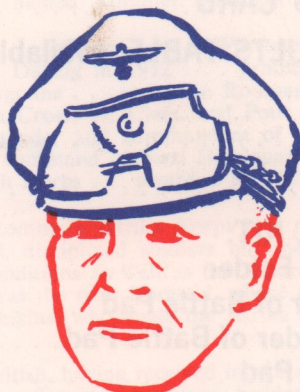




Afrika Korps



Battle Manual

(NOT A RULE BOOK—SEE INSTRUCTION FOLDER FIRST)

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY

GENERAL SITUATION: In the Fall of 1940 Adolph Hitler stood as the absolute monarch of the Continent of Europe and could boast not only 7 years of astonishing diplomatic victory but also, in the most recent year, a series of brilliant military triumphs. The German Wehrmacht had become the most powerful and effective Army in the world.

Meanwhile, back in Ethiopia Mussolini's Army had crushed the spear throwers and had begun to make noises in the direction of Cairo. The importance of the Suez, especially to British shipping, was obvious. So with a token force of 31,000 men General O'Conner under Commander-in-Chief Wavell drove more than 200,000 of General Graziani's finest from the Egyptian frontier to El Agheila between December 1940 and February 1941. But due to extended supply lines the British did not follow up on this rout. They were experiencing great difficulty unloading supplies in the weird harbor of Bengasi (Benghazi) so most things were being trucked directly from Tobrukh (Tobruk.)

For Hitler, Africa was always to be a secondary front overshadowed by the invasion of Russia. But he was not about to let Mussolini give it up altogether and expose the soft underbelly of Europe. So early in 1941 he sent the 5th Light Division as a psychological tonic for the Italians. They called themselves the Afrika Korps, commanded by a man named Rommel. Rommel was thought to be an aggressive type.

His Dossier read: "Born 1891 . . . Officer Cadet in Wurtemberg Infantry Regiment . . . attended War Academy at Danzig in 1912 . . . promoted to Lieutenant . . . Fought in 1st World War at Argonne . . . served in Roumania and Italy . . . twice wounded . . . Decorations: Iron Cross, 1st Class, and Pour le Merite . . . between two wars was regimental commander and commandant of a Kreissschule . . . on outbreak of 2nd World War, in command of Nazi Headquarters in Poland . . . later O.C. 7th Panzer Division of 15th Korps . . . awarded Knight's Cross . . . added Oak Leaves . . ."

To put the record straight, Rommel's Afrika Korps was not a corps d'elite. Admittedly they were well trained, disciplined soldiers but the men themselves were never able to adapt to desert conditions as well as the Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and British. It was the man Rommel, whose drive and very presence which inspired his men to the heights, who made the Afrika Korps the legend it has become.

ACTUAL CAMPAIGN: The British, having received information stating in fact that Hitler had forbid any large scale offensive operations, bedded down on the night of March 31, 1941, convinced that there would be no German/Italian action before the end of May 1941. So the night of March 31, 1941, Rommel launched the first of many brilliant offensives that earned him the famed title—"The Desert Fox."

Instructed not to advance eastward beyond Agedabia until the arrival of the 15th Panzer Division Rommel nevertheless overran all of the Cyrenaica except for Tobrukh (Tobruk) by the end of April. The offensive completely surprised the British. Its timing and execution was "not by the book" according to General Wavell. On May 1, now reinforced by the 15th Panzers, Rommel went after Tobrukh. Wavell, acknowledged master of war strategy himself, saw the importance of Tobrukh. His successful defense saved Egypt from being overrun at a time when German equipment and organization were vastly superior to the British. Wavell's May counter-offensive, however, was rebuffed at the Halfaya Pass.

Still bent on recovering Libya at the earliest moment, *Operation Battleaxe* was put into motion by Wavell in June 1941. Unfortunately, the British 15-20 mph Cruiser Tanks and 5 mph "I" Tanks were no match for the German Mark III's and Mark IV's. While British tanks outnumbered the Germans the belief that quantity made up for quality was completely erroneous in desert warfare. But viewing Wavell's offensive with anxiety Rommel converted the mobile 88mm anti-aircraft guns to tank warfare. They literally tore up the British armor before it could close with the Panzers. Thus, *Operation Battleaxe* was doomed to failure.

With both sides decimated at the end of June 1941, Summer became a period of rebuilding. Rommel particularly was in a quandary. The desert campaign had become secondary to Hitler's problems in Russia. Reinforcements and supplies to the Afrika Korps were arriving rather sporadically. So in order to convince Hitler of the importance of the desert campaign Rommel presented a plan not only for the conquest of the Suez Canal but beyond into Basra with the object of stopping the flow of American supplies to Russia through the Persian Gulf. This tact was dismissed by the German high command as too fantastic a scheme to pursue.

Adding further to Rommel's frustrations was the continued sinking of supplies. The Allies, using Malta to control the western Mediterranean, had sunk 60-75% of all supplies designated for Africa between August and October. It wasn't until the end of 1941 did Hitler think it expedient to neutralize Malta as a naval base for the British. Consequently, Rommel was not able to launch any full scale offensive for the remainder of 1941. Rommel had to be content with besieging Tobruch using the 21st Corps consisting of 4 Italian Divisions supported by 3 German Infantry Battalions.

In the meantime Fall of 1941 found the British now under General Auchinleck, the new Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East Forces. Auchinleck's November offensive, *Operation Crusader*, was the first battle of the new 8th Army. Its master plan called for feints center and south with the main thrust directed toward Tobruch. Under this plan the besieged garrison of Tobruch itself would participate in the offensive against the backbone of the Afrika Korps, the 15th and 21st Panzer Division. It employed 118,000 men against 100,000 of the enemy. British Tanks outnumbered the German, 455 to 412. Rommel's forces had been scattered, not expecting a November offensive by the British. So when the smoke had finally cleared on November 26, 1941 the Panzers were sent packing and Tobruch was relieved.

