



1 GAME INTRODUCTION

"That Scorpion of the Sea," *Malta Besieged: 1940-1942* is a solitaire strategy game covering the epic WW2 struggle between the British Commonwealth (the Allies) and Axis Forces of Germany and Italy in the Mediterranean Theatre. You must maintain the beleaguered island of Malta while supporting Allied attempts to interdict the Axis war and supply efforts in the Mediterranean, which will significantly affect the North African Campaign as well.

Through various card plays, key events, and a variety of constant decision points, you will maneuver through the course of more than two years of sustained conflict during this critical time and place of the war.

You must have enough Military strength to keep your defensive and offensive capabilities intact. You will also need to ensure that there is sufficient Supply for your forces and theatre combatants. Finally, you must strive to uphold the Morale of the Commonwealth in order to maintain its fighting efficiency and prevent demoralization.

To win the game, you will need to survive all the cards in the game and also force the retreat of the Afrika Korps at least post Tobruk, or instead simultaneously defeat all Axis Fronts.

2 GAME EQUIPMENT

Game Board

16 x Square Game Pieces

11 x Round Game Markers

48 x Event Cards

1 x Convoy Mat (double sided)

1 x Rules Booklet

1 x Examples and Designers Notes Sheet

Clear Plastic Disc, 1 x blue, 4 x red

THE GAME MAP: The map depicts the Mediterranean Sea and surrounding area, including North Africa. The island of Malta is the central hub of the game's activity, and four different colored tracks emanate outward from it. There is also one (Brown) for tracking the progress of their North African unit (Italians on the back side, Afrika Korps on the front side).

SHOW GAME MAP

Axis Front tracks don't necessarily pinpoint the physical location of an enemy force, but instead they abstract factors including command, logistics, troop status, and various degrees of air, land, and sea control.

The two spaces on the North Africa Front Track with dashed outlines indicate that they are capable of being fortified (9.4).

There are also three Resource Tracks on the map used to record your Military, Supply, and Morale levels.

Finally, there are various holding Boxes on the map, including Draw and Discard piles for the Event cards.

EVENT CARDS: These cards regulate the game's activities and narrative, list moving Axis Fronts, adjust Resources, provide Dice Roll Modifiers (DRMs) and allot the number of Actions that you have available each turn. In addition, special effects or occurrences appear on some cards that are taken into account during play.

THE FULL DECK OF CARDS ENTERS PLAY IN THREE "EPOCHS:" Early (#1 - #15 with the tan headline background), Middle (#16 - #32 with the gray headline background) and Late (#33 - #48 with the blue background). Each Event card is divided into five sections, thus:

SHOW EXAMPLE OF EVENT CARD

THE PLAYING PIECES: There are five square Axis military units, called "Fronts".

SHOW EXAMPLE

A front represents the Axis forces that fought against the Commonwealth. For Example, the Luftwaffe Front represents German airpower and related assets that deployed against the Allies.

The Commonwealth has no military pieces in the game per se. Their military strength instead is (abstractly) present in every space with an Axis Front, in player fortification units, and on the Military section of the Resource Track.

The various information markers indicate the status, possession, effect or quantity of an important game activity, situation or resource.

3 SET UP

Follow these steps to set up the game:

Place each of the Axis units with their proper starting Battle Value (BV) in their starting spaces as shown (and denoted on the map by light shading in those Boxes):

Regia Aeronautica (Italian Air Force)(2): Messina Box (#3)

Regia Marina (Italian Navy)(2) Taranto Box (#2)

LUFTWAFFE (3) AND (4): Set both of these counters aside out of play (6.3.2)

U-BOATS (2): Set aside out of play (6.3.2)

THE NORTH AFRICA GROUND UNIT ON ITS REGIO ESERCITO (ITALIAN ARMY) SIDE (2): Tobruk Box (#4)

PLACE MALTA'S RESOURCE MARKERS AS FOLLOWS WITH THEIR IMPROVEMENT VALUE (IV) SHOWING: Military (4) in the (#1) Box of its track; Supply (3) in the (#2) Box of its track; and Morale (2) in the (#3) Box on its track.

Play the Cunningham marker on its "Available" side in the Cunningham Status Box located on the map.

Place the DRM markers and the Malta Fort unit in the Holding Box.

Set aside out of play the remaining markers and tokens' they will enter the game later.

Sort the cards by title color into their three Epochs (see 2.2). Set aside the Middle and Late Epoch decks for now.

Remove card #1, "Faith, Hope and Charity", and then shuffle the remaining Early Epoch cards together to form a single deck and place it, face-down, onto the Draw Pile space on the map. Finally, place card #1, face-down, on top of the Draw Pile (i.e., ready to be drawn as the first card of the game).

This is called "seeding" the deck.

4 SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Basically, each card revealed and acted upon is a "Turn". You perform the items listed on a card in strict order, from top to bottom.

HEADLINE PHASE: Reveal the top card in the Draw Pile and place it, face-up, in the Event Pile (a.k.a., the Discard Pile). It becomes the new Current Event card, the complete resolution of which constitutes this turn.

MILITARY PHASE: Move the indicated Axis units (6.0), shift and markers as indicated, and if this is a red-titled Convoy card, then conduct a Convoy Battle (7.0):

ULTRA ESCORT: attempt (if available) Convoy Escort (10.2)

BATTLE STATIONS: flip Active Axis Fronts.

CONDUCT EACH BATTLE: Active Axis Fronts roll to inflict Hits on the Convoy.

RESOURCES PHASE: Adjust the Resource markers on their Tracks (8.0) and place any new Fortification in the Holding Box.

ORDERS PHASE: At any time during this Phase, you may attempt to expend the Ultra Marker (if available) in an effort to gain Intelligence (10.3).

First, place the appropriate circular Die Roll Modifier (DRM) markers on the units and markers listed on the Current Event Card.

Then perform the allowed number of Attack, Support, Fortify, Resource, Raid, and/or Ultra Actions (see 9.0), in any order as desired. Important: You may expend Supply Points for Extra Actions during this Phase only (see 8.3.2).

HOUSEKEEPING PHASE: This phase consists of the following Steps (see 13.0):

CONVOY ARRIVAL: If the Current Event card is a Convoy card, resolve any Hits from Phase 2 at this time, rolling on the Convoy mat for that Convoy. Deliver the surviving Resources by increasing those Tracks. On turns that any part of the Convoy safely arrives, you receive an immediate free Bonus Action (13.1.1) at the end of this Step, with an additional +1 DRM if used to roll for Morale.

PLAYER DEFEAT OR VICTORY: Determine if the game is over (13.2, 13.3). This might entail an Operation Herkules Check (14.0). If the game continues, then...

Refresh Map (not all steps may apply)

Return DRM markers to Holding Box.

Spitfires! Become "Ready" (11.0)

Ultra status check (10.1.1, 10.1.2)

Fort Removal and Reduction (9.4.5)

Check to see if Tobruk falls! (6.5.3)

TURN ENDS: Proceed to the next turn.

5 THE EVENT CARDS

The use of the Event cards is largely self-evident. The notations on each card appear in the order that they are applied during the Sequence of Play.

ADDING EVENT CARDS: Twice per game, when the Early and Middle Epoch decks are exhausted, the cards for the next Epoch are added to refresh the Draw Pile. Also at this time, reset the Cunningham marker (6.3.1).

THE MIDDLE EPOCH DECK (GRAY CARDS): set aside card #16, "Rommel Arrives!"; it will be "seeded" onto the top of the deck.

Shuffle the remaining Middle Epoch cards and place them, face-

down, onto the Draw Pile space. Then place card #16 face-down, on top of the Draw Pile (i.e., to be drawn as the first card of the Middle Epoch).

THE LATE EPOCH DECK (BLUE CARDS): set aside cards #33, "Rommel Attacks!" and #48, "Operation Torch", then shuffle the remaining Late Epoch (blue) cards and place them, face-down, in the Draw Pile Box. Place card #33, face-down, on top of the Draw Pile, and card #48, face-down, on the bottom of the Draw pile; they will be the first and last cards drawn during the Late Epoch, respectively.

