

ROMMEL'S LAST STAND

Italy 1943-44, What If?



Game Design: Ty Bomba
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NOTE: These rules use the following color system: **Red** for critical points such as errata and exceptions, **Blue** for example of play. **Green** for designer's comments.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In General

Rommel's Last Stand: Italy 1943-44, What If? (RLS) is an low-complexity, two-player wargame simulating the possible events that could have unfolded during the first 30 days of this alternative history World War II campaign. A complete game generally takes two to three hours to complete, and it is suitable for solitaire play.

1.2 Scale

Each hex on the map equals 5 miles (8 km) from side to opposite side. Each full turn represents two weeks to two months, depending on the time of year. Every ground unit represents a regiment, brigade or division of about 2,500 to 12,000 men and/or 50 to 350 armored fighting vehicles.

1.3 Allied Forces

Allied forces are organized into two groups: those of the United States (US) and those of the United Kingdom (UK). All units printed with a green background color are referred to as "US units," and they share common strictures based on that identification. All units printed with a tan background color are referred to as "UK units," and they share common strictures based on that identification. Of course, within both those groups there are units from nations other than the USA and Britain. For our purposes, however, it is only the US/UK distinction that has significance in regard to game play. If a rule is said to apply to "Allied units," it applies to all US and all UK units.

1.4 Italian-Yugoslavian Border

Historically, this border was drawn in 1919, and then redrawn in 1941, 1944 and 1945. The one on the game map is from 1919, since it represented the internationally recognized boundary between those two nations. In the game, both nations' territories are potentially in play; however, the German player receives additional reinforcements if the Allied player sends forces into Yugoslavia. See 8.5 for details.

1.5 Compass Directions & Map Edges

Compass directions are shown by the arrow the printed in the corner of the mapsheet. For play purposes, the "north map edge" is made up of all hexes from 4205 to 4244, inclusive. The "west map edge" is made up of all hexes from 4000 to 2100, inclusive. The "east map edge" is made up of all hexes from 4244 to 2943, inclusive. The "south map edge" is made up of all hexes from 1009 to 1035, inclusive.

1.6 1943 Turns & 1944 Turns

If a rule is said to be in effect only during "1943 turns," that means it is applied during Turns 1, 2, 3 and 4. If a rule is said to be in effect only during "1944 turns," that means it is applied during Turns 5, 6, 7, 8.

2.0 Components

2.1 In General

The components to a complete game of RLS include these rules, the mapsheet and the sheet of 99 die-cut counters.

2.2 Game Map

The game map shows the militarily significant terrain in the northern part of Italy as it existed in 1943-44 when portrayed at this scale. The hexagonal ("hex") grid printed over the map regulates the placement and movement of units. A unit is considered to be in only one hex at any one time. Each hex contains natural and/or manmade features that affect movement and combat. Each hex on the map has a unique, four-digit identification number printed within it. They're provided to help you find referenced places more quickly. [For example, the city of Venice is in hex 3426.](#) Those numbers also allow you to record unit positions if a match has to be interrupted and taken down before it can be completed.

2.3 Unit Counters

The orders of battle (also referred to as "units" and "unit-counters") represent formations that were historically available for this campaign. That is, the orders of battle are derived from what was historically deployed in Italy by the Germans and Allies during this period of the actual war. Additional counters are provided as informational markers and memory aids. After reading through these rules, punch out the counters. Trimming the "dog ears" from their corners with a fingernail clipper will facilitate their easy handling and stacking during play.

2.4 Sample Combat Unit



This unit is the US 1st Armored Division. It has an "attack factor" of "7" and a "defense factor" of "6."

Also note the backs of the units contain no numeric or text data. When the back of a unit is showing upward, it is said to be "disrupted." See sections 5.0, 10.0 and 11.0 for details on that.

2.5 Unit Types

The units in the game all belong to one or another of the following types. When these distinctions are important in regard to specific movement, combat and replacement capabilities, the details are explained at the most pertinent places in the rules below.

Note the distinction between mechanized ("mech") and non-mechanized ("non-mech") units is only important for German units. All Allied units are mechanized.

German Mechanized Units

- Panzer
- Heavy Panzer
- Panzer Grenadier

German Non-Mechanized Units

- Infantry
- Mountain Infantry
- Paratroops*

Allied Units

- Armor
- Infantry
- Mountain Infantry
- Airborne*
- Special Forces

***Design Note.** Neither side's airborne/paratroop units have any airdrop capabilities, and they are to be treated as regular infantry.

2.6 Nationalities & Sides

On the Allied side, a unit's national group, is shown by its color scheme. On the German side, color is used to designate the difference between mech and non-mech units.

Allied Color Schemes

US units: white on green

UK units: white on tan

German Color Schemes

Mechanized units: white on black

Non-mechanized units: black on gray

2.7 Historic Identifications & Organizational Sizes

Individual units are further identified by numbers and/or letter abbreviations. The abbreviations refer to the historical name (for those that had them) or other designators.

German Abbreviations

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Do – Doehla | Cr – Croatian |
| J – Jaeger | R – Reserve |

UK Abbreviations

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| C – Canadian | Cdo – Commando |
| Cp – Carpathian | G – Guards |
| In – Indian | It – Italian |
| K – Kresowa | Nm – Nembo |
| NZ – New Zealand | P – Polish |
| SA – South African | |

US Abbreviations

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| A – Algerian | Col – Colonial |
| F – Free French | M – Moroccan |
| MT – Moroccan Tabor | Rgr – Ranger |
| SSF – Special Services Force | |

Organizational Sizes

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| XX – Division | X – Brigade |
| III – Regiment | II – Battalion |

2.8 Attack Factors (AF) & Defense Factors (DF)

These numbers are measures of each unit's ability to engage enemy formations in offensive and defensive combat. When referred to together, they are called combat factors (CF). Their use is explained in section 11.0.

Also note that the AF and DF of both sides' division-sized units are always shown as separate numbers, even in those few cases where they are identical. All the non-divisional (brigades, regiments, battalions) have only one combined CF in order to make them easier to differentiate from divisions.

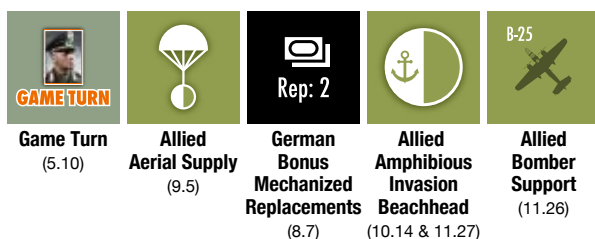
2.9 Movement Factors (MF)

Unlike most wargames, the units' movement factors (MF) are not printed on the counters. Those MF are shown in the table below, which is also printed on the mapsheet for easy reference during play.

| Movement Factors Table | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----|
| German Turns 1-6 | Mechanized | 16 |
| | Non-Mechanized | 8 |
| German Turns 7-8 | Mechanized | 12 |
| | Non-Mechanized | 6 |
| All Allied Units All Turns | | 16 |

2.10 Markers

The counter-mix includes the following markers. Their uses are explained in appropriate sections of the rules.



