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# Operation Battleaxe

June, 1941

## Campaign for the Khamsin WW2 Campaign Rules

Version 1.70 – February, 2014



# Introduction

Khamsin is intended to provide a simple campaign system to generate interesting Flames of War battles. This module is intended to be used with the basic rules to recreate a campaign set during Operation Battleaxe, the second Allied attempt to relieve Tobruk, in May of 1941.

## 1.0 Order of Battle

Each historical force is made up of a group of representative FOW companies. Actions generated through campaign maneuvers will be fought out on the tabletop using these types of companies, and the strength of a formation in the campaign is shown as their unit strength.

Initial Deployment –

- Axis formations may be deployed in any areas not marked as Allied controlled on the campaign map
- Formations indicated with a % are restricted to deploying at Bardia

AXIS FORCES (#, ## - reinforcements)				
FORMATION	MOBILITY	ACTIVATION	UNIT STRENGTH	TABLETOP UNIT OPTIONS
Rommel##	Motor	+1	-	Leader
15 <sup>th</sup> Panzer Division				
8 <sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment	Motor	3	4	Leichte or Mittlere Panzerkompanie
115 <sup>th</sup> Schutzen Regiment	Motor	3	2	Schutzenkompanie
104 <sup>th</sup> Schutzen Regiment	Motor	3	1	Schutzenkompanie or Panzerschutzenkompanie
33 <sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion	Recon	2	1	Kradschutzenkompanie
33 <sup>rd</sup> Pionier Battalion	Motor	3	1	Leichte Pionierkompanie
5 <sup>th</sup> Light Division				
5 <sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment ##	Motor	3	4	Leichte or Mittlere Panzerkompanie
2 <sup>nd</sup> MG Battalion ##	Motor	3	1	MG-kompanie
3 <sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion #	Recon	2	1	Kradschutzenkompanie
Italian Trento Division				
I/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment %	Leg	0	1	Posizione de Fucilieri
II/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment	Leg	0	1	Posizione de Fucilieri
III/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment	Leg	0	1	Posizione de Fucilieri

**COMMONWEALTH FORCES**

FORMATION	MOBILITY	ACTIVATION	UNIT STRENGTH	TABLETOP UNIT OPTIONS
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division</b>				
7 <sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade	Motor	3	4	Armoured Regiment or Crusader Armoured Squadron
"Jock" Campbell	Motor	+1	-	Leader, affects 7 <sup>th</sup> Support Group Only
7 <sup>th</sup> Support Group	Motor	4	2	Jock Column
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division</b>				
Central India Horse	Recon	2	1	Australian Divisional cavalry squadron [1]
11 <sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade	Leg	4	3	Indian rifle company
4 <sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade	Motor	3	4	Infantry Tank Company
22 <sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade	Motor	3	3	Guards rifle company

[1] – Indian unit but uses the Australian list, but with Indian special rules - see OOB notes

**Initial Deployment –**

- up to one formation from 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division may be initially deployed in Sidi Suleiman
- All other Commonwealth formations must be initially deployed in Halfway House, Quaret el Reteim or the British Assembly area

**Force Changes / Restrictions –**

Flames of War forces are selected from the appropriate list in the Hellfire & Back book. Details by nationality are as set forth in the Army List Section.

## 2.0 Campaign Timeline

The Operation Battleaxe campaign commences on June 15<sup>th</sup> and ends by June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1941 (a total of 3 days).

### Determining Weather –

The weather during this campaign was primarily dry and sunny. Weather has no impact on the campaign and is assumed to be clear each campaign turn.

### Reinforcement Arrival Areas –

- All Axis reinforcements arrive in Sidi Azeiz

### Replacements –

- Integration - both sides in the Operation Battleaxe campaign use dedicated replacements
- The Axis CiC receives 10 replacement points in the morning turn of June 16 and 17
- The Commonwealth CiC receives 15 replacement points in the morning turn of June 16 and 17

Jun 15 morning [1]		Jun 16 morning \$		Jun 17 morning \$
Jun 15 afternoon [2]		Jun 16 afternoon		Jun 17 afternoon
Jun 15 evening [3]		Jun 16 evening		Jun 17 evening

Milestones indicated on the turn chart below are:

[1] - British surprise move

[2] - Axis reinforcements arrive (3<sup>rd</sup> Recon)

[3] - Axis reinforcements arrive (5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Regt, 2<sup>nd</sup> MG Bn, Rommel)

\$ - both sides receive replacements

## 2.0 Coordination Special Rules

### **Axis Command Restrictions:**

Unlike their Allied opponents, the Axis forces had a more unified command structure in the frontier area at the time of the Battleaxe fighting.

