DAK 2 Example of Play

https://www.boardgamegeek.com/thread/169626/dak2-example-play

(This detailed walkthrough was originally posted by Jim Kuchar on Boardgamegeek, June 6, 2007, but is still excellent at showing the ebb and flow of an OCS game.)

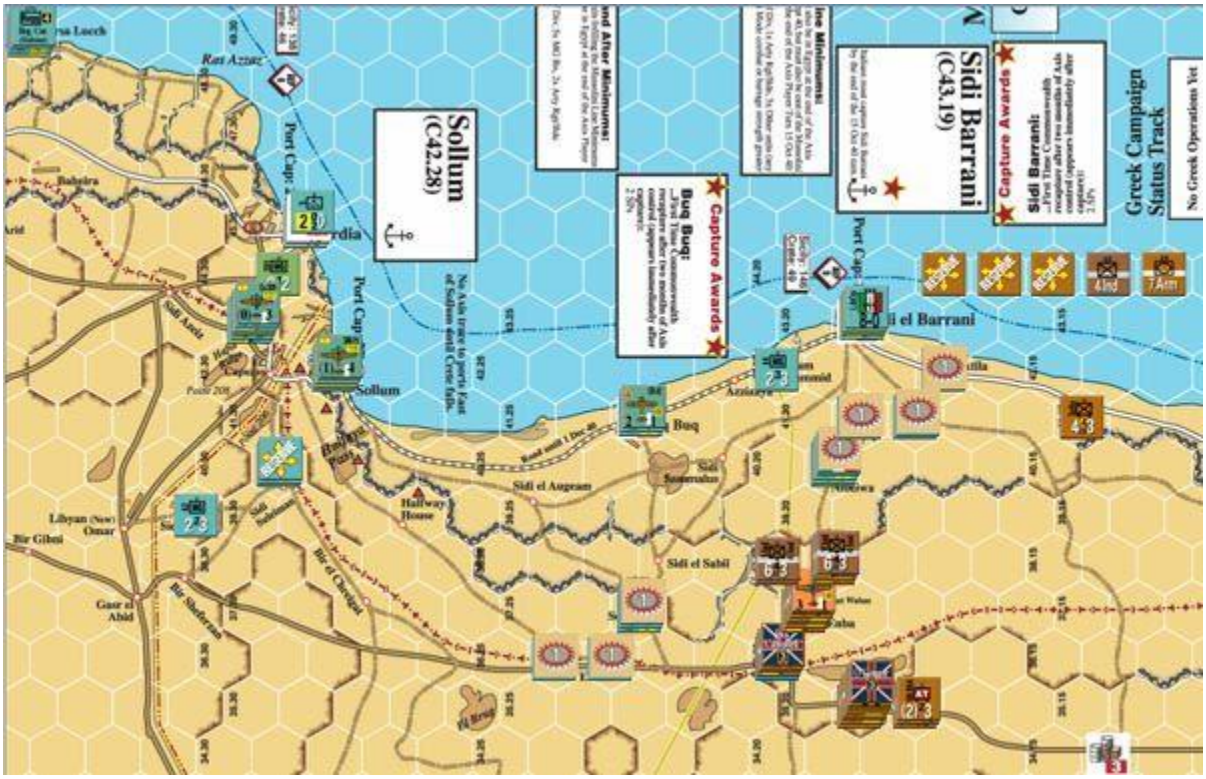
I've gotten back into the Operational Combat System (OCS) after a few years doing other things, and thought the community might appreciate a somewhat detailed example of play, especially now that we can enhance our reports on BGG using images. So, in the next few installments I will provide a run-through of one player-turn. As I go, I'll try to highlight what makes OCS really fantastic as a gaming system, and what makes playing DAK a real pleasure.

The OCS rules are currently being updated to version 4.0, and that is what I'll be using here. This latest version has streamlined several sections (most notably air missions) and the result is an even better product.

I will play through part of "Training Scenario #1". This scenario starts at the beginning of Operation Compass, the Allies' late-1940 counteroffensive against a somewhat-limited and stagnant Italian incursion into western Egypt. With a length of 6 turns (three weeks time) the scenario provides only a glimpse into how an entire campaign (covering 239 turns) could play out. A number of shorter and mid-sized scenarios are also available covering any stage of the fight for eastern north Africa.