It is interesting to note that while *Operation Crusader* was regarded as a success it missed catching the fox himself by a whisker. Rommel and General Bayerlein were making the rounds of a field hospital for both German and British wounded. Upon discovering that the hospital had fallen into British hands they passed themselves off as Polish Officers to the British Medic leading them around and surreptitiously took their departure. And only several weeks earlier a plot to capture Rommel met with failure as Rommel happened to be off in Rome attending to administrative matters while celebrating his birthday. Other similar escapades lends credence to historians who felt that Rommel literally had nine lives in the desert.

A fighting retreat led by gallant delaying actions of the Italians found Rommel back to a defensive position at El Agheila in January 1942.

Better than 1/2 of the Afrika Korps had been lost, Italian morale dropped to zero, 386 of 412 Tanks were blackened hulks out on the desert, 800 of 1,000 aircraft destroyed, and the prospects of immediate reinforcements were nil—so Rommel attacked.

Again catching the British by surprise (they never learn, do they?) the Afrika Korps had fought back to the Gazala-Bir Hacheim line by February 7, 1942.

It seemed the tide was turning for the Axis. In addition to the neutralization of Malta allowing full flow of German supplies the British were diverting troops from the western desert to fight the Japanese in the Pacific areas. Now, the German build-up would soon surpass that of the Allies. Quite a dilemma, what?

In June 1942, Rommel struck for Tobruch once again. Only the minefields stood in his way. Minefields alone cannot stop tanks since lanes can be quickly cleared through them. There must be defensive strongholds behind the minefields and even then the flanks are always up in the air. Rommel therefore attacked the left flank situated at Bir-Hacheim and rolled it right up to Gazala.

Since British supplies could not get through to Tobruch due to their loss of control in the Mediterranean Tobruch should have been abandoned at the fall of Gazala. It was not. Thus on June 20, 1942, in only one day of fighting, Rommel captured the same fortress that had held out for 9 months the previous year. On June 22, he was again at the Egyptian border. Should he go on? The Italians said "no". But buoyed by his recent promotion to Field-Marshal, Rommel said "yes". So by the end of June with but 12 tanks left he had advanced to the El Alamein line—just 65 miles from Alexandria.

This advance was the "Desert Fox's" high point of his success in Africa. What had been Rommel's secret? Why had he been able to accomplish the impossible against better than worthy tacticians? Rommel's tactics were quite simple: refuse action except on your own terms. And when attacking, form an advance screen of self-propelled anti-tank guns behind which the Panzers could advance and refuel in safety. Then when the anti-tank guns had taken their toll the Panzers could hustle through the screen and chew up enemy Armor attempting to close on the guns. It was Rommel's rapidity of decision and velocity of movement which made such tactics so successful.

Rommel's initial attacks at El Alamein were repulsed and a July stalemate developed. Rommel's usual tactic of rolling up the flanks could not be pursued at El Alamein simply because the British northern flank was the Sea and the southern flank was the Qattara Depression—a shifting, sandy waste practically impossible to traverse.

In early Summer General Montgomery arrived. Accompanying Montgomery were two divisions with tanks and guns that could, at last, match the German's. The British had regained control of the Mediterranean providing them with a Summer build-up of manpower while Rommel was beating his head against the rocky ridges between El Alamein and the Qattara. Rommel's plan, nevertheless, called for repeated attacks against the Alam Halfa Ridge. If successful Rommel could roll up the flanks with ease and be well on his way to Alexandria.

Seeing the importance of the Ridge to the German master plan Montgomery established almost impenetrable defensive positions in this area . . . "very good generalship, indeed" commented General Bayerlein in retrospect. For it was Bayerlein's troops that failed to break through at Alam Halfa thus forcing Rommel to begin his withdrawal on September 3, 1942.

Late in October 1942, *Operation Supercharge* spelled *finis* for the Afrika Korps. Building up a 2 to 1 superiority in men, equipment and air power, the final coup de grace was inflicted on November 4, 1942.

So it is at this point that Avalon Hill ends the game Afrika Korps. Without total victory here Rommel could not hope to cope with the Allied Forces then landing in his rear northwest of Tripoli. Even though the North African Campaign continued until May 1943, the battle of Al Alamein ended the final German threat to the Suez Canal. And coupled with calamity at Stalingrad it also spelled the end of their dreams for world conquest.

BASIC GERMAN STRATEGY: The burden of attack is on the German player. In the very first Turn you must decide whether to strike for Bengasi, Tobruch or both. The latter may be difficult to do successfully until your full May complement of the 15th Division can get into action.

Tobruch is the more important of the two Fortresses. Any Allied Units at your rear in Bengasi can be dealt with fairly easily once Tobruch is under siege. But Tobruch will be difficult to capture. In this event you must keep it under siege (Units adjacent to the Fortress itself) attacking only when you can muster at least a 3 to 1 majority with a little left over for the inevitable "soak-offs". In addition you must keep a few Italian Units to garrison "Tripoli" and Bengasi to protect your supply line from British Reconnaissance Units scurrying you to the southwest. Also, whenever possible send some Reconnaissance Units of your own eastward to delay the arrival of Allied Reinforcements.

The elimination of all Allied Units is your basic goal. But do not proceed toward "Alexandria" until you have fully recovered from the decimating effect of the siege. A premature eastward offensive with a weak force will end the old ball game for you right then and there. However, delaying such an attack beyond June 1942 means curtains, too.

