

# OPERATION SKORPION

ROMMEL'S FIRST STRIKE

HALFAYA PASS, MAY 1941



**Rules of Play**



**Compass Games**

*New Directions in Gaming*

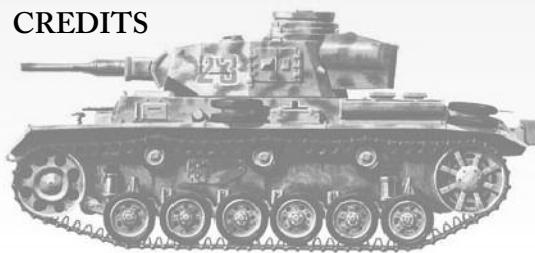
# OPERATION SKORPION

## - ROMMEL'S FIRST STRIKE -

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

OPERATION SKORPION is a two-player game depicting Rommel's attempt to stabilize the Sollum Front in mid-May 1941 and regain control of the important Halfaya Pass, the gateway to Egypt. The British forces had consolidated their hold on the pass and were harassing the Germans to the south. Players will note a distinct disparity in combat forces between the two sides. At the time, the Germans held the British Matilda Mk. II A infantry tank in high regard due to its heavy defensive armor. For this reason, the Germans committed much of their armor striking force to this operation, which they referred to as "Unternehmen Skorpion." In this battle, the Germans were in a race for time to quickly strike and capture the pass before their limited supplies ran out. Each player will have to judiciously allocate his resources and play a cat and mouse game in an attempt to outfox his opponent using the game's unique fog of war combat system.

#### 1.1 Game Scale

Each game-turn represents approximately 30 minutes of real time. Each map hex represents about 1/10 mile across. Unit scale consists primarily of companies and platoons.

#### 1.2 Game Inventory

- 1 Rules Book
- 1 Map - 22" X 34"
- 2 Countersheets
  - 1 sheet of 5/8" units and markers
  - 1 sheet of 1/2" markers
- 1 German Order of Battle and Strength Card
- 1 Allied Order of Battle and Strength Card
- 1 Combat Results Table (CRT)
- 1 Six-sided Die
- 1 Box and Lid Set

### 2.0 GAME EQUIPMENT

#### 2.1 The Map

The map depicts the Halfaya Pass region of North Africa where the battle was fought. The map features the prominent terrain features of this region. A grid of numbered hexagons (hexes) has been superimposed on the map as a means of regulating the movement and positioning of the playing pieces. Also located on the map is a Game Turn Record Track.

## 2.2 The Unit Counters

The cardboard pieces or unit counters represent the individual units that fought during the battle. Each unit contains several pieces of information: nationality, unit ID, size, type, combat value (CV) and movement allowance (MA).

## 2.3 Unit Sizes

- Platoons are shown as three dots: ( ... ) see example.
- Companies are shown as a line: ( | ) see example.
- The 22 Battalion HQ is shown as 2 lines: ( || ) see example.
- Armor unit counters represent Matildas, German Panzers, and Armored Cars, all containing color icons.
- Artillery unit counters represent German artillery companies and British artillery batteries.

## 2.4 Color Schemes

The colors used to identify the combat units are:

TAN: German Army

RED: British Army

## 2.5 Unit Types

All units belong to one of two categories, mechanized and non-mechanized. Matildas and those units with an unmodified MA of 5 or more are considered mechanized; while those units with an unmodified MA of 4 or less are considered non-mechanized.

## 2.6 Definition of Common Terms

**COMBAT VALUE:** A quantification of a unit's ability to combat enemy units.

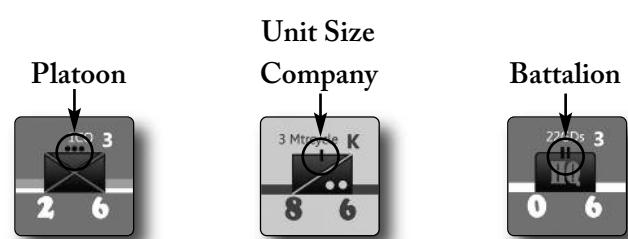
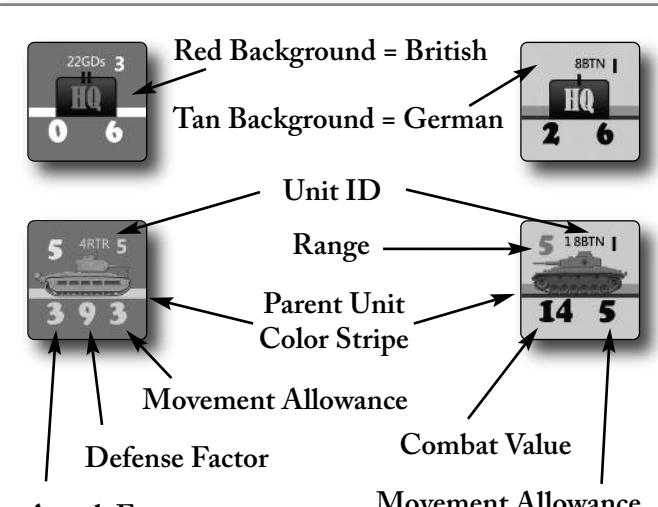
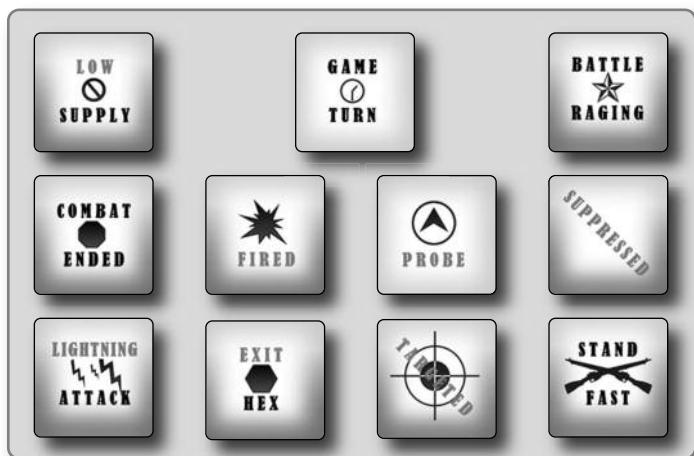
**MOVEMENT ALLOWANCE:** The measure of a unit's ability to move across the map.

## 2.7 Game Markers

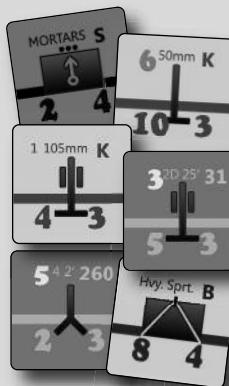
The game also includes a variety of markers that are used to facilitate the play of the game.

## 2.8 Order of Battle and Strength Cards

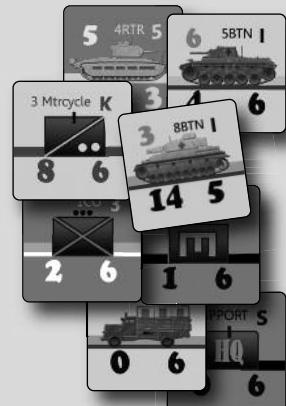
Each player is provided an Order of Battle and Strength Card, which lists the forces available, strength, time of appearance, and map board entry. These cards are provided to secretly track the assigned combat strength of each unit.



### Non-Mechanized Unit Examples



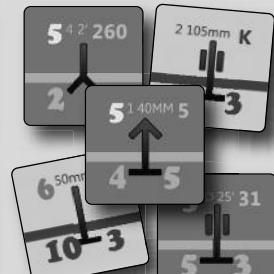
### Mechanized Unit Examples



### Armor Unit Examples



### Artillery Unit Examples



## 3.0 PREPARE FOR PLAY

The British are in control of Halfaya Pass at the start of the game. The British Player places all of his units anywhere on the map within the constraints of the Terrain Effects Chart (TEC) and the limitation that, at the start of the game, no British unit may setup within 3 hexes of a German Player entry point hex, as noted on the German Order of Battle and Strength Card and Game Map.

### 3.1 Allocation Points

Except for Matildas, an allocation point (AP) equates to a unit's Combat Value (CV), specifically its attack factor (AF), on a one-to-one ratio. Each player is assigned a specific number of APs at the start of the game. Each 0 strength non-supply unit is considered a cadre, which must be "fleshed out" via the assignment of APs. Order of Battle and Strength Cards should be kept out of sight of opposing players.

### 3.2 British Allocation

80 APs to start. Twenty APs must be distributed, not necessarily equally, among the four supply units. The remaining 60 are distributed as per 3.1. Each Matilda AF costs 2 APs. Note that the Matilda defense factor (DF) declines proportionally, from the maximum of 9 for an assigned AF of 3. *Example: A Matilda unit counter assigned 2 APs (AF 1) would have a DF of 3.*

### 3.3 German Allocation

290 APs to start, of which approximately 100 CV points will be considered low supply (LS). Each of the seven supply units must be assigned 14 APs. The German Player secretly rolls one six-sided die. On a die roll of 1 through 4, one panzer company of Panzergruppe Cramer (4 combat units and a HQ), exclusive of supply unit, plus all units of Stossgruppe Knabe, exclusive of supply units, are considered LS. On a die roll of 5 or 6 two panzer companies of Panzergruppe Cramer (8 combat units and 2 HQs), exclusive of supply units, are considered LS. Low supply units are reduced to 1/2 strength combat value and all units with a movement allowance of 5 or 6 are reduced to 4 for the entire game.

## 4.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Each game-turn consists of a German Player turn followed by a British Player turn. The game begins with the German Player turn of game-turn 1 and ends with the final German Player turn of game-turn 12. (There is no British Player game-turn 12.) The sequence of each game-turn must be strictly followed.