Card #49, "8th Army Advances", is printed directly on the map in the Draw Pile Box (see 13.3.2, 13.3.3, 13.3.4)

6 FRONT MOVEMENT

During the Military Phase, as indicated, Axis Fronts move along their tracks, Generally, Front's "Advance" a single Box closer to Malta (or Alexandria for the Axis North African unit). Sometimes, Fronts "Retreat" one space (i.e., farther away from Malta or Alexandria), thus reducing their threat.

MALTA BREACHED: If an Axis Front Advances into the Malta Box (#0), it has Breached the Fort unit (if present), which Reduces it during Housekeeping (9.4.5, 13.4).

Players may find it helpful to rotate the Breached Malta Fort unit 90 degrees as a reminder to Reduce it during Housekeeping.

ATTACKS AND RETREATS: An Axis Front can be Attacked (9.3) and Retreated (9.3.1) beyond the highest-numbered Box on its track. When that happens, it goes into the Holding Box, thus becoming Inactive. Inactive Axis Fronts do not attack Allied Convoys (see 7.0), nor can they be Attacked.

IMPORTANT: Regardless of which Fronts are Active or not, a card's other indicated events (e.g., Resource Adjustments, Convoys, Player Actions, etc) all still effect normally.

ADVANCE ACTIVATION: An already in-play but Inactive Axis Front automatically reenters the map (becoming Active again) and is placed in the highest-numbered Box on its Track, when it is next Advanced by any card.

ADMIRAL CUNNINGHAM: Once per Epoch, you may cancel a card's indicated Advance of a single Axis Front, except for the Afrika Korps.

You must make this choice before an Advancing Front makes a Fortification Test (6.4) that turn. Once used that Epoch, flip the Cunningham marker to its "Not Available" side. It is re-flipped at the start of each new Epoch (5.0), when it then becomes Available

again. Note: Cunningham never affects a Front's Battle Value, nor its initial map entry.

NON-ADVANCE: The German Luftwaffe and U-boats Fronts cannot Advance until after they are brought into play. Ignore any called-for Advances for either of these Fronts until a card that brings it into play is revealed.

BLOCKING ADVANCES: If an Axis Front attempts to Advance into a space containing an Allied Fortification unit, including the intrinsic Forts printed on the map: Malta (2) and Gibraltar (2) (when the U-boat Front advances from the Atlantic to the Western Med Box), carry out this Test Procedure:

6.1 FORTIFICATION TEST PROCEDURE

Roll a die (there are no DRMs) for the Axis Front and compare the result to the Battle Value of that Allied Fortification.

If the die roll is less than or equal to (\leq) the Fortification's Battle Value, the Axis Front is halted and simply remains in its current space; it does not Advance.

If the result is greater than ($>$) the Fortification's Battle Value, the Axis Front Advances into that space normally.

If, during the Housekeeping Phase (13.4),

the Afrika Korps Front is still stacked with the Tobruk or El Alamein Fort unit, that Fortification unit is removed (9.4.5) from the map and placed in the Holding Box.

any Axis Fronts are in the Malta (#0) space, these units automatically trigger an Operation Herkules check (see 14.0). Also, see 9.4.5 for Malta Fort Reduction.

TOBRUK: The Tobruk Fortification unit has some special properties:

TOBRUK DEFIANT!: If the Afrika Korps Fortification Test Roll is a 6 when attempting to Advance (not Retreat) into a Fortified Tobruk, treat the result as a "Bypass" instead and Advance the Afrika Korps unit into the next space, Sidi Barrani (#3). The Tobruk Fortification marker is placed in the Tobruk Status space on the map.

If Rommel Retreats onto a fortified Tobruk, simply conduct that Retreat normally; no Fortification Test Roll is made in this case. But be careful as the Fort is now in danger!

6.5.2 TOBRUK BYPASSED: Tobruk remains Bypassed until the Afrika Korps Front Retreats to the Benghazi Box (#5) i.e., Tobruk is "relieved", or the Tobruk Fort is permanently removed (see Card #41, The Fall of Tobruk).

WHILE TOBRUK IS BYPASSED:

You gain a +1 DRM on every Raid Action (9.5). This bonus is cumulative with other Raid DRMs.

If present and on its (2) BV side, the Tobruk Fort marker remains in place but cannot be Improved to (3) BV.

The above effects are summarized on the back of the Tobruk Bypassed marker. Note that El Alamein's Fort unit cannot be "Bypassed" due to the surrounding terrain.

TOBRUK FALLS!: When the Tobruk falls! Marker is received with card #16, "Rommel Arrives!", place it in the Tobruk Box. If you later build the Tobruk Fortress marker there, place it on top of the Tobruk Falls! Marker if it is still on the map. During each Housekeeping Phase from then on, a check is made to see if Tobruk "falls" to the Axis (see 13.4, 12.1).

7 CONVOY BATTLES

Some cards initiate a Convoy Battle as indicated by their red titles and the Convoy Battle! Symbol (shown here) in the Military section of the card.

Convoy Battles occur at the end of the Military Phase, immediately after all other tasks that Phase have been performed.

Convoy Battles may also represent minor shipping actions, attritional losses, mines, mishaps at sea, or other war related events that are outside of the game's scope.

Who Battles Allied Convoys?

Each Active Axis Front except the Axis North African Front (Italian or Afrika Korps) battles a Convoy from the Box it occupies on its Track. The Axis Fronts are trying to roll higher than their Box number to score hits.

7.1 PROCEDURE

The following Steps are performed, in order, to conduct a Convoy Battle:

CONVOY ESCORT: You may attempt to expend the Ultra marker at this to receive Convoy Escort (see 10.2). If successful, treat all Critical Hits rolled (i.e., not automatically generated from Axis Fronts in the Malta Box) as Misses instead.

BATTLE STATIONS: Make sure that any Axis Fronts moving that turn (6.0) have done so, and then flip those whose Tracks converge on Malta over to their Convoy Battle side, with the arrow point to the To Hit (dice) numbers along the left and bottom edge of the that Box (as shown).

CONDUCT EACH BATTLE: In any order you desire, designate one Convoy Battle marker at a time and roll a

die to resolve its attack, afterward flipping it back over to its Axis Front side (making sure to keep it in its same Box). Then resolve the next Convoy Battle marker until you've rolled for all attacking Active Axis Fronts.

EXCEPTION: If any Axis Front except U-boats occupies the Malta Box (#0), it does not roll but scores and automatic Critical Hit (see below). U-boats in the Malta Box auto score 1 Hit instead of a Critical Hit.

Applying Convoy Battle Results

Compare the attack die result (there are no die roll modifiers" to the To Hit (dice) along the Box's edge.

If the result is not shown among the To Hit results in that Box, the outcome is a "Miss". There is no effect.

If the result appears as a white To Hit number (show example – see original rules), the outcome is a hit. Advance the Convoy Hits marker up its Track by one Box to record that hit.

If the result appears as a red To Hit number (show example – see original rules), the outcome is a "Critical Hit". Advance the Convoy Hits marker up its Track by two Boxes to record that Critical Hit (but see 10.2).

A Critical Hit represents the Axis Front making multiple sorties on shipping that traverses Malta's surrounding sea lanes.

HIT RESOLUTION*: The maximum number of Hits that a Convoy can receive is six (6) as shown on the Convoy Hits Scored Track on the map. Ignore all excess Hits that are scored.

*You score these Hits during the Military Phase, but you don't apply them to the Convoy to determine its losses until the Housekeeping Phase when it "arrives" (13.1).

EXAMPLE: Card #21 is revealed, OPERATION TIGER. During the Military Phase, you advance the Regia Aeronautica Front from its 4 Box to its 3 Box and then proceed to the Convoy Battle with a notation that the Axis will automatically score one fewer Hit (due to the card's "bad weather" effect).

During step 1, you see that you don't have the ULTRA marker available, and so you cannot use it for Convoy Escort. "Damn!"

Step 2 finds you flipping Axis Fronts to their Convoy Battle sides in their current locations which are" the Regia Aeronautica in its 3 Box, the Luftwaffe in its 3 Box, and Regia Marina in its 4 Box (the U-boats are not yet Active).

