

# ATLANTIC WALL

## An in-depth Study

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Atlantic Wall is a grand tactical game by SPI covering the invasion of Europe by the Allied armies on the morning of June 6th, to the end of that month.

The game is at the battalion-company level, with each hex representing 1 kilometre. There are also counters for air units and individual naval warships. The sequence of play is readily learnt, flows easily, and is thus highly playable, whilst still remaining a very realistic simulation. I regard the game as one of SPI's finest, and since I first purchased it over two years ago, I have played one campaign game and each scenario several times. Also, I have carried on playing each invasion scenario well beyond D-day. I highly recommend that you try this on each beach, especially if you intend to play the full campaign.

For the major part of this article I would like to study invasion tactics that can be used on the beaches, and also subsequent campaign strategies. As a concluding section, I wish to suggest some rules additions which I have found successful in bringing certain aspects of the game more in line with the historical situation.

### INVASION

Commencing with the AM game turn of June 6th, the Allied player ignores weather determination, mulberry stage, and mutual artillery resupply. His first task is the air allocation. 25 pts must be placed on air superiority. After this I would suggest allocating 120 pts to interdiction, (this will be doubled to a maximum of 240). This will prevent the arrival of 12th SS Panzer division on GT3 and

slow down the movement of committed German units. The remaining air units are then available for ground support.

The next stage is the Allied paratroop. However, I will describe this in conjunction with the invasion sequence for each beach.

### GOLD, JUNO, SWORD.

The best drop zones for the 6th Airborne division are, in my opinion, the historical drop zones. The historical plan called for the seizure of the Orne bridges and a securing of the Allied left flank to prevent enemy interference with the landings on D-day. The stretch of clear terrain between the Canal de Caen and the bocage is important as it allows the German player direct access to Sword beach with his strongest forces. The Orne bridgehead is important as it will allow the Allied player to advance against Caen through clear terrain, instead of a more difficult struggle through the bocage.

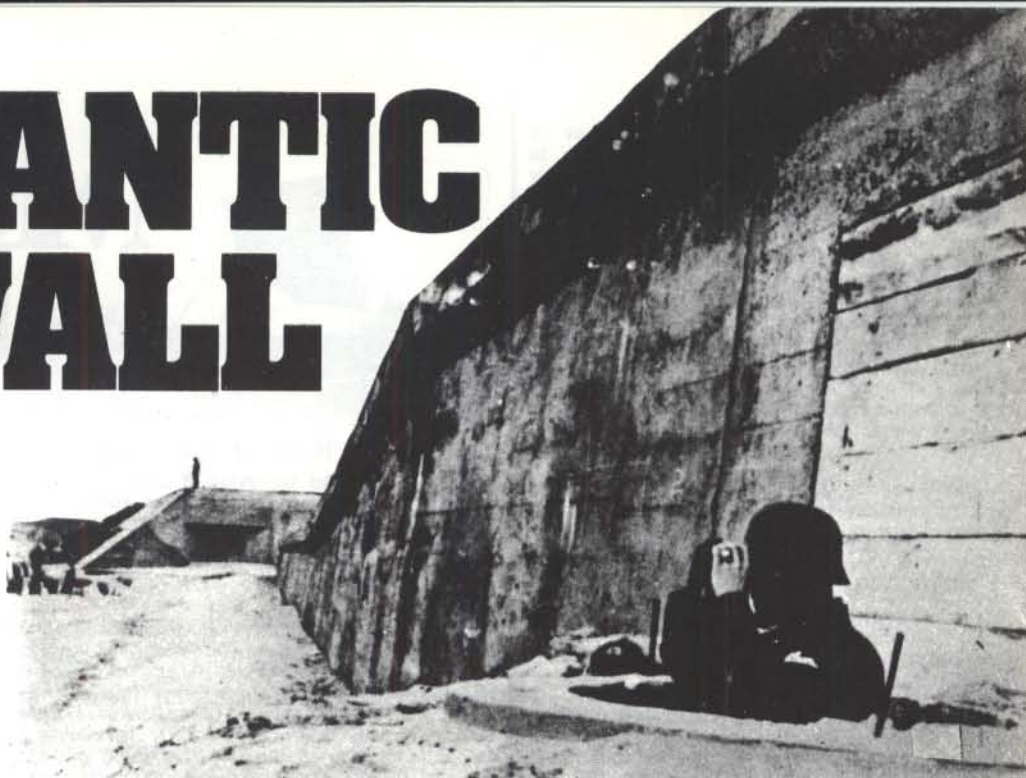
Now to the actual beach landings. The Allied naval units are best used, I believe, in neutralising the shore batteries. These are very numerous on map D and if left alone can seriously disrupt the troop landings. The actual shoreline defences are not too strong. Still, treat them with caution. The LCR's are very useful units, and I believe are best used in

