

## GAME PROFILE

# THE ENDLESS SAND

## Campaign for North Africa Surveyed

by Thomas G. Prutch

*Campaign for North Africa* is a game so big, one man cannot see both its beginning and its end at the same time. This was and is true in every sense. While it was being designed and tested, it became almost a ritual of team development play behind closed doors, from which the designer (Rich Berg) absorbed not so much information as intimations concerning the course of the game. The actual completion of this African elephant was done in the midst of debate and contradiction between the developer and the designer. Eventually, after much delay and organizational heaving, the beast was dragged from its lair. I can't believe that I was the dummy that proposed this in the first place. With our luck, you'll want more of them. —RAS

Men have climbed mountains because "it was there." There are people who purchase wargames for the same reason. There are some of us who cannot afford such a rationale in buying wargames. The purpose of this article is to present a view into SPI's "super-detailed, intensive simulation specially designed for maximum realism" new game *Campaign for North Africa (CNA)*. Any purchase of \$44 for a single game requires more information than can reasonably exist in an advertisement.

The game is so large that it defies immediate analysis of the tactical and strategic planning necessary to win the game. It will be at least a year before such an article on the scenarios is possible and even longer until the campaign can be discussed. However, it is possible now to examine the game and its components.

### Physical Layout

The game package looks (outwardly) no different than any of the other super-wargames currently published. Picking up the box discloses that the game weighs more than most.

In the box the owner finds five mapsheets that are well done in four color format. The coloration allows ready recognition of the 31 various terrain types. A comment is made in the game that players of previous North Africa wargames will be surprised to find a number of different terrain types where blank hexes once abounded. The five mapsheets require a playing area only slightly larger than that for *Highway to the Reich* or *Atlantic Wall*. One difference in the use of the *CNA* maps is that complete walk-around ability does not seem to be necessary. Combat and maneuver will (probably) stay along

### [4.23] Counter Summary

Front



Trucks in Convoy  
(unattached, 2nd/3rd line)



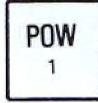
German Squadron Ground  
Support Unit



Commonwealth/Italian  
Squadron Ground  
Support Unit



Tank Delivery (CW)/Tank  
Recovery (Gm) Squadron



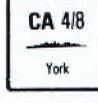
Axis POW's  
CW POW's



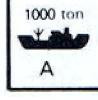
Axis Prisoner Guards  
CW Prisoner Guards



Desert Raider



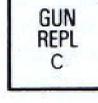
Commonwealth Warship



Axis Coastal Shipping



Infantry  
Replacement Points

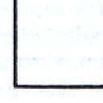
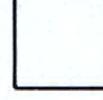
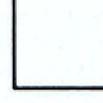
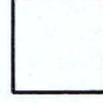
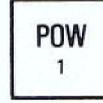


Gun  
Replacement Points



Tank  
Replacement Points

Back



the coastal areas, thus leaving the southern desert areas clear. The southern edge of the map set can be placed along a wall. The open desert areas can be used for some of the counter piles and rules booklets that are used while playing a game.

In speaking of the counters, SPI says in its advertisement that 1000 of the 1800 counters are land combat units. My observation is that between 100 and 200 of the 1800 counters are all that can be considered informational counters.

Next to be found in the box are the seven booklets and single set of logistical control sheets. It is this collection of booklets that sets *CNA* apart from other games.

### Historical Background Booklet

16 pages. Written by A. Nofi, R. Berg and J. Dunnigan

This booklet is a somewhat condensed, highly readable analysis of the fighting in North Africa. The discussions of each army and the overview of the campaign help to give players a clear idea of what is happening in the game. One can only wonder why the writers felt that the North African campaign should have occupied a minor status in the annals of WWII.

### Land Game Rules of Play

45 pages (32 sections) plus 1½ pages of addenda

This booklet contains all of the land warfare rules that the players will use. An abbreviated logistics/air game rule is also in this set.

### Air and Logistics Game Rules of Play and Scenarios

44 pages (16 pages of 17 Rule Sections for the Air Game; 7 pages of 11 Sections for the Logistics Game; and 14 pages of Scenarios and Campaign game Set-Ups. The balance of the booklet includes the index, designer's notes, etc.)

The rules here are an optional expansion to the Land Game rules.

### Charts and Tables Common to Both Players

16 pages (49 charts and tables.)

Two copies of this booklet are provided so that each player will have his own copy. This booklet gives common capabilities charts and CRT's.

### Axis Exclusive Charts and Tables

36 pages (73 charts & tables)

The Axis player has all the charts and tables that detail his units' capabilities by type division and force designation. Also included is general combat information on the

Commonwealth player's forces to aid in making decisions.

### Commonwealth Exclusive Charts and Tables

32 pages (58 charts and tables)

This is the CW player equivalent to the Axis set previously described.

### Logistical Sheets:

12 different sheets that must be separated

This set of sheets will provide the greatest surprise of the game to a purchaser. There are several wargames on the market that require replication of some player's aids in order to play. None approaches the quantity of duplication that is necessary for these control sheets. Because the quantities needed greatly exceed the capability of the publisher to include them in the same game box, permission has been given on the sheets for photocopying. A better and less expensive recommendation would be to stencil or mimeograph the necessary numbers.

### Rules

There are many changes from past wargames in the sequence of a game-turn. There is an Operations Stage that must be performed three times in each game-turn (similar to *Fast Carriers*). This stage contains the bulk of the phases played in a game-turn. The manner of printing the game-turn sequence varies among the three presentations in the Land, Air and Logistics Game Rules because of changes in the rules. Players would have been well served to have a master game sequence printed somewhere for ready reference — on the back of the Land Game Rules Booklet, for instance.