To win this scenario, the Commonwealth has to destroy the Italian army in Egypt. A "smashing" victory occurs if the Commonwealth can also capture Bardia, a small port on the opposite side of the Italian defenders.

Here's an overview of the starting positions for each side:



The Commonwealth forces consist of a number of armored battalions of the elite 7th Armored Division and several infantry brigades from the 4th Indian Division, all backed up with artillery and assorted independent units. Also present are three valuable leaders (O'Connor, Gott, and Campbell) who can help stacks move more responsively and improve combat effectiveness. Most of the Commonwealth supplies have been stashed in the town of Mersa Matruh off to the east of the segment of the map shown above. Two smaller supply dumps have also been set up, one just off the map above to the east near the coast, and the other as shown at a crossroads in the southeast corner. In OCS, supply is everything: it limits the extent to which units can maneuver, attack, or defend. The player constantly needs to balance the need to move, attack, or rest and resupply. An attack without a sufficient reserve of supplies will fizzle out.

The Italian forces are almost entirely poorly-rated infantry divisions and artillery, with a few small light tank battalions. All of the Italian supply is cached in coastal cities, and a few fortified defensive positions (called hedgehogs) have been built up along the front. The Italians also have one leader, Maletti, to support their troops, and a special Raggruppamento ("Ragg") that provides some additional flexibility in mobilizing their forces.

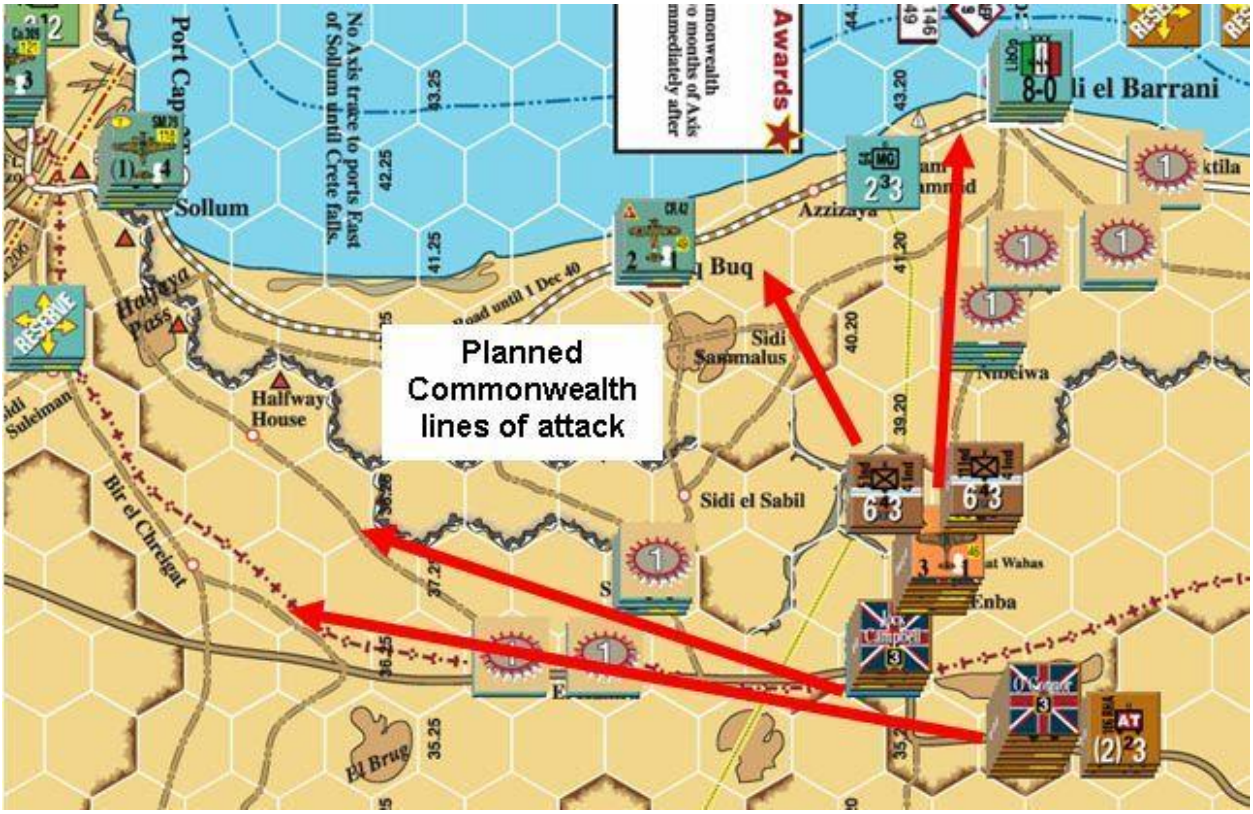
The terrain is mostly open desert with some low hills, but divided starkly by several escarpments (long, impassable cliff-like ridges). These escarpments play a large and interesting role in funneling combat units and supplies.