3.0 Set Up

3.1 Preparing to Play

After deciding who will command which side, both players should sort the units of their own side according to the following instructions. The "German player" commands all German units. The "Allied player" commands all US and UK units.

The German player should sit off the north side of the map facing south, with the Allied player sitting opposite him off the map's south side and facing north. Set up the game using the sequence given below.

Note that all units of both sides are setup on the map, or entered during the movement phases, in their undisrupted state; that is, with the sides showing their numeric and textual data facing up.

3.2 Allied Set-Up

No Allied units begin play on the map. Instead, the Allied player should place the Turn marker and all US units with a "1" in their upper-left corners into any handy large-mouth opaque container, such as a coffee mug or cereal bowl. He should then place all UK units with a "1" in their upper-left corners into a second container of the same type. Those two containers are referred to as unit "pools."

He should next place all other Allied units into the boxes on the Turn Record Track that correspond with the numbers printed on those units' upper-left corner. *For example, the US 1st Armor Division, with a "3" in its upper-left corner, should be put into the "Turn 3 / November 1943" box of that track.* Last, he should set aside within easy reach the Aerial Supply, Amphibious Invasion Beachhead and Bomber Support markers.

3.3 German Set-Up

The German player should first put all his units with an "1" in their upper-left corners into a large-mouth opaque container, such as a cereal bowl or coffee mug (and separate from the two containers used for Allied units). That container is called a unit "pool."

He should next put all his units with numbers other than "1" in their upper-left corners into the correspondingly numbered boxes on the Turn Track.

He should place the seven units with a "Y" (for "Yugoslavia") in their upper-left corners, along with the two Mechanized Bonus Replacement makers, in a pile off to the side of the map within easy reach.

Finally, he should place all his units with four-digit hex-grid numbers in their upper-left corners directly in those correspondingly numbered hexes on the map.

That completes the game's set up.

4.0 How To Win

4.1 In General

The Allied player is on the offensive, trying to win by advancing fast enough to cause a major disruption to the historic time flow of events.

4.2 Allied Victory During 1943 Turns

If Phase 9 of Turn 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 ends with Venice or Milan or Trieste, or any one or more of the four German supply source

hexes, occupied by an Allied unit or stack, that game ends at that time in an Allied victory.

4.3 Allied Victory During 1944 Turns

If Phase 9 of Turn 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 ends with Venice or Trieste, or any one or more of the four German supply source hexes occupied by an Allied unit or stack, that game ends at that time in an Allied victory.

4.4 German 1943 Sudden Death Victory

If any movement or combat phase of a 1943 turn ends with the German player having gained control of the containing the Allied Amphibious Invasion Beachhead marker, the game ends in a German victory at that time.

4.5 German 1944 Sudden Death Victory

If any movement or combat phase of a 1944 turn ends with one or more German units in any hex(es) on the south map edge, that game ends in a German victory at that time.

4.6 German End-Game Victory

If Phase 9 of Turn 8 ends without the Allied player having achieved a victory, the game ends at that time in a German victory.

5.0 Sequence of Play

5.1 In General

Every turn of RLS is divided into nine segments, called "steps" or "phases." Each full sequence of nine phases, as shown below in outline, makes up one "turn," of which there are a maximum of 8 in an entire match. Every action taken by a player must be carried out during the appropriate part of the sequence outlined below. Once a player has finished a particular phase or a specific activity within a phase, he may not go back to perform some forgotten action or redo a poorly executed one unless his opponent graciously permits it.

5.2 Turn Sequence

The turn sequence is presented below in outline. The rest of the rules are organized, as much as possible, to present their particulars in the order they're first encountered as you progress through each turn. Note the sequence of every turn is mostly the same, but with one important variable. That is, Phases IV and VI may change places with each other from turn to turn. See 5.6 below for details on that.

Turn Sequence

1. Allied Reinforcement, Replacement & Withdrawal Phase
2. German Reinforcement, Replacement & Withdrawal Phase
3. Movement-Combat Sequence Declaration Phase
4. Alternating Actions Movement or Combat Phase
5. Movement or Combat Recovery Phase
6. Alternating Actions Combat or Movement Phase

7. Combat or Movement Recovery Phase
8. German Supply Check Phase
9. Allied Supply Check Phase

5.3 Allied Reinforcement & Replacement Phases

During these phases, the Allied player may bring onto the map newly arriving units and reclaim into play units that had been previously eliminated in combat. See section 8.0 for details. This phase is skipped on Turn 1.

5.4 German Reinforcement Phases

During these phases, the German player may bring onto the map newly arriving units and reclaim into play units that had been previously eliminated in combat. See section 8.0 for details. This phase is skipped on Turn 1.

5.5 Movement & Combat Sequence Determination Phases

In each of these phases, excluding that of Turn 1, the Allied player openly declares whether that turn's movement phase or combat phase will be taken first. On Turn 1 the sequence is always the movement phase followed by the combat phase.

5.6 Alternating Actions Movement or Combat Phases

Always starting with the Allied player (**exception: see 5.12**), the two players alternate either launching one attack or moving one unit, depending on whether the present phase is movement or combat. Individual attacks may have more than one attacking unit in them, but moves are always made one unit at a time. The unit(s) committed to those "actions" are, upon their completion, flipped over to show their disrupted sides. If a player does not actually want to make an attack or a move when it is his time to do so, he must flip one unit to its disrupted side, just as if it had moved or launched an attack: no "passing" is allowed.

5.7 Movement or Combat Recovery Phases

A movement or combat phase continues as described above until both players are out of undisrupted units or both agree they want to end the phase. If one player runs out of undisrupted units before the other, the player with remaining undisrupted units may go ahead and complete whatever actions he desires to perform with them within normal strictures, but now uninterrupted by having to pause to allow the opposing player to take an action. When a combat or movement phase is ended, both players should cooperatively turn over all disrupted units on the map so their undisrupted sides are and showing.

5.8 German Supply Check Phases

In each of these phases, both players should cooperatively look over the map to find if there are any German units out of supply. Each such unit is immediately removed to the dead pile. See section 9.0 for more details.

5.9 Allied Supply Check Phases

In each of these phases, both players should cooperatively look over the map to find if there are any Allied units out of supply. Each such unit is immediately removed to the dead pile. See section 9.0 for more details.

5.10 Ending & Starting Turns

Each time a Allied Supply Check Phase has been completed, advance the Turn marker one box on the Turn Track printed on the mapsheet and start a new turn with Phase I.

5.11 Unique Turn 1 Rules & Procedures

On Turn 1, Phases 1 and 2 and 3 are skipped, and play begins with Phase 4, which is automatically a movement phase. Further, neither the Allied nor German units that enter play via the south map edge on Turn 1 (see below) may use column movement that turn. (The German units that begin the game set up on the map may do so under the normal rules for that kind of moment; see 1013.) All units of both sides are automatically in supply all during Phases 4, 5, 6 and 7, but Phases 8 and 9 are then taken normally.