### A. GERMAN PLAYER TURN

1. **German Movement Phase:** The German Player may conduct movement. German units scheduled to arrive this turn may enter play at this time. If all designated entry hexes of a specific letter are blocked by enemy units or their ZOCs (cf. 7.0), reinforcements may enter the nearest map edge hex, of that letter, free of enemy units and their ZOCs. Reinforcements may enter the game in an enemy ZOC, but must stop and move no farther.
2. **British indirect fire artillery** may fire at German units not adjacent to British units and within sight (cf. 17.2) and range. This occurs at the end of the German Movement Phase. Suppression markers are removed from German units at the beginning of this phase.
3. **German Combat Phase:** The German Player conducts combat in any order desired.

### B. BRITISH PLAYER TURN

1. **British Movement Phase:** The British Player may conduct movement.
2. **German indirect fire artillery** may fire at British units not adjacent to German units and within sight (cf. 17.2) and range. This occurs at the end of the British Movement Phase. Suppression markers are removed from British units at the beginning of this phase.
3. **British Combat Phase:** The British Player conducts combat in any order desired.



## C. RECORD KEEPING PHASE

Both players may exchange APs between friendly units located on map in the same or an adjacent hex as a friendly supply unit provided they are not adjacent to an enemy unit. Exchanges occur only with a supply unit. German panzer (armor) units may exchange APs with any supply unit containing a colored stripe belonging to any panzer company; while other German units may exchange APs with any supply unit containing a colored stripe not belonging to a panzer company. British tank (armor) units may exchange APs with any supply unit numbered 1 or 2; while other British units may exchange APs with any supply unit numbered 3 or 4.

An individual unit may not accept more APs than its printed CV, 1/2 printed CV for low supply units, or 2X AF in the case of a Matilda. In addition, no supply unit may donate more than half (round fractions up) of its APs in one game-turn; although it may accept an unlimited number of APs from any friendly unit located in the same or adjacent hex. There is no limit as to the number of APs which may be exchanged in one game-turn providing the supply unit does not donate more than half of its APs in its possession at the start of the game-turn.

British supply units numbered 1 or 2 possessing only 2 APs may donate both of their remaining APs in one game-turn. German supply units occupying the same or adjacent hex and containing the appropriate colored stripe may exchange APs providing they comply with all other restrictions for AP exchange. British supply units 1 and 2 occupying the same or adjacent hex may exchange APs and British supply units 3 and 4 occupying the same or adjacent hex may exchange APs providing they comply with all other restrictions for AP exchange. HQ units may not participate in an AP exchange. All transactions must be recorded on the Player Order of Battle and Strength Cards.

### 4.1 Night Game-Turn

Game-turn 5 is a night turn. All units may move only. No unit may enter an enemy ZOC or voluntarily conduct any type of combat. If a friendly unit begins the game-turn in an enemy ZOC, it must leave that ZOC during its movement phase. If this is not possible without entering another enemy ZOC, the unit is obligated to remain in place and attack. Furthermore, if units are locked in Battle Raging, the battle must be re-fought in the night turn. It may not be reinforced. Armor, artillery, supply and HQ units must leave the battle, but may remain in place providing there is at least one friendly unit unable to disengage from the battle.

The friendly unit unable to disengage need not occupy the same hex, but must have been involved in the same Battle Raging.

## 5.0 MOVEMENT

### 5.1 Procedure

During the movement phase, a player may move as many or as few units as desired. Units are moved from hex to adjacent hex. A hex may never be skipped or jumped. A friendly unit may never move through or end movement in a hex occupied by an enemy unit.

### 5.2 Movement Allowances

Each unit has a movement allowance printed on the counter. This allowance is the maximum number of movement points (MPs) that may be expended during the movement phase. Note that German MPs may be reduced for being LS. As each unit enters a hex, the unit expends MPs from its movement allowance. Unused MPs may not be accumulated from game-turn to game-turn nor may they be transferred to other units.

**GUARANTEED ONE HEX MOVEMENT:** A unit may always move at least one hex regardless of the movement cost as long as the movement is not into or across prohibited terrain, nor from one hex in the Zone of Control (ZOC) of an enemy unit directly to another ZOC of the same enemy unit (exceptions - advance after combat (8.7) and road overrun (14.0)).

### 5.3 Terrain Effects on Movement

The Terrain Effects Chart identifies the types of terrain and the costs incurred when moving into each type. Terrain type is determined by the dominant terrain in the hex. Any hex containing half or more of a specific terrain type identifies the terrain type for that hex. Half hexes are playable. Units expend MPs based on the dominant terrain of the hex entered as explained below:

- **Clear:** Units entering a clear hex expend 1 MP.
- **Bir El Siweiyat:** Units entering Bir El Siweiyat expend 1 MP.
- **Roads:** Road movement is accomplished by moving units through connecting road hexes. Units move along the road net at 1/2 MP per hex. Off road and road movement may be combined in one movement phase. The road net is not considered contiguous through Bir El Siweiyat hexes, i.e., it cost 1 MP to move through Bir El Siweiyat hexes. Road movement is unaffected by other terrain in the hex.

*Example: A unit with a MA of 6 moves through 3 clear terrain hexes to a road located in clear terrain. The unit may complete its movement by moving an additional 6 hexes along the road.*

- **Escarptment:** Armor, artillery, and supply units designated to carry armor APs are allowed in escarpment hexes only on roads, and they may enter and leave escarpment hexes only along the path of the road. Other units may occupy an escarpment hex only if the hex also contains a road or wadi. No unit may cross a solid escarpment hex side, regardless of the dominant terrain in the hex, unless utilizing the road movement rate or there is a wadi in the hex being entered or

exited. The wadi need not connect with the hex entered or occupied. Units entering a road escarpment hex from a wadi hex expend 2 MPs.

*Example: A motorized machinegun company may enter hex 4505 from hex 4504 by expending 2 MPs, but may not enter hex 5112 from hex 5213.*

- **Wadi:** Units entering an escarpment wadi hex expend 2 MPs. Units entering a clear terrain wadi hex expend 1 MP. The hex adjacent to the wadi hex, from which the unit moves, may be any hex that may otherwise be occupied and may entail crossing a hex side that would otherwise be impassable without the presence of the wadi.

#### 5.4 Exiting the Map

Any unit may exit a map edge at the cost of 1 MP. Units with no retreat route other than off a map edge may do so without penalty. For purposes of retreat, Zones of Control extend off the map edge, so that retreating units forced to exit the map may be eliminated (cf. 8.6). Once exited, a unit may re-enter the same map edge by remaining off the map for at least one complete game-turn and then re-entering the map within 6 hexes of its exit hex. German units may perform map re-entry only along western and southern map edges; while British units may perform map re-entry only along eastern and northern map edges. Units exited from the map and unable to re-enter are considered out of play for the remainder of the game.

*Example: Units of Panzergruppe Cramer scheduled to enter the game at hexes C and D may be held off the map for one game-turn and enter 6 hexes north of the northern most entry hex C.*

## 6.0 STACKING

#### 6.1 In General

No more than two units may occupy a hex at the end of a player's movement phase. Units may move through friendly units during the movement phase and during a retreat after combat without regard to stacking limitations. Units advancing after combat must comply with stacking restrictions. Retreating units may voluntarily retreat into an over stacked hex, even though alternate hexes may be available. Units found to be in violation of stacking restrictions due to a retreat after combat must comply with stacking restrictions by the end of the player's upcoming movement phase, otherwise excess units are eliminated (owner's choice).

#### 6.2 Exceptions

Engineers, supply units, British HQ units, and German 2-6 HQ company units may stack for free providing no more than two supply units and one HQ unit occupy the same hex at the end of a player's movement phase or during an advance after combat. Only 1 armor unit may stack in Bir El Siweiyat hexes and road escarpment hexes.

#### 6.3 Enemy Units

Units may never be moved into or through hexes occupied by enemy units.

## 7.0 ZONES OF CONTROL

#### 7.1 In General

The six hexes immediately surrounding a unit's hex constitute the Zone of Control (ZOC) of that unit. All units except supply units possess a ZOC, regardless of CV. In other words, a unit with a CV of 0 still exerts a ZOC. Supply units possess a ZOC only within the hex they occupy.

#### 7.2 ZOCs and Terrain

ZOCs extend into all types of terrain and across all hex sides.

#### 7.3 Features

ZOCs are exerted at all times. The ZOCs of both sides may be simultaneously exerted in the same hex. The presence of a ZOC is never affected by enemy or friendly units.

#### 7.4 Stops Movement

Units entering an enemy ZOC must immediately stop movement. A unit starting its game-turn in the ZOC of an enemy unit may not move directly into the ZOC of the same enemy unit. However, a unit may move out of the ZOC of an enemy unit into a hex free of enemy ZOCs and re-enter the same unit's ZOC or move directly into a ZOC of a different enemy unit in the same game-turn.

#### 7.5 Retreating into a ZOC

Units forced to retreat into a hex containing an enemy ZOC are eliminated.



## 8.0 STANDARD COMBAT

### 8.1 In General

The player conducting combat during his combat phase is termed the “attacker,” the other player the “defender,” regardless of the overall tactical situation.

**WHO MUST ATTACK:** During a player’s Combat Phase, the phasing player conducts attacks against enemy units adjacent to friendly units. Combat against adjacent enemy units is mandatory. Every adjacent enemy unit must be attacked in some fashion during the friendly combat phase, and every friendly unit adjacent to an enemy unit must participate in combat.

**DECLARING ATTACKS:** Combats are conducted in any order the attacking player desires.

#### RESTRICTIONS:

- No attacking unit may be used in more than one combat during the attacker’s combat phase (Exception-See Road Overrun).
- A unit’s combat strength may not be split for any reason, nor may a player declare a CV other than that recorded on his Player Order of Battle and Strength Card.
- Defending units stacked in the same hex must be combined into one defense strength.
- When a hex being attacked is over stacked, the defender chooses which units will defend, providing those defending units comply with stacking restrictions. Any remaining units in the hex suffer the same combat result as the defending units.
- No defending unit may be attacked more than once in a combat phase and no target hex may be attacked more than once in a combat phase (Exception -See Road Overrun).