In step 3 you roll for each of these Convoy Battle markers, flipping them back to their Axis Front sides as you go along. With the order

not mattering, you decide to roll first for the Luftwaffe. The result is a 6 for a Hit, and you adjust the Convoy Hits marker up one Box (from 0 to 1) on its Track. You roll a 4 for the Regia Aeronautica next, which is another Hit, and then a 5 for the Regia Marina, which is a third Hit! Finally, you apply the card's special condition and reduce the total number of Hits by one (-1), and adjust the Convoy Hits marker from the 3 Box back down to the 2 box.

8 RESOURCES

During the Resources Phase, add (gain) or subtract (lose) the number and type of Resources shown on the current Event card, if any, by adjusting those Resources' marker up or down on their respective Tracks.

Managing Resources in this game is just as important as conducting military operations. You will need Resources to gain bonuses, prevent operational penalties, effectively defend Malta, and to wage war against the Axis enemy.

Minimum/ Maximum" You cannot have more than five of each Resource type. Additional Resources received beyond five of that type are lost. Conversely, you can never have less than zero of each Resource type – penalties will be incurred (7.2). Resource gain and losses from a card apply simultaneously.

8.2. MANDATORY LOSSES: When instructed to lose a Resource that reduces it to an amount less than zero, you must still satisfy that loss from your other (remaining) Resources.

8.1 PROCEDURE

You must make up this deficit Resource loss first from your remaining Military Resources. If you have no Military Resources, then you must make up this deficit loss from your Supply Resources. If both of those Tracks are at zero, then apply this deficit loss to your Morale Resources. If all three Tracks are at zero, ignore further Resource losses' you are in danger of losing the game (13.2.1)

EXAMPLE: You have 0 Military; 1 Supply and 2 Morale Resources at the start of the turn, and when you reveal the next card, you're required to lose one (-1) each of Military and Supply Resources. Yikes!

Since you have 0 Military and must lose one, you check your Supply next and must lose one (i.e., your last!) point of Supply.

Then the card instructs you to lose a Supply Resource, but those are now at 0. You must check first your Military Resource's (which are also at zero) and then, finally, go to your Morale, which you reduce from 2 to 1.

RESOURCE BONUS ABILITIES: When your Military or Morale Resource markers reach the 5 Box on their respective Tracks, or your Supply marker is in its 1 (or higher) Box, flip that marker over to its Resource Bonus side indicating that you can use that Resource Bonus immediately at any time during your Orders Phase. As long as you maintain the required level on its Track, you enjoy that Resource Bonus. When reduced to a lower numbered Box that does not qualify for its Bonus, flip that Resource marker back so that its front side showing its bonus is lost immediately.

Each Resource's Bonus Ability is handled differently, as follows:

MILITARY BONUS (5 BOX): The Military Resource bonus give you one free Raid Action per turn (see 9.5) as long as you have at least 1 Supply Resource, OR a single re-roll on any Fortify Action; all die-roll modifiers (9.1) still apply.

SUPPLY BONUS (BOXES 1 – 5): The Military Resource Bonus allows you to “spend” one Supply Resource (reducing the Supply Resource marker by one Box toward 0) to gain one Additional Action (9.0) of your choice during your Orders Phase (only). This Bonus Action can be repeated multiple times per turn (subject to your Supply Resource limit, of course).

MORALE BONUS (5 BOX): This Bonus allows you, once per turn, to re-roll any just failed Resource (9.2) Or Raid Action (9.5). You cannot re-roll other failed Actions with this Bonus. Applicable card die roll modifiers (9.1) apply to the re-roll. The re-roll is risk-free; there is no penalty if the re-roll fails.

ZERO RESOURCE PENALTIES: When you have zero of any Resource, its Penalty listed below is immediately applied. (These Penalties are also noted in the 0 box of its Track).

A penalty immediately ceases (even if it has had no effect yet) once that Resource is raised to one or higher.

MILITARY PENALTY (0 BOX): You cannot conduct Raids (9.5), and there is a limit imposed on you of either one Attack (9.3) OR Air Support* Action (9.7) per turn (*the Spitfires! Marker for Convoy Support does not count against this limitation; 11.2).

SUPPLY PENALTY (0 BOX): You cannot conduct Raids (9.5; including the free one offered by the Military Resource Bonus, see 8.3.1), and all of your Attack Actions (9.3) suffer a -1 die roll modifier.

MORALE PENALTY (0 BOX): All of your Resource Actions (9.2) suffer a -1 die roll modifier (9.1) including trying to improve your Morale Resource!

If you have 0 of all three Resources at the end of the turn during the Housekeeping Phase, you are defeated (see 13.2.1).

Even with the above prohibitions and restrictions, you can and should use card provided Actions to attempt to increase your Resources, or for other allowed Actions, during a turn, to improve your lot in the game.

9 PLAYER ACTIONS

Each Event card specifies a number of Actions conferred on you, the Allied player. You use Actions to confront the situations and crises evolving on the map and cards that are the heart of the game. You spend Actions one at a time without pre-designation (thus, you can see the outcome of one Action before deciding how to allocate the next one). You cannot save Actions between turns.

YOU SPEND AN ACTION TO:

Attempt to gain a Resource (9.2)

Attack (9.3) enemy Fronts to drive them back a space

Attempt to Fortify a space (9.4)

Conduct a Raid (9.5) affecting Rommel

Purchase the Ultra Marker (9.6)

Provide Air Support for a Convoy (9.7)

SUSTAINED EFFORTS: In general, there is no limit to how many Actions you can spend to do something that turn, save the number of Actions available via the Current Event card, the Supply bonus (8.3.2) and /or a Convoy's arrival (13.1.1). Failure or success on prior attempts does not limit future attempts.

9.1 DIE ROLL MODIFIERS (DRMS): Certain cards or conditions can impose a die roll modifier, applied exclusively as indicated. (That is, a card's DRM for Attacks against the U-boats Front does not modify Attack die rolls against any other Axis Fronts.)

In all such cases where DRMs are applied, the modified result of a die roll is used after applying all applicable DRMs to that roll (i.e., all DRMs are cumulative).

EXAMPLE: A die roll has both a +2 DRM and a -1 DRM affecting it. Since these are cumulative, the net result is to apply a +1 DRM to that roll.

IMPORTANT: Regardless of the die roll modifiers (DRMs) on any Player Action, a natural (unmodified) roll of 1 always results in failure, while a natural (unmodified) roll of 6 always results in

success. No Action is ever certain – this is war!

During the game, you will be making die rolls for your own actions, in addition to Axis actions such as Fort Test and Convoy Attacks.

9.2 RESOURCE ACTION: You use this Action to try to increase the support necessary to sustain Malta and Commonwealth interests. Each attempt costs 1 Action.

9.1 PROCEDURE

When conducting a Resource Action, designate which single specific Resource (Military, Supply, or Morale) you are attempting to increase and roll the die, applying all applicable DRMs (from cards or the Zero Morale penalty; see 8.4.3).

If the result is less than or equal to the target Resource's Improvement Value, your attempt is unsuccessful and there is no effect; that Resource marker remains in its current Box (see 8.3.3 for a re-roll option).

If the result is greater than the target Resource's Improvement Value, your attempt is successful. You gain one (+1) of that resource; adjust its marker one Box to the right on its Track.

9.3 ATTACK ACTION: You use this Action to try to Retreat an enemy Front (move it back one Box away from Malta, or Alexandria for the Afrika Korps Front) to its next higher numbered Box. Each attempt costs 1 Action.

9.2 PROCEDURE

When conducting an Attack Action, designate one Active (6.2) Axis Front and roll the die, applying all applicable DRMs (see 9.3.2).

If the result is less than or equal to the target Front's Battle Value, your Attack is unsuccessful and there is no effect; that enemy Front remains in its current Box.

If the result is greater than the target Front's Battle Value, your Attack is successful and the targeted Front is Retreated back one Box (i.e., to the next higher-numbered Box) on its track.