The Allied units that were put into two separate pools during set up constitute all of that player's available units for Turn 1. See rule 3.2. Each time he is up to move a unit during Turn 1, the Allied player blindly draws one unit from the pool of his choice, enters it onto the map via a hex on the south edge and then completes its move from there. "Blindly" means without first looking to see what unit he will draw.

US units are entered via hexes 1009 to 1020, inclusive. UK units are entered via hexes 2021 to 1035, inclusive. All normal movement costs are paid, including those of the entry hex. Also note that, once on the map, the US and UK units do not have to stay within their entry zones.

The German units that were put into a pool during set up constitute only a part of that side's available units for Turn 1. The German units set up on the map constitute the other part. See rule 3.3. Each time he is up to move a unit during this turn, the German player may either move an undisrupted unit that is already on the map, or he may blindly draw a unit from his off-map pool, enter it via a hex on the south edge and then complete its move from there. "Blindly" means without first looking to see what unit he will draw.

German off-map units are entered via any hexes from 1009 to 1035, inclusive. German units that began already set up on the map move normally from their set up hexes.

Within the strictures given above, an EZOC being projected into a hex that is empty of an actual enemy unit or stack does not prevent you entering your off-map units via that hex.

Finally, if the movement phase is declared to be finished and there are one or more units of either or both sides still off-

map, those units are placed into the dead pile.

5.12 Rommel Effect



German players may declare the "Rommel Effect" only once during the game at the beginning of step 4 or step 6. With this declaration, the Germans, not the Allies, will activate his units first during that phase. After that, the two players alternate either launching one attack or moving one unit, depending on whether the present phase is movement or combat. After using the Rommel effect, flip the turn marker as a reminder.

6.0 Stacking & Fog of War

6.1 In General

Stacking is the word used to describe the piling of more than one friendly unit in the same hex at the same time. Your units may never stack with enemy units.

6.2 Stacking & Movement

Stacking rules are in effect at all times throughout the turn but, except for the strictures provided in this rules section, there is no limit on the number of units that may enter and pass through a given hex over the course of a phase as long as the stacking limit is met in each hex instant by instant. Units should always be moved individually, never moved as stacks.

6.3 Stacking Limits

For both sides there may generally be up to two divisions in any hex at any one time. Each non-divisional unit generally counts as half-a-division for stacking, but there may never be more than two non-divisional units in the same hex.

The exception to the general stacking limit given above is that any hex containing the Allied Amphibious Invasion Beachhead marker has double the normal stacking limit. That is, up to four Allied divisions may stack in that hex.

6.4 Allied Inter-Army Stacking

In general, US and UK units may not stack together; however, each turn the Allied player may declare any one unit from either army to function as if it were in the other army all that turn.

6.5 Free Stacking Markers

All the markers illustrated in rule 2.10 have no stacking value and may be added freely to any stacks within the strictures governing each type's particular uses.

6.6 Over-Stacking

If any hexes are found to be over-stacked or improperly stacked at the end of any unit's mov, or at the end of a battle, the violating player should select the minimum number of units necessary from that hex in order to bring it back

into compliance with the stacking rules. Those units are immediately placed into the dead pile as if they had been lost in combat or due to being out of supply.

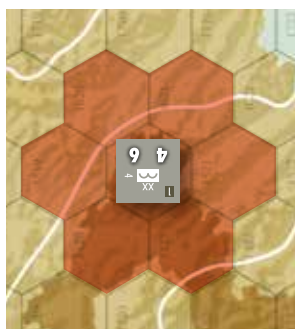
6.7 Fog of War

Neither player may look beneath the top unit in any enemy stack unless he's declared an attack against it and it's time to resolve that battle. Similarly, neither player is allowed to examine his opponent's dead pile or reinforcement pools.

7.0 Zones of Control & Hex Control

7.1 In General

Zone of control (ZOC) rules are an abstraction of a unit's ability to project its combat power, through tactical fire and maneuver into areas immediately around its location. Do not confuse the zone of control rules with other rules concerning the control of hexes. (See 7.7 below.)



Every ground unit on the map exerts a ZOC into the six hexes adjacent to its hex. Your units' ZOC stop enemy movement (see 7.5) and block supply paths (see section 9.0).

7.2 No-ZOC Markers

None of the markers illustrated in rule 2.10 exert ZOC; however, the presence of one or more such markers in a hex does not inhibit ZOC-projecting units in that hex from projecting their ZOC.

7.3 ZOC Limits

Units never exert ZOC across all-sea or all-lake hexsides. No other kind of terrain or rivers have any effect on ZOC projection. Also note out of supply units still project ZOC.

There is no qualitative difference between a hex containing a ZOC projected there by one unit and a hex containing ZOC projected there by several units. A stack of units exerts the same ZOC as a single unit. The ZOC of units of both sides may be simultaneously projected into the same hex or hexes.

7.4 Enemy Zones of Control (EZOC) & Supply

A friendly ground unit or stack in a hex containing an EZOC negates that EZOC for supply tracing purposes. See section 9.0.

7.5 EZOC & Movement

A moving unit must end its move for that phase when it first enters an EZOC. A unit that begins its move already in an EZOC may leave that hex, but only by entering a hex that

does not contain an EZOC. Further, it must stop for that phase as soon as it does enter a hex with an EZOC. Units may not move directly from EZOC to EZOC. Friendly units do not negate EZOC for movement purposes.

7.6 EZOC & Retreats & Advances After Combat

A friendly unit or stack may not retreat-after-combat into an EZOC and friendly units do not negate EZOC for retreat purposes. Units may retreat out of an EZOC provided the hex they are retreating into contains no EZOC. EZOC have no inhibiting effect on advances-after-combat. See 11.15 and 11.21 for further details.

7.7 Hex Control

A unit may "capture" (take control of) an enemy controlled hex only by moving into that hex. The mere projection of one of your unit's or stack's ZOC into an enemy controlled hex is not sufficient to give you control of that hex. At the start of play the German side controls all hexes on the map. It is not necessary to keep track of the control status of most of the hexes on the map. The only time hex control status is critical is in regard to the victory conditions given above in 4.2 and 4.3.

8.0 Reinforcements, Replacements & Withdrawals

8.1 In General

Reinforcements are units that enter play after play has already begun. Both sides receive reinforcements during the game. Replacements are Allied and German units that are returned to play after having been eliminated in combat. Whenever a reinforcement or replacement unit is placed onto the map, it does so in its undisrupted state and stacking rules are in effect. Within the limits of the other strictures given below, all replacements and reinforcements may be entered onto the map in eligible hexes that contain EZOC.

8.2 Allied Reinforcements

During Phase I of Turns 2 through 8, the Allied player may enter all the newly arriving US and UK reinforcement units he finds in the current turn's box on the Turn Track. He is not required to enter reinforcements simply because they are available; he may hold them off map, from turn to turn, as long as he wants.