**MINIMUM VALUE:** Units may have a combat strength of zero, even though they possess a ZOC. Units that take losses during combat are not considered eliminated until their CV is reduced to less than zero.

### 8.2 Combat Procedure

**1. REVEALING COMBAT VALUES:** The attacking player reveals the total Combat Value of those attacking units based on the APs assigned to individual units. He need not reveal the CV for each unit or for units in a particular hex, but only the total CV for that specific combat. In return, the defending player does the same. At no time may a player physically record a CV declared by his opponent; this is expressly forbidden.

**2. UNITS WITH A CV OF ZERO:** If a combat reveals the defending unit or units to have a sum CV of zero, the result is considered a defender eliminated (DE) without having to roll a die. Any unit belonging to the player conducting a game-turn with a CV of zero is eliminated if in an enemy ZOC at the

beginning of the friendly combat phase if not accompanied by at least one friendly unit with a CV of 1 or greater.

**3. DETERMINE ODDS:** Total the combat strength of attacking units involved in a specific attack and compare it to the total combat strength of defending units in the hex(es) under attack. State the comparison as a ratio of the attacker’s strength to the defender’s strength. Round off the ratio in favor of the defender to conform to the ratios found on the Combat Results Table (CRT). *Example: 26:9 becomes 2:1.*

**4. ROLL THE DIE:** The attacker rolls the die. The number rolled on the die is cross-indexed with the appropriate column on the CRT, taking into account any die roll modifiers and column shifts. The result of the combat is applied immediately before any other combat is conducted.

**5. APPLY RESULTS:** The defender always applies his result first, followed by the attacker.

**MAXIMUM ODDS AND MINIMUM ODDS:** Odds greater than 6-1 are treated as 6-1. Odds less than 1-6 are treated as 1-6.

### 8.3 Terrain Effects on Combat

Defender Occupies:

- CLEAR: None.
- ESCARPMENT: One column shift to the left on the CRT.
- WADI: As per other terrain in the hex.
- BIR EL SIWEYAT: The CV of all defending non-armor and non-artillery units in a Bir El Siweyat hex is doubled.

### 8.4 Combat Results

**DE:** All defending units are eliminated. Attacker may advance 1 hex into defender’s hex or hexes, if vacant.

**AE:** All attacking units are eliminated. Defender may advance 1 hex into attacker’s hex or hexes, if vacant.

**SF:** Standfast! If the defending force consisted of more than 1 unit, the defending player must eliminate 1 unit of his choice. No retreat occurs. If the defense amounted to only 1 unit, there is no effect. No elimination or retreat occurs, and the combat is considered unresolved.

**LA:** Lightning Attack! The attacker chooses to (1) eliminate an attacking unit with the highest CV (DF for Matildas) and defender retreats 2 hexes or (2) attacker re-rolls the combat at odds one column less on the CRT. Attacking units may advance 1 hex into defender’s hex or hexes, if vacant, and 1 additional hex, if possible. The additional hex advance may be chosen only if the attacker selected option (1).

**BR:** Battle Raging! The battle is currently unresolved. Both attacker and defender are locked in combat and must remain in place. The attacker must refight the original battle in his next

turn. Both players, in their respective turns, may reinforce the battle. The defender is not obligated to counterattack providing, should he reinforce the battle, it is only within the originally fought hex or hexes. If any attacking unit from the original battle is attacked, defending units are attacked again in the same game-turn (see Examples of Play), or the original hex or hexes are vacated by the defending unit(s), the original battle is considered broken and need not be fought again. Should the defender choose to counterattack, all adjacent enemy units must be fought. Armor, artillery, HQ, and supply units are free to ignore BR results.

**DR:** Defender must retreat 2 hexes in any direction. Attacker may advance 1 hex into defender's hex or hexes, if vacant. The defending player chooses the retreat route.

**AR:** Attacker must retreat 2 hexes in any direction. Defender may advance 1 hex into attacker's hex or hexes, if vacant. The attacking player chooses the retreat route.

### **8.5 Panzer Attrition**

High-speed attacks and relatively long distances traveled caused a not insignificant number of German Panthers to break down from mechanical problems and combat damage throughout Operation Skorpion. Any German attack that includes an armor unit (excluding Ranged Direct Return Fire) where an unmodified die roll of 6 occurs, results in attrition to one attacking armor unit with the highest CV. For a unit with a CV greater than 7: On a die roll of 1 or 2, two CV points are subtracted. On a die roll of 3 or 4, three CV points are subtracted. On a die roll of 5 or 6, four CV points are subtracted. For a unit with a CV of 7 or less: On a die roll of 1 or 2, one CV point is subtracted. On a die roll of 3 or 4, two CV points are subtracted. On a die roll of 5 or 6, three CV points are subtracted. These deductions are to be immediately recorded on the German Order of Battle and Strength Card.

Die Roll			
CV	1-2	3-4	5-6
0 - 7	-1CV	-2CV	-3CV
8+	-2CV	-3CV	-4CV

### **8.6 Retreat After Combat**

Players retreat their own units in any direction with the following restrictions:

- Retreating units may not enter a hex occupied by or in the ZOC of an enemy unit, regardless of the presence of a friendly unit or friendly ZOC.
- Units with no retreat route other than off a map edge may

do so without penalty. For purposes of retreat, Zones of Control extend off the map edge, so that retreating units forced to exit the map may be eliminated.

- A retreating unit may not enter a hex or cross a hexside it would otherwise be prohibited from entering or crossing during normal movement.

### **8.7 Advance After Combat**

If the defending or attacking player is required to retreat or is eliminated due to combat and leaves a vacant hex or hexes, the opposing player may advance 1 hex with any number of units involved in combat into the vacated hex or hexes providing stacking restrictions are maintained. Artillery units may not advance after combat. Advancing after combat must be performed immediately before resolving another combat.

Units may ignore enemy ZOCs when advancing after combat.

Any non-artillery unit with a CV of 0 may advance after combat only with an accompanying attacking unit having a CV greater than 0, to include supply units and HQs.

An advancing unit may not enter a hex or cross a hex side it would otherwise be prohibited from entering or crossing during normal movement.

### **8.8 Declaring Losses**

Any unit lost in combat due to a CRT loss or a retreat loss must reveal its CV to the opposing player.

## **9.0 RANGED DIRECT FIRE COMBAT**

**9.1** Ranged direct fire is conducted during a player's combat phase against a non-adjacent enemy unit. Armor units firing armor piercing rounds, Panzer III H, Matildas, and direct fire artillery may fire at any one enemy unit located in a clear terrain hex or a clear terrain road hex within range that has a clear line of sight (cf. 17.2). The range of the Panzer III H and Matilda is 5 hexes. Line of sight is blocked by any friendly or enemy unit or any non-clear terrain other than a clear terrain wadi hex or clear terrain road hex. Calculating the line of sight and range is exclusive of the hex occupied by the firing armor or artillery unit. All firing armor and artillery units targeting a hex must combine their CV into one total CV. The target hex may be ranged direct fire attacked only once per game-turn. Only one unit in the target hex may be fired on and must be the following priority: armor, artillery, any unit other than supply or HQ, supply, HQ. A hex being targeted for ranged direct fire combat may not be attacked in any other fashion in the same combat phase, which means no friendly unit may be adjacent to the targeted hex. All ranged direct fire combat is conducted prior to any combat involving units adjacent to one another.

**9.2** Panzer II (4-6) and German Recon (armored car) may also conduct ranged direct fire combat, but not against any hex containing a Matilda. The range of these units is 6 hexes. Target priorities remain the same, less Matilda.

**9.3** Ranged direct fire combat is conducted using the Direct Fire CRT. Combat value equates to direct fire factors. Tally up the total number of direct fire factors and roll the die, referencing the appropriate column on the CRT. The result is the number of CVs deducted from the target unit, with "S" signifying Suppression (cf. 17.4). Die Roll Modifiers are located on the table. Any excess factors are considered lost. In the case of Matildas, deductions are taken from the defense factor, rather than the attack factor.

*Examples: A full strength 3-9-3 Matilda receives 2 hits. Its CV becomes 3-7-3. Should it receive 3 hits, its CV becomes 2-6-3. A 1-3-3 Matilda receives 2 hits. Its CV becomes 1-1-3. Had it received 3 hits, the unit would have a CV of 0-0-3. Had it received 4 hits, the unit would have been eliminated.*

*To bring the 1-1-3 Matilda back to full strength (3-9-3) would require the allocation of 4 APs from a friendly supply unit, keeping in mind that each Matilda AF costs 2 APs.*

**9.4** If ranged direct fire results in the suppression (cf. 17.4) of a unit already suppressed, that unit is considered eliminated. Suppression markers are removed at the beginning of the enemy indirect fire artillery phase.

## 10.0 RANGED RETURN DIRECT FIRE COMBAT

**10.1** Ranged return direct fire combat is conducted prior to deducting any CV losses resulting from ranged direct fire combat. Any one targeted armor unit or one targeted direct fire artillery unit in a hex may return fire at any one unit in range that fired at it during ranged direct fire combat. Any non-targeted direct fire artillery may add its CV to any return direct fire combat providing the target unit is in range and within its line of sight. Ranged return direct fire combat is done immediately after each individual ranged direct fire combat before moving on to any further ranged direct fire combat. Direct fire artillery units may fire ranged return direct fire only once per game-turn.

**10.2** The German Recon unit and Panzer IIs may also conduct ranged return direct fire combat, but only against direct fire artillery units not occupying a hex containing a Matilda.

