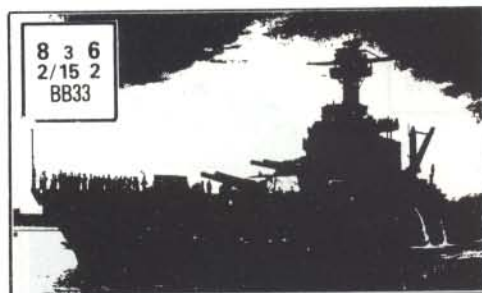


WAR IN THE PACIFIC



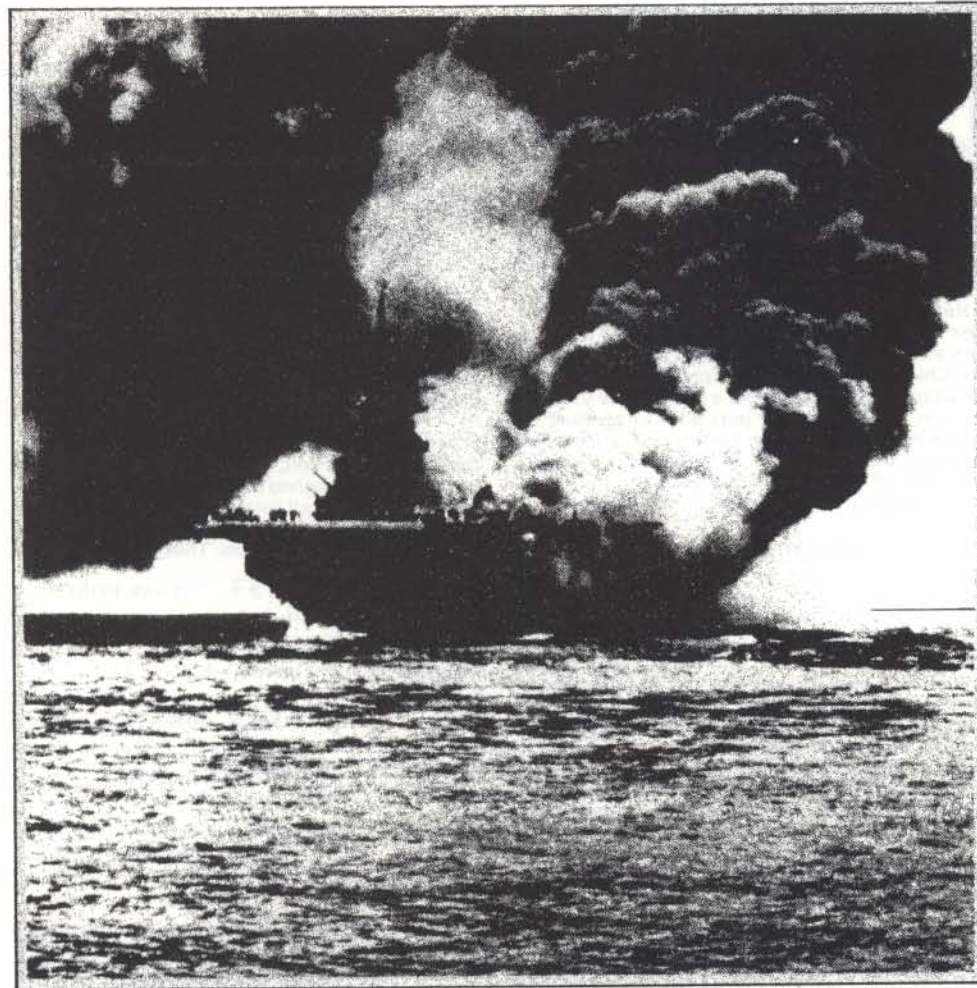
1. THE NAVAL GAME

Every capital ship, aircraft carrier, light cruiser and destroyer which appeared in the Pacific war can appear in the game, as well as further ships if the players' construction programme so demands. For the first months, of course, the players are bound to the historical fleets and construction, but from the start of the war onwards they are free to steer their fresh production in whichever direction they think it will do most good, subject only to certain shipyard capacity limitations.

This gives both sides scores of active ships at any one time, and with three naval phases per game-week (plus three air phases and a ground phase) to be ordered in writing simultaneously, one might suppose that each week would take an eternity to play. Not so: each player is allowed 25-30 Task Forces, and these are the operational units which are normally moved on the map. Off the map and out of your opponent's sight you have task force displays which show how your navy is currently distributed, and you are free at any time to split forces up or to merge or intermingle forces meeting in a hex; most of the time, however, it will be advisable to operate forces together for some time, in order to put together mixed groups of carriers, surface ships and screen units to move and fuel together. You are also allowed dummy task forces, a die roll each week determining how many are currently available.

When both players have completed their orders, they take it in turn to execute them for individual task forces. On the face of it this is rather odd, and there is a strong case for executing all task force movement simultaneously. Against this — we tried it and went back to the rules version — is that it allows players an exactitude in multi-task force manoeuvre which was scarcely possible in reality (move 11 hexes, then pass one impulse while Force 12 catches up, then 4 hexes, then join Force 7...) and gives them an unrealistic confidence that the enemy task forces are precisely so-and-so many hexes away. One possible order to task forces foreseen in the rules is *reaction*, which allows them to make part or all of their moves in response to the movement in progress of any enemy task force; this is an adequate safeguard against being 'jumped' and goes a long way to mitigate the undesirable possibilities in alternate resolution of movement. The snag is fair enough: to start a reaction you must spot the enemy task force: if it escapes your air and submarine observation (see later) your reaction cannot take place until all other task forces have moved... and perhaps sneaked up on your force. The overall effect is a touch of the John Hill design philosophy (as in e.g. *Squad Leader*): the individual mechanics are not quite convincing, but the result is satisfyingly realistic uncertainty.