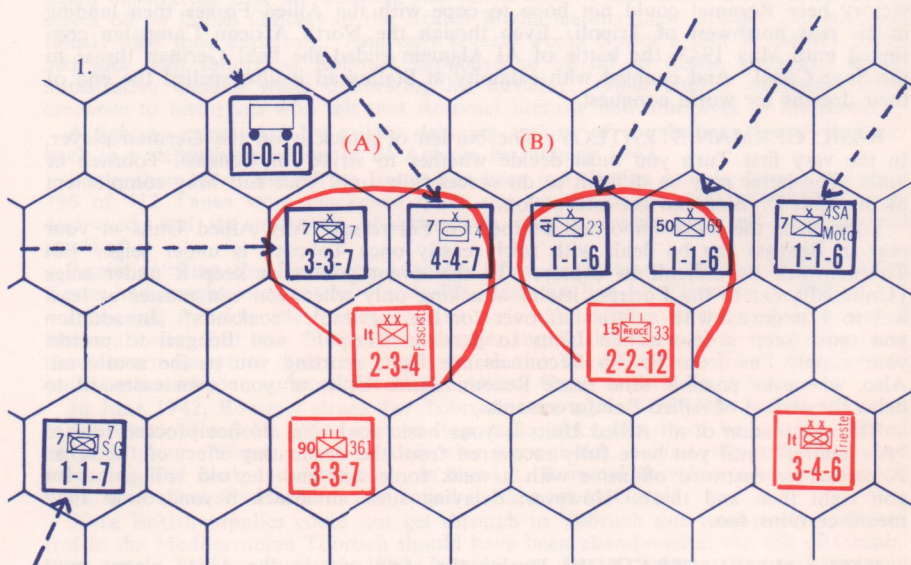
BASIC ALLIED STRATEGY: During the early months the Allied player must commit himself to a defensive game. Token resistance at Bengasi is recommended but possession of Tobruch is the key. Therefore your strongest Units must avoid combat and hole up in Tobruch. By the time the Germans have arrived at Tobruch they may be too weak to eliminate these strong Units in the Fortress.

While you are holding out at Tobruch your Summer build-up will allow you to conduct a Fall offensive of your own. If this is not practical you should at least make harrassment raids in the German rear. Force the German to spread himself out over the desert by inviting small, annoying skirmishes in the south. In many cases your supply superiority will allow you to take the initiative pursuing this strategy.

Montgomery's arrival in the Summer of 1942 marks the reorganization of the 8th Army along lines similar to that of the Afrika Korps. Therefore, you should play the delaying game until August 1942 when you can make use of your Substitute Counters. Then, your numbers can be concentrated in smaller areas making it almost impossible for the German player to run past you. Being thusly shut off from effecting Automatic Victory situations he will be hard put to reach Alexandria to cut off your supply and replacement rates. Regardless of his numbers, Victory is yours if you still remain on Board at the end of October 1942.

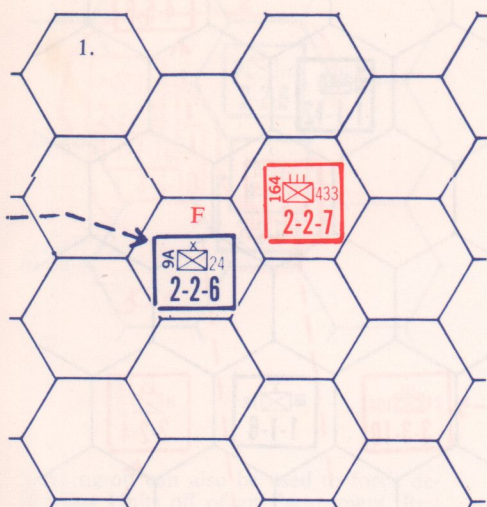
EXAMPLES OF PLAY

HOW TO MOVE UNITS

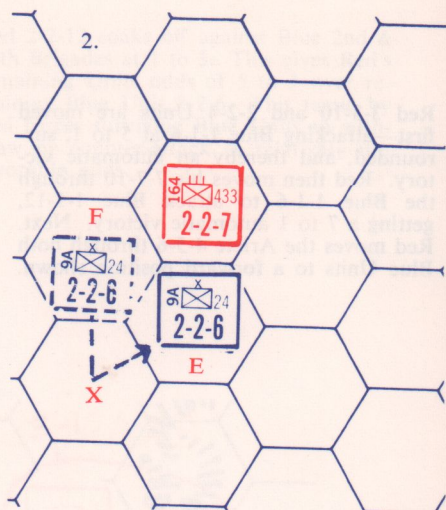


Blue has decided to move 7 of his Units in his current Turn. He has moved some of them adjacent to Red Units thereby causing combat in two situations. He has also brought up other Units choosing not to engage them in combat in this Turn. It is important to remember that Blue does not resolve battles (A) and (B) until after he has moved all 7 of his Units.

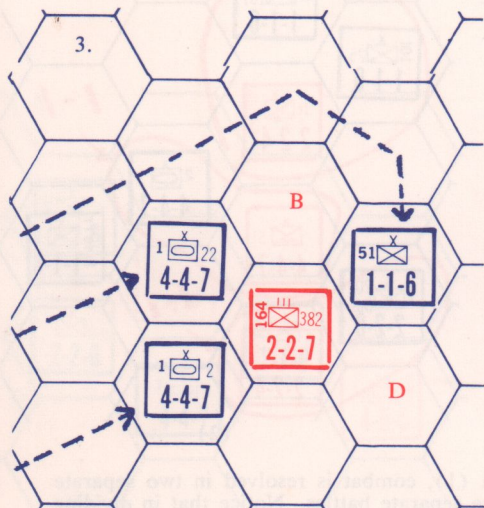
HOW TO HAVE COMBAT



As soon as Blue's Unit has entered any one square of Red's zone of control (square F in this case) it has finished its move in this Turn.



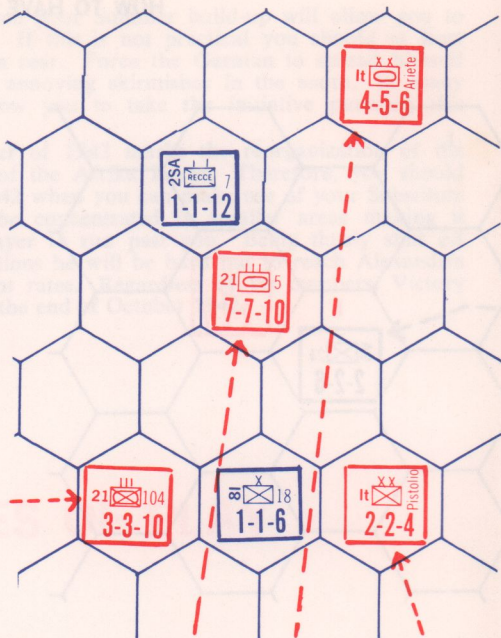
Blue's Unit is not allowed to move directly from Square F to Square E. It may enter Square E only by pulling out of Red's zone of control altogether and then re-entering by an uncontrolled square, Square X in this case.