**10.3** Ranged return direct fire combat is conducted on the Direct Fire CRT as per rule 9.3.

## 11.0 COMBINED ARMS

If attacking units in a hex contain both an armor unit with a CV of 1 or more and a non-HQ unit with a CV of 1 or more, the attacker receives a Die Roll Modifier (DRM) of +1 on the CRT. Every adjoining hex designated to participate in the attack must contain this combination of units to qualify for the DRM, and every unit in the designated hex or hexes must participate in the same combat.

If defending units in a hex contain both an armor unit with a CV of 1 or more and a non-HQ unit with a CV of 1 or more, the defender receives a Die Roll Modifier (DRM) of -1 on the CRT. Every adjoining hex designated to participate in the defense must contain this combination of units to qualify for the DRM, and every unit in the designated hex or hexes must participate in the same combat.

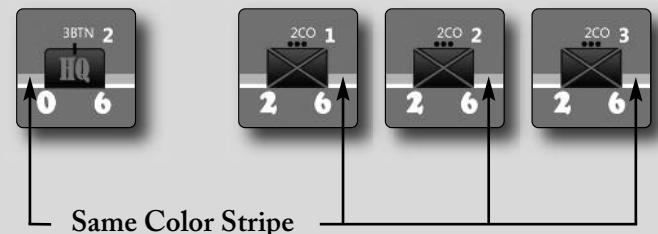
A defender's combined arms bonus will cancel an attacker's combined arms bonus.

## 12.0 HQ COORDINATED COMBAT

If attacking units include a parent HQ, the attacker receives a +1 DRM on the CRT. If the defending units include a parent HQ, the defender receives a -1 DRM on the CRT. HQ units attacking or defending alone do not realize a DRM benefit. For the German player, a parent HQ is defined as an HQ possessing the same colored stripe as any other friendly unit in the same combat. For the British player, a parent HQ is defined as an HQ possessing the same platoon number as any other friendly platoon in the same combat. The British Battalion HQ (22 GDS/3) and Independent HQ Company (SUPPORT) may extend a DRM to any other British unit in play.

A defender's HQ coordinated combat bonus will cancel an attacker's HQ coordinated combat bonus.

*Example: The British 2 HQ Company of the 22 Guards Brigade, 3rd Battalion may provide a DRM to any of the three platoons of the 2nd rifle company.*



## 13.0 SUPPORT UNITS IN OPEN DESERT

Carrier, mortar, signal, engineer, and HQ units defending alone in open desert (non-road, non-wadi) clear terrain incur a +1 DRM on the CRT.



## 14.0 ROAD OVERRUN

Units in a road hex attacking adjacent enemy units in an adjoining road hex may, if combat results allow, immediately advance 1 or 2 hexes along the road after combat, ignoring enemy ZOCs, and may attack a second time any adjacent enemy units in an adjoining road hex. Second combat must be against an adjoining road hex, and must be performed before proceeding to any other combat. Any other adjacent enemy units not located in the adjoining road hex are ignored for purposes of Road Overrun second combat. Second combat may only occur if an advance after combat resulted from the first road overrun combat. A second advance after combat may occur, but may be only 1 hex into the enemy vacated, road hex. No further Road Overrun combat may take place. In the initial combat, attacking units may attack from a combination of hexes and terrain, but only the attacking units in the road hex may advance along the road and attack a second time. If Road Overrun second combat occurs against an over stacked hex, only those units fought in first combat may defend. All other units in the hex suffer the same combat result as the defending units. Should Road Overrun second combat fail to remove all enemy units adjacent to a friendly unit or units, the friendly unit or units, which have not yet been involved in combat, are obligated to attack (see Examples of Play). This is a further exception to the rule that no defending unit may be attacked more than once in a combat phase and no target hex may be attacked more than once in a combat phase.

## 15.0 ENGINEERS

An attacking engineer unit negates the defense bonus provided by escarpment and Bir El Siweiyat hexes. A defending engineer unit will cancel out the benefit of the attacking engineer unit, i.e., terrain defense bonuses are retained.



## 16.0 RECONNAISSANCE PROBE

Gruppe von Wechmar's armored car company has special reconnaissance capability. During the German Player's movement phase, the unit may move adjacent to a hex occupied by enemy units, at which time the British Player must declare the CV of each unit in the hex. Once the declaration has been made, the armored car company must move 1 or 2 hexes away and remain outside of enemy ZOCs. It may not participate in the upcoming combat phase of the immediate game-turn. The entire reconnaissance probe move may not exceed the unit's MA.



## 17.0 ARTILLERY

### 17.1 In General

Artillery consists of two types: direct fire and indirect fire. Direct fire units include German Panzerabwehrkanone (PAK 50mm), British 2 Pounders, and British Bofors (40mm). Indirect fire includes German 105 mm Howitzers and British 25 Pounders. The range, in hexes, is located in the upper left side of each artillery unit. The range of German 105 mm artillery and British 25 Pounder artillery is unlimited. The range of 3 noted on the British 25 Pounder artillery applies to Optional Rule 20.0. Artillery in an enemy ZOC may not fire in the artillery fire phase, but participates in the standard combat phase using its assigned CV. Artillery located in different hexes may fire at the same target hex providing all rules of range and sighting are satisfied.

### 17.2 Line of Sight

For all game purposes, line of sight is determined by a straight edge from center of hex to center of hex. Line of sight is determined at the beginning of the fire phase.

### 17.3 Direct Fire Artillery

Direct fire artillery conducts direct fire as per 9.0 RANGED DIRECT FIRE COMBAT. Direct fire artillery in an enemy ZOC at the start of the combat phase is obligated to standard combat using its CV and to resolve combat on the CRT.

### 17.4 Indirect Fire Artillery

Indirect fire artillery not adjacent to an enemy unit may fire at any hex in range that has a clear line of sight from any friendly unit (spotter), and the target hex is not adjacent to a unit friendly to the firing artillery unit. Line of sight is blocked by any friendly or enemy unit or any non-clear terrain other than a clear terrain wadi hex or clear terrain road hex. Calculating the line of sight is exclusive of the hex occupied by the spotter unit, artillery unit, and target hex. Each unit in the target hex is subject to indirect fire artillery. For each unit in the target hex, select the column on the Indirect Fire Artillery Table based on the number of attack factors firing. If the targeted unit is occupying terrain other than clear terrain or a clear terrain road hex, shift one

column to the left on the table. If the targeted unit is armor, shift one column to the left on the table. Shifts are cumulative. If the number of shifts results in less than the left most column, the indirect fire is considered to have no effect. The result of successful indirect artillery fire is Suppressed (S), which means the affected unit may move only one hex, may not enter an enemy ZOC, may not exchange APs in the Record Keeping Phase, and may not attack in the next game-turn. Place suppression markers on the affected units. Suppression markers are removed at the beginning of the enemy indirect fire artillery phase. Indirect fire artillery units in an enemy ZOC at the start of the combat phase are obligated to conduct standard combat using their CV and to resolve combat on the CRT.

### 17.4a CV Loss From Indirect Fire Artillery

Whenever 15 or more indirect fire artillery factors fire at a non-adjacent target unit in a clear terrain hex or clear terrain road hex and roll a 5 or 6 on the die, a CV loss to the defending unit, in addition to suppression, will result. Refer to the Indirect Fire CV Loss Table and roll the die, taking into account any die roll modifier. Any CV loss to a supply unit applies to APs possessed by the supply unit. A supply unit with an AP value of 0 equates to no effect.

### 17.5 Panzer IV E HE Fire

Panzer IV E's fire HE rounds. Range is 3 hexes. The requirements for firing ranged HE rounds are the same as 17.4 Indirect Fire Artillery, except that the line of sight can be determined only by the firing unit. Results are resolved on the Indirect Fire Artillery Table. For each unit in the target hex, select the column on the table based on the number of armor attack factors firing. If the targeted unit is occupying terrain other than clear terrain or a clear terrain road hex, shift one column to the left on the table. If the targeted unit is an armor unit, shift one column to the left on the table. Shifts are cumulative. If the number of shifts results in less than the left most column, the indirect fire is considered to have no effect. Panzer IV E's fire ranged fire in the German Combat Phase. Ranged fire is conducted at 2 or 3 hexes from a target hex not in an enemy ZOC. Panzer IV E units in an enemy ZOC at the start of the German Combat Phase are obligated to conduct standard combat using their CV and to resolve combat on the CRT.

### 17.5a CV Loss From Panzer IV E HE Fire

Whenever 15 or more Panzer IV E HE factors fire at a non-adjacent target unit in a clear terrain hex or clear terrain road hex and roll a 5 or 6 on the die a CV loss to the defending unit, in addition to suppression, may result. Refer to the Indirect Fire CV Loss Table and roll the die, taking into account any die roll modifier. In the case of Matildas, deductions are taken from the defense factor, rather than the attack factor (cf. 9.3). Any CV loss to a supply unit applies to APs possessed by the supply unit. A supply unit with an AP value of 0 equates to no effect.

## 18.0 SUPPLY UNITS

### 18.1 In General

The purpose of supply units is to absorb and distribute APs as described in the record keeping phase of the sequence of play.

### 18.2 Supply Unit Characteristics

Supply units do not count against stacking restrictions, but only 2 supply unit may occupy a hex at any time. Although supply units do not possess a CV, they do have a ZOC in the hex occupied and can stop enemy movement. Suppressed supply units may not exchange APs during the Record Keeping Phase. If attacked alone during the enemy combat phase, they are automatically eliminated. All APs for that supply unit are lost and the enemy may occupy the vacated hex.

## 19.0 VICTORY CONDITIONS

### 19.1 In General

For the German Player to win either victory level he must accomplish the following by the end of the German Combat Phase of the final game-turn. Anything less is a British Player victory.