The different classes of ship can each execute a variety of missions, of which the most important are shore bombardment (mainly for heavy surface ships), emergency transport (mainly destroyers: quick reinforcement of troops and supply), carrier-based air strikes, which come under the air rules described below. In between such aggressive action all ships must refuel every few phases and refit for one week per month. Refuelling is absolutely crucial to the pattern of the game since one can get away with one shot a month if one is prepared only to move once a week: at the usual active rate of twice a week one must refuel after 5 active phases; at the frenetic rate of three moves a week (i.e. moving on every phase — only the more modern ships can do this) one must refuel after a single week. Accordingly, neither side can afford to send out the full battle fleet for major operations unless there is a crisis: players doing so regularly will find their forward supply bases melting away.



The End of the Omniscient Wargamer

NICKY PALMER

You are, let us say, the Allied player in *Wacht Am Rhein*. The Germans have just unleashed an offensive for which you are supposed to have been totally unprepared. They have overrun your outposts, they are pouring through the gaps, the situation at the front is confused, chaotic and panic-stricken. The outlook would be bleak, except for one fortunate fact: you are omniscient. You know exactly what units the enemy has. You know precisely where they are. You know their combat strengths, the state of German supply, the positions of their infiltrators, the progress of their bridge-building. With the exception of their exact objectives (determined secretly in *Wacht Am Rhein*) you know everything. You can plan the defences with withering precision: should you have 7 or 8 factors in Houffalize? Count the enemy attack factors in the vicinity and work it out. Do you need to start guarding the southern approach to Bastogne? Count the hexes from the nearest German unit and you'll know.

This gratifying but totally unrealistic second sight

is so familiar to wargamers that *War in the Pacific* comes as a shock, since in this game it is possible and even probable that your information about enemy dispositions is wildly incorrect. Large carrier-backed forces turn out to be a few heavy cruisers plus a dose of jittery imagination by your spotters; innocuous task forces cruising in enemy waters turn into deadly arrows speeding to the heart of your defences. You are no longer omniscient; on the contrary, you are worryingly short of reliable information, and accurate reconnaissance becomes as important a preoccupation as tactical placement.

While many other games have attacked the problem of excessive information, *War in the Pacific* is the first strategic game to incorporate partial intelligence as the *cornerstone* of its system. More than anything else, this feature distinguishes the simulation and justifies the considerable effort which playing the game requires. In what follows I will summarise the main points of the design in the three theatres of naval, air and land combat, and then try to show how these characteristics work out in practice with the illustration of an actual game.

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Kate
Tb +10



2. THE AIR GAME

Campaign for North Africa succumbs to the temptation of simulating every plane; WITP is more strictly strategic and settles for one Air Point per 10 planes. However, each type is represented with its individual performance assessed: range, anti-ship value, ground bombardment value, and air-to-air combat factor. There is some doubt about some of the values — thus PBY seaplanes could in reality have done better than the 90-mile radius in the game, and there is a definite error for the SBC, which should have the same bombing capacity as the SBD but a search range of around 36/52. Undisputed king of the air is the marvellous Mav-Em type (a combination of two similar Japanese types): able to bomb at a radius of 190 miles, this plane has only one thing wrong with it: not enough were built!

Like ships, air points are normally grouped together, in headquarters of various sizes, and can undertake a variety of missions, the most important of which are attacks on naval forces and ground installations. Air power is the main *defensive* weapon against raiding task forces, the Japanese "ring" of air bases from Kwajalein via Rabaul and Truk to Saigon and Malaya in the west acting as a major deterrent to the vulnerable Allied carriers, and the island bases which the Americans can establish from Pearl to Australia forming the best long-term guarantee for the merchant routes which must be formed further south.

Air attacks on naval forces are intensely exciting, though again not realistic in detail. The task force under attack sets up in three layers: 4 ships in the "core", 4 in each of three segments of an "inner ring", and the remainder equally spread round an "outer ring". After fighter combat and interception have been resolved, surviving bombers can choose whether to go for the most valuable targets in the core — braving all three layers of AA fire — or to settle for an easier target in one of the peripheral rings. As a rule of thumb, an attack of 5 Air Points (50 planes) can be driven off without doing serious harm by either good fighter cover or good AA protection (i.e. a large screen); 10 Air Points can be seen off by fighters and good AA; more than 10 are likely to break through and do serious damage even if the sky is black with defending fighters. Although the 4-ship core does not correspond to anything in particular in actual naval tactics, once again the overall effect seems reasonably accurate.

The remaining function of air points is, in some ways, the most important of all: reconnaissance. If a task force moves within range of a reasonable number of enemy planes, it will probably be "spotted", and the aircraft will obtain a report on its composition. However, instead of merely saying what it is, the owning player draws a chit from a cup, with only a 20% chance of being required to give a completely accurate report. Other chits allow modest or less modest inaccuracies about the number of ships, the number of capital ships, and the presence or absence of carriers; there is also a 6% chance of being allowed to lie without restriction, always a great moment since one can then generally ensure almost total surprise for that task force. Dummies must be reported as such unless the "lie" chit is drawn, so for diversionary moves a small force (which may be mistaken for a large one) is generally more effective than a dummy.