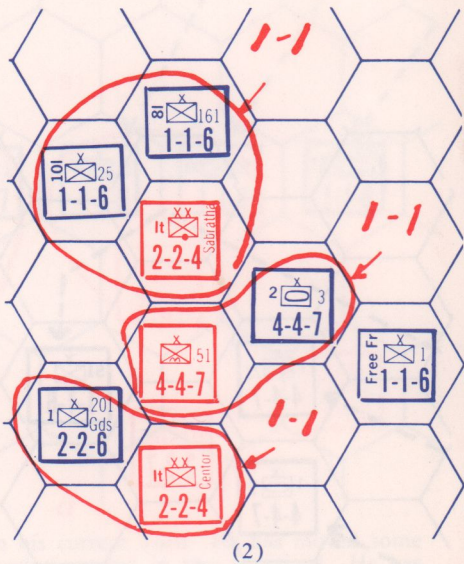
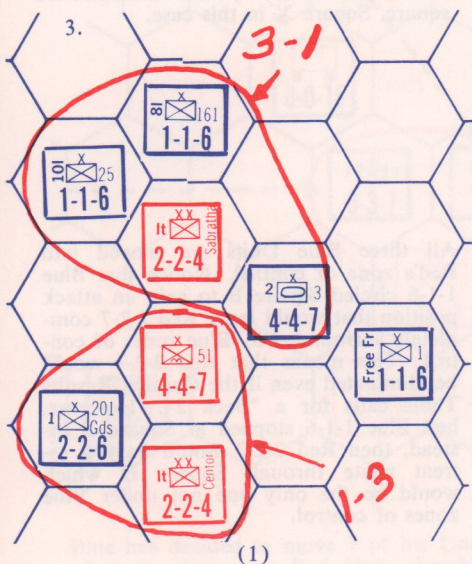
All three Blue Units are moved into Red's zone of control. Notice that Blue 1-1-6 circled Square B to gain an attack position that would leave Red 2-2-7 completely surrounded by Blue zones of control. This means that Red 2-2-7 would be eliminated even if the Combat Results Table calls for a "Back 2". However, had Blue 1-1-6 stopped at Square B instead, then Red 2-2-7 would have a retreat route through Square D which would be the only one not under Blue zones of control.

AUTOMATIC VICTORY:

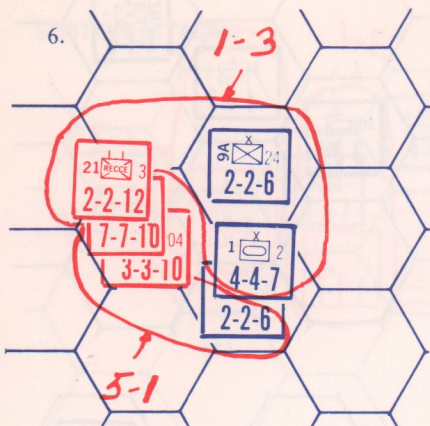
Red 3-3-10 and 2-2-4 Units are moved first—attacking Blue 1-1-6 at 5 to 1, surrounded, and thereby an automatic victory. Red then moves his 7-7-10 through the Blue 1-1-6 to attack Blue 1-1-12, getting a 7 to 1 automatic victory. Next, Red moves the Ariete 4-5-6 through both Blue Units to a forward position shown.



MULTIPLE UNIT BATTLES

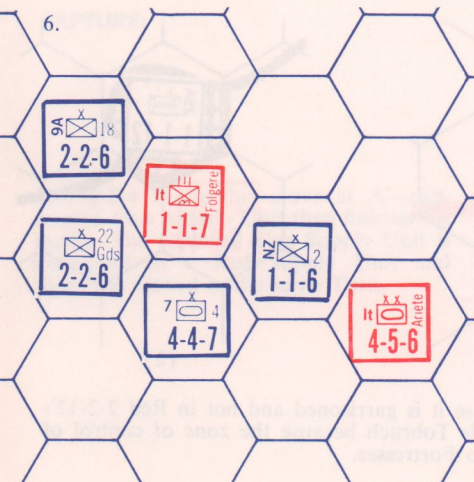
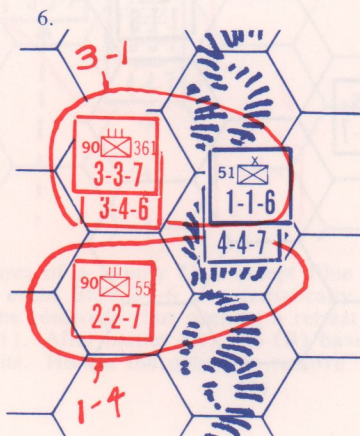


Blue may divide combat in two ways. In (1), combat is resolved in two separate battles. In (2), combat is resolved in three separate battles. Notice that in dividing combat every Red Unit that is in a Blue zone of control will be fought. Also notice that Blue Free French Unit is not engaged since its zone of control does not fall on any of the Red Units.