**1. Operational Victory:** Those hexes of the Halfaya Pass containing a red "V" must be free of British units. They may be in a British ZOC. Capture Bir El Siweiyat AND clear the road of British units extending from the first northern clear terrain road hex adjacent to Bir El Siweiyat (hex 2020) directly to the first hex of the Halfaya Pass containing a red "V." Any of the road or Bir El Siweiyat hexes may be in a British ZOC.

**2. Tactical Victory:** Those hexes of the Halfaya Pass containing a red "V" must be free of British units. They may be in a British ZOC. Either capture Bir El Siweiyat OR clear the road of British units extending from the first northern clear terrain road hex adjacent to Bir El Siweiyat (hex 2020) directly to the first hex of the Halfaya Pass containing a red "V." Any of the road or Bir El Siweiyat hexes may be in a British ZOC.

### 19.2 Automatic Victory

If, by the end of the German Player turn of game-turn 8, he captures Bir El Siweiyat AND clears the road of British units extending from the first northern clear terrain road hex adjacent to Bir El Siweiyat (hex 2020) directly to and including road hex 4007 an immediate automatic victory is declared and the game ends. Any of the road or Bir El Siweiyat hexes may be in a British ZOC. It is assumed that, with adequate supply, if the British southern flank is not adequately defended, German forces would be able to push east quickly, swing north to the coast, and cut off the British units defending the pass.

## 20.0 OPTIONAL RULE

British 25 Pounder Artillery was capable of firing armor piercing (AP) ammunition. Whether or not any British 25 Pounders were utilized in this role during Operation Skorpion remains uncertain. Thomas Jentz, author of "Tank Combat in North Africa, The Opening Rounds," writes in a narrative that the German "left flank was struck by very encumbering direct fire from artillery and anti-tank guns at Halfaya Pass." However, the use of the British 25 Pounder in a direct fire anti-tank role cannot be confirmed in after action reports. Should the players desire to use this optional rule, consider the effective direct fire range to be 3 hexes. Utilize all aspects of 9.0 RANGED DIRECT FIRE COMBAT, keeping in mind that British 25 Pounders may only fire once per game-turn, either as indirect fire or direct fire artillery.



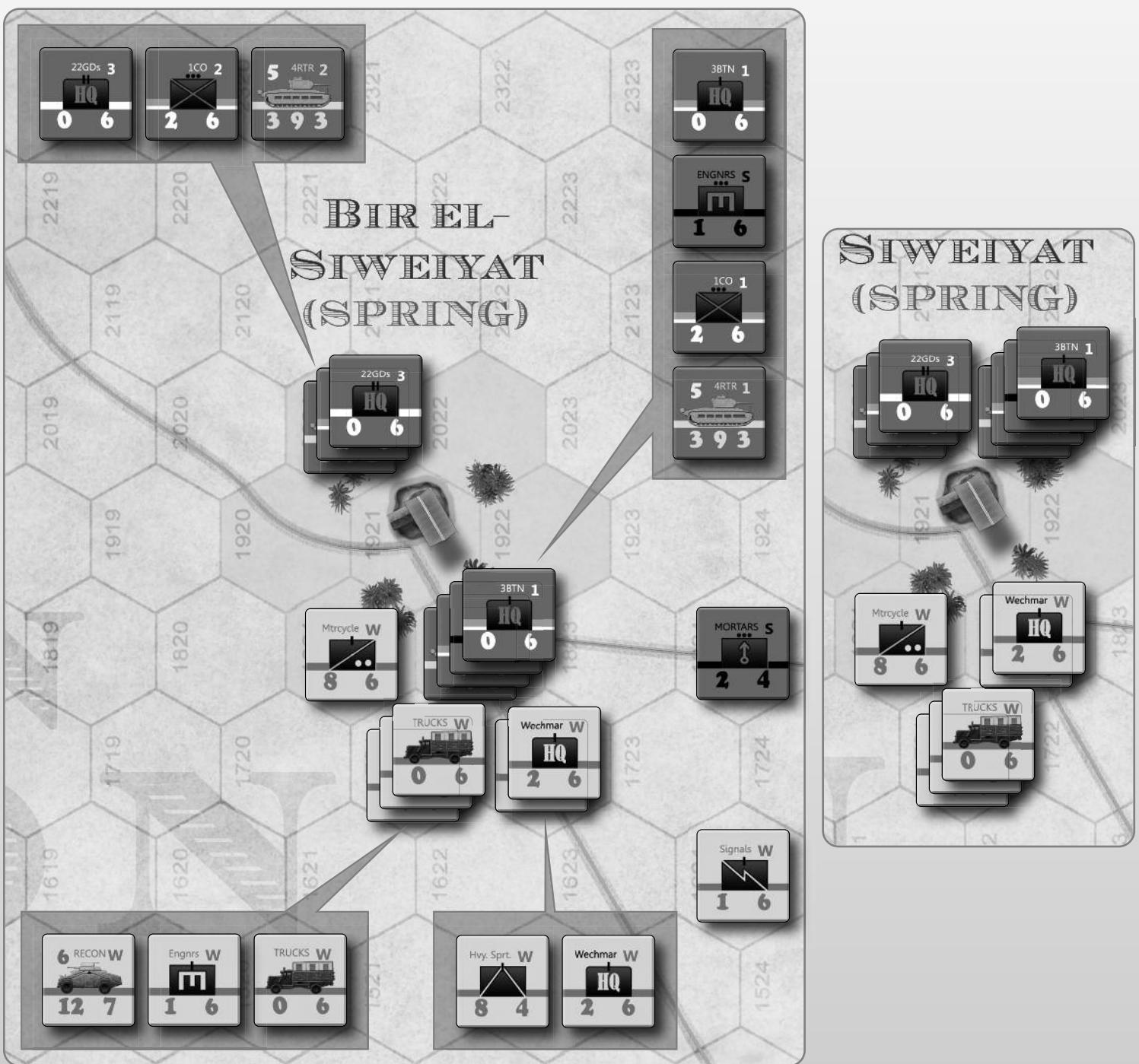
## 21.0 EXAMPLES OF PLAY

There are 3 examples of play depicted on pages 13 through 17.



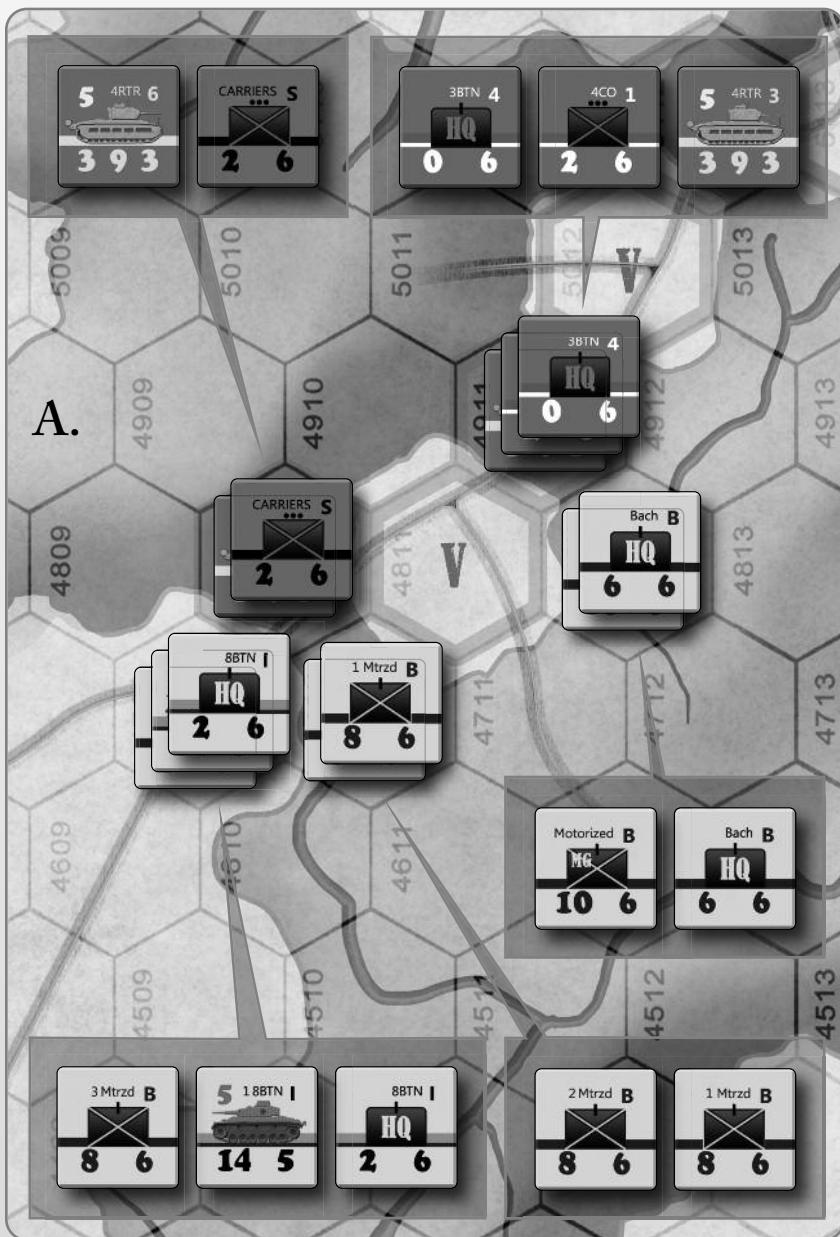
## Example of Play 1:

It is the German Player's game-turn 6. Gruppe von Wechmar is making an initial attack on British forces defending Bir El Siweiyat. Each side possesses a parent HQ, which cancels all potential HQ Coordinated Combat DRMs. The defending engineer unit cancels out the benefit of the attacking engineer unit, which means the CV of all defending non-armor and non-artillery units in Bir El Siweiyat is doubled. The British player realizes a Combined Arms DRM of -1 on the CRT. Both side's Order of Battle and Strength Cards reveal all combat units to be at full strength. Combat odds are 2-1 (31 to 15) with a -1 DRM. The German player rolls a 5 on the die and subtracts 1 for the DRM. The result of 4 reveals a DR on the CRT. The British Player must retreat all defending units 2 hexes. He chooses to retreat to hex 2022, and remain in Bir El Siweiyat. The German Player chooses to advance Gruppe von Wechmar's Heavy Support Company and HQ Company into the vacated hex. Note that the German Player may NOT exercise a Road Overrun, because the road net is not considered contiguous through Bir El Siweiyat.