Allied reinforcements may enter the map each turn via any one or more of the following: 1) any south map edge hex; 2) any cities on the map then under his control and in regular overland supply; 3) any port-cities* on the map then under his control; 4) the Beachhead marker if it is deployed on the map (see 10.14).

***Design Note.** A city is also a "port city" if it is in a coastal hex. For example, Spezia, in hex 1705, is a port city, while Pisa, in hex 1210, is not a port city.

8.3 Allied Replacements

Whenever a US or UK unit is eliminated, either in offensive or defensive combat or due to having been out of supply, the Allied player should set it aside within easy reach.

During Phase I of Turns 2 through 8, the Allied player may reclaim from the dead pile and return to play any two US units. Additionally, he may also reclaim and one UK division or any two UK brigades.

Any given Allied unit may remain in the dead pile any length of time prior to its reclamation (if ever). Similarly, each Allied unit may potentially go into the dead pile any number of times during a game and still remain eligible for another recall.

Allied replacement units are reentered into play in the same ways, and at the same time, as Allied reinforcement units.

8.4 Regular German Reinforcements

During Phase I of Turns 2 through 8, the German player may enter all newly arriving units of his side that he finds in the current turn's box on the Turn Track. He is not required to enter reinforcements simply because they are available; he may hold them off map, from turn to turn, as long as he wants.

German regular reinforcements may enter the map each turn via any of that side's four supply source hexes (see 9.6) and/or any cities on the map then under German control and in regular overland supply.

8.5 Special German Yugoslavia Garrison Reinforcement

The seven German divisions with a "Y" in their upper-left corners constitute a special group of special reinforcements. They become available during the movement phase of any turn in which an Allied unit enters any hex north or east of the Tagliamento River (4230/4231 to 3731/3832). Once available, the Y divisions enter play, using normal one-at-a-time move actions, via any Yugoslavia map edge hexes from 4236 to 2943, inclusive. They move, fight and replace normally, and they are not required to stay in Yugoslavia. The German player is not required to enter the Y units simply because they have become available, but neither is there any inherent advantage in his delaying or cancelling their entry.

8.6 German Regular Replacements

Whenever a German unit is eliminated, either in offensive or defensive combat or due to having been out of supply, the German player should set it aside within easy reach.

During Phase II of Turns 2 through 8, the German player may reclaim from the dead pile and return to play two units under the following strictures. That is, a mechanized unit or units may only be chosen when there are no non-mechanized units in the dead pile.

German replacement units are reentered into play in the same ways, and at the same time, as German reinforcement units.

8.7 German Bonus Mechanized Replacements



During any two of his replacement steps throughout the game, the German player may expend one of his bonus mechanized steps to reclaim an eliminated mechanized unit from the dead pile. He may not make more than one such bonus reclamation per turn, but they may be made in disregard of the stricture given in the second paragraph of 8.5 above.

The bonus mechanized replacements are otherwise reentered into play in the same way as regular German replacements. Two markers have been provided in the counter-mix as memory aids; set each one permanently aside when it is used.

8.8 Withdrawals

Both players are called on to withdraw units from play, as shown in the notes on the Turn Track. To be eligible for withdrawal a unit must either be in the dead pile or in play on the map in overland supply. Arriving reinforcements and replacements do qualify as "being in play." Once a unit is withdrawn – by simply picking it up off the map and returning it to your storage container – it may never be reentered into play under any circumstances.

Note that, on the Allied side, when a "US" or "UK" withdrawal is called for, the units must be of that 'pure' type. That is, none of the subsidiary nationalities – such as Canadians, Poles, French, etc. – may be used to make "US" or "UK" withdrawals even, though, for all other purposes they are considered constituent parts of those armies.

Within the strictures above, and within the categories of units to be withdrawn, as called for on the Turn Track on a case-by-case basis, both players are free to make their own specific unit choices for withdrawals.

If the exact type of unit called for withdrawal is not available, a player must choose from the most similar type that is available. [For example, if no SS panzer division were available for the Turn 2 German withdrawal requirement, that player could substitute a regular army panzer division.](#)

If both players cannot agree on what constitutes the "most similar type" of substitute unit when the exact called-for type is unavailable, resolve that argument via a die roll or coin toss.

9.0 Supply

9.1 In General

On Turns 2 through 8 (see 5.11), all units of both sides require supply to operate at their full movement and offensive combat values. A ground unit is always in one of two general supply

states: “supplied” or “unsupplied.” That last is also referred to as being “out of supply” or “OOS.” Also note the Allies have three ways to “supplied” – regular overland supply, aerial supply, and coastal supply. The Germans only have regular overland supply.

Unsupplied units are penalized in combat and movement. Units that are found to be OOS during their own side’s Supply Check Phases are eliminated on that account at that time. Units may move into hexes where they will, or may, become unsupplied.

9.2 When to Check Supply

Check the supply status of each of your units at the time you want to move it. The status determined at that time lasts all through that move. Check the supply status off all involved attacking and defending units at the start of each individual battle’s resolution.

9.3 Allied Supply Sources

Allied supply comes from five sources: 1) south map edge hexes not occupied by a German unit; 2) Allied controlled port city hexes; 3) the Aerial Supply marker; 4) the Amphibious Invasion Beachhead marker; and 5) coastal hexes.

To be in supply an Allied unit traces a path of contiguous hexes, hex by hex and of any length, from its hex to a supply source hex. The hex path supply lines of the two Allied armies may cross each other any number of times. Supply paths may cross any kind of terrain (including lakes), but may not cross an all-sea hex or hexside. Further, no supply path may pass into a hex occupied by an enemy unit, and no supply path may be traced into a hex containing an EZOC unless there’s also a friendly ground unit in that hex to nullify the EZOC’s effect for that supply trace.

Unlike when tracing to a south map edge hex, Allied supply paths traced to the Allied Amphibious Invasion Beachhead marker may not be longer than 20 hexes. Count out from the marker; do not count the marker’s location hex. See 10.14 for more details on the marker’s entry into play.

9.4 Allied Coastal Supply

Allied units in coastal hexes – of the Adriatic and Ligurian Seas – are always in supply for all purposes while in such hexes.

9.5 Allied Aerial Supply



The Allied player may place this marker into any hex containing Allied units anywhere on the map at any time during every game turn. Once placed, it stays in that hex until the end of the turn or there are no longer any Allied units in its hex, whichever comes first. Its effect is to fully supply the Allied unit or units in its hex. Such units may move away, but they cannot take the marker with them.

Within these strictures the marker is indestructible, but it has no step, stacking or combat values of its own. It does not exert a ZOC, but neither does it inhibit or block the normal projection of ZOC by the Allied unit(s) in its hex or by German units in adjacent hexes.