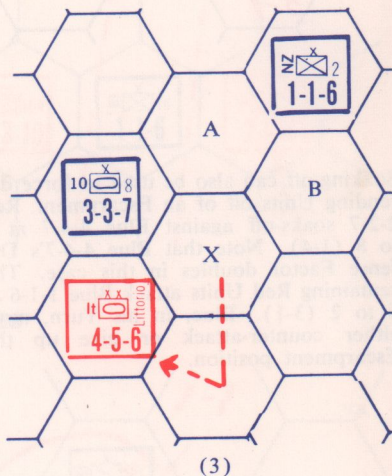
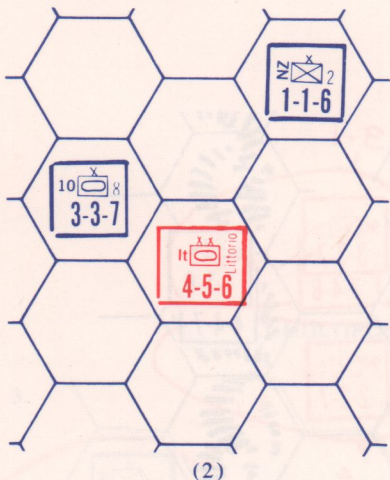
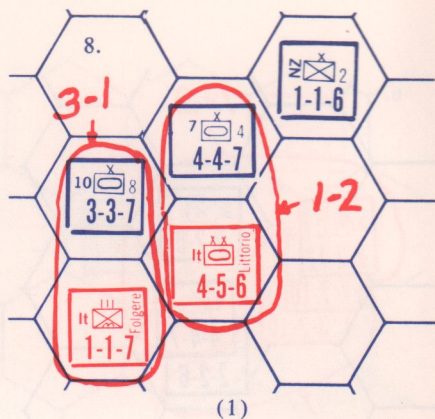
Soaking-off can also be used to force defending Units off of an Escarpment. Red 2-2-7 soaks-off against Blue 4-4-7 at 2 to 8 (1-4). Note that Blue 4-4-7's Defense Factor doubles in this case. The remaining Red Units attack Blue 1-1-6 at 6 to 2 (3-1). Blue, in his Turn, must either counter-attack or give up the Escarpment position.

Red 2-2-12 soaks off against Blue 2nd & 24th Brigades at 1 to 3. This gives Red's remaining Units odds of 5 to 1 over remaining Blue Unit 2-2-6. This tactic by Red forces surviving Blue Units to withdraw or counter-attack at relatively unfavorable odds.

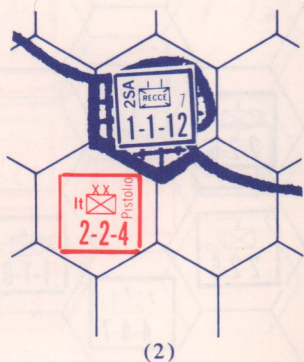
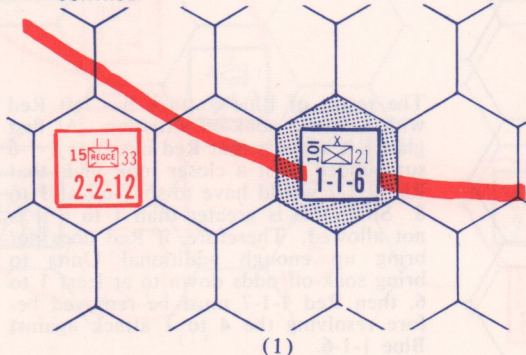


The result of Blue's attack has left Red with a forced soak-off situation. At first glance it appears that Red has Blue 1-1-6 surrounded. But a closer look finds that Red 1-1-7 would have to soak-off at 1 to 8. Since this is greater than 1 to 6 it is not allowed. Therefore, if Red does not bring up enough additional Units to bring soak-off odds down to at least 1 to 6, then Red 1-1-7 must be removed before resolving the 4 to 1 attack against Blue 1-1-6.

In (1), Blue resolves combat in two battles. But in (2), the result of both battles leaves opposing Units still engaged. Therefore, Red 4-5-6 must either withdraw or attack in his Turn. If he decides to counter-attack as in (3), he is allowed to withdraw from his previous position Square X and re-enter Blue 3-3-7's zone. Notice that Red 4-5-6 is not allowed to re-enter Blue's zone at Square A because to do so would require moving to Square B first—a square controlled by a different Blue Unit. Of course, Red 4-5-6 has the option to counter-attack from his original defensive position, Square X.



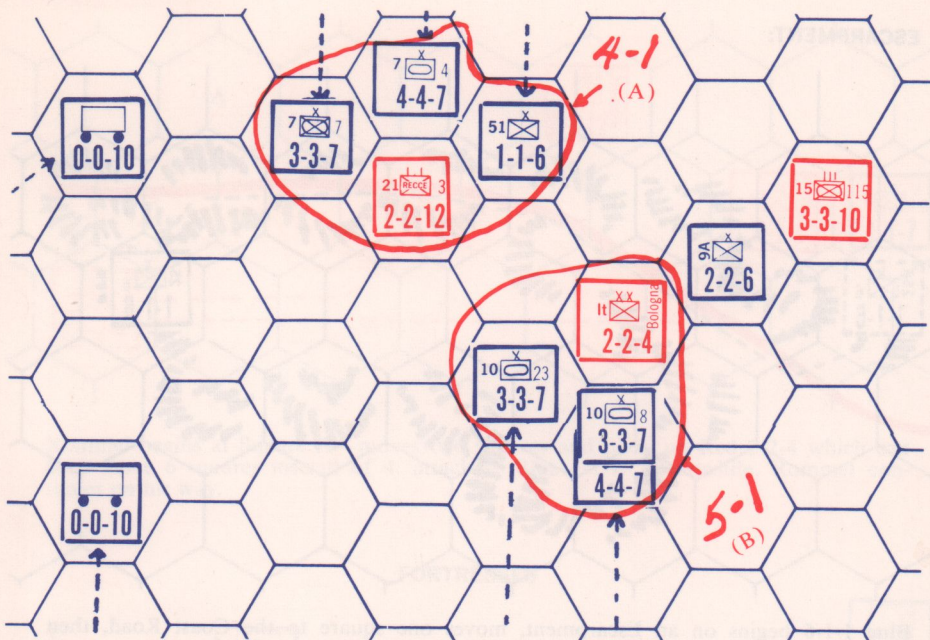
CONTROL:



In (1), Blue controls his home base because it is garrisoned and not in Red 2-2-12's zone of control. In (2), Blue also controls Tobruch because the zone of control of adjacent enemy Units does not extend into Fortresses.