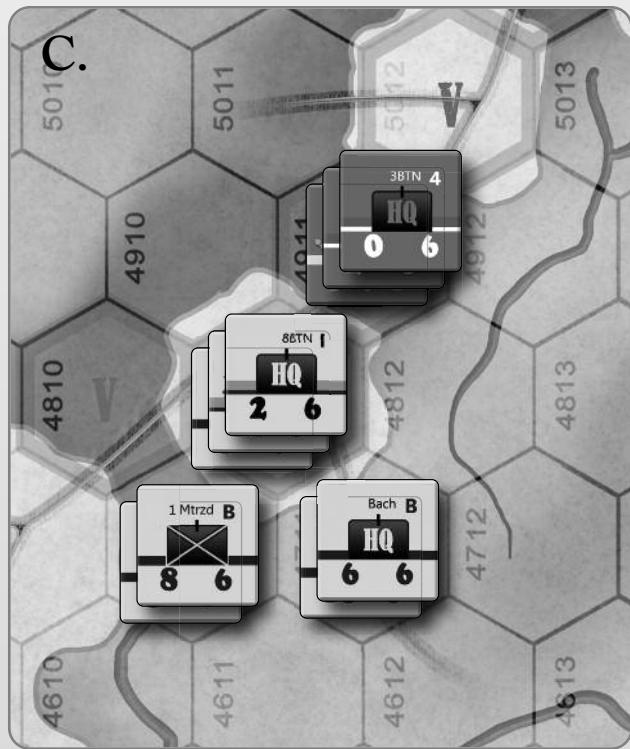


## Example of Play 2:

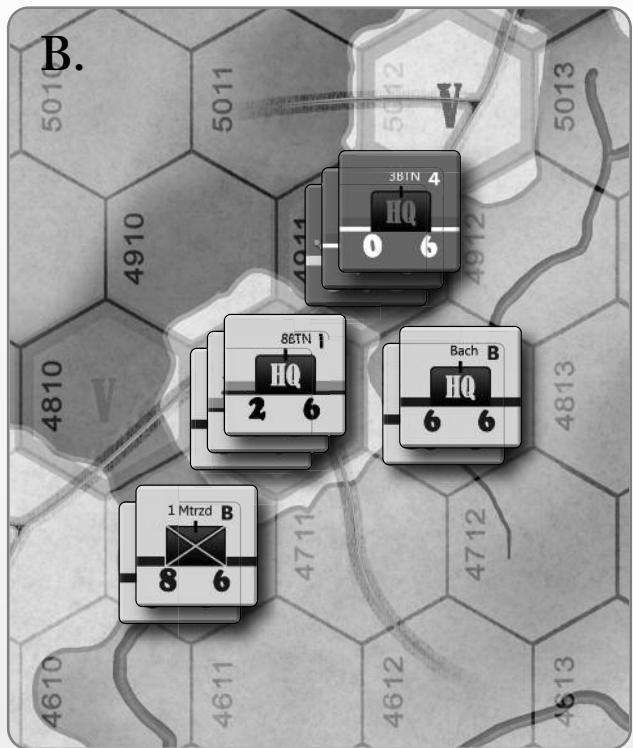
**A.** It is the German Combat Phase, and he has chosen to attack British units defending the Halfaya Pass. The attack vs British units in hex 4810 is conducted first. Order of Battle and Strength Cards reveal the German Panzer Company to be at half strength (CV 7) and the Matilda unit to have a DF of 6 (CV 2-6), while all other units are at full strength. The British Combined Arms DRM cancels the German HQ Coordinated Combat DRM. Combat odds are shifted one column to the left on the CRT for defending in an escarpment hex. Combat Odds are 4-1 (33 to 8) shifted to 3-1. The German Player rolls a 5 on the die, which is a LA (Lightning Attack!) on the CRT. The German Player is reluctant to lose a full strength Motorized Infantry Company, and chooses to re-roll the combat at odds one column less on the CRT. He once again rolls the die, this time on the 2-1 column. A die roll of 3 results in a DR. Since there is no available retreat route due to blocking terrain, the defending British units are eliminated and removed from the map. German units located on the road choose to exercise a Road Overrun, while the remaining German units advance into the vacated hex.



**C.** Combat odds are 4-1 -1 DRM (16 to 4) with a 1 column shift left to 3-1 and a -1 DRM. The German Player rolls a 1 on the die and subtracts 1 for the DRM. The result of 0 reveals an AR on the CRT. The German Player retreats his two units to hex 4711. The British Player, in his turn, must withdraw or counterattack the German units in hex 4811.



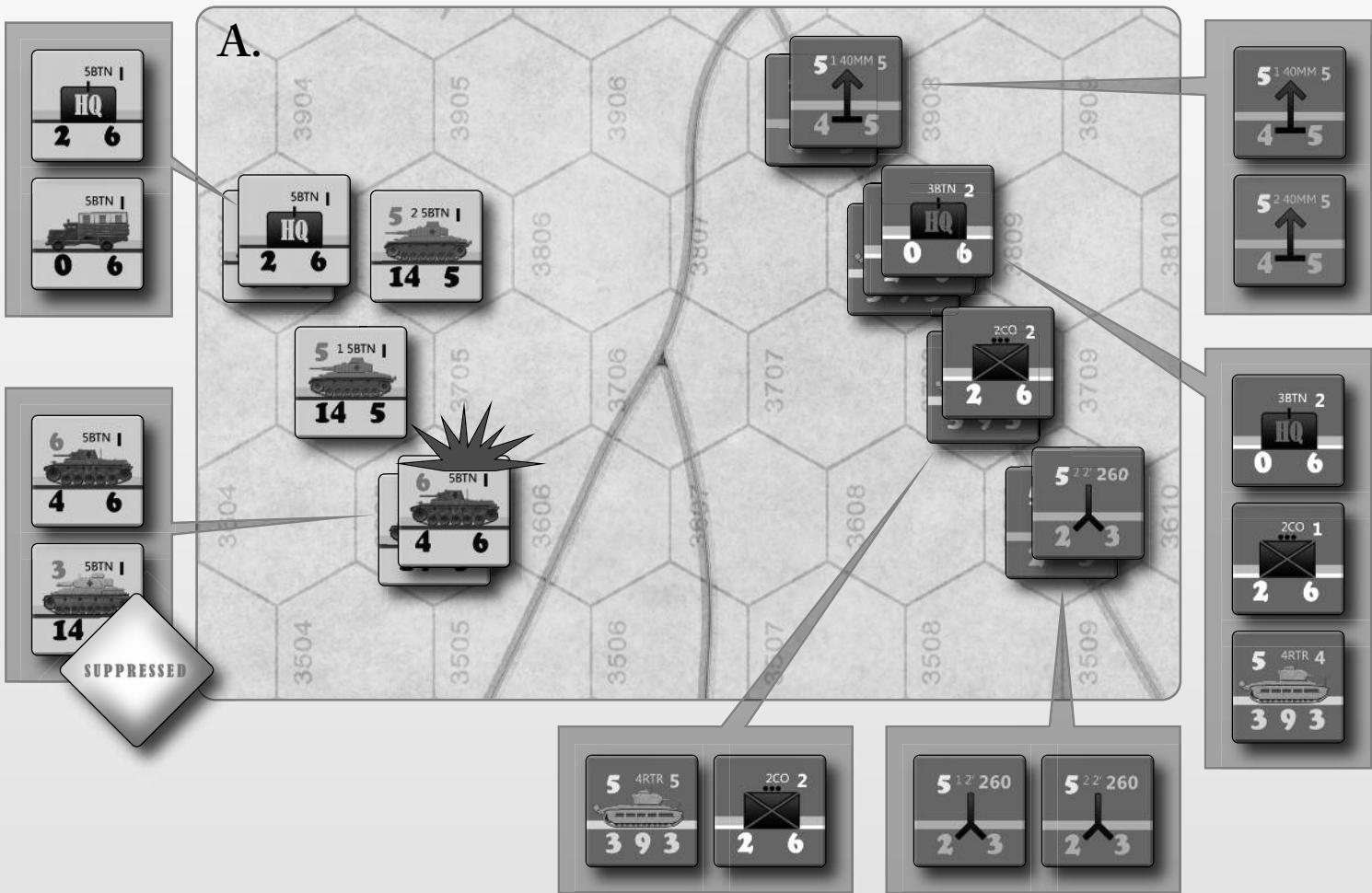
**B.** German units conducting the Road Overrun advance 2 hexes adjacent to the British units defending in hex 4911. The British Order of Battle and Strength Card reveals the infantry company to have a CV of 1 and the Matilda unit to have a DF of 3 (CV 1-3). Each side possesses a Combined Arms DRM and a HQ Coordinated Combat DRM, which cancel each other. Combat odds are shifted one column to the left on the CRT for defending in an escarpment hex. Combat odds are 4-1 (17 to 4) shifted to 3-1. The German Player rolls a 3 on the die, which is a BR (Battle Raging!). Road Overrun second combat has failed to remove the defending British units adjacent to German units in hex 4812. Therefore, these German units are obligated to attack the British units which defended against the Road Overrun second combat, effectively cancelling the previous BR combat result. The German Order of Battle and Strength Card reveals the attacking German units in hex 4812 to be at full strength. Each side possesses a HQ Coordinated Combat, while the defending British units will have a -1 Combined Arms DRM.