IMPORTANT: When you successfully Attack the Afrika Korps unit and Retreat it, the Rommel's Situation marker also move (in tandem) one Box to the left on its Track (making your next attack on the Afrika Korps unit a bit harder).

9.3.1 OFF-TRACK RETREATING: You can Attack an Axis Front already in the highest-numbered Box on its Track and make it Retreat. When this occurs, that Front is Retreated to (and placed in) the Holding Box where it becomes "Inactive" (and it cannot be Attacked further while Inactive).

Inactive Axis Fronts are just that; they are not combat effective. They are regrouping and resupplying to get back into the war.

Ignore card instructions to Retreat an Inactive Front.

BACK ON TRACK: When an already in-play Front is in the Holding Box and Advances, place it on the highest-numbered Box on its Track, thus making it "Active" again.

9.3.2 ATTACK DIE ROLL MODIFIERS:

Here is a summary of the different Attack Action Die Roll Modifiers (DRMs):

Event Card DRMs range from -2 to +2. Use DRM markers on affected pieces as a mnemonic each turn.

Apply a -1 DRM to all Attack Actions if the Supply Resource is at 0 (8.4.2).

The Rommel Situation Track DRM (12.) is applied whenever you Attack the Afrika Korps Front (only).

Apply a +1 DRM for Intelligence from the ULTRA Marker versus any one Axis Front (see 10.3). Note that this could instead apply to Raid! Actions.

Apply the Spitfires +1 DRM versus either Axis Air unit (see 11.1)

9.4 FORTIFY ACTION: You use this Action to try to build or improve a Fortification (a.k.a. "Fort") unit. Each attempt costs 1 action.

The game starts with a Malta Fort and a Gibraltar Fort printed on the map, each with a Battle Value of 2 and fully functional (6.4).

The Gibraltar Fort is not a "Box" along the U-boat Track, per se, and cannot be improved.

9.4.1 COMINGS AND GOINGS: The Malta Fort unit sets up in the Holding Box (3.0).

Place the Tobruk Front unit in the Holding box at the start of the Middle Epoch when card #16, Rommel Arrives!, is revealed.

Place the El Alamein Fort unit the Holding Box at the start of the Late Epoch when card #33, Rommel Attacks!, is revealed OR if Tobruk falls (13.4, step 5) before the Late Deck comes into play.

9.4.2 BUILDING A FORT UNIT: if it is in the Holding Box, you may Build a Fort unit in its named map Box, if you control* it, by performing a successful Fortify Action.

BOX CONTROL: The Box currently occupied by the Afrika Korps Front is Contested. You cannot attempt to Fortify a contested space.

Higher-numbered Boxes behind the Afrika Korps Front area Axis Controlled, and you cannot attempt to fortify those either.

*Lower-numbered Boxes in front of the Afrika Korps are Player controlled and you may attempt to Fortify those Boxes.

9.3 PROCEDURE

Designate the Fortification unit in the Holding Box (with its lowest Battle Value side face-up) and roll a die, applying applicable “Fortify” DRMs (if any).

If the result is less than or equal to its lowest Battle Value, there is no effect; that Fort remains in the Holding Box.

If the result is greater than its lowest Battle Value; you have succeeded; place it in its named Box with its lowest Battle Values side face-up.

9.4.3 IMPROVING A FORT UNIT: If it is in its map Box on its lowest Battle Value side, you may Improve that Fort unit to its higher Battle Value side by performing another successful Fortify Action (and see 8.3.1 for a re-roll option if you fail).

Use the same procedure as when building that Fort. If successful, flip that Fort unit in place over to its higher Battle Value; if unsuccessful it remains at its lower strength.

9.4 RESTRICTIONS

GROWTH LIMIT: A Fort unit cannot Improve any further on the same turn that it is first built or Improved.

BYPASSED AND BREACHED: While Bypassed (6.5.2), the Tobruk Fort cannot be Improved. Likewise, Malta’s Fort unit cannot be Improved while an Axis Front currently occupies its (0) space unless directed to do so by a card.

9.4.4 FORTIFICATION DUTIES: Fortifications can hinder Axis Advances as per case 6.4.

9.4.5 FORT REMOVAL AND

REDUCTION: During the Housekeeping Phase when the map is refreshed (13.4), if a North African fort unit is in the same space as the Afrika Korps Front, it has fallen; return that Fort unit to the Holding Box. If the Malta Fort was Breached this turn, meaning an Axis Front passed its “Test” (6.4) and advanced into the 0 space. Reduce the Fort one level (to the minimum of (2) printed on the map).

You have a chance to Attack and Retreat the Afrika Korps unit and save a Fort. If the Malta Fort is Breached by any Axis Front Advancing into its 0 space, it automatically will Reduce. Tobruk and El Alamein Fronts don’t reduce.

Note that you may later be able to rebuild removed Fort units, if desired; see 9.4.2.

9.5 RAID ACTION: You use this Action to raid the Axis supply and troop flow into North Africa. Each attempt costs 1 Action (but see 8.3.1 for a possible “free” Raid Action per turn at no Action cost).

9.5 PROCEDURE

You conduct a Raid! Action just like an Attack Action on an Axis Front (9.3). That is, you must roll higher than the Axis Convoy’s Battle Value of 4 (see the Raid! space on the map) after applicable DRMs are applied (from the Current Even card; Tobruk being Bypassed, 6.5.2; and/or use of ULTRA Intelligence, 10.3). A modified roll less than or equal to the Axis Convoy’s Battle Value has no effect, while rolling higher than the Axis Convoy’s Battle Value is a success that moves the Rommel’s Situation marker one Box to the right. See 8.3.3 for re-roll option if you fail.

9.6 PROHIBITIONS

While you have no Military or Supply Resources (8.4.1 and 8.4.2), you cannot Raid.

EXAMPLE: You have at least one Military and Supply Resource on hand and enjoy a +1 DRM for Raid Actions this turn. So if you conduct a Raid Action, it succeeds on a roll of 4, 5, or 6, and the Rommel’s Situation marker would thus shift one Box to the right.

Raids are a method to gain favorable DRMs when Attacking the Afrika Korps Front.

9.6 ULTRA ACTIVATION: You use this Action to take the ULTRA marker from the Holding Box and place it in the Active ULTRA Box with its “Ready” side face-up, where it awaits ready for use. Activating (purchasing) ULTRA from the Holding Box costs 1 Action. For ULTRA’s uses, see 10.0.

9.7 AIR SUPPORT ACTION: You use this Action on turns when there is a Convoy event to protect vital Allied shipping lanes that help ensure the arrival of that convoy. Doing so costs 1 Action (or the commitment of the Spitfires! marker; see 11.2).

Place (automatically, no die roll is necessary) the translucent blue disk in the -1 DRM Circle on that Convoy’s display on the Convoy mat. See Case 13.1 for the exact benefits of this.

9.7 LIMITATIONS

You can only perform this Action once per turn (for a maximum DRM of -1 when the Convoy arrives). Even then, if you are under a Military Resource Penalty (8.4.1), you cannot perform an Air Support Action (except by using the Spitfires! marker) if you conducted an Attack Action this turn.

Do not confuse a Convoy Battle (7.0) with an Air Support Action. Air Support reflects the extra effort to safely “bring the ships home”.

10 ULTRA

Place the ULTRA marker in the Holding Box during the Early Epoch when Card #2 or Card #9 is revealed. You must carefully track the current status of the ULTRA marker, as committing it to its two abilities, Convoy Escort or Intelligence, is an important decision made throughout the game.

10.1 ULTRA STATUS: While it is in the Holding Box, the ULTRA marker is “Available” (in play) but “Inactive” (not functioning on the play area of the map). See 9.6 for how to Activate the ULTRA marker.

While in the Active ULTRA box, it is “Active.” Its Active status is defined further up. When placed in the Active ULTRA box, its status is set to “Ready” and you can attempt to use it for Convoy Escort (see 10.2) or Intelligence (see 10.3).

When used, the ULTRA marker is “spent” and returned to the Holding Box, where it is again available for Activation (see 9.6).