LOGISTICS

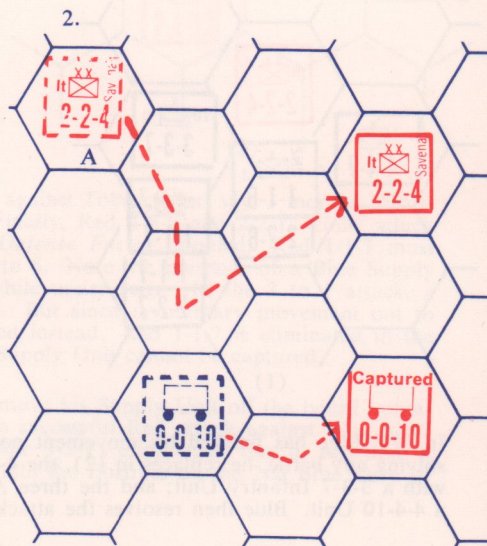
SUSTAIN ATTACKS:



All attacking Blue Units are within 5 squares of a Supply Unit except Blue 2-2-6, left surrounded from Red's Turn. In this event Blue 2-2-6 is automatically eliminated and removed before any battles can be resolved—thus opening a retreat route for Red 2-2-4 being attacked at 10 to 2 (5-1). After battles (A) and (B) have been resolved, Blue removes the two Supply Units. He has the option to remove

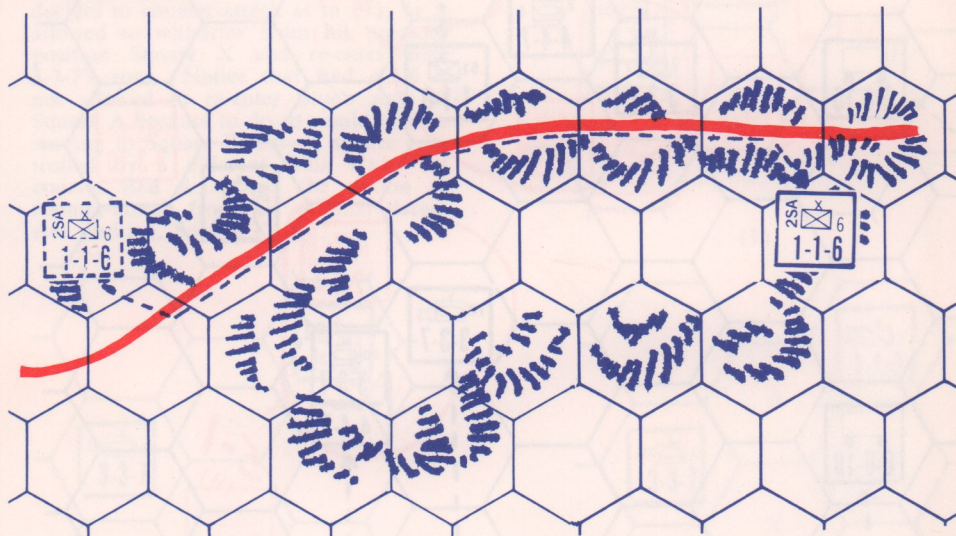
CAPTURE:

Red 2-2-4 begins his move at A—captures a Blue Supply Unit then finishes his move. The captured Blue Supply Unit is converted to a Red Supply Unit and then also moved in the same Turn.



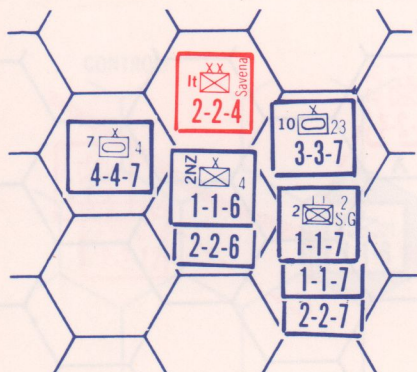
SPECIAL TERRAIN MOVEMENT

ESCARPMENT:

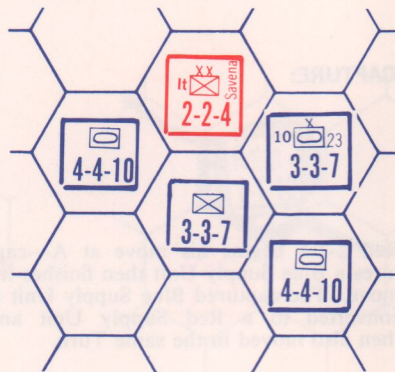


Blue 1-1-6 begins on an Escarpment, moves one square to the Coast Road, then jumps off one square onto another Escarpment all in the same Turn.

ALLIED SUBSTITUTE COUNTERS



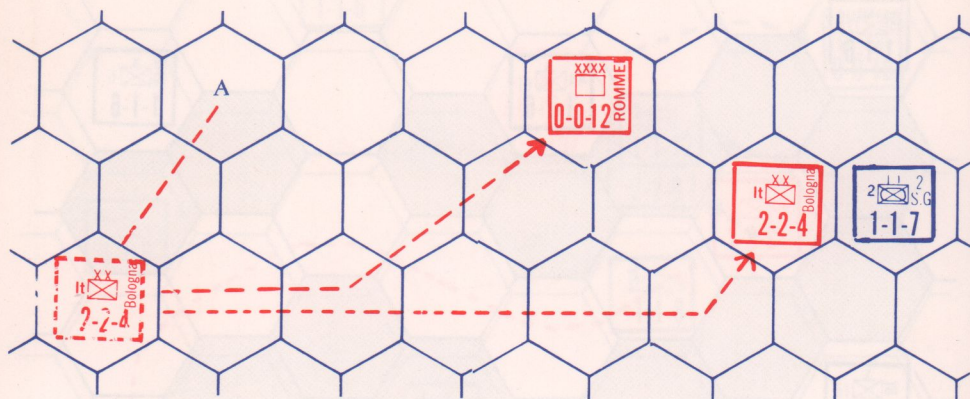
(1)



