an exception, see below).

Units count as dug-in until they're ordered to Advance or Run. If possible, mark the locations of vacated foxholes, gun pits and trenches so that they can be re-occupied or captured by the enemy later. Card counters, plasticine or piles of small stones can be used as a makeshift solution, although gorgeous modelling solutions made with foam core, clay or similar materials are preferred of course!

DUG-IN VEHICLES

On the defensive, it was common practice to dig-in tanks as well as men, albeit considerably more digging was required! While the tank sacrifices its mobility, it gains protection by reducing its target size and not having its more vulnerable treads and hull exposed to enemy fire.

Dug-in vehicles count as being in hard cover to attackers and count immobilised damage results as crew stunned instead. Dug-in vehicles may not move during the game.

DUG-IN WITH HIDDEN SET-UP

A unit can be both dug-in and use hidden set up, providing it satisfies the deployment restrictions for both – in this case, it is assumed the dug-in unit has

had the time and opportunity to properly camouflage its positions.

The hidden set-up rules take precedence until they no longer apply, the dug-in unit does gain the additional protection of counting as Down against HE fire while hidden. Once hidden set up rules no longer apply to the unit for any reason, the dug-in rules apply instead.

DUG-IN VERSUS PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

In scenarios which use the preparatory bombardment rules, (see page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) being dug-in doesn't modify the effects of the bombardment. It's assumed that units are already taking cover as best they can from the bombardment and that in the event of a direct hit being dug in won't offer any additional protection from a heavy calibre shell, bomb, or rocket.

DUG-IN VERSUS TANK ASSAULT

A foxhole or trench would give protection for a few moments, but if a tank actually stopped on it or stopped on it and twisted on its tracks a few times 'like a man crushing out a cigarette' (to quote one observer) the hole would collapse with messy results for the unfortunate occupant.

Models from dug-in n units automatically pass their morale check and are not moved aside when assaulted by a tank as they simply duck down in their entrenchment and allow the tank to pass overhead. However, if a tank ends its assault movement on top of any dug-in models, those models are removed as casualties and the unit must take the morale check for tank assault as normal.

DIGGING-IN DURING A GAME

We do not normally allow troops to dig-in during the course of a game, but if both players agree, troops can be allowed to dig-in during a game if they are given a Down order. Make an order test for the unit at the end of the turn, if it succeeds and the unit remains on Down orders in the same spot until the end of the next turn, they will count as dug-in at their current positions in the end phase of that turn.

As this can slow down the game and makes some scenarios harder for one side to win, we present it as an optional rule for experienced players rather than as a general rule of play.

MINEFIELDS

Despite the Desert War being considered one of manoeuvre, minefields became a major factor in the campaign. Any time that the battle lines began to stabilise such as at Tobruk or the approaches to El Alamein, large and complex fields were quickly laid, often aimed at channelling attacking forces into machine-gun or antitank killing zones. German minefields in the El Alamein area, nicknamed the Devil's Garden by Rommel, were estimated to contain nearly three million mines. Units retreating also laid hasty fields to help deter too close pursuit. As the campaign progressed both sides honed their skills with mines to new levels of deadly effectiveness.

MINEFIELD RULES

Players can add minefields to any of their games, as long as both agree beforehand. Usually only the defender in a scenario can deploy mines, since attackers are pushing into new areas and have not had the opportunity.

During the desert conflict, most minefields were marked with wire or signs, adhering to the Geneva Convention and marking their minefields. The default rules below are for anti-personnel mines, which were the most common. We also provide rules for anti-tank, mixed, dummy, and concealed minefields.

MINEFIELD SECTIONS

The default minefield section in *Bolt Action* is a 6"-sided square area. Larger minefields can be made by placing several of these sections next to each other.

Normally, we tend to allow the defender in a scenario two minefield sections per full 1000 points of his force. Or if you prefer you can allow a certain amount of points to be spent on minefields (up to 10% of the force total), and say that each section costs 50pts.

A minefield section can either be a cardboard base appropriately decorated, much like an area of rough ground, or can be delimited ad hoc before a game using four 6" long obstacles (like a 6" length of barbed wire), or even simply using four counters set up at 6" distance to mark the corners of the minefield.

EFFECT OF MINEFIELDS

When any unit (friend or foe) moves into a minefield section, the opponent can interrupt their movement once at any point during their move, just as if the minefield itself was in Ambush. When the opponent declares that the minefield is 'attacking' the unit, the controlling player must halt at that point and note how much movement the unit has left. Assuming the unit survives its encounter with the minefield, it will finish its move as normal.

After the unit has been positioned at its 'ambush' point, the opponent rolls one die to see if the unit triggers a mine, effectively rolling to hit the unit with the minefield section itself. A minefield section needs a 3+ to hit an Inexperienced unit, 4+ for a Regular unit, and 5+ for a Veteran unit.

Units belonging to the player that has placed the minefield are supposed to know the location of the mines, so they can force the opponent to re-roll any successful hit, as long as they are moving at an Advance. Also, units of combat engineers (engineers, pioneers, etc.) are trained to deal with these obstacles and always benefit from this re-roll when moving at an Advance, even when crossing the enemy's minefields.

If any unit (including friends and engineers) is sufficiently foolhardy to cross a minefield at a Run, the minefield rolls three dice when ambushing the unit rather than one!

If the minefield misses with all of its dice, the unit has not triggered a mine and can finish its move normally. If the minefield scores hits, then each successful hit is resolved with a penetration value of +2 against non-armoured targets and +3 against armoured targets (damage roll of 7+). Roll to damage as normal. A unit that is hit also suffers D3 pin makers rather than just one. Note that the higher value Pen against armoured targets reflects the fact that the anti-personnel mine hits the weakly armoured belly of the vehicle – not normally considered from the point of view of other hits.