As noted in the designer's comments, air search is probably rather too easy, but since the information from a single search is so unreliable the fog of war swirls around in a highly dramatic way. You observe, for instance, two task forces approaching a vital merchant pipeline: one is reported as "2 capital ships, 10 ships", the other as "1 carrier, 5 ships".

Would he send a carrier almost on its own like that? Is it a bluff? A double-bluff? How much force should you mobilise? Efficient intelligence records of previous reports become particularly important, since with luck you can assemble the jigsaw into a fair picture of the main enemy locations — but there are usually one or two carriers unaccounted for, and it is this sort of thing which accounts for the white hairs of WITP players.



3. THE LAND GAME

This is the junior partner, although there is plenty of variety in the units and extensive rules for movement, combat and supply. The largest forces appear in China, but the fronts are only just mobile enough to stave off tedium, and after the initial spectacular feats of the Japanese Army the rest of the land war soon settles down to stable fronts and a few sieges. The Chinese campaign is an interesting puzzle for the Japanese player, though: a pincer from Vietnam and east China certainly puts a lot of pressure on the Nationalist troops (the Communists are tougher birds and secure in the northern provinces), but a good deal of supply is required for, at best, slow progress against enormous Kuomintang armies.

4. MISCELLANEOUS

Special units not mentioned in detail above include submarines — only moved once a month for simplicity, but operating in a fifty-mile radius of their deployment points, and invaluable for spotting because they give *accurate* reports — and merchant shipping, which can be operated tactically with one move per week or in the more efficient but static strategic mode, in pipeline from port to port. Logistics are also aided by amphibians, which can transport supply when they are not moving troops, and support forces, which are equally invaluable (i) taking vast mounds of supply to front-line ports or (ii) refuelling strike forces at sea. Various other units: Japanese coastal defence vessels, destroyer escorts, and the primarily anti-submarine escort carriers — fill out the rosters.

All this is underpinned in the strategic game by the production system, which proceeds on standard lines: a certain number of points are available each turn (the American ration far in excess of the Japanese right from the start), and within certain limits can be spent on anything from base forces to battle-ships (the latter will arrive in 1945 and are *not* a recommended buy!) The needs of air, sea and land forces must be weighed up against each other, with the Japanese dilemma being especially acute since their economy will only support one main building effort while the Americans can have lots of most things. As the game proceeds, the aircraft and ships produced become gradually modernised, and the old types gradually disappear from the map as attrition takes its toll. The disappearance of the last F2A "Buffalo" is expected shortly in the current game, something I've been looking forward to, as the Allies, ever since Zeroes shot down dozens of them over Singapore without loss to themselves! The beastly things just take up space on the airfield.

5. SCENARIOS

The scenarios on offer are Pearl Harbour (the first 6 months of the war), Midway (2 months), Guadalcanal (21 weeks), Burma (6½ months), Leyte (2 months), and of course the Campaign (nearly 4 years). We have played to Campaign rules twice for the first six months, and therefore have a fair idea of the Pearl Harbour scenario as well as some insight into the Campaign. We have no experience of the others, but they do look quite interesting. Midway and Leyte require the player on the

offensive (Japanese and Allies respectively) to choose objectives secretly; thus, the Japanese can aim for Noumea or Port Moresby instead of Midway. The credibility of this scenario is increased by the fact that the campaign game which will be described later has now reached the same period of the war (mid-1942), and all three of these objectives are indeed of considerable interest to both sides. Guadalcanal features the battle for the pipeline to Australia. Burma gives an introduction to the land and air rules on their own, and is therefore the one scenario which can be played solitaire. Generally speaking we find that once one knows the game well an average game-month takes 8-12 hours for the whole map; it is therefore probably possible to manage Midway and Leyte over an intensive weekend.

6. POSTAL PLAY

No rules for postal play are offered by the designer, but given mutual trust the game is not particularly hard to undertake by post; players send stapled instructions for the next phase with open details of the last phase, preferably ringing each other up in the event of crucial decisions. Depending on the current level of activity one needs about 3-4 letters each per game week, which of course means that the game runs more slowly than real time! We both live a long way (about 800 miles) from the nearest WITP enthusiast, and take the view that a slow game is better than none; keeping the map on the wall with the counters affixed by Blu-tack enables one to brood over the position between moves, and certainly one can do better justice to the depth of the simulation by post than in a face-to-face struggle.

Either way, it is advisable to have a loose-leaf note book for naval orders, one sheet per task force: the most effective method seems to be to type out a standard sheet for all forces with dates for the next six months phase by phase and space for fuelling records and current location. Thus, one might have:

CVs 6,8	CLs 51,53	TASK FORCE: 6
BBs —	DDs 1,4-6,8-12,15,21	
CAs 24,33,36	Others APB1	
Dummy? —	Not in use? —	
Fuel		
1	1/1/3 Pearl Harbor, fuel, move to Johnson Is., DDs make emerg. transport of supply	
—	2/1/3 Inactive	
2	3/1/3 APB splits to TF17 with DD1,4-6; remainder return Pearl.	
—	1/1/3 Inactive	

Thus this task force (No.6) is shown for its first two active phases in the first week (it therefore has 3 active phases left); after the 3rd phase of the first week (of month 3) APB1 and some destroyers will be deleted from the contents at the top and entered on the TF 17 page.