attempting to destroy key static units on the invasion beaches. In order to facilitate an early Commando breakout from Sword beach, I would use two LCR's against each of the resistance nests in hexes 3107, 3108, and 3008. I have found the remaining 3 LCR's useful in weakening the powerful defence of hex 2327 on Gold beach.

The troop landings are very much a matter of fate and the die but losses should not be excessive. On none of the beaches would I recommend that the tanks 'swim' in. The high loss rate for swimming tanks far outweighs the advantage of them landing unpinning. The gap number will almost certainly be reached on all three beaches during GT 3. By then all beaches should be completely cleared. Gold and Juno should have been linked, and the Commandoes will be well on their way to the relief of the 6th Airborne.

The German response to the Allied landings is quite limited, more so due to the errata modifications. During the invasion stage, I would propose firing all the unpinning batteries at key landing units, e.g. Commandoes, flail tanks, and engineers. Their loss will make the allied advance more difficult and time consuming.

I will discuss the movement of ground troops in the section of the article dealing with campaign strategies, as it has more relevance there. Now let us examine the American beaches.



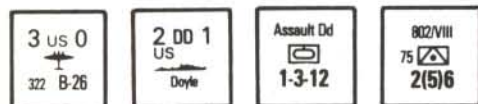


## BLOODY OMAHA

The beach is aptly named, as this is the one beach where the Allies can encounter all kinds of devastating problems. Although the beach is strongly defended, it is by no means impossible to assault. Having spent many an hour playing the invasion scenario solo, I believe the best way to crack open the defence line is to start at the centre, where the defences are weakest, and then work outwards to clear the whole beach.

On the first game turn I would attempt to eliminate the two RN's on hexes 2016 and 1918 by using all available naval fire power. Success here will create two 'safe' beach hexes:— Easy Red-1 and Dog Red. When the central beach area is cleared, push outwards to form a beach-head, and onto the flanks to clear the whole beach.

It is quite possible that Omaha beach will not reach its gap number by the end of GT3. This is not a serious situation provided that assault troop losses are no greater than about 60%, and a reasonable beach-head defence has been established. The German commitment rate for units in the vicinity of Omaha beach is very low, and so no serious counterattack should be forthcoming until the middle of June 7th. By this time the gap number will be safely reached, and the beach-head adequately reinforced.



## UTAH BEACH

The invasion here is supported by the drop of the two American airborne divisions. As with the 6th Airborne division, I would again advocate the historical drop zones. One airborne division drops behind the coastline swamps, with the aims of holding The Douve crossing at Carentan, and securing the causeways from the beach. The other airborne division drops with the intention of forming a defensive perimeter from the village of Pont l'Abbe to a point midway between Foucarville and Fontenay sur Mer. Together the two airborne divisions thus create an 'airhead', into which the invasion forces can easily and rapidly deploy.

As for the landing itself, the special Utah beach rules add a touch of uncertainty, but losses from drift will be zero (unless the tanks elect to swim in). Thus the probability of reaching the gap number GT1 is 28%. The beach is lightly defended, and so I would suggest using all available naval fire power against the shore batteries as they are quite powerful behind Utah beach.