(2)

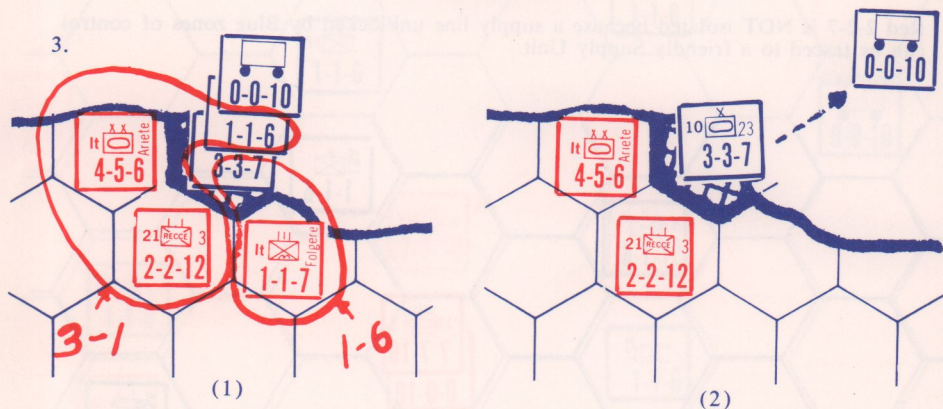
In (1), Blue has finished his movement portion and is ready to attack. Before resolving any battle, he replaces in (2), the 4-4-7 with a 4-4-10; the two Infantry Units with a 3-3-7 Infantry Unit; and the three Armor and Armored Infantry Units with a 4-4-10 Unit. Blue then resolves the attack against the Red 2-2-4 Unit.

ROMMEL HEADQUARTERS UNIT



Rommel begins at Square A—moves two squares and picks up Red 2-2-4 which can then move 6 squares instead of 4, attacking Blue 1-1-7. Meanwhile, Rommel continues on his way.

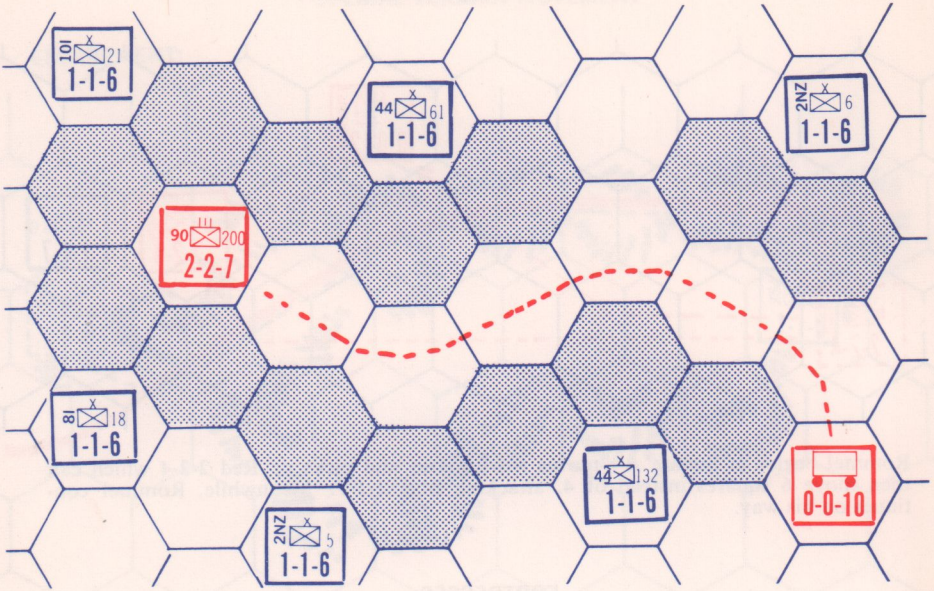
FORTRESSES



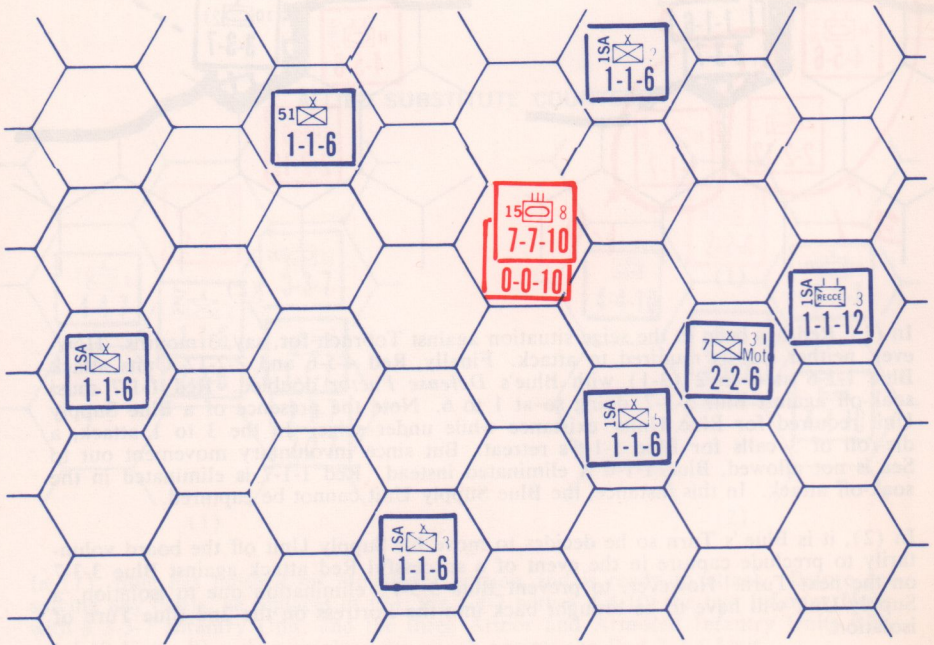
In (1), Red has been in the siege situation against Tobruch for, say, 3 months. However, neither side is required to attack. Finally, Red 4-5-6 and 2-2-12 Units attack Blue 1-1-6 at 6 to 2 (3-1) with Blue's *Defense Factor* doubled. Red 1-1-7 must soak-off against Blue 3-3-7, doing so at 1 to 6. Note the presence of a Blue Supply Unit required for Blue Units' existence while under siege. In the 3 to 1 attack, a die-roll of 3 calls for Blue 1-1-6's retreat. But since involuntary movement out to Sea is not allowed, Blue 1-1-6 is eliminated instead. Red 1-1-7 is eliminated in the soak-off attack. In this instance, the Blue Supply Unit cannot be captured.