A final suggestion: if you trust each other — and it is silly to play a game of this length if you don't — you can dispense with all the rigmarole suggested for two groups of spotting chits governing how honest reports have to be, and simply pick chits and return them to the same cup after use. We extended the system to apply to the contents of air bases within range as well: one gives a report on fighter and bomber types to the nearest three planes, and is allowed to lie to the extent shown on the counter. This adds to the uncertainty in raiding enemy bases at long range, as if his fighter cover is larger than expected, it will be able to do severe damage to unescorted bombers.

After this summary — from which many details have been omitted! — on to the game, which shows many of the concepts in full flower. As noted above, this was our second game; our first was notable for a number of rules errors and ended with a bang when I rashly sent the American fleet out and was caught napping by an unspotted dash by the Japanese carrier fleet: 4 American carriers bit the waves and the USA ceded Japan California and Texas in an honourable peace. Something for the "it's all experience" department. The return match with the same sides has shown a considerable improvement in play by both sides, though missed opportunities can still be detected in hindsight.

About the players : Chris Strachan, playing for Imperial Japan, is a historian whose special wargaming interests are naval and Roman warfare, together with some other pre-20th century themes such as the American Civil War (a Strachan-Palmer battle in *War Between the States* appeared in *Moves in English* in 1979). Meticulous and thorough in his planning, Chris decided to considerably sharpen his aggressive play in the latest game after analysing the results of a more cautious policy in the first game before the decisive carrier battle. The results are evident from the first turn.

Nicky Palmer, playing for the Allied Powers, is a mathematician with catholic wargaming interests but a bias towards monster games. He is the author of *The Comprehensive Guide to Board Wargaming*, the Sphere paperback edition of which has just appeared, and *The Best of Board Wargaming*, the successor to the Guide which is also just out. Paranoid and cowed after the fruits of his recklessness in the first game, Nicky nevertheless believes that active counterplay is necessary to keep Allied hopes alive during the early months and wear down the Japanese fuel reserves.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC



Most of the game was played during several holiday face-to-face sessions, but about 6 weeks were played by post. Comments are from my point of view except where stated, since we could not discuss the game in great detail without prejudicing our plans for later moves.

DECEMBER 1941

The game opens with the unleashing of a terrible Japanese offensive all over the map. Most spectacular is of course the Pearl attack, which bottoms four battleships, four cruisers and the vital support force, destroys half the Hawaii supply dump, and knocks out 160 planes on the ground for the loss of a mere 10 Zeroes shot down while strafing the airfield. By specifying that one wave of the Pearl attackers is going for the support force, the Japanese can force the American player to put it in the "core", against which the Japanese are then required to attack the core even if they find that their approach route is over particularly heavy anti-aircraft fire. Since the support force could be used both to shovel supply into Pearl and Australia and to enable the American fleet to raid much further forward, it is essential that this be done. The attack on the supply dump is more controversial but an interesting alternative to the historical concentration on ships and airfields: reducing the dump by 50% cuts fuel for the whole remaining battle fleet by about 2 months' supply, and is probably a better investment than taking out a couple more old battlewagons.

Attacks elsewhere concentrate on flattening Allied airfields and picking off isolated ships; particularly important is the sinking of merchantmen en route to Australia with long-range MavEm attacks, since this will make the pipeline much harder to form.

The Prince of Wales and company sally out in their historical suicide dash (an optional rule allows one to ignore history and stay snug in port), and are hit by 130 bombers from Saigon as well as a submarine squadron; 20 bombers are shot down but the Prince of Wales is mortally wounded (taken under tow into Palembang but later sinking to a further attack) and the Repulse heavily damaged. The latter staggers off of Soerabaja to lick her wounds — during the battle of Java she will be sunk.

Now the invasions go in: two divisions land in the Philippines, a division and a regiment in Malaya, and Special Naval Landing Force marine units in Wake Island, Hollandia (New Guinea), Balikpapan, Rabaul and Lae. The last three are especially important: Balikpapan in Borneo provides free refueling (up to a limited port capacity which can be expanded with Base Forces) while Rabaul and Lae provide extremely important forward air bases for the drive on the Australian pipeline in a few months, as well as a useful port in Rabaul. Since the invasions are in the first week, all facilities are captured intact.

JANUARY 1942

The Japanese press south in Malaya and the Philippines, but Allied opposition starts to coalesce. My main offensive tools are the small number of surviving B-17 and B-24 bombers, and the efficient but equally small Dutch submarine force; American submarines are using the wrong torpedoes at this stage in the war and are halved in effectiveness, making them good mainly for spotting. The Dutch have little luck, but bombers based in Singapore are able to chip away at enemy merchant shipping in the Saigon pipeline, forcing the Japanese to shorten it to Cam Ranh Bay instead. We allow fighters to cover convoys under the same rules as task force naval CAP, but the Saigon-based Zeroes are frustratingly ineffective against the high-flying Americans.