The German ground forces in the Cotentin have a high commitment rate. Initial counter attacks are quite a feasible proposition. I would direct my initial attacks against isolated parachute companies (as their destruction will prevent battalion rebuilding) whilst also attempting to form a defensive line around the paratroop.

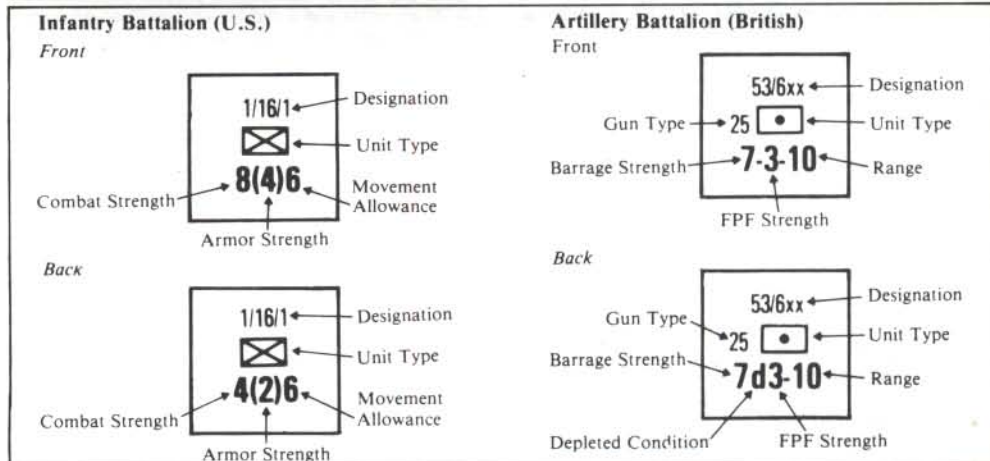
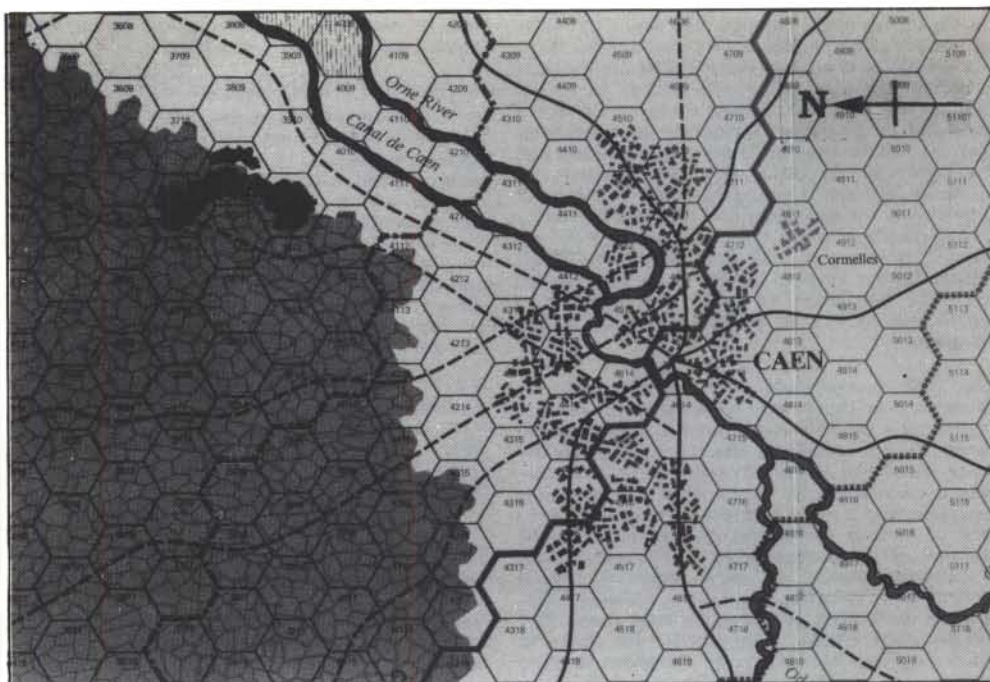
## CAMPAIGN GAME

When playing the campaign game, the Allied player can choose one of the following three plans:— Historical plan; Objective Brittany; First stop: Falaise.