Event Card Status Changes

During the Military Phase on certain Event cards, the status of the ULTRA marker changes for the worse as follows:

10.1.1 NOT READY: When the Current Event card indicates that the ULTRA marker is “Not Ready,” flip it to show its “Not Ready” side. You cannot use it this turn (refresh it back to Ready at the end of the turn during the Housekeeping Phase). If it is still in the Active ULTRA Box it remains so, and if it is in the Holding Box you may still purchase it this turn to make it Active (9.6); you just cannot use it to perform its Convoy Escort or Intelligence functions again this turn.

10.1.2 COMMITTED: When the Current Event card indicates that the ULTRA marker is “Committed,” you must place it temporarily out of play if it is in the Active ULTRA Box (i.e., the Action you spent previously to make it Active was wasted!), or in the Holding Box. Regardless, you cannot perform an ULTRA Activation Action (9.6) this turn. This marker is unavailable until next turn.

So, on some turns, the ULTRA marker can be Available but not Ready for use. On other turns, it is Committed elsewhere and is not available for use or even Activated that turn.

10.1.3 COUNTERINTELLIGENCE: Prior to using the ULTRA marker for either of its functions, you must roll a die to see if that attempt succeeds.

On a roll of 1, there has been an Intel Failure. Place the ULTRA marker in the Holding Box without effect. It is a wasted attempt, but you can still re-activate the marker (9.6), even on that same turn.

On a roll of 2 through 6, use the ULTRA marker normally and then return it to the Holding Box. It can be re-activated (9.6), even on that same turn.

Thanks in no small part to ULTRA cracking the Nazis’ codes, Allied intelligence efforts were good, but they were still not infallible. Sometimes Axis counter-measures, Allied miscommunications, or sudden changes in plans would foil ULTRA.

10.1 ULTRA FUNCTIONS

10.2 CONVOY ESCORT: At the conclusion of the Military Phase when a red-titled Convoy card is revealed, a Convoy Battle (7.0) takes place. During the ULTRA Escort Step of that Convoy Battle, you may freely (no Action cost) attempt to use the ULTRA marker (if Active and Ready, see 10.1) to sortie additionally forces for Convoy Escort duty.

If there is no Intel Failure (see 10.1.3), then all Critical Hits rolled (i.e., not automatically generated from Axis Fronts in the Malta Box) are treated as Misses instead.

Two British units in the theatre, designated Force H (based at Gibraltar) and Force D (Alexandria), escorted Allied convoys.

10.3 INTELLIGENCE: Once per turn, at any time during the Orders Phase, you may freely attempt to use (i.e., it does not cost an Action) the ULTRA marker (if Active and Ready, see 10.1) to gather Intelligence about present and future enemy activities.

IF THERE IS NO INTEL FAILURE (SEE 10.1.3), THEN YOU RECEIVE THESE BENEFITS:

First, flip over the card on top of the Draw Pile. It remains there face-up, where you can examine it freely for the remainder of the current turn. This card is still “revealed” and implements normally during next turn’s Headline Phase.

Second, you may immediately place a +1 DRM marker on any Active Axis Front or the Raid! Box (only you could not place it on a Resource marker) and thus enjoy the benefits of that DRM for the remainder of the turn.

ULTRA provided valuable enemy secrets to the Allies. In game terms, you gain fore-knowledge with which to adjust your plans, as well as a +1 DRM marker for the current turn.

11 SPITFIRES!

The Spitfires! marker arrives with card #42, 1st Battle of El Alamein, when it is placed with its "Ready" side up in its circle space near Malta on the map.

You can use this marker in only one of two ways each turn. When used, flip it over as a reminder that it has performed its duty for that turn. At the end of the turn, during the Housekeeping Phase (see 13.4), it is refreshed and flipped back to its "Ready" side.

Spitfires' Function

11.1 AIR SUPERIORITY: When used in this capacity, you gain a +1 DRM for your Attacks against either the Luftwaffe or Regia Aeronautica Fronts that turn (your choice).

11.2 CONVOY SUPPORT: In lieu of conducting Air Superiority (see 11.1), you may use the Spitfires! marker for a free* Air Support Action (see 9.7) to assist a Convoy that turn.

*Free in that there is no Action cost to do so and this does not count against the 0 Military Resources Limit imposed by 8.4.1.

Spitfires represent not only those fighters based at Malta, but also those improved radar and increased AA fire. The Axis lost over 1,100 planes during the Malta Campaign.

12 ROMMEL'S SITUATION

The North African Axis Front begins the game on its Italian (2) side and, when card #16, Rommel Arrives! Is revealed to begin the Middle Epoch, it is flipped to its Afrika Korps side (4).

Any card DRMs applied to the Regio Esercito Front are noted in the Early Epoch deck.

The Afrika Korps Front, once it is in play, has its own special Attack Action DRM when in combat, on the Rommel's Situation Track (this track is inactive until the Afrika Korps unit arrives).

12.1 THE ROMMEL'S SITUATION

TRACK: The Rommel's Situation marker is adjusted on this Track as noted on certain card events by your conducting a successful Raid Action (see 9.5), by Tobruk falling (see 6.5.3, 13.4), and by a successful Attack Action (9.3) by you that causes the Afrika Korps Front to Retreat (see 12.3).

Do not adjust this Track beyond the +2 or -2 DRM Boxes. Ignore any adjustments called for beyond those Track Limits.

12.2 ATTACKING ROMMEL: When you perform an Attack Action against the Afrika Korps, consult the Rommel's Situation Track and apply the DRM indicated by the Rommel's Situation marker to that Attack Action. This special DRM is in

addition to any other DRMs versus that Front this turn.

EXAMPLE: The Current Event card has a harmful -1 DRM on the Afrika Korps Front, while the Rommel's Situation Track offers a favorable +2 DRM. If you used an Attack Action against that Front right now, you would have a helpful +1 DRM.

12.3 THE DESERT FOX: Each and every time you conduct a successful Attack Action that causes the Afrika Korps to Retreat, you must immediately move the Rommel's' Situation marker one box the left. (Note: the Afrika Korps Retreat on Card #49 does not affect the Rommel's Situation Track.)

Supply lines (for both sides) would shorten and lengthen as the North African Campaign ebbed back and forth. The Rommel's Situation Track abstracts these immense logistical concerns.

EXAMPLE: The Rommel's Situation marker is in the +1 DRM Box when you Attack the Afrika Korps unit, succeeding in Retreating it one Box. The Rommel's Situation marker then immediately moves one Box to the left, to its 0 DRM Box.

13 HOUSEKEEPING

During this Phase, you must perform certain procedural Steps, when required, in the order listed below to close out the current Game Turn and prepare for the next one:

Convoy Arrival

Defeat Check

Victory Check

Refresh the Map

13.1 CONVOY ARRIVAL: If the current card is red-titled card, then that Convoy now arrives at Malta. You must determine how much, if any, of that Convoy's Resources actually arrived.

13.1 CONVOY ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

Roll one die for each Hit scored during the Military Phase against that Convoy as recorded on the Convoy Attack Hits Scored Track on the map. You can use that Track and its marker to count down the Hits rolled for back to 0 as a reminder, if you like.

Compare those die roll results, in aggregate, to that Convoy's display on the Convoy mat.

AIR SUPPORT: Apply a -1 DRM to each Hit die roll if you performed an Air Support Action (9.7) this turn (the translucent

blue disk will be on that Convoy's display to remind you).

APPLY HITS: For each (modified) die roll that indicates a "Lost" result, place a translucent red disk in that Circle (i.e., each Circle can only be Hit and Lost once; ignore any additional Hits against that same Circle – they have no effect).

EXAMPLE: *It is nearing the end of the game and Malta is under tremendous pressure when card #44, Operation Pedestal, is revealed. After losing the ULTRA marker this turn (it has been "Committed", 10.1.2, by card decree) and advancing every Axis Front except for the Afrika Korps, the Axis strike Pedestal hard and score a maximum of 6 Hits against the Convoy*

Fortunately, during your Orders Phase, you had the Spitfires! marker to commit to Air Support, and so the translucent blue disk is placed on the Convoy display reminding you of the -1 DRM it provides (also flipping the Spitfires! marker over to show its use). Now it is the Housekeeping Phase, and it's time to apply all 6 of those dreaded Hits!