The Axis forces suffer from no command restrictions in this campaign scenario.

### **Commonwealth Command Restrictions:**

British doctrine at this time discouraged close cooperation between armored units and infantry units, other than the infantry tank units specifically designed to support the infantry.

To reflect this, Commonwealth forces from 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division may not cooperate in battle with forces drawn from 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, and vice versa. Forces from one division may never occupy an area occupied by forces of the other division, although they may move through such an area as long as they end their movement in an area not occupied by forces from the other division. In addition, an enemy occupied area may only be attacked by forces from one of the divisions in a given turn.

## 3.0 Air Operations

### **Air Support Specifics –**

During this period in the desert most air operations were concentrated on interdiction and naval / convoy operations. Effective air / ground coordination was still being developed.

During the Battleaxe operation the Allied forces enjoyed almost total command of the air, but did nothing effective in translating this into a positive effect on the ground campaign.

To reflect this, neither side may purchase or use air support in any engagement during this campaign scenario.

### **Aerial Recon –**

One advantage the Allies did gain from their command of the skies was better intelligence about enemy movements than their Axis opponents.

To reflect this, each turn the Allied CiC may designate one map area as the focus of aerial recon. The referee will reveal the unit strength and type of the Axis forces located in that area at the start of that turn.

## 4.0 Movement Special Rules

### Desert Movement Types –

In the desert theater, movement and particularly supply were heavily dependent on the coastal road (Via Balbia), which is the only significant artery through the theater.

### Movement –

Movement point costs for Operation Battleaxe are as follows:

Connector	Movement Point Cost
Artery	2
Trail	3
Desert	3

### Control of Areas –

At the start, all areas on the map except Halfway House, Sidi Suleiman, Quaret el Reteim and the British Assembly Area are controlled by the Axis.

### The British Surprise Move –

Rommel had a pretty good idea that an Allied offensive in the frontier area was coming, but did not know the exact timing. Consequently, the British / Commonwealth offensive achieved a small level of temporary tactical surprise.

To reflect this, on the first turn of the campaign, only Allied formations may be given movement orders. In addition, all Allied units automatically pass their activation rolls on the first turn.

### Supply Areas / Special Rules –

Supply areas for Axis formations are Bardia and Sidi Azeiz. Supply Areas for the Commonwealth formations are Halfway House and Quaret el Reteim.

### German Forward Supply Doctrine –

German mobile divisions during this period had supply columns which traveled with them up close to the front lines. To reflect this, any German mobile formation that is in a position where it would normally be out of supply may ignore the effects of being out of supply for one campaign turn. If the formation remains out of supply for more than one turn it suffers the normal effects of being out of supply.

### Infantry Tank Supply –

British Infantry Tank units had a very limited range and required regular supply replenishment, which made it very difficult to keep them supplied too far from the coastal highway.

To reflect this, supply for an Infantry Tank unit may only be traced along a maximum of 2 non-artery connectors. If the unit needs to trace supply through more than 2 trail or desert connectors it is treated as out of supply.

## 5.0 Engagement Special Rules

### Setting up the table –

This campaign uses the following terrain placement tables:

### Basic desert table:

Roll for one random feature for every 2' by 2' section of table (6 rolls for a 4' by 6' table)

Terrain Table	
Terrain	Die Roll
None	1-3
Soft sand	4
Ridge or low rise	5
Rough going / scrub	6
Gully	7+

If a terrain feature is indicated, one should be placed by the defender anywhere within that section of the table. Terrain features should be at least 8" and no more than 16" in length and width, and may cover no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the surface area of that section of the table.

Note that areas with no other terrain are hard sand (treated as road for FOW).

Special Rule – soft sand areas in the desert were particularly difficult for wheeled vehicles to traverse. Areas of soft sand are impassable to any but fully tracked vehicles and all gun teams except man-packed gun teams.

### Escarpment table:

Set up the table as per the basic desert table above, but add +1 to each die roll. In addition, place an escarpment along one random long table edge.

The escarpment is represented by a thin strip of very steep terrain along one of the long table edges. It is impassable to all except infantry or man-packed guns that are mountaineers. Place d2 rocky draws or wadis at random in the escarpment, treat them as difficult terrain providing cover. Any reserves may only enter the escarpment table edge at a wadi/draw.

The base of the escarpment (within 6") is treated as rocky ground, counting as very difficult going that provides cover.

### Tables with Defenses:

Set up the terrain as per the main terrain type.