### FIRST STOP:FALAISE

This plan calls for the Allies to capture certain towns, with Caen counting as three towns, and also to exit units off the southern edge of map D. The advantages of this plan are that the British originally land strongly over most of map D, and are quickly reinforced. The terrain to the east of Caen is clear, and so an advance here is easier than in the bocage. Also, this area has naval support almost to the map edge.

The main disadvantage of this plan is that the British very soon find themselves fighting strong German reinforcements, which include 12th SS Panzer, Panzer Lehr, as well as 21st Panzer which is already around Caen.



## OBJECTIVE BRITANNY

This plan calls for the Allies to exit units from the southern edge of maps B or C. The Allies' main advantage is that the Germans in the area behind Omaha beach and the Douve river are very weak, and are not reinforced significantly until the morning of June 9th (Allied air power permitting). The disadvantages are that the Americans landing at Omaha beach build up more slowly than their British neighbours, and of course Omaha beach itself could be a tricky landing. Utah beach is a long way from the southern map edge and the Americans landing here would have to traverse difficult terrain. Also, if the Americans neglect to cut the Cotentin peninsula, the three German divisions stationed there initially will be able either to move south, or attack towards the beachhead whilst the Americans are driving south. Thus the Utah forces are compelled to negate these German forces by firstly cutting the peninsula, and then driving either north or south.

There is one added attraction in this plan. It is quite possible to drop an airborne division in the vicinity of the village of St. Clair sur l'Elle. This division could then hold open the way for the troops from Omaha beach to march directly to St. Lo. Provided that the landing at Omaha beach is not a failure, the Allies will very quickly have a route from a beach almost to the southern map.

## HISTORICAL PLAN

If the Allied player chooses this plan, he will be required to exit units off the southern edge of any of the maps along with the capture of certain towns, the most important being Cherbourg. The advantages in adopting this plan are that the Allied player can choose his point of attack from any of the landing beaches, and still attain his victory conditions. The flexibility allowed with this plan will unbalance the German defender, as

he will be unable effectively to counter all three landings simultaneously.

Whichever plan is chosen, the Allied player will encounter supply problems, especially if there is a storm in the first few days. There is such a large variance of supply point availability, that any examination of the situation has limited relevance. However, in cases when there are not enough supply points for each division on the map I have found that the following guidelines are helpful in deciding who receives supply, and who goes without. a) Supply those divisions which are in critical positions, or attacking towards key objectives. b) Initially supply one division from each corps, as this will allow supply of corps artillery.

The final choice of plan is, of course, the Allied player's decision. My own personal choice (for what it is worth) would be to adopt the historical plan, but initially to be very aggressive in the British sector. This will hopefully lure the German player into thinking I have chosen the Falaise plan, and cause him to reinforce the defence on map D to such an extent that the American forces can then advance into Cherbourg, and the southern map edge, with relative ease.

## GERMAN RESPONSE

The German strategy is naturally limited by the fact that he does not know which of the Allied plans has been chosen. Therefore his initial response to the landings is very crucial. The only two areas which are suitable for an immediate counterattack are the airborne bridgehead over the Orne, and the paratroop landings in the Cotentin. A rather bold move would be to use the 12th SS Panzer (if they arrive) in conjunction with 711th Infantry, in an immediate attack against the east bank of the Orne. 21st Panzer would support this attack by pushing along the west bank of the Canal



de Caen. This move threatens the whole left flank of the Allied attack, and in bad weather conditions has a definite chance of success. The drawback of adopting this plan is that the British forces advancing through the bocage towards Carpiquet and Tilly sur Seules will encounter little resistance and the whole German front will be threatened. So, for those of you whose middle name is not Guderian, the plan I would use is the formation of a defensive line consisting of 711th (supported by 21st Panzer's armour) opposing the Orne bridgehead. 21st Panzer defends Caen itself, and 12th SS should be sent into the bocage south of Carpiquet and Tilly sur Seules, to bolster the remnants of 716th infantry in their defence against the British advance.