Panzer III mired in sand.

### Example of Play 3:

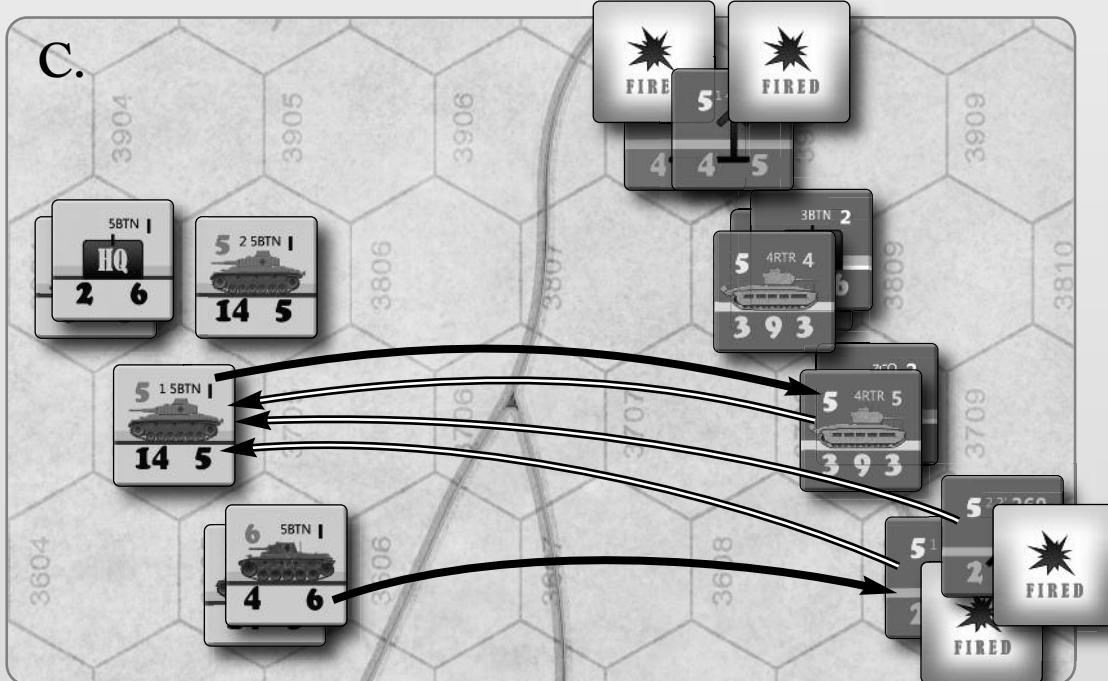
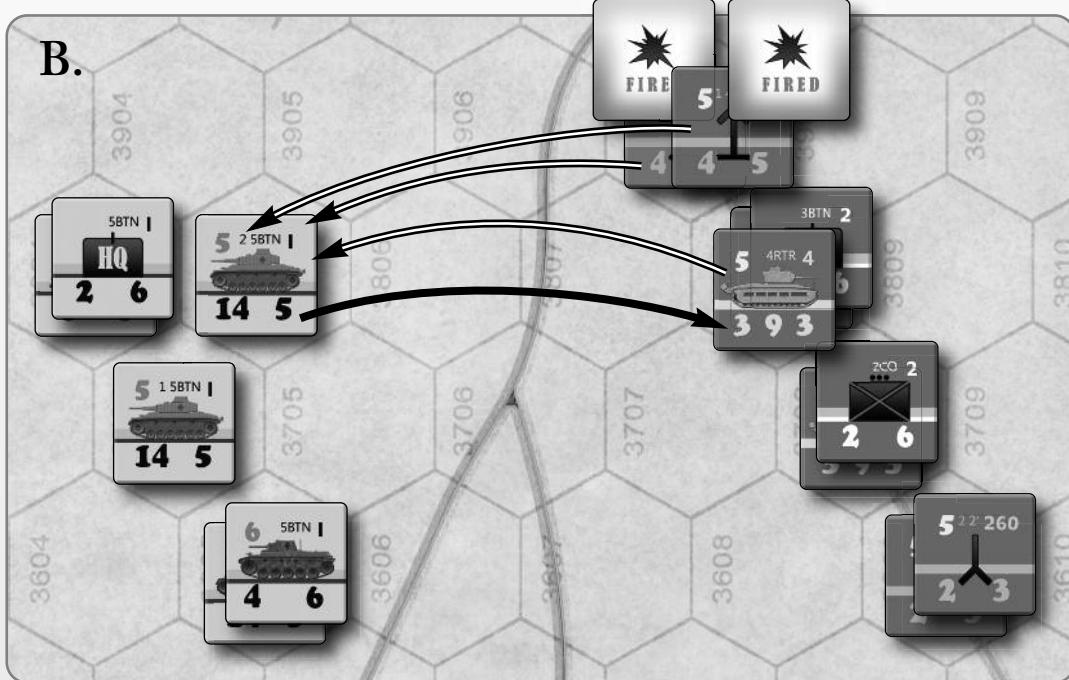
A. It is the end of the German Movement Phase of game-turn 6. The German Player has chosen to leave a panzer battalion off the map, with the intent of entering the map 6 hexes north of hex 3801 in the following game-turn, while a second panzer battalion enters this turn in the SW, moving across the desert to assist Gruppe von Wechmar in the capture of Bir El Siweiyat. For purposes of this example of play, all German and British units are at full strength. The British Player fires 15 indirect fire artillery factors (off map) against the Panzer IV and Panzer II units located in hex 3605, which are easily spotted. (Note that the German I/5 HQ and supply truck cannot be fired upon because they are out of sight.) The first die roll vs the Panzer II is a 1, resulting in no effect. While the second die roll vs the Panzer IV is a 3, resulting in S, which means the Panzer IV Company is suppressed. The German Player places a "Suppressed" utility marker on this unit.



C. The German Player repeats the process, firing his 1, I/5 Panzer III Company vs hex 3708 , but this time rolls a 6 on the die. In addition to the loss of 3 from the DF of the Matilda unit, the panzer unit suffers attrition. The German Player rolls a 4 on the >7 column of the German Armor Attrition Table, resulting in a CV loss of 3 to his panzer unit. The British Player returns fire with his targeted Matilda (at full strength) and two 2 Pounder Artillery units. He rolls a 4, without any DRM, on the 7 column of the Direct Fire Table, resulting in a further CV loss of 2 to the panzer unit. The British Player places "Fired" utility markers on his 2 Pounder Artillery units. Finally, the German Player fires his Panzer II unit at one of the 2 Pounder Artillery units, being careful to confirm there are no accompanying Matildas in the hex. Firing on the 4 column of the Direct Fire CRT, the German Player rolls a 3 on the die and subtracts 2 for the DRM. The result of 1 reveals no loss to the British unit. Since all British direct fire artillery within range already fired, no Ranged Return Direct Fire Combat takes place vs the Panzer II Platoon.

## OPERATION SKORPION - ROMMEL'S FIRST STRIKE

**B.** The German Player now chooses to conduct Ranged Direct Fire Combat. He chooses to fire the 2, I/5 Panzer III Company vs hex 3808, taking careful note that priority requires the Matilda to be the target with a -3 DRM. Firing on the 10+ column of the Direct Fire CRT, the German Player rolls a 4 on the die and subtracts 3 for the DRM. The result of 1 requires the British Player to remove 2 from the DF of his Matilda unit. Before moving on to the next, potential Ranged Direct Fire Combat, the British Player chooses to fire Ranged Return Direct Fire Combat with his just targeted Matilda (at full strength) and his two Bofor units. Firing on the 10+ column of the Direct Fire CRT, without any DRM, the British Player rolls a 5 on the die, resulting in a 4 CV loss to the panzer unit. The British Player places "Fired" utility markers on his Bofor units.



## 22.0 DESIGNER'S NOTES

The stubborn British defense of Tobruk had placed them in temporary possession of the initiative in North Africa. Political pressure resulted in the British forces launching an attack to secure the border of Libya and Egypt, in addition to relieving the Tobruk garrison. The attack was named "Operation Brevity." Although largely a failure for the Allies, it did leave them in possession of Halfaya Pass. Rommel realized this critical terrain had to be recaptured in order to stabilize the front. In somewhat of an overkill, he sent three panzer battalions to lead the attack. This offensive, "Operation Skorpion" was brief and violent. Although the Germans succeeded in their objectives, it left the German forces critically short of fuel and in even worse shape for the upcoming British attack, "Operation Battleaxe."

In designing the game Operation Skorpion (OS), my goal was to create a game that could be learned in a relatively short period of time and played within a three to four hour time span. In addition, I wanted to author a manageable "fog of war" system that could possibly be utilized in future game designs. The OS fog of war system holds some similarity to the original SPI Panzergruppe Guderian, but goes a step further by allowing combat units to modify their combat values throughout the course of the game. Due to the relatively brief number of game-turns and intensity of game play, not all aspects of the OS design can be realized in every game played, but the potential is always present. From a designer's perspective, I find that most satisfactory. I must take this opportunity to tip my hat to the renown TOBRUK game designer, Harold E. Hock, who served as my reference for the tactical aspects of OS.

In my opinion, a solid wargame design must have a well researched Order of Battle (OOB), Order of Appearance (OOA), and game map. I called upon my friend, Dr. Henry Lowood, Curator, History of Science & Technology Collections, Stanford University, to assist. Through interlibrary loans, and examination of both primary and secondary sources, a highly, historically accurate foundation for the game was created. I have taken the liberty of including a not all inclusive bibliography of sources used by Dr. Lowood. The game map was created by placing a hex overlay on a 1:100,000 scale Italian map dated 1936 and Egyptian survey map dated 1938, and published by the US War Office, 1941. Wadis were depicted in blue on the original map. It was decided to retain this appearance to clearly delineate them from roads, but they should not be misinterpreted as rivers or streams. Early on, we referenced Bir El Siweiyat as a "town." This is probably a misnomer, as it was the site of a well or what might be perceived as an oasis. The important point is that Bir El Siweiyat had tactical significance. Both sides used it as a rallying point, the Germans eventually building an outpost at the location. For these reasons we felt it appropriate to give non-armor and non-artillery units at this location a combat benefit reflecting a determined defense and to include the site in the victory conditions.