One of the interesting features of OCS is that each unit can switch between several modes (combat, move, strategic, reserve, exploit, or disorganized), shown by which side of the unit

faces up and whether an identifying marker is placed on top. Which mode to be in, and when, plays an important part in success and can lead to some challenging decisions. Shown here are two Italian units (the small 62nd light tank battalion and large Marmarica infantry division) that have started set up in reserve mode. This will allow them flexibility to move more rapidly in response to Commonwealth activity. However, until these reserves are formally released they are unable to attack and have their defensive strength halved due to their limbered stance. Additionally, there are only a few reserve markers available to each side; this limits the extent to which an entire army can be flexibly mobilized.

A few aircraft are also available. The Commonwealth have access to some Hurricanes, Gladiators, and Blenheim IVs; the Italians have CR.42 fighters and Ca.309 and SM.79 bombers.

The basic Commonwealth plan in this scenario is to push north to the coast and break up Italian supply lines to the towns of Buq Buq and Sidi el Barrani, while also pushing westward toward Sollum. If things go well, the Commonwealth will then turn north to capture Bardia. One of the great aspects of OCS is that it is eminently possible to defeat enemy units by maneuvering to cut off their supply rather than attacking them head-on. In fact, outright frontal assaults quickly drain supplies and leave an exhausted force, out of fuel, that is helpless to respond to enemy maneuvers. So, while some Commonwealth units will attack key Italian defenders, the main goal is to actually move around most of the defensive positions and cut off their supplies, leading to surrender.

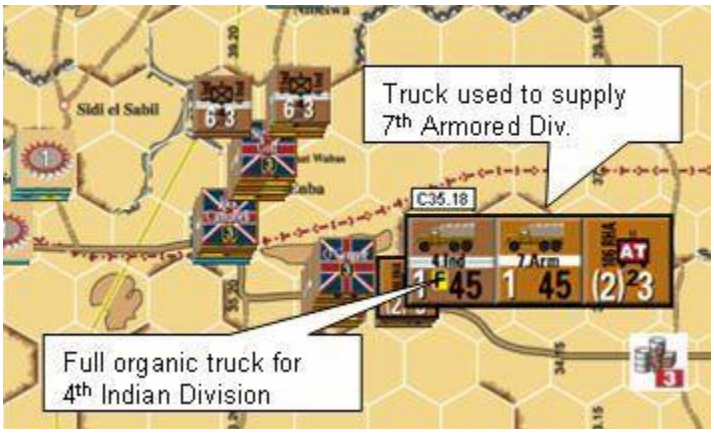


Turn 1: 8 December 1940

I. Pre-Turn Phase
1. Weather: roll is 1,6 = clear
2. First player determination: Commonwealth goes first by scenario design

II. Commonwealth Turn 1
A. Aircraft refit: no inactive aircraft, so no actions needed
B. Reinforcement phase: 2 Supply Points (SP) arrive at Mersa Matruh (off the map to the east), bringing the total there to 13 SP.
C. Mode determination and movement phase
i. breakout segment: none
ii. Mode & movement segment:

The first action is to fuel the entire 7th Armored Division. This costs 1 SP and will allow every unit within that Division to move this turn. There's an "organic truck" for the 7th Armored division in hex 35.18 (under the AT gun) which is used to supply the necessary SP. Later, we'll move that truck back to Mersa Matruh to reload with supplies.