FEBRUARY 1942

Sieges are under way against Singapore and Bataan, but both have enough supply for months; the Japanese choose to conserve their own forward supply by refraining from frontal assaults. Small Allied units in river craft ("seacap": local coastal/river capacity akin to "railcap" in this and other games) slip out of Singapore to guard the important resource centres off the town and on Sumatra. Chris outguesses me on his landing area and succeeds in establishing a bridgehead before my defenders can reach the spot. Through the judicious use of exaggerated spotting reports, however, I have given the impression of a more significant air defence than is really available on Java, and to counter this he sends his carrier force with heavy escort south to guard the invasion fleet. This gives me the chance to replenish the Pearl supply dump and launch my first raid in the Central Pacific, on Kwajalein. Another one follows late in the month, dodging away from the Japanese strike force as it races east again; my reputation for recklessness stands me in good stead as Chris cannot be sure that I will not press home an attack on his main base at Truk! In reality I have grown very cautious after my chastening experiences and will only risk my carriers if I can gain a clear edge.

My main objective at this stage of the game is to keep the Japanese off-balance and force them to use up front-line fuel reserves reacting to me rather than executing further strikes on the Pearl pipeline or other targets. A secondary objective is to hit Kwajalein often enough to delay its use as a major forward base; these raids are mainly using old cruisers, and I am perfectly prepared to lose a few. Chris, meanwhile, is building up his supply at Truk as much as possible to prepare for the battle for the pipeline, and has decided to use his support force for this rather than to support long-range operations.

The Pearl forces send an engineer with supply to Johnston Island (mis-spelled on the map as Johnson Island) with a view to building an air base for forward fighter cover. 70 miles west of Pearl, this island was on the Japanese short-list for invasion historically, and in due course it is likely to play an important role in the game as a naval base as well.

In retrospect Chris agrees that he should have hit the Pearl pipeline again this turn: the US Department of Misinformation glows with satisfaction!

MARCH 1942

Two Commonwealth carriers arrive in Africa, and are promptly dispatched east to Australia and onwards to Pearl. Equipped with rickety old Swordfish, Fulmars and Albacores they are pretty useless, but loaded with SBDs and F4Fs they will be a very welcome boost to the Pearl fleet. Stupidly, I allow

them to move within MavEm range of Rabaul, where they are spotted with a "True" report: rats!

Merchantmen slip south from the Pearl route to form the first Australian pipeline, running to Newcastle as far as possible from Rabaul. I don't expect to hold it but cannot get further south with the merchantmen available, thanks to the Japanese depredations in the first week of the war. My B-17s and B-24s are now grouped together and dance frenetically from base to base along the route: I have enough supply in the Fiji Islands to keep a group going for a month there. The Japanese strike force masses at Truk and moves east, but decide that the pipeline is probably composed of dummy task forces in view of the evident impossibility of holding it for long; instead, they turn south and hammer the bombers on Fiji with a surface raid. Despite losing 50 bombers, I regard this as a successful distraction, since fuel requirements force him to return to Truk while the pipeline survives for 1 week; we interpret the pipeline rule, which requires the Americans to open a pipeline to Australia and maintain it from April or shorten the war by two weeks for every week that this is not done, as applying at the beginning of each week, so that although his MavEm can break the pipeline at once next month he will only shorten the war by 6 weeks, the first week of April starting with the pipeline intact. Incidentally, this pipeline rule is another example of "Hillman" design: the designer wishes to simulate the political pressure to keep Australia supplied, and uses the blunt tool of a threat to shorten the war in 1945 to force the Allies to do so; again the effect is realistic but the reason for it is not.

APRIL 1942

Four carriers are spotted by subs heading for Japan: a sign of fuel shortages at Truk? It's time for an American show of force, supported by a Commonwealth thrust in the west, to bring his fleet to the front again. All available carriers and a large surface escort move to Johnston Island (evading submarine detection), hoping to be mistaken for destroyers transferring small amounts of supply to the engineer. In the west, three cruisers lead a raiding party into the untouched supply dump in Ceylon, from where a rich variety of targets is available within 2 phases, not least a merchant shipping task force which has been resupplying Malaya.

The raids unfold, but submarines off Truk report 4 more Japanese carriers heading east! The American force splits, sending a dummy south towards Australia out of spotting range from Kwajalein. The Japanese chase towards the dummy but it pretends to sheer away in terror, and in due course arrives in Sydney, after which I start consistently lying about my Australian fighter strength to exaggerate as far as the chits allow: as a result, he believes that I have reinforced my fighter cover for next month's pipeline, making a MavEm attack a risky affair.

Meanwhile, the cruisers plunge past submarine pickets through the Straits of Malacca and head for the convoy: an erroneous air spotting report tells Chris that there is a carrier in the force, but further more accurate reports reassure him. The cruisers take a pounding from shore-based air, but two survive to struggle through to engage the merchant shipping off Malaya — only to find that Chris has prudently included four battleships in the escort! Both cruisers go down and I learn once again not to gamble on his being unprepared for anything; the only consolation is that 30 good bombers are shot down. The significance of this is that the Japanese are allowed an early bonus in naval air strikes which is dissipated after the first 1000 Japanese planes are lost. Since this simulates the attrition of the pilot elite rather than general crew, we instead use a limit of 60 planes lost from naval aircraft and the better bombers. Normal attrition will tip the balance around June; in our game it tipped in May instead due to higher combat losses in raids such as these. Despite this consolation, three cruisers is a heavy price to pay: not again for some time!