The individual rule sections and cases are far more detailed than in previous games. Even so, the players may change anything that they disagree with or have better information on.

One of the positive features of *CNA* is the deliberate effort by the designer/developer to keep the game from being a hard and dry publication. Throughout the books there are humorous remarks and enlightening comments on the purpose of a rule.

The game has a note written into the rules stating that it is not for the casual gamer; a more appropriate comment would have made it "gamers." From the start of the game materials to the end, there is repeated reference to the use of multiple players in playing the *CNA* campaign. Some of the scenarios are equally in need of multiple players. It is recommended that a minimum of ten people play the campaign game. Suggested assignments are: Commander in Chief, Logistics Commander, Rear Area Commander, Air Force Commander, and Front Line Commander for each side.

The reason for multiple commanders is the complexity of the rules pertaining to each given area. While the impact of a rule in the scenario games will be minimal because of the short duration, the longer campaign game will require someone who is thoroughly familiar with each special area of operations

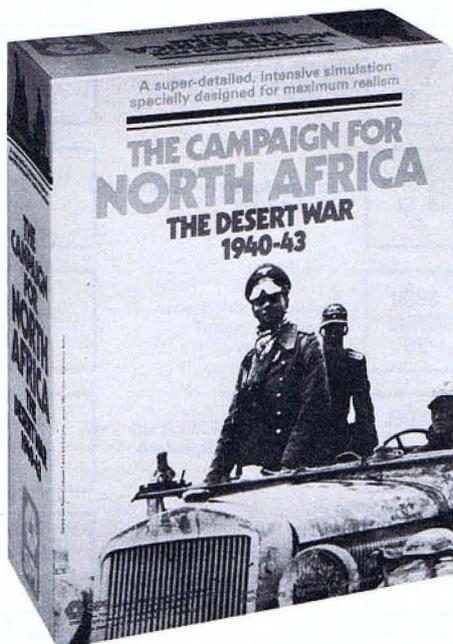
to prevent compounding errors from weakening a side.

Examples of this complexity are easily cited:

1. The logistics commander must monitor fuel supplies, fuel loss from evaporation, fuel consumption, and unit fuel needs (projected) in an upcoming movement.

2. SGSU's (Squadron Ground Support Units) can be assigned to specific order of battle aircraft.

3. Players may roll for *individual* aircraft refit instead of in whole squadrons. Why? In the words of SPI: "The (air) players have to have something to do while waiting for the ground game-turn to finish."



### Evaluation and Commentary

The first question that must be asked is why would anyone wish to purchase *CNA*. Or: What does 17 year old Joe "I-Wanna-Play-Wargames" Snuffy want with a game in which counters are included for abandoned trucks and broken down tanks? Certainly with a campaign game that takes (according to SPI) two years to play — which is as long as the original campaign — the simulation seems to be on a par with building a 1:1 scale model collection.

There are good reasons to own *CNA*:

1. To play the most incredibly complex scenarios ever designed about North Africa.

2. To own a game that can serve as a reference set of rules and ideas.

3. To design scenarios of actions in North Africa that the owner cannot find in other games.

**Reason #1:** The scenarios cover some of the major efforts by both sides to win the African fighting. Playing time varies greatly among scenarios, but none is any greater than the playing times of games currently on the market. When used with the full set of rules, players should find these scenarios far more rewarding to play than any other North Africa game. Planning ahead, allocating

resources, and the ability to interdict enemy build-ups are just some of the operations available.

To compare the scenario playing times as given by SPI to the playing times of other games on the market, see the table below.

If the scenarios are played using the abstract air and logistics rules, then the playing times are shortened. However, playing the scenarios this way deprives the gamer of the strongest feature of the *CNA* game — the interfacing of combat actions with required support.

### COMPARISON OF *CNA* SCENARIO PLAYING TIMES (with other games)

Scenario/ Equivalent Game	Nr. of Game-Turns	Playing Time (hours)
Last Chance <i>Narvik</i>	1	10
Graziani Offensive <i>TSS</i>	6	25-50
The Long Retreat <i>War bet. the States</i>	9	50-100
The Desert Fox <i>Atlantic Wall</i>	12	75-125
Italian Campaign <i>DNO</i>	20	90-150
Operation Crusader <i>War in the Pacific</i>	8	250

**Reason #2:** Much of the work in the game is original and innovative. Many of the rules and ideas can be adapted to other games. Some of the areas covered in *CNA* are: prisoners (capture, guard requirements and escape); reconnaissance patrols; construction of installations and facilities; replacement forces (equipping and training); aircraft refit; supply shipping.

**Reason #3:** One feature of the game that must not be overlooked is the use of *CNA* as a basis for designing scenarios of the North African conflict. The owner of *CNA* has every force counter and rule (so far as I can see) for everything that happened between 1940-1942 in North Africa.

Since the advent of *CNA* in late June 1979, there has been insufficient time for anyone to play all the scenarios, and it is impossible for anyone to have played the campaign game. It is this length of playing time that will (probably) work against a review of *CNA*. However, it would be an injustice to write off the potential in *CNA* because of length. ■■

### Opening MOVES [continued from page 3]

with our poor service, and I want to assure everyone in general that we are fixing the problems with our list (in fact we're going to convert to a brand new, more powerful, maintenance program for all our magazines). You will notice an improvement in subscription fulfillment. Honest.

By the way, if you like this "bits and pieces" format for *Opening Moves*, let me know and I'll stick with it. —Redmond