The defender receives force adjustments as follows:

- Frontier Wire Area – the defender may deploy up to 8 barbed wire sections. The wire must be placed in no man's land and in a straight line, although the line may have gaps
- Fortress Area – the defender may deploy up to 4 AT obstacles in no man's land

## 5.0 Engagement Special Rules

(continued)

### **Strongpoint Areas –**

Although the frontier area was not as fortified as Rommel would have liked, good progress had been made at several key points in creating strong defensive positions.

To reflect this, a German force defending in a strongpoint area may be fielded as a stutzpunkt instead of its normal list.

Such a force follows all of the normal rules for using a stutzpunkt on the tabletop.

## 6.0 Allied Special Rules

### **British Armor Laager Doctrine –**

British armored formations operated under a doctrine of laager, where they withdrew at dusk to a “safe” location and formed a laager for the night. This often resulted in them relinquishing positions they had fought for successfully during the day.

To reflect this, any force consisting of only British armor companies must withdraw after any engagement fought during an evening turn; unless their combat result was double that of the opposing side. They follow the normal withdrawal rules, except that they are not required to withdraw if they have no valid area to withdraw to.

## 7.0 Axis Special Rules

### **German Recovery Efficiency –**

During Operation Battleaxe the German vehicle recovery teams were more effective than the corresponding Commonwealth and Italian teams. To reflect this, German formations receive a +1 modifier to any die rolls for AFV recovery.

### **Italian Mobility –**

The Italian formations deployed on the frontier were stripped of all of their transport for use in keeping the Axis forces supplied, and deployed in static positions.

To reflect this, Italian forces in this campaign are immobile and may not be ordered to move or attack another area. If they are forced to retreat as a result of combat they are destroyed (dispersed and no longer combat effective), as they have no transport to move any of their equipment.

## 8.0 Winning the Campaign

### **Victory –**

The goal of Operation Battleaxe was to clear the frontier area of enemy forces, as a prelude to the relief of Tobruk.

This is accomplished by creating and maintaining an unobstructed string of areas between the British supply areas and either Bardia or Sidi Azeiz for 2 consecutive turns. Success results in a major Allied victory.

At the same time, both sides were looking to inflict significant losses on the other, to improve their position for future fighting. If either force manages to inflict 3x the losses in attrition points it receives it wins a victory.

Finally, securing a more favorable position in the frontier area would assist both sides in the next offensive. If the Allied player controls at least half of the VPs on the map at the conclusion of the campaign, it ends as a marginal Allied win.

Finally, if neither side achieves a win through the criteria above, the campaign is considered a minor Axis victory.

### **Command Medals –**

The North African theater was renowned for both the frequent personal heroism displayed on all sides, and also for the much more gentlemanly approach that was shared by the combatants. To best reflect this, the players should strive to match the heroism shown in history on the tabletop, and the referee should strictly enforce the honor point penalties against un-chivalrous conduct.

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## 9.0 Optional Rules:

There are no optional rules for this campaign.

## 10.0 Strategies:

### **Map Movement and Area Control –**

The Allies start out with a slender superiority in power, which will erode quickly as Axis reinforcements arrive. The Allied forces must be aggressive early, and hope to keep the Axis off balance long enough to complete their corridor. Just as was the case historically, this will be a tall order.

### **Tactical / Tabletop –**

Remember that you know the mission prior to planning your army list for a given engagement. Think through your plan for the action, remember the restrictions on deployment, etc. when setting up your force. This is a key element for achieving victory on the tabletop.

**German** - The Axis forces, particularly the German units, have lots of different options to bring to the tabletop, allowing lots of customization by mission and opponent if the Axis has good intelligence. This brings a tactical flexibility, which combined with some important weapons advantages (the 88mm gun, the versatility of the PzIV and solid armor of the PzIII, the excellent 50mm PaK, etc.) makes the German units very tough through the campaign.

The choice on whether to hunker down using a stutzpunkt force where allowed, or fight a more mobile action, should be made carefully depending on the wider strategic goals at that point in the campaign.

**Commonwealth** – on the other hand, playing the Commonwealth is really an exercise in getting a few basic things right. Infantry units have solid, tough infantry combined with portees and excellent artillery. Armored units have decent and fast tanks combined with, well, powerful artillery. While there are fewer different viable looks to offer on the tabletop, good Commonwealth players will get very good at using their core units well together.

**Italian** – Italian units were basically used as static defenders during the operation, and this is reflected on the tabletop. Their commanders should strive to utilize their strengths. If you focus on artillery, arguably the best arm of service for Italy, your forces can be surprisingly tough for the Commonwealth to tackle.

# 11.0 Army List Section

## Introduction –

All forces shown are fielded using the appropriate Flames of War book, or the equivalent for other rules systems.

Exceptions are noted in each nation's entry in this section.