9.6 German Supply Sources

German supply is traced under the same general strictures as those given above for Allied regular overland supply. The supply source hexes for German units are the four north map edge hexes designated as such: 4217, 4223, 4233 and 4243. Each of those four hexes is potentially capable of supplying, within the general tracing strictures given above, all the German units in play on the map. A supply source hex occupied by an Allied unit(s) may not be traced to, but it comes back into service if that Allied presence is nullified in a timely way (see 4.3 and 4.3).

9.7 Effects of Being OOS

All ground units have their combat factors halved (round up all remainders) while OOS. All OOS units have their movement factors halved. Units found to be OOS at the start of their own side’s Supply Check Phases (Phases 8 and 9 in turn sequence; see 5.2) are eliminated at that time on that account. Such units are available normally for replacement and withdrawal.

10.0 Movement

10.1 In General

Every ground unit in the game has a movement factor (MF) as described in rule 2.9. That factor is the number of “movement points” (MP) available to the unit to use to move across the hex grid during each movement phase. Units move from hex to adjacent hex — no “skipping” of hexes is allowed — paying varied costs to do so depending on the type of unit moving and the terrain in, and water barriers along the sides of, the hexes being entered. Move each unit individually; never move units as stacks.

10.2 Limits

MP may not be accumulated from turn to turn or phase to phase, nor may they be loaned or given from one unit to another. A player may potentially move all, some or none of his units in each of movement phase throughout the game. Units that move aren’t required to expend all their MP before stopping. The movement of each unit must be completed before that of another is begun. A player may only change the position of an already moved unit if his opponent agrees to allow it.

At the end of any move, that just-moved unit is “disrupted.” Show that by flipping it so the side with only its nationality’s flag is showing upward. Disrupted units remain disrupted until

the immediately following recovery phase, at which time both players should cooperatively flip over all the disrupted units on the map to undisrupted status showing their numbered sides.

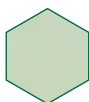
10.3 No Movement Guarantee

There's no guaranteed ability for any unit to be able to move at least one hex during a movement phase. To enter any hex, a moving unit must have sufficient MP available to pay all the involved costs or the move may not be made. Also note moving units may never enter hexes containing enemy units. Disrupted units may not move in any way.

10.4 Terrain & Water Barriers

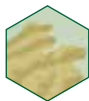
There are 10 types of terrain and hydrographic features on the map. The effects those various features have on the movement of units are described below and summarized on the Terrain Effects Chart (TEC) printed on the mapsheet for quick reference during play. There is always just one type of movement-governing terrain in any given hex.

10.5 Clear Terrain



This is the "base" terrain of the game; it is devoid of any natural features that would enhance defense or slow movement at this level of operations. Each clear hex costs all ground units one MP to enter. For a hex to be considered "clear," it must be entirely devoid of any other terrain.

10.6 Mountains & Summits



Each mountain and hex costs most units two MP to enter, though special forces and mountain infantry pay only one MP. Each summit hex costs most units three MP to enter, though special forces and mountain infantry pay only two MP.



10.7 Marsh



Each marsh hex costs all units four MP to enter.

10.8 All-Lake & All-Sea Hexes & Hexsides



All-lake and all-sea hexes and hexsides are generally unenterable/uncrossable by all units of both sides. **The exception is that, during the movement phase of any one 1944 turn of his choice, the Allied player may move any one of his SF units across such hexes and hexsides as if they were clear terrain. The selected unit is automatically in supply during that whole turn, but it may not end its move in an all-lake or all-sea hex.**

10.9 Passes



The effect of passes is to provide moving units the ability to enter the hexes along their paths at the rate of only one MP per hex. The only restriction is, such movement must be from pass hex to pass

hex and only across a hexside crossed by the pass. Units may enter EZOC using pass movement costs. Units otherwise meeting the qualifications for column movement (see 10.13 below) may use pass movement.

10.10 Rivers



Units must pay an extra MP to move across a river hexside. "Extra" means in addition to the MP cost for moving into the hex being entered. **So, for example, for a unit to move across a river hexside into a marsh hex would cost a total of 5 MP.**

10.11 Italian-Yugoslav Border

Crossing this border carries with it no extra movement costs, but see 8.5.

10.12 Cumulative Costs

The total movement cost for entering any hex is always the sum of all the applicable costs.

10.13 Column Movement

Moving units may double their MF whenever they conduct a move such that they do not start their move, enter anywhere along their movement path, nor end their move in a hex containing an EZOC. The presence of a friendly unit or stack in hex containing an EZOC does not negate that EZOC for purposes of column movement eligibility.

10.14 Allied Amphibious Invasion

During the movement phase of Turn 2 or 3 or 4, the Allied player may choose to launch an amphibious invasion. He is not required to do so.

An amphibious invasion must be the first action the Allied player takes during the movement phase of the chosen turn and the phase sequence he chose that turn must be move/fight.

To launch the invasion movement action, he takes the Beachhead marker, along with any one of his units that he selects from any hex on the map that does not contain any EZOC at that time. He places the marker and the combat unit in any clear coastal hex on the map. That constitutes one movement action and the unit that landed with the marker is immediately disrupted.

As his turn comes around to make other movement actions that same phase, the Allied player may reinforce the Beachhead by sending another similarly selected unit(s) until such time as that hex's special stack limit is reached (see 6.3).

In turns after the one during which the invasion occurs, the Beachhead hex no longer has the ability to receive further reinforcement as described above. Also see 11.26.

11.0 Combat

11.1 In General

Attacking is always voluntary. The mere fact of enemy adjacency doesn't necessitate combat. No attack may have more than one enemy occupied hex as its objective. No unit in a hex being attacked may be withheld or excluded from the defense of that hex. To execute an attack, first designate the hex being attacked along with those of your units that will be participating in that action.

Multi-hex attack deployment is allowed, and not all units in a hex containing one or more friendly units need participate in an attack, only those you designate. That is, though all the units you choose to include in an attack must be immediately adjacent to the chosen objective hex, single attack actions may consist of units attacking from up to all six hexes adjacent to the targeted hex.

The player who is launching the present attack is considered the "attacker," and the other player is considered the "defender," no matter the general situation across the map.

11.2 Repeated Attacks & Defenses & Disruption

Any given hex may potentially be attacked, by one or both players, any number of times in each turn's combat phase; however, each such effort generally constitutes a separate attack.

Undisrupted units that participate in a defense are thereby disrupted and, because of that, they won't themselves be able to attack any time later that same phase. Disrupted units defend normally, no matter how many times they're attacked during a given combat phase.

Similarly, participating in just one attack generally disrupts all the units participating in that attack effort for the rest of that combat phase, but [see 11.22 and 11.23 below for the important exceptions](#).

11.3 Indivisibility of Units

No single attacking unit may have its attack factor divided and applied to more than one battle. Likewise, no defending unit may have part of its defense factor attacked by one or a few attackers while another part is attacked by other units. No defending unit may be withheld from participating in the defense of its hex.

11.4 Attack Sequencing

There's no arbitrary limit on the number of attacks each player may resolve during the combat phases. Neither player need declare all his attacks beforehand, and he may resolve them in any order he wishes, alternating one at a time with the attacks of his opponent, as long as the resolution of one is completed before that of the next is begun.

