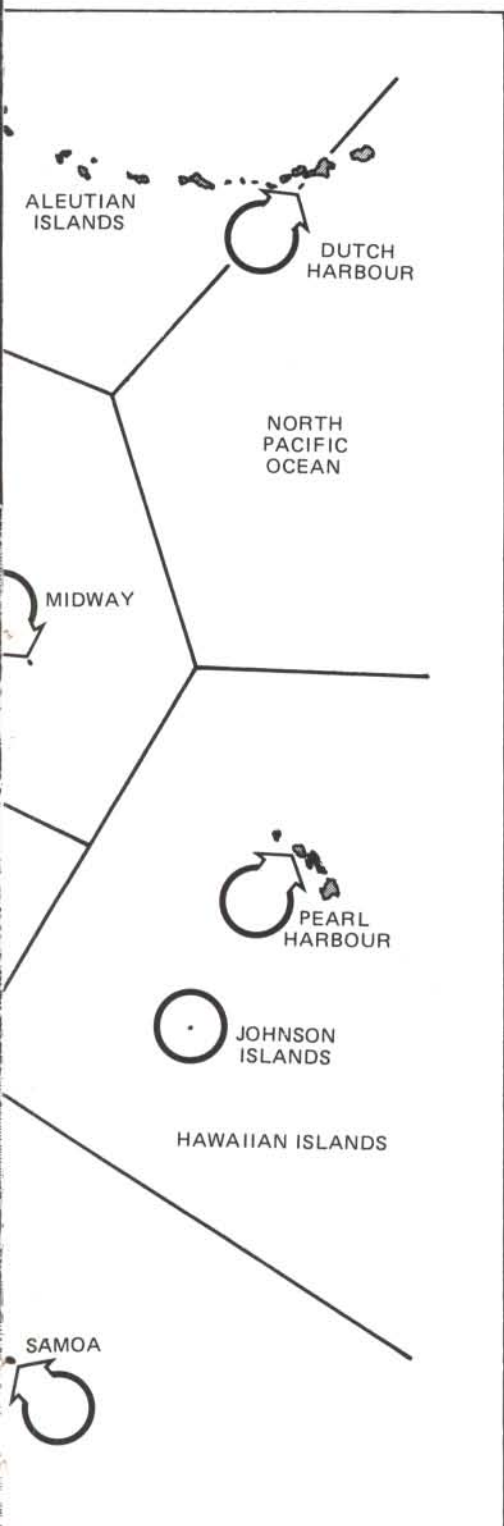


Complicating Wurzburg

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An important element of the output of SPI over the past few years has been the Quadrigame series, each one consisting of four related Folio-size battlegames. One of the first in the series — and one of the best received — was the **Modern Battles Quad** which presented two hypothetical and two actual conflicts of the contemporary era. The purpose of this article is to examine one of these games — **Wurzburg** — with a view to introducing a set of rule modifications to eliminate what are in my opinion certain unsatisfactory elements of the game system.

The first criticism I would make is that, by failing to distinguish between the various arms of a modern army (with the exception of artillery) the game ignores their relative capabilities and limitations. This applies especially to **Wurzburg** since all units are mechanised and hence have the same movement allowance; they are differentiated only by the strength points allocated to them. In consequence, it is a legitimate question in terms of the game to ask why the US Army does not scrap all its tank units (3-2-12) and its mechanised infantry (MI) units (2-3-12) and substitute instead reconnaissance battalions (3-3-12). Similarly the Soviet Army should, according to the game's logic, concentrate upon tank regiments (4-2-12). The answer to this question can be found only outside the game, in the realms of the tactical capabilities of the units in the real world. A judicious mixture of armoured and MI units will carry out an attack more successfully and more completely than one or the other by itself. An unsupported armoured attack is fairly certain to come to grief, as the Israelis found in 1973, on the anti-tank defences of the enemy whilst an MI assault without armoured back-up will tend to smash itself futilely against intact enemy strong-points. Considerations such as these have led me to propose a set of rule modifications which attempt to build the combined arms philosophy, crucial to the structuring of real-world armies, into the game to aid the player in search of a greater degree of realism.

A second modification stems from considerations of playability, that is, it concerns the gaming aspect of simulation gaming. As the Game Notes to **Wurzburg** point out, the mark of a good defender is his use of FPF which, combined with a judicious use of terrain, can transform the most ferocious attack into a meek DI result or worse. Only the most incautious or gung-ho player will allow any of his units to be caught in the open without artillery support; in consequence, very few attacks will use the +12 column of the CRT, most instead taking place at +6, 8 or below. Because the game's designer and developer chose to integrate terrain and combat using a shift effect on the CRT, **Wurzburg** is a defender's game, with the optional 'bloody' CRT often being the only (if costly) way to unlock certain situations. To prevent such stagnation therefore, a new set of rules is proposed below which treats terrain effects, more conventionally, as a specific bonus to the defending unit's strength. At low combat differentials this has the effect of favouring the well-entrenched defender over the relatively weak attacker but at high differentials the attacker is encouraged to concentrate overwhelming strength which really does overwhelm.