## Army Lists - Axis

### Trento Division / 62<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment [Italian] –

**Rating:** Trento Division units are rated Regular except where noted in Hellfire and Back  
**List:** Hellfire and Back Posizione di Fucilieri list, Fucilieri choices  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** may not field Carri or Medium Tank Platoons, but may field 0-1 German Infanterie platoon as a support choice  
**Notes:** immobile

### 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division / 8<sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment –

**Rating:** 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Leichte or Mittlere Panzerkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** no captured British armor was available  
**Notes:** none

### 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division / 104<sup>th</sup> & 115<sup>th</sup> Schutzen Regiments –

**Rating:** 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Schutzenkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** none  
**Notes:** none

### 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division / 33<sup>rd</sup> Pionier Battalion –

**Rating:** 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Leichte Pionierkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** none  
**Notes:** none

### 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division / 33<sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion –

**Rating:** 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Kradschutzenkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** none  
**Notes:** none

## Army List - Axis

### 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division / 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment –

**Rating:** 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Leichte or Mittlere Panzerkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** no captured British armor was available  
**Notes:** none

### 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division / 2<sup>nd</sup> MG Battalion –

**Rating:** 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** MK Kompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** none  
**Notes:** none

### 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division / 3<sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion –

**Rating:** 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division units are rated Confident Veteran  
**List:** Kradschützenkompanie, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** none  
**Notes:** none

# Army List - Allied

## 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division / 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade –

**Rating:** Indian Division units are rated Fearless Trained except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Hellfire & Back book – Indian Rifle Company list  
**Added support units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** may not field Valentine platoons or Australian rifle platoons or field batteries  
**Notes:** none

## 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division / 22<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade –

**Rating:** Guards units are rated Confident Veteran except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Hellfire & Back book – Guards Rifle Company list  
**Added support units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** may not field Valentine platoons or Australian rifle platoons or field batteries  
**Notes:** uses the Guards special rules

## 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division / Central India Horse –

**Rating:** Indian Division units are rated Fearless Trained except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Hellfire & Back book – Australian Divisional Cavalry Squadron list  
**Added support units:** may not field Commonwealth rifle or Commonwealth MG platoons, but may instead field 8<sup>th</sup> Army MG platoons or Indian Rifle platoons for those support slots  
**Prohibited units:** may not field captured Italian or French tanks; may not field Marmon-Herrington or Humber armored cars  
**Notes:** may replace all Universal carriers with India-pattern carriers; troops are Indian and use Indian and not Australian special rules

## 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division / 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade (Attached) –

**Rating:** 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade units are rated Confident Trained except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Infantry Tank Company, Hellfire & Back list  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** may not field Valentine platoons, Commonwealth rifle platoons or Commonwealth Carrier platoons  
**Notes:** none

## 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division / 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade –

**Rating:** 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade units are rated Confident Trained except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Armoured Regiment or Crusader Armoured Squadron list, Hellfire & Back  
**Added units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** captured armoured companies ; may not field Humber armored cars  
**Notes:** none

## 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division / 7<sup>th</sup> Support Group –

**Rating:** Support Group units are rated Confident Veteran except where noted in Hellfire & Back  
**List:** Hellfire & Back book – Jock Column list  
**Added support units:** none  
**Prohibited units:** may not field Honey Armoured platoons or Humber Armoured Cars  
**Notes:** none

## Move and Attrition Sheet – Axis

Formation	Current Attrition Points			Start Area	Destination Area	Via*
	Armor	General	Total			
Rommel						
8 <sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment						
115 <sup>th</sup> Schutzen Regiment						
104 <sup>th</sup> Schutzen Regiment						
33 <sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion						
33 <sup>rd</sup> Pionier Battalion						
5 <sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment						
2 <sup>nd</sup> MG Battalion						
3 <sup>rd</sup> Recon Battalion						
1/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Italian)						
2/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Italian)						
3/62 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Italian)						

\* indicate the area to be moved through to get to the destination if the formation is moving through multiple areas

# Move and Attrition Sheet – Commonwealth

Formation	Current Attrition Points			Start Area	Destination Area	Via*
	Armor	General	Total			
7 <sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade						
“Jock” Campbell						
7 <sup>th</sup> Support Group						
Central India Horse						
11 <sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade						
22 <sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade						
4 <sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade						

\* indicate the area to be moved through to get to the destination if the formation is moving through multiple areas



# Operation Battleaxe Map

**Key:**

-  VP Area
-  Fortress Area
-  Escarpment Area
-  Road Connector
-  Trail Connector
-  Desert Connector
-  Supply Source Area
-  Frontier Wire Area
-  Strongpoint Area