In the final week, a large surface force from Africa arrives off Melbourne to escort the new pipeline, which runs along the edge of the map. Together with the ghost of the fighters transported by the dummy (soon to be replaced by real fighters transported by carriers refuelled at Pearl) this force

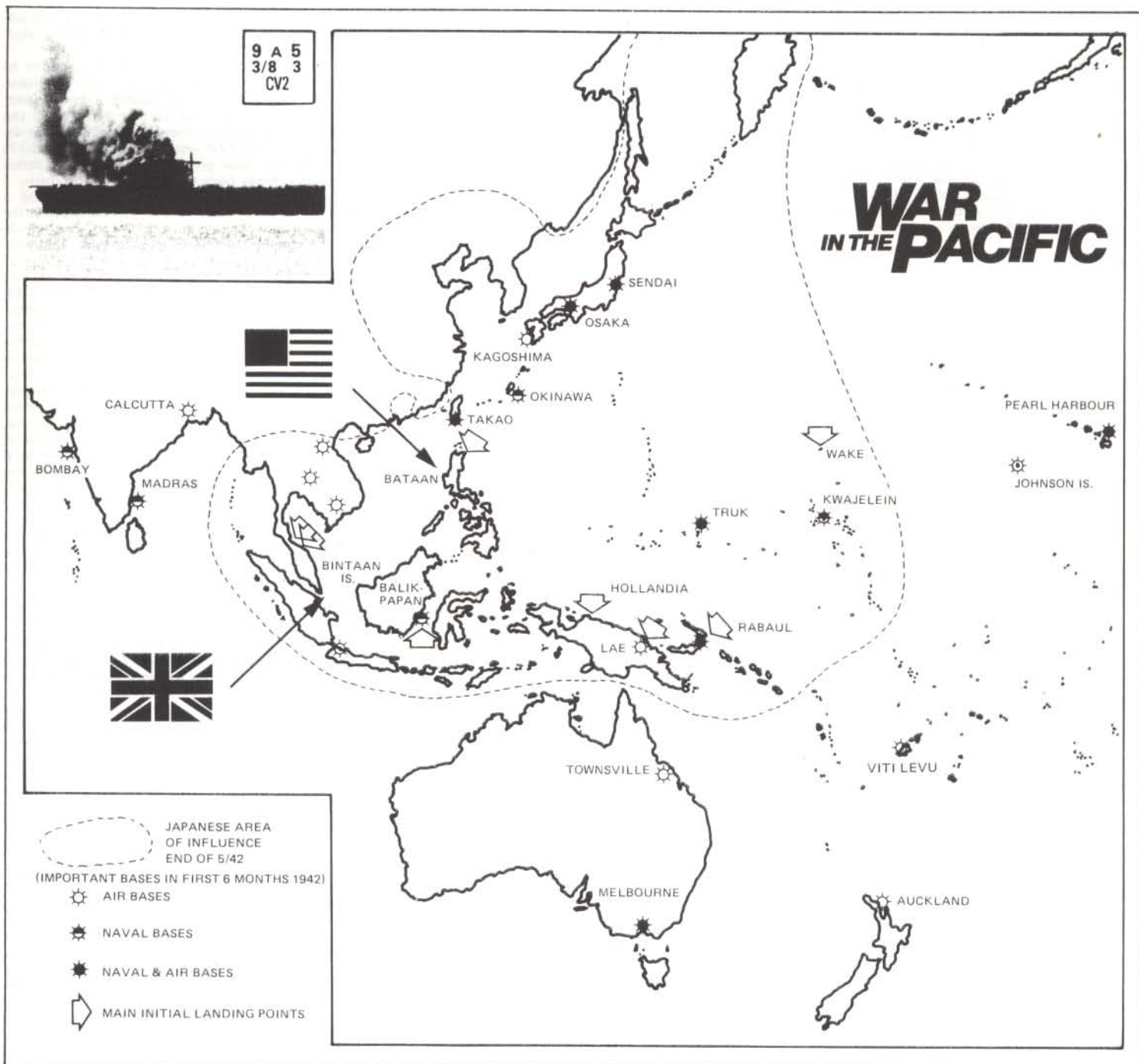
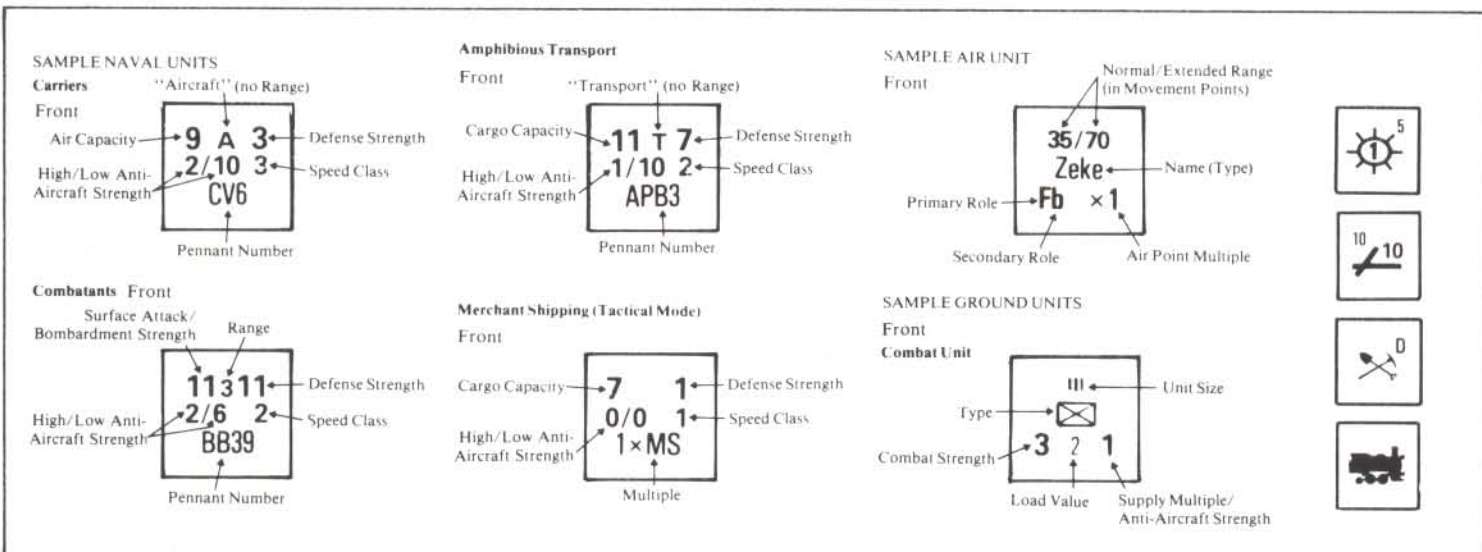
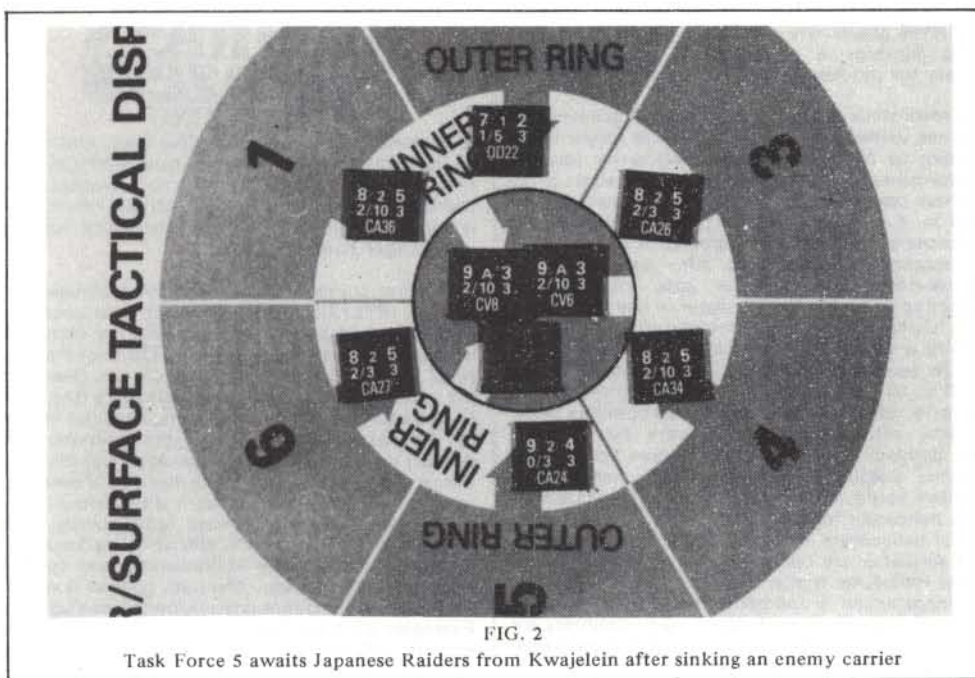