If the unit is not destroyed, or broken by a resulting morale check, it can finish its move as normal.

Note that a single minefield section can attack a unit only once per move, but can attack any number of units moving over it during the turn. Also, if a unit was foolish enough to cross two (or more!) minefield sections as part of the same move, each section can ambush it in turn.

The Bersaglieri lead the Italian assault

ANTI-TANK MINEFIELDS

At the beginning of the game, you may secretly write down that any of your minefields is an anti-tank minefield. Anti-tank minefields only affect vehicles, and are ignored by infantry and artillery units that move over them. However, hits inflicted on vehicles are at +5 Pen rather than the normal +2.

MIXED MINEFIELDS

You can also create a mixed minefield section by 'using up' two of your sections. So, if for example you were allowed two sections in the scenario being played, you can lay both out as anti-tank or anti-personnel minefields, or deploy a single one as a mixed minefield. Make a note of which section is mixed.

A mixed minefield section combines the best of both worlds and will affect infantry and artillery with +2 Pen hits, but vehicles with +5 Pen hits.

Il Duce's boys on the march

DUMMY MINEFIELDS

You can replace any real minefield section allowed by the scenario with two dummy minefield sections. For example, if you are allowed two sections, you can place three down. Make a note of which sections are dummies. Your opponent might notice this variation in the number of allowed minefields, in which case he'll know some minefields are dummies, but of course, he won't know which ones!

When units enter a dummy minefield, roll to ambush them as normal (including any re-rolls that the opponent may force upon you). If you score a hit, however, you have to reveal the minefield is just a dummy, and from now on it counts as a cleared minefield section (see below), as a few mines were often left even in dummy minefields.

CONCEALED MINEFIELDS

Instead of visibly deploying your minefields sections, you may halve the number of sections available and deploy them hidden without any markings. We cannot condone and do not encourage the use of this despicable practice, which is against the Geneva Convention!

Make an accurate note of where the minefield sections are. You can either use coordinates and/ or make a map of the table as you wish. You cannot place

hidden minefields in the enemy's set-up zone.

During the game, when a unit moves into the minefield, you must reveal it (the unit has spotted that something is amiss) and place it on the table, and then proceed to ambush the unit as normal.

CLEARING MINEFIELDS

Once a minefield section has scored one or more hits on a unit passing over it, the opposing player rolls a die. On the roll of a 6, the minefield is cleared. If the unit that was hit was a vehicle with damage value 8 or more, the minefield is instead cleared on a 4+. This represents any subsequent troops either following in the tracks of the first or moving over craters left by previous exploded mines.

A cleared minefield is left in place, but from that point onwards the minefield only ever scores hits on a 6, regardless of the quality of the troops crossing it, and always rolls a single die 'to hit', even against units moving at a Run. Re-rolls for friends and engineers still apply. This represents hurried mines clearance under fire, which is not exactly a thorough process, and might leave a few isolated mines behind.

Thankfully, there are alternative means of clearing a minefield other than walking your infantry or driving your tanks over it. These are listed below with their rules.

DAK Medium Mortar Team

MANUAL MINE CLEARANCE BY INFANTRY

Any infantry unit that has at least five models inside a minefield can be ordered to attempt to clear it using their bayonets. The unit must be given a special 'mine clearing' order, which is the same as giving the unit a Down order – place

a Down marker next to the unit and then make a mine clearing roll applying all of the modifiers below. In order to clear the minefield section, the result needs to be a 6 after modifications. Note that a natural 6 is always a success and a natural 1 is always a failure. In addition, if a natural 1 is rolled, the minefield section ambushes the unit as normal (and in this case, an anti-tank minefield does affect the tampering infantry!).

MINE CLEARING MODIFIERS (CUMULATIVE)

Mine Clearing Modifier Table	
Veterans	+1
Inexperienced	-1
Engineers	+1
Mine-clearing gear *	+2
Per pin marker on unit	-1

*Any engineer unit may be equipped before the game with mine clearing gear (Bangalore Torpedoes, mine detectors, etc.) at a cost of + 1pt per model. At least one of the models should show this upgrade.

BLOWING IT UP!

Any weapon capable of indirect fire can target a visible minefield section. Aim for the centre point of the section and roll to hit as normal (including ranging in for successive shots). If a hit is scored, roll for the HE value of the weapon – if you score at least six hits on the minefield with a single shot, the minefields section is cleared.

When resolving an artillery barrage 'fire for effect' result, roll a die for each minefield section within range of the barrage (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6, the minefield section is hit by a heavy howitzer as normal, and if you score at least 6 hits on it, it is cleared.

When firing a preparatory bombardment, roll a die for each minefield section in the defender's set-up zone (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6 that minefield, section is cleared.

CREDITS

COVER ART
Peter Dennis

INTERIOR ART
Steve Noon and Peter Dennis

WRITTEN BY
Roger Gerrish & Mike Bradford

EDITED BY
Alessio Cavatore and Paul Sawyer

PHOTOGRAPHY
Darek Wyrozebski and Michael Perry

MINIATURES PAINTED BY
Andres Amian, Dark Wyrozebski, Paul Robbins, Andy Singleton, Bruce Murray, Gary Martin, Mark Owen, Rafa Archiduque, Mark Hargreves (Over Open Sights), Colin Dixon and Michael Perry

ADDITIONAL MINIATURES AND PHOTOGRAPHS KINDLY PROVIDED BY

PAINTING
Paul Robbins, Andy Singleton

TERRAIN
Paul Robbins, Darek Wyrozębski

PHOTOGRAPHY

Liam Raimes-Hall, Darek Wyrozębski