In (2), it is Blue's Turn so he decides to move his Supply Unit off the board voluntarily to preclude capture in the event of a successful Red attack against Blue 3-3-7 on the next Turn. However, to prevent Blue 3-3-7's elimination due to isolation, a Supply Unit will have to be brought back into the Fortress on the 2nd Blue Turn of isolation.

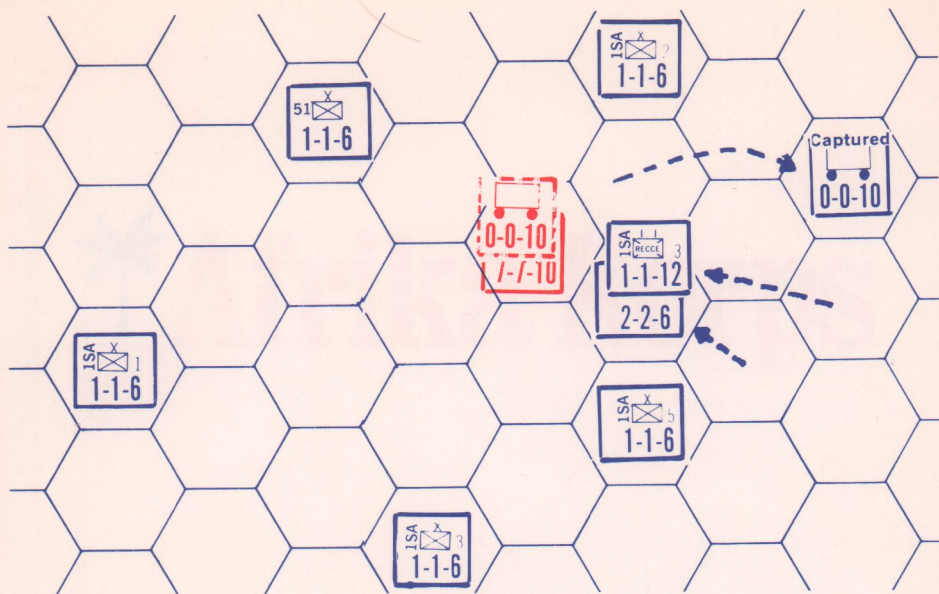
ISOLATION



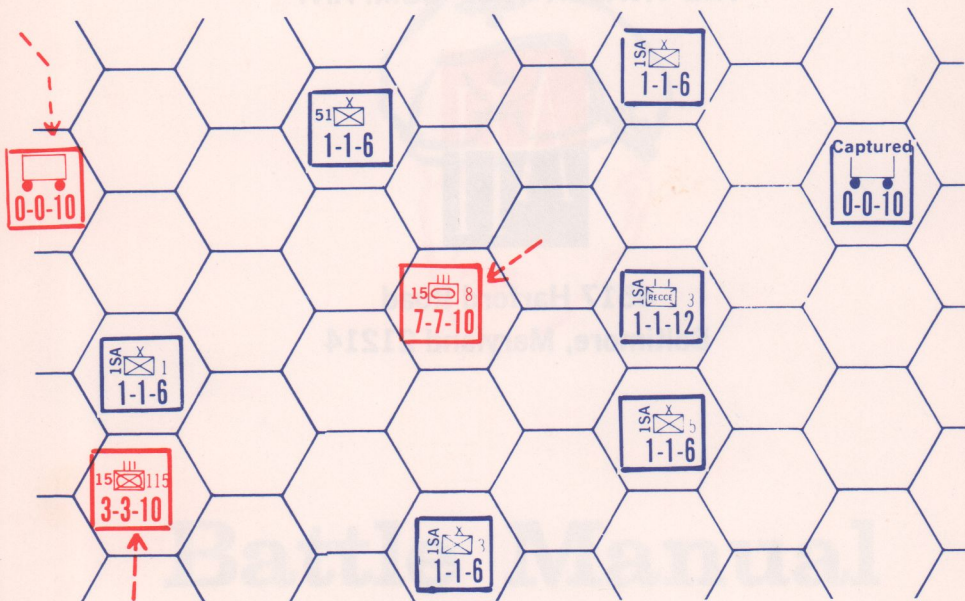
Red 2-2-7 is NOT isolated because a supply line unblocked by Blue zones of control can be traced to a friendly Supply Unit.



(1)



(2)



(3)

In (1), Red 7-7-10 is NOT isolated because of the presence of a Supply Unit within the encirclement. Red can remain encircled thusly for an indefinite period until (2), where Blue 2-2-6 soaks-off against Red 7-7-10 so that Blue 1-1-12 can capture the enemy Supply Unit. The captured Supply Unit is immediately converted to a Blue Supply Unit and moved as shown. Note that no Supply Units were required to sustain the soak-off attack since the attack was at odds greater than 1 to 2. In (3), Red attempts to break the isolation by bringing Red 3-3-10 to attack Blue 1-1-6. Red 7-7-10 is moved one square to get out of Blue's zone but is not allowed to assist Red 3-3-10 in the attack against Blue 1-1-6 because its line to the Red Supply Unit is blocked by Blue zones of control. If Red is unsuccessful in breaking the isolation within 2 Turns, then Red 7-7-10 is automatically eliminated.

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