FIG. 1
War in the Pacific map showing the perimeter of the Japanese advance (note two Allied holdouts within the enclave, the initial Japanese landing points and the mid-1942 Japanese bases). Note that many of the early landings coincide with important bases showing Strachan's far-sighted planning.





should deter the valuable MavEms from a long-range strike. The carriers now on the way are armed to the teeth with bombers (no fighters at all): I hope that he will expect me to send a mixed force (hence weaker in bombers), and will dispatch an inadequate surface force against the convoy route. The dummy sails innocently off.

MAY 1942

The main Japanese battle fleet emerges from Japan after an extensive refit and heads, not south towards the pipeline, but east! At last the Allies reap the benefit of the earlier skirmishing: the Truk supply dump is too low to support a major expedition. However, Chris takes advantage of the narrowing of the globe in the far north to build up a base in Paramushiro in the far uppermost tip of Japan, allowing him to raid Pearl and get back to refuel without significant damage due to fuel shortage.

The American surface fleet breaks refit in California and surges out to sea to meet the challenge. I am now getting intelligence reports on his moves once a week (random selection of 10-60% of Japanese task force orders, unseen by him), and hope to catch his force by advance knowledge of its destination. His surface escort is inadequate to combat my entire fleet, and if he sends in the fast carriers on their own they will be able to escape from the battleships but will become vulnerable to my bombers on Pearl. The Johnston Island air base is nearing completion, just too late for this raid. I took 3 hours to plan the defences..... only to find that the enemy fleet fired off three dummy task forces in my direction and then went home! I am much relieved, and presume he will now head for Truk, which has been resupplied by task force. My fleet returns to its refitting, but.... once again the Japanese spring a surprise! The carriers barely pause in Japan before wheeling round to return east, this time with a crushing force of 20 capital ships. Luckily he is spotted by American submarines. This time the attack is really serious — last week's probe having been a feint to break my refits — since he can win a surface action as well as a carrier action, and with his naval air bonus about to expire he would love to engage me in a grand battle.