11.5 Combat Procedure

The attacking player should strive to have several times more attack factors involved in a battle than the defender has defense factors. Such battles are called "high odds" attacks. To resolve such fights, the attacking player begins by calculating his "odds." Do that by adding together the attack factors of all the attacking units involved in the battle; then add up the defense factors of the enemy units defending in the battle. Divide the defender-total into the attacker-total and round down any remainder. [For example, if 27 attack factors attack 7 defense factors, the situation yields an odds ratio of 3:1 \("three to one"\). That is, \$27 \div 7 = 3.71\$, which rounds down to 3. To turn that "3" into a ratio, you must set a "1" next to it on the right. Thus "3" becomes "3:1," which corresponds to a column-heading on the Combat Results Table \(CRT\) printed on the mapsheet.](#)

11.6 Poor Odds Attacks

Battles in which the attacking force has fewer combat factors than the defender are called "poor odds attacks." Procedures in such situations are modified from what's described above in that here you divide the defender's total by the attacker's, round up all remainders, and set the "1" on the left side of that result. [For example, if a force with 5 attack factors is attacking a force with 9 defense factors, it is a poor odds attack. In that case, divide 9 by 5 \(\$9 \div 5 = 1.8\$ \), and round up \(1.8 becomes 2\); then set a "1" on the left of that "2," yielding odds of 1:2 \("one to two"\).](#)

11.7 CRT Odds Limits

Note the column headings on the CRT range from 1:2 to 6:1. Final odds greater than 6:1 automatically get results of "DE." Final odds less than 1:2 automatically get results of "AL1." Always fully calculate a battle's combat odds, including applying all combat strength modifiers and odds column shifts, before referring to the CRT.

11.8 Combat Column Shifts

Combat odds may be shifted by the terrain in, and river hexsides around, the defender's hex as well as by other factors described below. All applicable shifters are cumulative in their effect. That is, in every battle, all applicable shifts are combined to get one final left or right shift. Leftward shifts favor the defender; rightward shifts favor the attacker.

11.9 Clear & Marsh Terrain

Units defending in clear hexes devoid of all other terrain features derive no benefit to their defense for terrain. Similarly, units defending in marsh hexes also receive no benefit on that account.

11.10 Mountains & Summits

Units defending in mountain hexes receive a one-column-left (1L) shift on that account. Units defending in summit hexes receive a two-column-left (2L) shift on that account.

11.11 Cities & 1943 Victory Cities

Units defending in both types of city hexes receive a two-column-left (2L) shift on that account. Further, no concentric attack bonus may ever be applied against defenders in either kind of city, and rolled combat results of DR are mandatorily converted to EX.

11.12 Rivers

If all attacking units in a battle are coming across river hexsides, that defense receives a one-column-left shift on that account.

11.13 Concentric Attack Bonus

In general, if a defending hex is attacked by units in opposite hexes, or by units from three surrounding hexes with one hex between each and the next attacker-occupied hex, or by units from more than three hexes, that attack receives a “concentric attack” rightward one column shift (1R) bonus. See 11.11 above for an exception.

11.14 Final Combat Resolution

After all applicable shifts have been applied, the attacker rolls a die and cross-indexes that result beneath that proper differential column on the CRT to get a “combat result.” For example, a result of “5” rolled for an attack made under the “3:1” column heading gest a result of “EX.” All the combat results are explained in detail below.

11.15 Defender Retreat Result (DR)

Retreats-after-combat are always one hex; and their direction(s) is always determined by the player who owns the force being retreated. A retreat may potentially be made in any direction(s); stacked units need not be retreated together. Units may not be over-stacked at the end of a retreat, and they may not retreat into a hex from which one or more of their attackers was located during the battle; nor may they retreat into a hex or across a hexside they couldn't normally move into or across.

Units blocked from retreating for any reason remain in place and suffer a DL1 result (see below). If a unit retreats into a hex that is attacked later that same phase, the retreated-in unit contributes its defense factor to that new battle just as if it had been in that hex at the start of that phase.

Units may not retreat into an EZOC, and the presence of a friendly unit in such hexes does not work to negate EZOC for retreat purposes.

11.16 Exchange Result (EX)

The combat result of EX means the attacking and defending force must both have one unit (total) eliminated from among them. The owning player chooses the unit to sacrifice on his own side. If an EX leaves a defended hex empty, it's eligible for advance after combat by the victorious attacker.

11.17 Attack Stalled Result (AS)

The combat result of AS (Attack Stalled) means nothing happens to either side's involved force and no post-combat advances or retreat takes place.

11.18 Attacker Lose 1 (AL1)

The attacking player must eliminate any one unit from among his involved attacking force.

11.19 Defender Lose 1 (DL1)

The defending player must eliminate any one unit from among his involved units. If an DL1 leaves a defended hex empty, it is eligible for an advance after combat by the victorious attacker.

11.20 Defender Eliminated Result (DE)

All involved defending units are eliminated.

11.21 Advance-After-Combat

At the end of every attack, whenever the defender's hex is left empty of all units, the victorious attacking units may advance-after-combat into that hex. Stacking limitations must be observed. Such advances are not part of normal movement; they don't cost any MP, but advancing units must still observe normal terrain prohibitions. EZOC do not block advances after combat.

Advancing-after-combat is an option; it's never mandatory; however, the decision to advance must be made immediately after the battle is resolved and before that of another is begun. It's not necessary for advancing attackers to stack-full the newly won hex; the victorious player may send just one or a few units. There's never any defender advance-after-combat; victorious defenders and simply hold in place.

At the end of an advance after combat, disrupt those advanced units unless they are going to immediately take part in a momentum attack (see below).

11.22 Momentum Attacks

During combat phases of all turns, supplied German units may make momentum attacks. Within that stricture, attacking German units that advance-after-combat may attack again immediately (German player's choice), but such “momentum attacks” are always resolved as only one hex of attackers versus one hex of defenders. Further, the option to launch such an attack must be exercised immediately, prior to starting the resolution of any other battle.

Also note there are never any serial momentum attacks. That is, even if a given momentum attack is successful in clearing another defended hex, and that victorious attacking force advances-after-combat again, it would then not be allowed to make yet another momentum attack that same phase.

At the end of a momentum attack – or at the end of a probing and momentum attack sequence (see below) – disrupt the

involved attacking units.

During combat phases of turn 8 (only), Allied units with regular overland supply may make momentum attacks under the same strictures as given above for the Germans during 1943 turns.

11.23 Probing Attacks

During combat phases of all turns, supplied German units may make probing attacks. If an eligible unit or stack is located such that it is immediately adjacent to one or more hexes containing Allied units as well as other hexes that contain only Allied ZOC, the German player may decide to attack into any one of those empty-but-EZOC-containing hexes in a procedure known as a "probing attack."