Above is the "before" picture of this Convoy's display. After rolling 6 dice for the Hits, the results come up: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 6. After applying the -1 DRM to each roll, you treat those results as: 1, 1, 3, 4, 5, and 5. Red translucent disks are placed over the "Lost" numbers for this Convoy as shown below in the "after" picture.

The two 1s are Misses, and the duplicate Hit on the 5 result is ignored. Still, this Convoy was shot up pretty badly as only 1 Supply gets through.

RECEIVING RESOURCES: After applying all the Hits against that Convoy, any Resources that were not "Lost" now arrive. Add them to your Resource Tracks as appropriate.

Whether or not anything arrives from that Convoy, the appropriate Post-Arrival Event immediately takes place as follows:

13.1.1 SOMETHING ARRIVES: If any Resource from a Convoy is delivered (no matter how little got through), you receive an immediate free Convoy Bonus Action right now, during the Housekeeping Phase. You cannot use the Supply Bonus (8.3.2) during the Housekeeping Phase; this is just one free Bonus Action!

All of the current card DRMs and special events for that Convoy Bonus Action still apply, and you also receive an additional +1 DRM applied to your Morale Resource, should you decide to roll for Morale (9.2) with the free Bonus Action.

Any Convoy arriving at Malta tended to boost the desperate island's Morale.

13.1.2 NOTHING ARRIVES: Alternatively, if

nothing arrives from a Convoy (i.e., all of its Resources were Lost), then that Convoy is considered Sunk and you immediately lose 1 morale Resource and do not receive the "Free" Convoy Bonus Action.

A "Sunk" Convoy doesn't mean that every ship was lost, but instead reflects losses, damage, reduced cargo, and/or vessels turned back or re-routed away from their destination.

EXAMPLE CONTINUES: The Convoy from Operation Pedestal limps in with but 1 Supply Resource. Still, that's enough to garner an immediate free Bonus Action and an instant +1 DRM on the Morale Resource for this Bonus Action only.

13.2 DEFEAT CHECK: There are three ways to lose the game. Check each of them during this Step of the Housekeeping Phase.

13.2.1 MALTA STARVES: If, at this time, all three Resources are at 0, you are defeated.

Malta is essentially isolated from the rest of the world and forced to capitulate. The island's surrender has monumental consequences in the Mediterranean, and the Allied position is grave.

13.2.2 ROMMEL TRIUMPHANT: If, at this time, the Afrika Korps Front is in the Alexandria (0) Box, or if, at any time during the game, it ever Advances into the Cairo (Instant Defeat) Box, you are defeated.

13.2.3 MALTA INVADED?: If, at this time, one or more Axis Fronts occupy the Malta Box (0), conduct an Operation Herkules Check (see 14.0), where defeat also looms.

If you are Defeated, the magnitude depends on what Epoch you are currently in:

If you have not yet added the Middle Epoch cards to play, it is a Catastrophic Defeat.

The Axis take advantage and push hard to capitalize on Malta's initial weaknesses. Mussolini establishes his dream of a Mare Nostrum and the Axis sweep across North Africa to secure the Suez Canal. The resulting string of catastrophes is too much to endure, forcing Winston Churchill to resign as Prime Minister. The war is in serious jeopardy.

If you have not yet added the Late Epoch cards to play, it is a Disastrous Defeat.

In the bitter aftermath of a failed Campaign, local Allied commanders are sacked, and resources are redirected to surrounding areas to contain other Axis threats. Rommel advances in North Africa and the Allies ignominiously retreat from

theater yet again, just as they did from Greece and Crete.

If you have added the Late Epoch cards to play, it is a Strategic Setback.

Malta has drained significant resources from the Axis Mediterranean Campaign, but the island can hold out no longer and finally succumbs. Unable to halt Rommel's drive in North Africa, the Allies make a desperate last stand in the Near East.

13.3 VICTORY CHECK: There are three ways to Win the game, and one Draw condition. Check them during the Housekeeping Phase.

13.3.1 AXIS SWEEP AWAY: If, at this time, all five Axis Fronts are either in the highest-numbered Box on their Tracks or in the Holding Box, you have won an acclaimed Overwhelming Victory.

Malta serves with distinction as a base for unrelenting attacks against the enemy. Hitler loses interest in the "sideshow" Campaign in North Africa and Allied forces emerge triumphant, using it as a springboard for Total Victory in late 1944.

13.3.2 ROMMEL DRIVEN OUT: If, at this time, you have completed all the cards (including #49, 8th Army Advances, printed on the map) and the Afrika Korps Front has been retreated into the Holding Box, you have earned a Decisive Victory. This is the historical outcome.

Battered and bruised by all that is the Axis could throw at it, Malta survives (even as sporadic attack continue through mid-1943). With their North African supply lines in tatters, Panzerarmee Afrika surrenders in 1943. The subsequent Allied invasion of Sicily soon leads to Italy's downfall, and the war continues into 1945 before the world is finally purged of the Axis menace.

13.3.3 ROMMEL STILL A THREAT: If, at this time, you have completed all the cards (including #49, 8th Army Advances) and you at least control (9.4.2) the Tobruk Box a Marginal Victory is achieved.

Malta endures, but a long hard fight remains in North Africa as the Axis are stretched thin from Libya to Tunisia. The invasion of Sicily is delayed.

13.3.4 MALTA SURVIVES ALONE: If, at this time, you have completed all the cards (including #49, 8th Army Advances) but you do not control the Tobruk Box (#4), then the contest ends in a Draw.

Malta barely holds, but the failure to defeat Rommel and the Afrika Korps inhibits further Allied efforts, and the desert conflict drags on. Hitler contemplates sending additional resources to

North Africa, including new Tiger tanks, to support Rommel.

13.4 REFRESH THE MAP: If the game continues, you must refresh the map for next turn by following these steps:

Return DRM markers to the Holding Box.

If in play and used this turn, flip the Sptfires! Marker back to its "Ready" side.

If in play and "NOT Ready" (10.1.1), flip the ULTRA marker to its "Ready" side. If "Committed" (10.1.2), return the ULTRA marker to its Holding Box.

If a North African Fort unit shares a Box with the Afrika Korps Front, remove that Front to the Holding Box (see 9.4.5). If the Malta fort was Breached this turn (i.e., an Axis Front entered the 0 space), reduce the Malta Fort by one level (minimum of {2}). Note: Malta's Fort (only) can reduce a maximum of one level per turn.

Check to see if "Tobruk falls!" occurs (see 6.5.3). This happens once per game (only), the first time the Axis Control the Tobruk Box after the Tobruk falls! Marker has been placed in it. When this occurs, shift the Rommel Situation marker one Box to the left. The El Alamein Fort may also become available (see 9.4.1)

When captured, ports like Tobruk could yield a cache of fuel, equipment, and supplies to the enemy.

14 OPERATION HERKULES

Operation Herkules is a game abstraction of an Axis invasion of Malta. Historically, this operation was planned, postponed, and finally cancelled but, in game terms, if the war takes a more favorable Axis Course, it can happen.

Malta Invasion Trigger Event

If, during the Housekeeping Phase of any turn (see 13.2.3), any Axis Front(s) occupies the Malta Box (#0) on its Track, perform an Operation Herkules Check as follows:

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Axis Attack Total: Roll 2 dice and, from their sum, subtract the value of the Axis Casualties at Crete marker (if in play), and add the Battle Value(s) of the Axis Front(s) currently in the Malta (0 space) Box.

STEP 2: Malta Defense Total: Sum the combined Blueae of all Malta's Resources (Military, Supply, and Morale) and add the current value of Malta's Fort unit.

STEP 3: Subtract the Malta Defense Total from the Axis Attack Total:

If the final sum is -1 or less, Herkules is postponed. Retreat the Axis unit(s) in the Malta Box back to the #1 Box on their respective Tracks, and Malta's Fort will be Reduced one level (9.4.5, 13.4). The game continues normally. . .