The high commitment rate for units in the Cotentin area should give ample time for the formation of a defensive line to contain the invading forces. Do not hesitate to attack isolated paratroop units, and if any of the airborne divisions is noticeably weakened due to a bad drop, an immediate counterattack is not a bad idea. Eventually, due to lack of armour and strong artillery support, the German will feel compelled to disengage and adopt a defensive stance. A good defensive line is Marsolines — Valognes — St. Saver, utilising 709th division on the left, 243rd in the centre, and 91st on the right (West). This controls the route to Cherbourg, and also blocks an American drive to cut the peninsula. Further German action will depend upon the movement of the Americans. Firstly, if the American drives south without cutting the peninsula, or becomes over-extended whilst driving across the peninsula, then a counter attack towards the beach should upset the Americans' plans, and throw him off balance for a while. An all out American offensive towards Cherbourg is best countered by retiring with all available forces into the Cherbourg perimeter. This, I have discovered in playing, is a better plan than attempting to defend in the bocage, because the German forces are not strong enough to cover the whole of the Cotentin area. Finally, if the American defends the beachhead heavily, and then drives south, the German should move two divisions out of the Cotentin to block the southward move, and retire one into Cherbourg, to prevent an easy capture.

Once the American forces are established at Omaha beach, the strategy I would employ is a delaying action using 352nd division and 30th Brigade. With the arrival of reinforcements, especially 3rd FJ division and 17th PG division, I would form a defensive line as near to the beaches as possible, thus forcing the Allied player into a long struggle through the bocage.

That, then is a basic summary of the strategic options open to both sides. It is by no means exhaustive, but does, I believe, mention those options which give the best chance of success, even when the weather and your die rolling are not to your satisfaction.

## RULES ADDITIONS

The third section of this article consists of suggested rules additions. Each rule is followed by a note which explains the reasoning and logic behind its conception.

### 1. ALLIED ADVANCE

The Allied player may only use strategic movement behind his front line, as determined at the very beginning of his movement phase. Players are requested to use common sense when determining their front line.

*NOTE The Allies were 'blinded' by the bocage, and their advance was naturally cautious. Strategic movement implies that the unit has adopted a marching formation and is not capable of defending itself immediately if attacked. This is obviously not the best way to advance against an unknown enemy force.*

### 2. UNSUPPORTED UNITS

Units attached to an unsupported HQ suffer 'command paralysis', as described in the Caumont Gap scenario special rules.

*NOTE A division which is receiving the barest minimum of supplies will be in no condition to*

*push forward and encounter enemy forces, which would lead to a costly engagement.*

### 3. ALLIED REINFORCEMENTS

The six assault divisions are under no restrictions on landing once the gap number is reached on their respective beaches. However, all other units must adopt the following procedure. Units become available for landing as stated on the master reinforcement schedule. Then the Allied player rolls one die for each beach. This is the number of units which may land on that beach in that game turn from the pile of available units. In heavy overcast conditions, halve the die roll, rounding up fractions. On storm game turns one unit only may be landed on each beach on odd numbered game turns.

*NOTE The Allies do not have the capacity to land a complete division on the beaches in one game turn, as implied by the reinforcement schedule. Hence the landings would be spread out over the better part of a day, and longer in bad weather conditions.*

### 4. AIR SUPPLY OF AIRBORNE DIVS

The airborne divisions may either be supplied normally via the beaches, or they may be air supplied. To be air supplied, the weather must be clear or light overcast. The airborne HQ must be in a clear or bocage hex, and no adjacent hex must be enemy occupied or in an enemy ZOC. (a friendly unit will negate the ZOC). The Allied player then allocates 3 B-26 air units and a fighter unit with an air superiority strength of 2 to each airborne HQ during the AM game turn, and that HQ is considered supplied for the remainder of the day. The air units may not be used for any other missions during the day.