Probing attacks are conducted using the same general procedures as regular attacks, with the important exceptions **no odds calculation process is undertaken and neither side suffers any losses**. Instead, the German player simply announces the probing attack and then makes an advance-after-combat into the probed hex, where it is disrupted unless it's going to launch an immediate momentum attack.

Momentum attacks may be conducted as probing attacks, and the advance resulting from an initial probing attack may be used to create the opportunity for a momentum attack. Note, though, no unit may ever make more than one probing attack and one momentum attack, in either order, per combat phase.

At the end of a probing attack – or at the end of a momentum and probing attack sequence (see above) – disrupt the involved attacking units.

During combat phases of turn 8 (only), Allied units with regular overland supply may make probing attacks under the same strictures as given above for the Germans during 1943 turns.

11.24 No Allied Inter-Army Attacks

No inter-army attacks are allowed by US and UK; however, keep in mind rule 6.4.

11.25 Allied Naval Gun Support



Whenever US or UK units or stacks defend in, or attack into, any coastal hex, they may receive naval gunfire support. As a first step in the odds calculation process of all such battles, the Allied player open rolls a die for a result of one through six. That's the number of combat factors he may potentially add to the overall attack or defense strength of his involved force. As a further restriction, however, no supported ground force may receive an amount of gunfire factors greater than its own attack or defense strength.

11.26 Allied Bomber Support



The Allied Bomber Support marker is available for use in one Allied attack (by either US or UK forces) during every combat phase of every game turn. To use the marker -- which is only a memory aid and has no intrinsic combat or step or stacking values of its own -- simply place it with the supported attacking force, roll the die, and apply all applicable modifiers as listed beneath the table on the mapsheet.

11.27 Allied Attacks From the Amphibious Invasion Beachhead



Allied units attacking from the Amphibious Invasion Beachhead hex have their attack factors halved on that account (round up all remainders).

Strategy Tips for Playing Rommel's Last Stand

The German player should understand that his forces will never be stronger than they are on Turn 1. Take every opportunity to surround and attack entering Allied forces. Above all else, the German player's goal during Turn 1 is to keep the Allies from penetrating beyond the Apennines (the mountains along the map's south edge).

Above all else, the Allied player's goal for Turn 1 is to get the front north of the Apennines.

The Allied player should understand there is no quicker way to recover momentum in a stalemated game than by launching of the amphibious invasion. The tricky part is how far away from the main front to land. If you go too far, you will allow the German player the chance to counterattack the beachhead and perhaps win the game. Too close to the main front, and you might as well not launch it.

Both players, when planning their attacks, should keep in mind withdrawals can come from their dead piles. So do not be afraid to launch some attacks 1:2 or 1:1 or 2:1, if that kind of risk is what is needed to produce victory.

The German player has to carefully plan his move at the end 1943. When the Allies get probing and momentum attacks in 1944, their combat power is greatly increased. So the German player has to set himself up for the start of 1944 in as compact a line as possible, probably along the Adige River, or even in the Alps in the center and behind the Tagliamento River in the northeast.

Rommel's Strategy for Italy, 1943

By Ty Bomba



This photo shows Rommel and Mussolini in March 1943, when the field marshal went to visit the Italian dictator during a stopover in Rome while on his way to Fuehrer Headquarters. Fatigue and strain are obvious on both men.

On 9 March 1943, Rommel decided to fly from Tunisia to Fuehrer Headquarters to make a final effort to convince him to order the evacuation of German forces from North Africa. (That was something for which he had been arguing since he first began his retreat from Egypt late the year before.) His plane landed in Rome, and on arrival there he went to Mussolini's "Supreme Command" headquarters.

When Rommel got there, he was initially met by Gen. Vittorio Ambrosio. He told Rommel they had learned Hitler was not going to let him return to Africa, and that he would be ordered to take "sick leave" – for chronic fatigue and sinusitis – which would last until the situation in Tunisia was resolved one way or another.

Rommel then had an audience with Mussolini. The meeting was cordial, but it soon became clear to the field marshal the Italian dictator was also in denial about the truly desperate situation for the Axis in North Africa. After leaving the meeting, Rommel remarked he was "heartily sick of all this everlasting false optimism" from Mussolini and Hitler as to the war's course of events.

Mussolini, for his part, had been planning to give Rommel his regime's highest award, the "Gold Medal for Military Valor." At the last moment, however, he withheld making the presentation because he could not abide what he called Rommel's "defeatist attitude." Rommel flew on to Hitler's headquarters, where the dictator had just returned from visiting some units near the eastern front. Rommel later remarked Hitler was "upset and depressed" when they met. Interestingly, Hitler remarked to others that Rommel seemed "very low in spirit [with] his nerves shot to pieces."

Rommel talked about the desperate situation confronting his "Afrikaners," but Hitler was unreceptive and – just as the Italians



This is the Knights Cross with Diamonds, which Rommel was awarded for losing North Africa. Think what he would have gotten if he had won!

had forewarned – he ordered the field marshal to take sick leave, so he would be able to "take command again [in time for] for an operation against Casablanca."

That remark showed Rommel just how out of touch with the North African situation Hitler was. He apparently still thought some grand Axis counteroffensive would soon sweep across all of Algeria to the Allied landing sites of Operation Torch.

The next day, Hitler unexpectedly summoned Rommel for a second meeting at which he presented him with the diamonds to his Knights Cross. Rommel was only the sixth commander to receive that prestigious award, which by war's end

had only been given out a total of 27 times.

Hitler had told Mussolini he was going to send Rommel on leave to "restore his health." He also asked the Duce to keep that a secret, in view of the harm it would do if the Allies got wind of the change of command. As Hitler put it: "Whatever posterity may judge of Field Marshal Rommel, to his troops, and particularly to the German soldiers, he was beloved in every command he held. He was always dreaded as an opponent by his enemies and he still is."

By the start of May, Hitler had found Rommel another command posting, this time in northern Italy. He would take overall command of that peninsula whenever it might prove necessary: if the Italians opted for surrender or the Allies invaded there or both.

Rommel first heard about his new assignment from a former aide, Alfred Berndt, who was then working at the Propaganda Ministry, where they were being told to prepare to trumpet the news once it was officially announced.

On the 8th Rommel was ordered to report to Hitler in Berlin. When they met there the next day, the dictator admitted to him: "I should

have listened to you before, but I suppose it is too late now; it will soon be all over in Tunisia.” (He was correct; the last Axis forces in Africa surrendered four days later.)

Hitler was determined to win back Rommel’s adulation, and he succeeded in doing so. Rommel was in his company almost constantly for the next two months, and he described it to his wife as happily being “under the sunray lamp” of Hitler’s genius.

Rommel’s new appointment was kept secret from everyone – even from Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, who, as “Commander-in-Chief Southern Italy,” was not expecting to suddenly have to begin reporting to anyone other than Hitler. (Rommel and Kesselring did not like each other.)

During May, June and most of July, Rommel spent his time organizing a still-secret headquarters, which was first given the cover name of “Planning Staff Rommel,” then was later retitled as “Armed Forces High Command Refitting Staff Munich” (the city where it was set up).