If the final sum is 0 or more, Herkules is launched, succeeds, and you are defeated.

Malta presented many obstacles to enemy invasion. It has forts, a rocky limestone composition and a lack of invasion beaches.

EXAMPLE: *The U-Boats and Regia Marina Fronts Advanced past your Malta Fort unit this turn, entering Malta, the (0) Box. You had no success ejecting either of them using Attack Actions during the Orders Phase (bad luck, old chap!). So during the Defeat Check of the Housekeeping Phase, you must perform an Operation Herkules Check.*

You roll two dice, and their sum is 6, minus one (-1) from previous Axis Casualties at Crete ($6-1=5$). Add to that the Battle Values of those two Axis Front units in Malta ($5 + 2 + 2 = 9$). This is the Axis Attack Total.

Let's presume that Malta's Fort is currently at a (3) Battle Value. If you don't have a minimum of 7 Resources (the sum of Military, Supply, and Morale) to combine into a Malta Defense Total of at least 10, you will lose the game (i.e., Herkules is triggered).

If you do survive, and Herkules is postponed, the Axis Fronts would ball back to the respective 1 Boxes, and Malta's Fort would be Reduced from (3) to (2) since it was Breached by Axis Fronts this turn.

15 OPTIONAL RULES

You may use these Optional Rules in any combination to vary your play experience.

15.1 THE HISTORICAL GAME: Stack all of the cards into a single deck in ascending numerical order and play them thus.

ULTRA will have less of an impact in this Historical Game as you get to know the card deck. You still retain the +1 DRM from ULTRA's Intelligence function.

15.2 U-BOAT CODES BROKEN (PLAYER ADVANTAGE): Whenever you successfully employ the ULTRA maker for Convoy Escort (10.2), the U-boats Front does not attack the convoy. In other words, consider the U-boats "Inactive" for that Convoy Battle.

15.3 ADMINISTRATION (PLAYER

ADVANTAGE): During any single Orders Phase, you may expend 2 Actions to flip the Cunningham marker (6.3.1) from its "Not Available" side to its "Available" side.

15.4 ULTRA NOW (PLAYER

ADVANTAGE): Disregard the instructions on cards #2 and #9 to place the ULTRA maker in the Holding Box. Instead, place the ULTRA marker in the Holding Box during the game's set up (3.0).

15.5 ROYAL NAVY HINDERED (PLAYER

DISADVANTAGE): As long as the Afrika Korps Front controls the Mersa Matruh space (#2), all player Attacks against the Regia Marina incur an additional -1 DRM penalty.

15.6 TOBRUK HOLDS! (PLAYER

ADVANTAGE): If the Afrika Korps Front is Attacked and Retreated back onto a Fortified Tobruk space, immediately Reduce the Tobruk Fort by one level and move the Afrika Korps Front into the Benghazi space. This rule supersedes 9.4.5 and 13.4. The additional move (into Benghazi) does not affect the Rommel's Situation Track.

16 EXAMPLE OF PLAY

AFTER SETTING UP AS PER RULE 3.0, THE GAME BEGINS. NOTE: this example showcases the game's mechanics, not optimal play.

Show Card #1 FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

The game always starts by flipping over the first Early Epoch Card #1, which was "seeded" at the top of the deck.

The Military section of the card pictures the Regia Aeronautica, so the Italian Air Force Front Advances one Box on its Track from (#3) to (#2).

The Italians opened the Malta campaign by launching air strikes to bombard the island bastion.

RESOURCES: NONE

The Resource section shows no gains or losses.

SHOW ORDERS GRAPHICS

In the Orders section your 1 Action is preceded by several die roll modifiers. There is a +1 DRM Military and a -1 DRM Morale, so circular DRM markers are appropriately placed on those two Resources.

The first bombings accomplished little, but they did cause concern amongst the population of Malta.

A -2 DRM for both the Regia Marina and Regio Esercito is indicated,

so those markers are placed.

Some military thinkers believed Malta to be untenable, so it was ill-prepared for war.

With just 1 Action available, you examine your potential opening move. First, you could make an Attack Action (9.3) against the Regia Aeronautica which just advanced. To beat that Front, you would have to roll a 3, 4, 5, or 6, which is higher than its Battle Value of (2).

You can't conduct an Air Support Action (9.7) because this is not a Convoy card. You could attempt to Improve (9.4) the intrinsic Malta Fort (2) printed on the map. (The Malta Fort upgrade unit starts in the Holding Box).

Of course, you would like to increase any of your Resources (9.2), so these are all worth considering (especially Military with its +1 DRM).

The Rommel's Situation track cannot be Raided (9.5) in the Early Epoch since it does not become Active until the start of the Middle Epoch. The Ultra marker (10.0) is not yet available either, so it cannot be purchased now.

After due consideration, you attempt to gain a Morale Point as you'd like to start to maximize it for future Resource and Raid reroll options (8.3.3). A die roll of 3 does not succeed because of the card's -1 DRM for this particular resource.

With no more Actions (you could exchange 1 Supply for 1 Extra Action, 8.3.2, but you decide not to on the first turn), it's on to the Housekeeping Phase. The only task is to return the DRM markers back to the Holding Box; the first turn is now over.

SHOW CARD #2: THE FALL OF FRANCE

The Second Turn's card is revealed, and the French are about to capitulate to the Germans.

Advance the Regia Marina from its (#2) to its (#1) Box.

Next, you lose a Morale Point (down to 2 now), but the good news is that the ULTRA Marker becomes available to you, so it is placed into the Holding Box.

In the Orders Phase, you place -1 DRM markers on the Morale Resource marker and the Regia Aeronautica and the Regia Marina, and a -2 DRM marker goes on the Regio Esercito.

This turn, you have two Actions, and you quickly use the first for the ULTRA marker; it is taken from the Holding Box and put in its Active Box, "Ready".

You use your second (and last) Action this turn to Attack the Regia Aeronautica. There is a -1 DRM, yet a roll of 4 means success, so the

Italian Air Force Retreats from its (#2) Box back to its (#3) Box.

You again decline to exercise converting one Supply to an Action (8.3.2), so the Orders Phase concludes.

During Housekeeping, return all DRM markers to the Holding Box and get ready to flip the next card.

SHOW CARD #6: OPERATION HATS

This card's Headline text is in red, and it has a Convoy Battle icon on it; so, it is a Convoy card.

As instructed, the Regia Marina Advances, but it can't enter Malta (the {#0} Box) without passing a "Test" against the Island's intrinsic Fort printed on the map. The "Test" roll (6.4) is a 1, so the Italian Navy fails to advance and remain in its (#1) Box.

The option to use Cunningham (6.3.1) to halt the Regia Marina's advance before it made the "Test" roll against Malta's Fort was available, but was not used in this particular case.

Now you must choose whether to use your Available and Ready ULTRA marker to provide additional Escort for the Convoy (7.0, A). You decide to withhold the marker and take your chances with the Italians against the Convoy.

It's now time for the Convoy to suffer the Axis attacks (7.0, B). The German units are not yet in play, so they won't attack, and the Regio Esercito (Italian Army) never attacks convoys. Flip the Italian Air and Naval units over to their "Convoy Battle" side and align the counters with the Hit numbers in their spaces.

The Regia Aeronautica strikes first, and a roll of 1 results in a Miss. Next in line is the Regia Marina, where a roll of 5 or 6 would be a Critical Hit (7.0, C)! The roll is a 4, so a single Hit is scored on the Convoy; adjust the Convoy Hit marker from its (0) Box to its (1) Box on its track on the map. The Italian Fronts are re-flipped over to their Battle Value sides.

There are no automatic Resource adjustments listed on the card, so no changes yet; the Convoy will arrive and, hopefully, deliver its full cargo of 2 Supply during the Housekeeping Phase (13.1).

For Orders, a helpful +1 DRM marker is placed on the Regia Aeronautica, while a harmful -2 DRM marker is placed on the Regio Esercito unit.

Your first decision is freely expending the ULTRA marker for Intelligence to reveal the next card on top of the Draw Pile. You pass a Counter-Intelligence Check first (10.1.3), which is a 3, so ULTRA may be used (it would have failed on a roll of 1 only).