*NOTE Air supply is an integral part of an airborne division's operation, and this was true for the Normandy campaign. The penalty to the Allies is that if he continually air supplies these divisions, his ground support capability will be reduced.*

### 5. AMERICAN ASSAULT COMPANIES

Four American assault companies are required to build up into a battalion. The phase 3 assault units on Fox Red and Dog Red are the reconnaissance troops of the 1st and 29th divisions respectively. Back print these units with a pinned side and use them in place of the assault companies.

*NOTE See the assault unit designations at the back of the scenario booklet. Each American assault battalion consists of four assault companies.*

## OPTIONAL RULES

Most of the optional rules are worth using, with the exception of alternate June 6th weather. I feel, though, that two of the rules need slightly modifying.

### 1. ENGINEERS

Both sides have a fair amount of engineer units, and if broken down into companies, can be used to give shifts to almost all attacks. In actuality, engineers were only useful in attacking fortifications or towns. Hence the column shift should only be awarded in attacks against town/villages or fortifications.

### 2. HIGH TIDE GAP BLOWING

Demolition engineers who had the capability to blow gaps underwater were in the minority of the engineer total. Thus, I would suggest the following table is used in conjunction with table 31.3:

| No. of DPs | Die roll modification |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 1, 2 or 3  | -4                    |
| 4, 5 or 6  | -3                    |
| 7 or 8+    | -2                    |

Well, that about wraps it up. If anyone has any other ideas concerning the game, I would be very interested to hear from you. Also, anyone residing in the North East who would like to participate in a campaign game, please don't hesitate to contact me at:

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A REVIEW OF NEWS,  
GOSSIP & RUMOUR  
COMPILED BY  
DOUG DAVIES



# Grapevine

24th April 1981

Well have I got a tremendous tale of intrigue, international skulduggery and intimate revelations to tell you avid readers this issue — no I haven't, it's the usual run of mundane rubbish, so there! I will commence this time with the latest from SPI so after mentioning its M. Freni I'm listening to this time, here goes.

## SPI.

Last time I promised to try and discover exactly what SPI intended with its "remakes" project for updating some oldies but goodies, and although little has definitely been decided in this area it appears likely that two games will initially be given this treatment. Patrol will be revamped by providing two geomorphic maps which necessitates a whole new set of scenarios, and whilst the rules will remain basically the same they will be modified slightly to make the game easier to play. Then Dreadnought will be upgraded to incorporate many of the suggestions made in various articles regarding ship strengths, and additional counters may be provided. Other games which might later attract SPI's attention in this manner include NATO, World War 3, and Chickamauga.

Moving onto new projects the big thing at the moment seems to be the SF role playing game Universe scheduled for release at Origins which will later acquire the voluminous trappings these things generally generate. Around autumn will come your game masters screen, quickly followed by the character log pads, speedily followed by your initial adventure and your first supplement about encounters with aliens. The game will be available in two versions, the basic set will not have the tactical combat system (this in fact being Laserburst from Ares 9) while the full set will include it and therefore will cost more to buy. Staying on the SF front we have Legions of Space which sounds like classic Doc Smith and in Ares 16 The Human — Kzinti War on a theme typical of the genre. Mention of Ares must bring me to the point where I mention that once again Davies had it wrong — issue 13 will feature Galactic Trader not Traitor as I would have had you believe. While I'm at these true confessions I might as well reveal that the 1914 game SPI intend doing will be on a strategic level covering the whole opening moves of the campaign not just Ypres as I'd previously reported. Other titles which are being considered are another TSS spin off entitled Red River, a game on Salerno, and one on a potential operation in the Persian Gulf.

## YAQUINTO

Those enterprising gentlemen at Yaquinto whose albums are usually near the top of the board-gaming charts are working hard to produce the four new games they are scheduled to release at Origins. These include two titles in the revised album format, Commando Raids, a man to man tactical level treatment of several well known daring exploits of those famed units in WW2, and Ghost Cruisers a game which has been long in the pipeline and is concerned with the actions of the

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