Due to the scale of the game, it was not possible to limit the rules

to a strictly operational level design. However, I did not want to enter wholly the Squad Leader arena of tactical game play. The net result was what I consider to be a "quasi tactical/operational" design, which allows for relatively quick game moves and a modest number of combat die rolls without compromising the historical flavor of the battle.

I believe my biggest challenge was that of matching game play with the historical timeline. The battle was brief, lasting only about 6.5 hours once battle was joined. How many game-turns of play were needed for the Germans to potentially achieve their goals? At first glance, the scale of the game map would indicate the armor, specifically the German armor, should be able to travel further than allowed. However, there were a number of factors that slowed them down, to include: soft sand encountered, limited fuel reserves, fuel conservation considerations, and combat, itself. This, coupled with where the German forces actually showed up at specific times during the course of the battle, resulted in designating each game-turn to amount to approximately 30 minutes once the panzers made their appearance. As a final note on this aspect of the design, gamers should be aware that a significant number of the German forces ultimately showed up at Halfaya Pass with nearly dry fuel tanks. It truly was a "near run thing."

The German OOB is considerably stronger than the British OOB, a reflection of the Germans fighting primarily with companies vs British platoons. Simply put, this was the historical presentation. However, do not be misled by this scenario. On occasion, the British are capable of "stinging" the German juggernaut. For example, should the British Player concentrate his forces at Halfaya Pass and Bir El Siweiyat, while ignoring the road net, he is quite capable of literally wiping out Gruppe von Wechmar. An insightful German Player may recognize such British positioning and instead choose to combine Wechmar with the forces of a panzer battalion, and use this stronger force for a drive on Bir El Siweiyat. The best units in the British OOB for counterattack potential happen to be their artillery. At least 15 APs should be allocated to indirect fire artillery, while the Bofors should be built up to full strength.

A not insignificant number of panzer losses incurred during OS were not the result of direct combat, but rather due to mechanical breakdown. The Panzer Attrition rule balances these losses between the two rather well. One conundrum encountered was the British tactic of occupying a large number of road hexes before and within the Halfaya Pass in the hope of slowing down the German advance and using up precious game-turns. This could have been an insurmountable position for the German Player, and, in effect, a game breaker. This was resolved by the Road Overrun rule, an elegant approach to resolving this particular situation. The German Player is encouraged to use this rule as often as the opportunity presents itself.

A successful game design requires playtesting. I believe that OS was adequately playtested by a reliable cadre of gamers personally known to me. Fellow game designer, Bruno Sinigaglio, and I

spent a solid week of playtesting at ConsimWorld Expo 2012. Significant rules modifications resulted. Playtester, Roger Eastep, was particularly helpful with his insightful suggestions. In addition, the contributions of my developer, Steve Lapierre, proved to be invaluable. Without his assistance, OS would not have been possible. The vast majority of games played during the development of OS resulted in games decided on the last or next-to-the-last game-turn. With that, I felt I had attained success. I hope you, the gamer, find OS as much fun to play as it was for me to design.

## 23.0 HISTORICAL TIMELINE

### *Operation Skorpion 26-27 May 1941. Preparations and Results*

"Three assault groups moved into position in front of the [Halfaya] Pass on the evening of the 26th May, and our attack opened on the morning of the 27th. The British were soon driven out and fled in panic to the east, leaving considerable booty and material of all kinds in our hands. Our losses were comparatively insignificant."

— Erwin Rommel, *The Rommel Papers*, ed. B. H. Liddell Hart (1953)

The Allied Operation Brevity captured the German positions at Halfaya Pass on 15 May 1941. The original German plan for the attack that would lead to its retaking was described as a "Scheinangriff auf breiter front" (a diversionary attack on a broad front). It called for clearing the rocky heights of the Haggag el Aqaba escarpment. The recapture of the Halfaya Pass was described as a possibility, if the opportunity presented itself. Much of this was dependent on the British reaction to the mobile force movements of the 26th, with the German command determined to avoid "ernstere Kämpfe" (serious battles) and mindful of the need to conserve fuel. German intelligence accurately expected Halfaya Pass to be defended by an infantry battalion supported by several artillery batteries and a tank company, but was concerned by the possibility of significant Allied reinforcements reaching the battlefield, including a tank battalion and motorized artillery batteries. As it turned out, these reinforcements turned out to be a desert mirage.

Here is an approximate timeline of the events leading up to and through the battle at Halfaya Pass, based on the reconstructed Skorpion reports of the DAK:

**17 May 1941.** German air intelligence reported that British forces have pulled back to Sidi Barrani. The area all around el Hamra appeared to be free of Allied forces. The reconnaissance elements of Gruppe Herff had moved forward into contact with Allied forces, some reinforcements had been received, and re-supply had been commenced with the goal of making German forces in the area *angriffsbereit* (assault ready).

Gruppe Herff reported its intentions for the 18th: "Increased reconnaissance ... If the enemy pushes past the reconnaissance

line [Omar – Suleiman – Halfaya Pass], he will be attacked and destroyed. Height 206 will be built up into a strongpoint."

The Afrika Korps HQ replied to Herff's report, "Our reports say that the enemy forces have pulled back en masse, only reconnaissance troops possibly supported by tanks will be found on the heights east of the border. It is at minimum necessary to cut off the rise to Halfaya Pass. Do it."

**18 May.** Gruppe Herff announced its intentions of an operation to take back Halfaya Pass on 19 May.

"Der Befehlshaber" (Rommel) declared himself in agreement with this plan and ordered that the Pass be closed by artillery fire.

Radio intercepts reported that English batteries at the Pass were describing their situation as critical. "Apparently their artillery guns cannot be moved and are not satisfactorily protected." Air reconnaissance reported however that English forces were still occupying the Pass.

**14.20.** Herff's planned reconnaissance operation towards Halfaya Pass could not be carried out due to heavy English artillery fire. Contact with the enemy around Sidi Suleiman pushed British forces south, but by nightfall the Panzer forces returned to Point 206.

"Large-scale attacks towards distant objectives were cancelled due to the gasoline situation."

**19 May.** Reconnaissance revealed that Hagiag [sic] el Aqaba was occupied in strength by British forces.

**20 May.** "The positions at Halfaya Pass are being strengthened by the enemy."

"The enemy is sending out reconnaissance forces consisting of armored cars and tanks, so that our own reconnaissance troops have been unable to get through to the area. Enemy artillery fire consistently disrupts work on our *Stützpunkte* (bases), so that in the future we will only be able to do most of the work at night."

**21 May.** "In the morning hours an attack by enemy tanks (including some Mark II) south of Capuzzo against Height 206 was beaten off by tanks from Gruppe Herff. Our own tank attack against 207 (6 km. south of 206) resulted in the destruction of an enemy tank observation tower with three towers, as well as a few anti-tank guns."

**22 May.** "Morning reconnaissance from 9.45 to 10.15 revealed several enemy groups along the Hagiag [sic] el Agaba [sic] with a total of 200 vehicles north of Habata and a strong gathering of more than 300 vehicles at Sebil, near Der el Hamra, about 100 vehicles."

"On the Sollum Front two Panzer Mark III [sic, presumably Mk II] tanks were shot up as Gruppe Herff repulsed an enemy tank attack."

**23 May.** Gruppe Herff received the order to prepare an operation to retake Halfaya Pass.

**24 May.** The plan was completed under the name "Unternehmen Skorpion." It will take place on 26 May.

**25 May.** Reconnaissance revealed only relatively small groups of Allied forces, none at all on the road from Buq Buq to Sollum, and no apparent observation posts. "Overall impression: the enemy has pulled back the mass of his troops from the escarpment."

"Radio intercepts on the evening of the 25th revealed ... Halfaya Pass is occupied by a PAK-FLAK battalion with heavy artillery and few riflemen as before, however now reduced by a reconnaissance squadron.

The group that was stationed at Sidi Suleiman is no longer there.

The group that was south of Sidi Suleiman has pulled back to the area of el Hamra, with a tank battalion to the north of el Hamra, with 2-3 artillery battalions, an infantry battalion, and an armored car battalion ..."

**26 May.** The battle led off with an attack by British tanks supported by infantry and artillery against Gruppe Herff's forces not far from point 206. A German Panzer III was destroyed.

The arrival of Gruppe Bach apparently played a role in stiffening the defense and the German forces went over to the attack. Gruppe Herff advanced on a broad front until Midnight to positions west and southwest of the Pass, with its left wing at Height 194. It prepared for a renewed attack in the early morning of the 27th.

Wechmar's Aufklärungs-Abteilung reached a position at el Hamra and was tasked with heading northwest to find contact with the enemy.

**27 May.** The renewed attack opened up at 4.30am. By 7.40am Gruppe Herff reported "Halfaya Pass is in our hands."

In his report, Von Herff stated that, "the attack on the morning of the 27th succeeded with 3 columns.

The enemy withdrew quickly, leaving behind much materiel after a quick, intense battle; they practically fled to the east. Expect our follow-up. Pursuit called off at Alam el Kidad due to lack of fuel. Defensive positions are being prepared at Halfaya Pass. Reconnaissance is in contact with the enemy.

Thus far we have captured nine guns, four of which are functional, also seven Mark IIs, of which we can use three, two other tanks, several anti-tank guns and much other equipment. We have about forty prisoners. [We have inflicted] many more casualties with pursuit fire from the high ground at the edge of the escarpment.

Our own losses are light: One panzer III."

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