Revealing the next card, it is card #15;

MALTA GETS MINED. Hmmm. . . you see that you will lose -1

Supply from next turn's card (in addition to -1 Morale), so it is especially important to 'bring home' the Hats Convoy this turn. A single +1 DRM marker is also gifted to you from ULTRA Intelligence (10.3), and you opt to place it on the Regina Marina. Then you place the ULTRA marker into the Holding Box, available for purchase again.

Your Two Actions listed on the card are still to be used. An Air Support Action (9.7) is considered, but as only 1 Hit was scored on the Convoy, we'll hope for a good die roll result on the Convoy mat. Thus you decide to use the first Action to attempt to raise the Military Resource by +1 point. A die roll of 4 is not higher than Military's Improvement Value of 4, so no luck here.

With your second (and last) Action this turn, you launch an Attack against the Regia Aeronautica (knowing they will Advance next turn because of ULTRA) which has a Battle Value of 2. With a helpful +1 DRM from the card, any roll other than a 1 is required to retreat the Axis unit back a space. A subsequent loss of 3 results in a success, so the Italian Air force goes back a space, retreating to its (4) box.

Unsure whether Hats will deliver both its Supply Point or not (with 1 Hit pending), you hold onto your 2 current Supply Points (instead of converting any into Actions), and the Orders Phase is over.

During Housekeeping, the Convoys arrives' double-checking the Hats Table on the Convoy mat to resolve the 1 Hit, we see that there's a 2/3 chance that you will lose one of its Supply Points.

Show Graphic of Operation Hats

A lucky roll of 2 means that both of the Convoy's Supply points are delivered, raising the marker on that Resource Track from the (2) to its (4) Box. This is important because Supply generates extra Actions (8.3.2) during the Orders Phase (only, not now during the Housekeeping Phase).

However, at this time, you get a "Free" Convoy Bonus Action thanks to the Convoy's safe Arrival (13.1.1). Knowing (again because of ULTRA) that a Morale point will be lost via next turn's card, plus with all Resources facing a -1 DRM from the next card, you opt to roll for Morale (with the Convoy Bonus +1 DRM, 13.1.1) so anything but a 1 succeeds. A roll of 5 raises Morale to (3).

Another good option would have been to Attack the Regia Marina, which still has ULTRA'S +1 DRM.

You then return the DRM markers to the Holding Box. There are no other applicable Housekeeping items to perform, so the third turn is now over.

CARD #15: MALTA GETS MINED

We already knew what this fourth turn card is because of last turn's ULTRA play, so you slide it (face-up) from the Draw to the Discard Pile.

The Luftwaffe is still not yet in play, so it is now Activated by this card, and is placed in its (4) Box at 4 Battle Value. Also, the Regia Aeronautica Advances again, back into its (3) Box.

A -1 DRM marker is placed in the "All Resources" circle on the map, and now we have 3 Actions to contemplate, as the sea surrounding Malta starts to boil due to the pressures of war. . .

How would you next prosecute the War in the Mediterranean? Feel free to continue the game from this point or set up anew and start a fresh game.

17 DESIGNER NOTES

The Island of Malta has long been the crossroads of the Mediterranean Sea. In ancient times, it was colonized by the Carthaginians, ruled by the Romans, and occupied by Arabs. Malta later became a British Crown colony near the end of the Napoleonic Wars. It has been besieged multiple times throughout history, most notably by the Ottomans in 1565, and then by the Axis during World War II. Despite opinions that Malta's position was untenable, the impregnable rock withstood repeated enemy attacks and survived.

Even before my first "States of Siege" design, *We Must Tell the Emperor*, was published by Victory Point Games, I began research on a sequel. Just like the Home Islands of Japan, Malta would be under pressure from multiple threats. This situation fit perfectly into the States of Siege scheme of things, and as a two-way battle of attrition, the campaign itself was just fascinating. It's also a topic that hasn't been addressed much within the hobby; thus it remained fresh and appealing.

Malta was a dagger pointed at the heart of Mussolini's dream of creating a New Roman Empire. This is where the island served as a focal point for harrying Axis shipping and troop convoys. Rommel himself quipped that Malta was, "That Scorpion of the Sea" as a result. The Rommel's Situation Track abstracts this, which you can attempt to manipulate via Raids (9.5) and by holding out in a bypassed Tobruk (6.5.2), but it will also automatically be affected (against you) by all successful attacks against the Afrika Korps (12.3). This reflects the nature of desert combat, which included lulls and build-ups followed by periods of intense combat as changes in supply lines occurred.

When close to Malta, Axis Fronts are more deadly against inbound Convoys (including inflicting possible Critical Hits – except for

ULTRA, and Air Support (9.7), can help protect your vital shipping. Spitfires! – when they are available – can also benefit your lifelines (11.2).

The Malta Fort Reduction procedure (when breached) came about during playtesting, and it's a crucial factor in the game. This welcome addition focuses more player attention on the island, and again conveys the continuous attritional factors of the conflict. Malta's Fort also affords you additional protection against Operation Hercules, so one strategy is to try to keep its strength as high as possible.

Supply is often the deciding factor in the game, as it was during the actual campaign. The ability to trade Supply for Extra Actions (8.3.2), plus the "Free" Convoy Arrival (13.1.1), will offer constant decision trees for you to consider.

Remember, if a Convoy is "sunk" (13.1.2), you not only lose all its cargo and the associated "Free" Action, but a Morale point is also immediately forfeited!

Malta served as a focal point for information gathering in the theatre, so don't be afraid to use ULTRA for its Intelligence option (and its intrinsic +1 DRM bonus, 10.3). But, due to the vagaries of intelligence operations, you cannot completely rely on it, as any ULTRA attempt may indeed fail (10.1.3).

Several "seeded" cards are necessary to hold the game's historical narrative together, but the three decks in the game still provide plenty of variety, replay ability, and a sense of the unknown. The Allies had the Intelligence advantage in the Mediterranean Theatre, so the "seeded" cards will give you a slight boost against a very tough Axis game-controlled system.

In the Early Epoch, you'll be jockeying with the Italians until the Luftwaffe arrives. In the Middle Epoch, Rommel and his Afrika Korps are on the scene, later followed by the U-boats. Finally, in the Late Epoch, Malta will attempt to hold on and then revive under unrelenting pressure from the Axis, while the 8th Army secures North Africa. Meanwhile, who knows when the next cargo-laden convoy will make a desperate run to the beleaguered island?

It is important for players to understand that North Africa is not just a sideshow in the game; it is a major Front that will demand much of your attention. Malta must survive for you to turn the key to victory in the desert. Balancing the double-edged sword of Malta and North Africa is what winning this game is about.

In retrospect, it's amazing to consider the aerial pounding that Malta endured. For example, twice the tonnage of bombs fell on Malta during March/April 1942 alone than during an entire year of

the London Blitz. Yet the population persevered, and their mettle earned the Island of Malta the George Cross in 1942, Britain's highest civilian honor. It's one of the design goals to convey to you just how precarious the Commonwealth position was in the Mediterranean during this war period.

U-boats were not as effective in the Mediterranean as they were in the Atlantic, and this is reflected in the game. Germany sent in excess of 60 U-boats into the Med, and not a single one returned by the war's end.

During my research for this game, I was surprised to learn that the Italian Navy had over 100 submarines, although they were poorly designed. For game purposes, the Italian submarines are mixed in with the Regia Marina and U-boats, and their torpedo boats and commandos are also factored into the Regia Marina unit which gives it some punch. Unlike the British, the Italian lacked a naval battle tradition, had no aircraft carriers and were short of fuel. Furthermore, the Italian Navy was occupied escorting convoys of their own, a task that they performed efficiently and bravely.

This game is designed for repeated play, so feel free to explore different strategies and discover its secrets. A "Draw" result is actually quite an accomplishment, and a "Victory" result will be a triumph to be savored!

"That Scorpion of the Sea" offers you a plethora of options, but on a tight budget. As in every other "States of Siege" game, every Action is precious. Use them – and your Supply – wisely. – Steve Carey.

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