Rommel’s new headquarters became involved with planning “Operation Alaric” – named for the Gothic chieftain whose tribe sacked Rome in AD 410 – which was a plan to infiltrate German units into northern Italy to defend against an Allied invasion there. There was also a second plan, “Operation Axis,” to oversee the disarming of any Italian forces that might surrender or defect to the Allies, and, if necessary, capture or eliminate them.

Then Hitler changed his mind, deciding he would instead send Rommel to be commander-in-chief of German forces in Greece, Crete and the Aegean Islands, from where he could “jump over into Italy later on.”

Rommel’s new headquarters would be known as “Army Group B,” while “Army Group E,” which was then the highest German headquarters throughout the Balkans, would be reduced to only controlling Serbia and Croatia. No firm date was given for the change, but Rommel arrived in Greece on 23 July, under orders from Hitler to “survey the situation and report” back to him about it. Two days later, as Italian resistance collapsed on Sicily, Mussolini was overthrown and placed under arrest. That caused Hitler to change his mind regarding Rommel yet again, and he ordered the field marshal to return to Germany once more.

Upon returning, Rommel was told his Italian assignment was back on, this time for certain, and his undercover headquarters in Munich would soon be publicly announced as “Army Group B.” He was to be in command of all German forces in Italy as far south as the Pisa-Arezzo-Ancona line. His main initial task would be to keep secure such vital areas as the Alpine passes.

The new Italian government did not like the movement of German troops into Italy, and they protested each such arrival, but without being able to do anything practical to prevent them. As Rommel wrote in his diary, however, “though they will obviously betray us, it is not politically possible to just march in.”

Hitler’s intention was that Army Group B would directly command all German formations in northern Italy, and though Kesselring’s headquarters would keep command of those in the south, plus those evacuating from Sicily, he would be required to “conform” to orders Rommel gave him. Kesselring objected to that arrangement, telling everyone on his staff he “could not serve under Rommel.”

Hitler resisted getting between the two field marshals until the

middle of August, when he declared a compromise that left Italy divided on the earlier drawn Pisa-Arezzo-Ancona line. Rommel would command all troops north of it, and Kesselring all the troops south of it.

Three Corps headquarters were assigned for Army Group B: 87th Infantry, 2nd SS Panzer and 51st Mountain. Eight German divisions had by then either entered, or were about to cross into, northern Italy. Six of them were reformed “Stalingrad divisions”; one came from garrisoning the Netherlands, and the remaining one – the super-elite 1st SS Panzer Division – came from the eastern front. On 17 August, Rommel moved his HQ to Lake Garda, setting up there with some difficulty because the Italians refused to give permission to lay secure telephone lines back to Germany. By the end of the month the situation had deteriorated to the point “the Axis” effectively no longer existed. The Italians moved troops to guard Rome against a German coup there, and also sent some toward the Alpine passes.

For their part, the Germans were by then fully ready to put Operation Axis into motion, disarming all Italian troops except those prepared to go on fighting under Wehrmacht command. Rommel sent units to increase the garrisons of the mountain passes and occupy several major cities.

The Allied landings on the Italian mainland on 3 and 9 September, together with the quickly following Italian surrender, led to Operation Axis being put fully into effect. Rommel wrote to his wife about it: “In the south, Italian troops are already fighting alongside the British against us. Up north, Italian troops are being disarmed... and sent as prisoners to Germany. What a shameful end for an army!”

Some 800,000 Italians were disarmed by the Germans, and 268,000 were sent across the Alps as slave laborers.

Meanwhile Rommel began arguing – as a way to finally end the rivalry with Kesselring – that southern Italy should simply be abandoned and all German troops there put into his army group. He maintained that otherwise the long coastlines would make any German defense line vulnerable to being out flanked by Allied amphibious invasions.

As part of that argument, he refused all requests by Kesselring for the southern fighting to be reinforced by divisions from Rommel’s command in the north. Kesselring argued the near-miraculous German escape from Sicily – despite Allied control of the surrounding seas – demonstrated they were not competent to carry out the kind of lightning amphibious flanking moves Rommel feared.

In the midst of that renewed debate, Rommel was suddenly wracked with pain. He was rushed to a hospital and operated on for appendicitis. All went well medically, but he was out of contact with Hitler’s headquarters for 10 days.

When Rommel returned, he immediately again began conferring with Hitler to try to get him to adopt his fight-in-the-north strategy, while continuing to refuse Kesselring’s requests for major reinforcements from Army Group B.

After much indecision, Hitler decided Italy should be placed under Kesselring’s sole command. During Rommel’s medical absence, Kesselring had been conferring steadily with Hitler without anyone on hand to present a contravening view. Despite the fact Hitler had



This map shows the campaign in Italy as it was fought historically from September 1943 through May 1944. Had Rommel been given overall German command throughout Italy, he would have taken over just as the Allies established a line across the entire south part of the peninsula on 25 September.

until then been favoring Rommel's strategy, and despite the fact he generally got along much better with Rommel than he did with Kesselring, the Fuehrer had decided to adopt the fight-in-the-south strategy.

On 21 November 1943, Rommel left Italy forever, to take up another new command, his final one, this time in France. Even then, at one point a few days earlier, Hitler had changed his mind again, deciding Rommel should take over from Kesselring in all of Italy. Just as the radio operator began transmitting those orders, however, Hitler again changed his mind and ordered Kesselring to remain in supreme command in Italy and continue to fight it out in the south. For his part, despite the fact he finally won the argument with Rommel, Kesselring never forgave him for denying him reinforcements when the Allies first landed in Italy. He wrote in his memoirs that, had Rommel sent him "just one panzer division," he could have smashed the American beachhead at Salerno and then turned against the British, either defeating them in turn or at least stalling them out permanently in the far south.

Since then, of course, historical hindsight tells us Kesselring was indeed correct in his southern strategy. During the next year, the Allies tied up in Italy about 30 of their divisions, whereas the Germans never had more than 20 of them in that theater. Had

Rommel gotten his way, the resultant Italian campaign – and the whole rest of the war in the west – would certainly have looked different than what we read in the history books today.

On the one hand, if Rommel did well and held the Allies to getting no farther north than the Po River valley, his absence from Normandy in the first weeks after D-Day certainly would have been felt there. With Rommel in Italy, it would have been von Rundstedt – who advocated falling back from the beaches to fight the decisive battle inland – who would have been running things in France.

On the other hand, if the Allies had been able to make good use of the unavoidable chaos involved with so large and swift a retreat by the Germans from southern Italy into the north, and in that way gotten to the Alpine passes a year ahead of their historic arrival, that might have had major effects on Anglo-Allied strategy. Such a development might have been taken as proof of Churchill's "soft underbelly" theory, leading to a major campaign into the Ljubljana Gap to try to break into the Danube Valley. That would also have diminished Rommel's reputation as having been one of the war's great commanders.

We will never know for certain what would have happened, but we can explore the possibilities on our wargame table.