A third unsatisfactory aspect of the game is the abstract role of air power (air strikes are handled as a notional addition to attack and defence strengths), a technique which leaves much to be desired both visually and playwise. To overcome this problem it is suggested that air units are physically represented by actual counters, those contained in **Revolt in the East** being particularly suitable. These counters would be stacked with the unit under attack and would have a shift effect upon the CRT. (In terms

of the original game rules, they thus function not as 'flying artillery' but rather as 'flying terrain!') In addition, an optional rule is included to simulate the role of anti-aircraft defences.

This then is the sort of thinking which underlies the amendments suggested below. Whilst these have been formulated with reference only to **Wurzburg**, gamers may wish to experiment with one or more of these modifications in other games in the **Modern Battles Quad** or indeed, if suitable, in other Quads.

Standard Rules Folder:

(5.4) Terrain Effects Chart — in the 'Effect on Combat' column delete 'Shift 2' and 'Shift 3' and substitute 'Defender doubled' and 'Defender tripled' respectively.

(7.2) Multiple Unit and Multi-hex Combat — Add: "(7.24) If both a tank and an infantry unit attack or are attacked by a single Enemy unit in any Combat Phase, their combined Strength for both Attack and Defence is doubled. Note: for the purposes of the game, the Soviet infantry Assault regiment (3-2-12) is considered to be a tank unit. However, if an unsupported tank unit (i.e. one without a co-operating infantry unit) attacks one or more infantry units or vice-versa, the Combat Differential is calculated and the Phasing Player shifts one column to the left on the CRT."

(7.4) Effects of Terrain — Delete Rule 7.42. Substitute: "(7.42) The effect of Terrain on combat is to increase the Defence Strength of the defending unit (see Rule 5.4 Terrain Effects Chart)."

(9.0) Air Power — Delete the whole section. Substitute: "General Rule: Air units are represented by suitable counters, each counter being equivalent to 1 Ground Support Point in the Scenarios. They may be used in each Combat Phase to enhance the attack and defence differential of friendly ground units.

Procedure: Air units are stacked with the unit under attack. After establishing the appropriate column to be used on the CRT (including terrain effects), the Phasing Player will shift one column to the right for each air unit involved.

Example: A US tank unit (3-2-12) supported by 2 air units and 2 Artillery Barrage Strength Points attacks a Soviet tank regiment (4-2-12) in a clear hex. The column used is the +6, 8 column.

(9.1) Restriction — A total of no more than 2 air units may be stacked with the unit under attack, this not being considered a violation of Rule 5.31.

(9.2) Anti-Aircraft Fire (Optional Rule) — General Rule: The effects of anti-aircraft fire on the number of air units available in each Game Turn is determined during the Special Weapons Interphase using the SAM Resolution table on the 'Tables and Charts' sheet.

Procedure: The total number of air units allocated in that Game Turn is read off along the top (horizontal) line of the SAM RT and is cross-classified with the result of a die-roll which is read off the side (vertical) column. (That is, delete the word 'Israeli' from the columns heading and delete the words 'Number of SAM Points Allocated' and substitute 'Die-Roll').

Example: A scenario allocates 4 air units (Ground Support Points) to a player in Game Turn 7. During the Special Weapons Interphase at the start of Game Turn 7 he consults the '4' column on the (revised) SAM RT and rolls a '5'. He thus has 3 air units to allocate for attack and defence in that particular Turn.

before the reinforcements mentioned earlier. Attrition at this stage will favour the Allies considerably and a jumping off point for the turn six carriers is needed if the Allies are going to clear the Japanese lead in control points.

Anyone wishing to try **Victory in the Pacific** should obtain a copy of the General Vol 14 No 4 which contains excellent designers notes by Richard Hamblen as well as a variant that provides for the joining of **VITP** to **War at Sea**. This variant comes complete with two new sea areas to link the two games (Caribbean and Cape of Good Hope) as well as additional counters. This is an ideal way to play both games as obviously decisions made in one game affect the situation in the other.

In conclusion **VITP** recreates well the strategic flow of the Pacific war and is great fun to play. It makes a refreshing change to be able to absorb the rules without recourse to pages of errata and a spare weekend.