We flip the 7th Armored Division marker (not shown here) to its fueled side to keep track that all of its units have gas.

Without fuel, only ‘leg’ movement units can move (the other movement types are track and truck). Leg units are those with a white movement factor (the rightmost value at the bottom of each counter); track units have a red movement factor, and truck units have a black movement factor.

Next, the Commonwealth sends a sortie of Hurricanes from their airstrip at Ghat Wahas to Buq Buq to engage the Italian CR.42s. This fighter sweep is intended to draw the Italian fighters out so that they are unable to engage future Allied bombing missions. The Hurricanes have an air combat rating of 3 to the CR.42’s 2, so they have an edge in the combat.

Air combat is very simplified: roll two dice, add the attacker’s combat rating and subtract the defender’s rating. 6-or-less and the attacker must abort, 8-or-higher and the defender must abort, otherwise both abort. A third die is used to determine whether an aborting aircraft suffers a step loss (1/3 chance).

Air combat roll is a 3, which is adjusted to a 4. A third die shows that no abort loss occurs. Despite being the better aircraft, the Hurricanes botch their sweep and wind up returning to Ghat Wahas to refuel.

Next, a Gladiator squadron is sent from Mersa Matruh to Buq Buq. The Gladiators are essentially equal to the CR.42s (2 combat rating) but the Commonwealth is going to take its chances in the hope that the Italian air defense can be weakened. The air combat roll is a 6, again resulting in the attacker aborting (no losses either side).

Now, time for some ground combat! During movement, a special attack called an overrun is possible. As we'll see, there are a number of stages to run through when conducting combat. A stack of three armored battalions (1st Royal Tank Regiment, 8th Hussars, 3rd Hussars) led by O'Connor move along the road from their initial position co-located with the Western Desert HQ to just east of a small Italian hedgehog containing a single machinegun battalion. This move takes 2 movement points (MPs). The stack then performs an overrun attack on the Italian position (3 more MPs, plus combat supply).

To attack in OCS, each combat unit step must expend ¼ SP (also called 1T or Token; 4T = 1 SP). So, to supply this attack, the Commonwealth must burn 3T supplies, which it does from the 3 SP dump to the east of the Western Desert HQ. The HQ is able to reach out a distance of 5 MPs to that supply dump and then "throw" the supply as far as 8 MPs (as marked on this HQ) to the hungry 7th Armored Division units.

Defenders in a combat need to pay a flat 1T or 2T (depending on size) or else be forced to defend at half strength. The defending machineguns choose to pay the 1T supply cost using the dump at Buq Buq (which they are able to reach because it is within 5 MPs of their position).

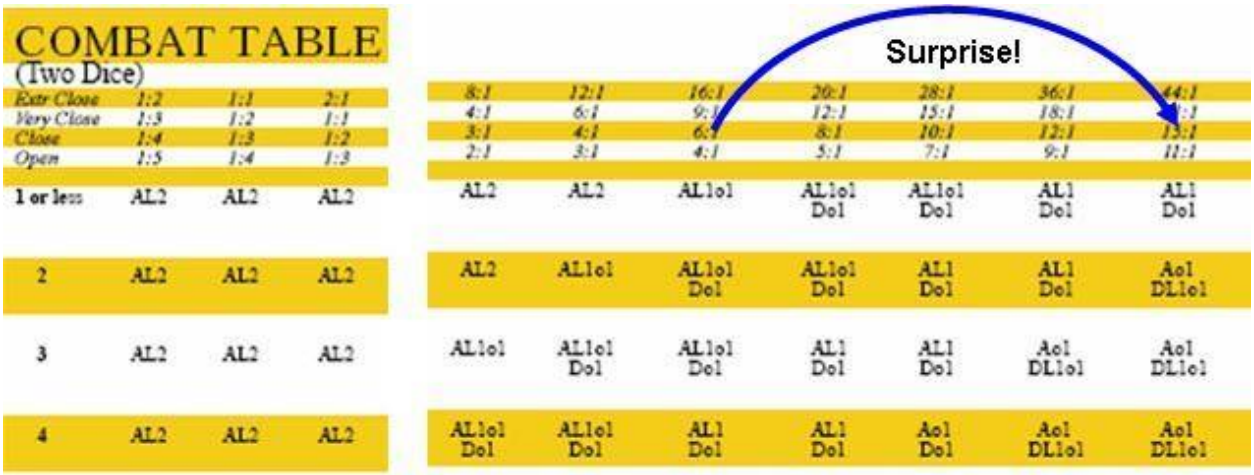
Next, each side declares its Action Rating (AR) in the attack. Each unit has an AR shown by the small number in the center of the counter. Higher ARs lead to higher likelihood of combat success, but any losses must first come from the unit whose AR was used to lead the attack. In DAK, leaders can also support an attack and increase the AR by 1, but might suffer wounding,