I must break the pipeline to Pearl or get it bombed to the bottom of the Pacific, but believe I have a fighting chance to save the second line going south to Australia. Johnston Island gets a Group Air Headquarters rushed in by amphibious landing craft to take advantage of the completed airstrip, allowing me to base 100 planes there as well as 200 in Pearl. In addition, I have 2 big and 3 small carriers, which will not fight the main force but are ready to hammer any smaller groups pushing south; he cannot afford to send them all south since he will need to refuel at Kwajelein.

I strip the Pearl merchantmen by 80%, and (rightly in my view) he chooses not to bother with the remainder, satisfied with having starved Pearl of fuel for next month. His main force hovers off Johnston Island, brushing off my bomber raid without too much difficulty and waiting to pounce on any daring Americans: fortunately for me, daring Americans are in short supply and my ships lurk near the edge of the map out of reach.

Now yet another threat appears: the last two Japanese carriers and what proves to be the mighty Yamato battleship steam southeast from Japan: straight for the pipeline! American intelligence identifies one task force as heading past Kwajelein: although he could have split his force, I gamble on this being the carriers. I feel I can handle two carriers, and move in fast with my forces from both sides, the Australian-based CVs hurrying north to join in the fun. A climax is approaching: if I have miscalculated, I may again lose the game in an inferno of sinking carriers and a broken pipeline; if he has miscalculated, I may be able to bring his carrier strength down to my level. I move to optimum range (fairly distant since SBDs are more effective at long range than the Japanese naval bombers) and prepare to strike.

The Japanese expedition is indeed the one which I had reported by Intelligence, and it sails into a hailstorm of bombs; one carrier goes down, another is lightly damaged, and the force aborts before it comes into range of my second ambush party. A famous victory!

JUNE 1942

Immediately followed by a famous defeat. Betty and MavEm aircraft transfer to Kwajelein, where the airstrip has now been extended by engineers and two Groups are operating. The bombers scream in at extreme range and inflict exactly the same damage on me: one carrier lost, one slightly damaged. On balance I am still not dissatisfied: the even carrier exchange weakens his options slightly more as the player on the offensive, though on the other hand it also increases his proportionate edge in carriers; the pipeline has held again; 20 MavEms have been shot down of his 70 on the board. No sooner have I started to congratulate myself, however, than 3 more carriers refuel at Kwajelein and start to move southeast — and this time he really has caught me on the hop, with half my forces in urgent need of refuelling!

And so it goes on: thrust, feint, assault, counter-thrust, and the occasionally set-piece battle as both players decide that their objectives are worth the risk and the carrier fleets meet in a nerve-stretching climax. At the time of writing, that's the position, and even as I type the back of my mind is brooding darkly about the latest raid and how it might be fended off — postal WITP is all too easily transformed into an obsession. But what a game!

I wish I could say it was convincingly realistic. On the strategic level, I believe that it is: the strategic alternatives are correct according to my reading of history, and the constraints on both sides, especially supply limitations and the need for island bases, are beautifully portrayed. At the tactical level into which the game strays, I am afraid that there is a good deal that will not strictly wash, but personally I am willing to swallow this in view of the quite extraordinary tension which the game generates by its limited intelligence rules. In several other monsters — *War in Europe*, for example — the main interest over the long haul is the production cycle and its impact on the current fighting, but although production is absorbing here as well it is just one part of a symphony of effects, and I suspect the game would be worth buying for the shorter scenarios alone. The rules are acceptably good, deficiencies (notably in what happens to a convoy's fuelling record when it is broken by enemy action or voluntarily) being easy to remedy by common sense.

Strategy? Well, two games is a limited basis for comment, but a few suggestions: **Japanese:** decide on your priorities and stick to them. Don't try to do everything: raid Pearl, break the pipeline, overrun Burma, advance in China; despite your early dominance you won't manage it for long. In my opinion the priorities are destroying the American carriers and establishing forward bases in the South Pacific; the enemy recovery, if it comes, will come from this direction. By contrast, Burma will starve if left alone, and if you can keep the airfield down Singapore and the Philippines can be left to the ravages of attrition too. Make sure of capturing the best installations on the first turn, as Chris did in this game: a competent American will blow up everything that you might attack as soon as he can. It's worth considering invasions of distant places like Samoa and Viti Levu, since possession of these will really doom the pipeline unless he puts on a massive effort which he can't really afford.

Builds: bombers, merchantmen, and perhaps a support force for the optimistic and adventurous. Remember that you will be on the defensive after 1942, so in general such aggressive long term builds will not pay off — but at least a support force makes more sense than surface gunpower.

Allies: Avoid combat like the plague unless forced to it or in very favourable circumstances: one bad slip and you've had it. Your first chance to make a stand is Java, where light ships based on Soerabaja and the remnants of the air force can hope to damage the invaders (or force the Japanese to concentrate major forces, as in this game). In the Pacific, try desperately to set up island bases using emergency transport by destroyers; Canton is too close to Kwajelein but Samoa and Viti Levu are good. When pipeline time approaches 2-3 carriers should be based in Australia; to save fuel for this the early forces in Australia should rush off the map to California without delay. When your support force and APB arrive, start by beefing up the islands, then try to get a bomber base within range of the enemy forward bases, putting them temporarily out of action with surface raids if possible.

Builds: B17/24s, carriers, support forces, and APBs should form the backbone: everything else is also needed in modest amount. Look forward to 1943-44 when it will all arrive: as one base after another falls in 1942, this vision is all that will keep you sane!

