

ATLANTIC WALL

The Invasion of Europe, June 1944

- Operational Combat, Inter-action between Armor, Infantry, and Artillery
- Extensive Sea Landing System, Naval Bombardments, Beach Defenses, Tides, and more
- Individual Air Groups, Parachute Drops, Troop Carrier Wings, Pathfinders, and Gliders

Dawn was coming to the sleepy section of French coast known as Normandy and hundreds of tired men were arising for another day of work. But this was no ordinary coastline, and these were no ordinary men. For this was June 6, 1944 and this coastline was now part of Hitler's famed *Festung Europa* — part of the dreaded Atlantic Wall — and these hundreds of tired men were German soldiers watching for an invasion along a coast where few thought it likely to occur. Unknown to these tired sentries, one of the greatest dramas in history was about to begin. Appearing like nightmare spectres were thousands of Allied ships. Their terrible power seemed purposely withheld, awaiting the moment which would see fury sweep across the beach and transform it into a living hell.

This was the beginning of D-Day, the well-known Allied invasion of Europe that spelled the end of Hitler's Thousand Year Reich. This is also the beginning of SPI's new operational Second World War Simulation, *Atlantic Wall*. Never in the history of warfare had an operation so grand in scope and so daring in concept even been attempted. This game covers the three major areas of fighting — the land, the sea, and the air — in great detail on many levels. As the Allied Player, you may hit the beaches with infantry teams in your LCVP's, DD ("Duplex Drive") swimming tanks, and with demolition engineers to blow gaps in German obstacles and minefields. All the while, your rocket-equipped LCT's saturate the coast with volleys of hundreds of 4.5" rockets every second. As the German Player, you must use your Strongpoints and Resistance Nests (at platoon strength) — sited on the bluffs overlooking the sands — to pin the vulnerable Allied soldiers to their positions while your mobile reinforcements approach the coast to hurl the invaders back into the sea. Meanwhile, you must use your 240mm and 280mm batteries at Houlgate and Le Grand Clos to discourage Allied ships from becoming too daring and approaching too far inshore. Once established ashore (and this is a big "if"), the Allies must pour their massive reinforcements poised in Great Britain into Normandy. Absolutely necessary for survival in the fragile bridgeheads will be artillery, armor, anti-tank guns, reconnaissance elements, replacements, and — most importantly — supply. While the Allied Player is building

up, the German Player must make a crucial decision: Do the reinforcements available at the moment make a massive effort to crush the invasion worthwhile? Or should the superb defensive terrain in the Normandy *bocage* be utilized to its utmost, with dreaded 88's dug-in along with machine-gun teams to make an Allied advance well-nigh impossible? *Atlantic Wall* simulates Second World War combat with all its complexities on every level, from quasi-tactical to operational to strategic. As a theater commander, you must make the critical strategic decisions: Which divisions should get the meager supplies arriving at the half-finished "Mulberry" artificial harbors? Should the Cotentin Peninsula be cut at Carteret followed by a drive on the all-important port of Cherbourg, or should an all-out drive be made on the crossroads at Coutances (a city which was to cost many thousands of lives when taken later during *Operation Cobra*)? Where should the German Player pit his fast-arriving Panzer Divisions? In the relatively open terrain west of Caen, or in the dense *bocage* on the American front?

As a Corps or Divisional commander, you must decide how artillery will be allocated in the support of attacks or in the defense of a critical position. In the attack, you must team-up infantry battalions with tank and engineer companies for optimum Combat Results. On the defense, you must pit a strong infantry force, well dug in with minefields and combined with a few anti-tank guns, against the advancing enemy. You also must choose your attacking units wisely, for prolonged combat will tire and eventually disrupt even the most experienced and well-trained troops. It will usually be extremely dangerous to attack with a single unit more than twice per day. Similarly, it is extremely dangerous to defend a much-coveted piece of ground with a unit whose morale has been shaken so much that it will not stand even the slightest shock.

As a regional or battalion-level commander, you will see what it was like to batter your way through "that damned hedgerow country," where each shrub might conceal anything from a sniper to a German tank company. Advancing through this country is extremely tedious, disorganizing, and bloody. Rarely will you be able to take a position without strong help from supporting tanks, artillery, and aircraft, and even then, you will probably

not take more than one position a day. On the defense, the German Player must use his infantry and anti-tank guns wisely, dug in with entrenchments. Even so, your best-laid plans may go awry in the face of ingenious Allied inventions meant to combat these defensive advantages, such as the British "Funny" tanks beating up sown mines with fast-turning iron flails.

The air war over Normandy, usually secondary in nature, is covered in great detail. Individual Groups (Wings for the British) are allocated to various support functions each day. Each unit is given a primary aircraft type and quantitative ratings in performing these functions, from the devastating rocket-firing Typhoon to the night-fighting Black Widows of the USAF. The naval aspect of this campaign is similarly portrayed. Individual ship counters from battleships to monitors, to cruisers and destroyers are used in the game. They perform both bombardment and ground support. The international flavor of this fighting is shown, as air and naval units from practically every nation in Europe will fly or sail in support of the great invasion.

The 2,000 counters represent fighting land, sea, and air units, broken-down companies, and extensive game markers and aids. *Five full-size map sheets* portray most of the Normandy area, from Cherbourg to St. Lo to Caen, at one kilometer per hex. Terrain features shown include beaches, *bocage*, woods, villages, towns, rivers, swamps, fortifications, cliffs, and bluffs. Extensive charts and tables simplify unit organization, invasion waves, and battalion breakdown. A complete order of battle for the Normandy fighting, from June 6 to July 1, 1944 is also included.

Jumping-off from where SPI's *Wacht am Rhein* (the first true operational-level game covering the Second World War) left off, *Atlantic Wall* attempts to perfect the playable, yet detailed system of simulating this type of combat. The distinction of this system lies in its attempts to portray *all* aspects that might be considered crucial from anyone from a Regimental commander on up. The number of things to think about each Game-Turn are truly staggering, yet Players will soon easily adapt to the game-system as it is written in the rules. Any student of history with an interest in this period will not want to miss this simulation.

***Atlantic Wall* will sell for \$26. Available 15 March 1978.**