capture, or even death in the process. In this case, the Commonwealth declares that the 8th Hussars are leading the attack (5 AR) also supported by O'Connor, for a final AR of 6. The Italian defender is actually quite good as Italians go, with an AR of 3. The leader loss check is a 10, well above the 6 needed to keep O'Connor safe and sound.

The combat odds depend on attack ratings (left-most value on the counter) and on the terrain and attacker and defender types. Normally, armored (yellow) and mechanized (red) units have their attack strengths doubled in open terrain. However, against a hedgehog (or other anti-tank defense) this is reduced to a factor of 1.5. The total attack strength is then (4+2+2)x1.5 = 12, against a defense strength of 3, for final combat odds of 4:1.

The next step is to determine whether there is any surprise in the combat. I actually don't like the term surprise; what this represents is how better training or preparedness may result in an easier, more successful attack than simple combat odds would suggest. It makes each unit's combat value more subtle. Surprise is handled by rolling two dice, adding attacker AR, subtracting defender AR, and subtracting one more for the hedgehog defenses. If the result is 9 or more in an overrun (10 or more in a regular attack) then attacker surprise occurs; if the result is 6 or less in an overrun (5 or less in a regular attack) then defender surprise occurs. When surprise occurs, the column used in the combat results table is shifted left or right by as many columns as a subsequent die roll. This can lead to much larger or smaller combat odds than originally expected.

In this case, the surprise roll is a 7 (+6 attacker AR -3 defender AR -1 hedgehog) = 9 which results in attacker surprise! The Commonwealth armored units have caught the Italians in their tents. The subsequent die roll is a 4, pushing the combat column from 4:1 to the 11:1 column.



Finally, we roll two dice to resolve the combat (again adjusting for the AR difference and subtracting the hedgehog level). The dice yield a paltry 2 which is adjusted to a 4. The results are then "Ao1 DL1o1": The defender must lose 1 step (DL1) and has the option to either lose one more step or retreat one hex (o1). The attacker also has the option to lose one step or retreat one

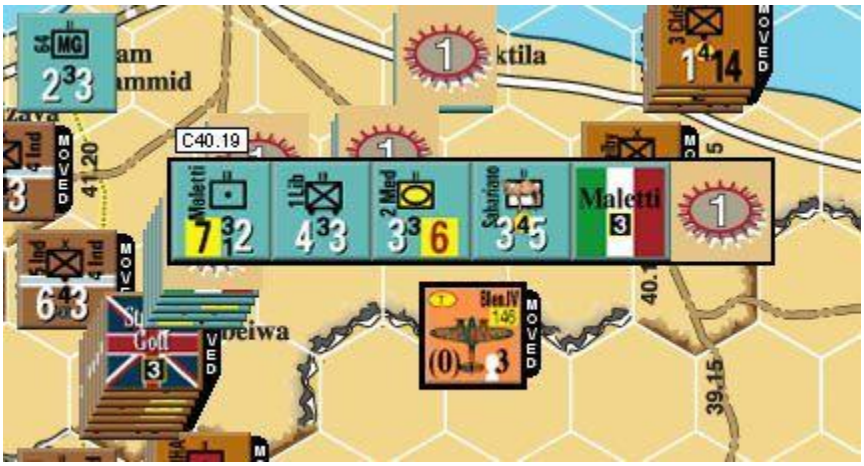
hex (Ao1), and should the attacker exercise the option to retreat, the defender need not exercise his option.

Since units are at a premium, the Commonwealth decides to retreat rather than lose the 8th Hussars (a unit with only a single step). The Italians, however, must lose their single-step machinegun battalion.

The rest of the movement phase continues without any overrun attacks. Several units move from Mersa Matruh to reinforce positions to the east of the Italians along the coast. Units in the center push northwards toward the coast. The northernmost unit (11th Indian infantry brigade) actually blocks the supply line from the west to Sidi el Barrani, at least until Italian units move to cover the road adjacent to the Commonwealth unit. Movement is finished off running several trucks to and from Mersa Matruh to replenish supply dumps near the front.

Final positions at the end of the Commonwealth movement segment.

The last part of the mode determination and movement phase is a barrage segment wherein aircraft and ships can conduct barrage attacks. A group of Blenheims fly from Mersa Matruh to the main Italian defensive hedgehog and bombard it.



First, the bombers must survive defensive flak or possible interception by the still-active Italian CR.42 fighters. The Italians decide not to intercept so that their fighters can remain active. However, flak still is used. This involves rolling two dice and adding modifiers depending on whether the hex of interest is within a patrol zone (this one is) and other defenses in the hex. The roll here is a 10, modified to a 12 which results in a step-loss to the Blenheims. Their barrage rating is reduced from a 3 to a 2.

The barrage is then conducted (2 factors, shifted left 1 column due to the hedgehog). The resulting roll (10) is no effect. Note that one interesting aspect of barrages is that the more densely packed the target hex is, the more likely it is for casualties to result.

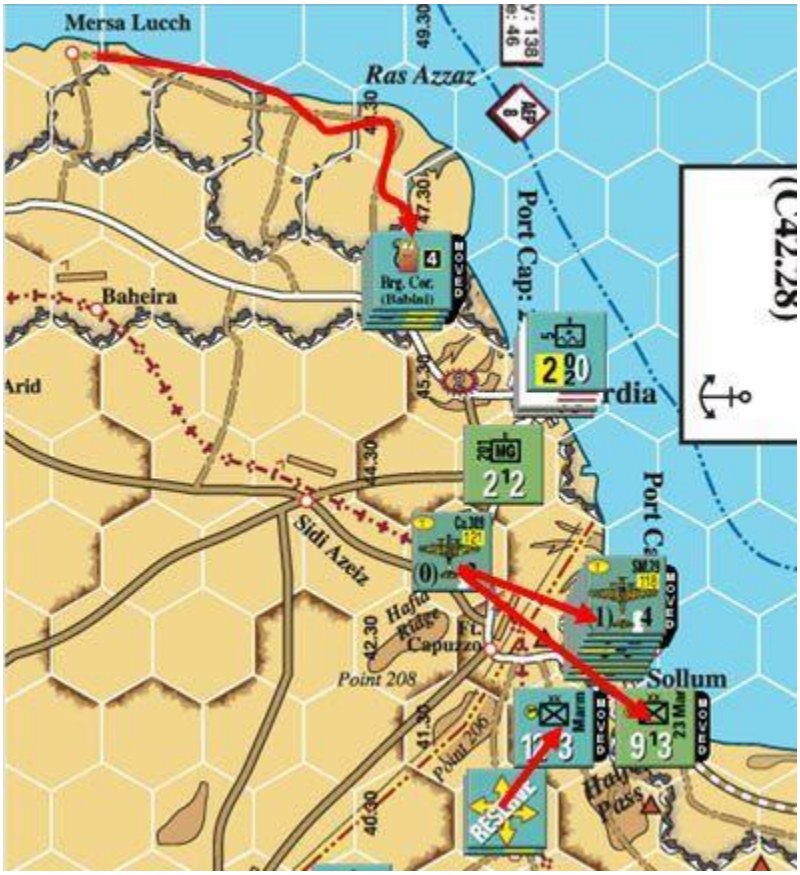
This scenario also allows the Commonwealth to conduct 12-factor Naval barrages against coastal targets on the first two turns. An attempted barrage against Sidi el Barrani is ineffective.

D. Supply phase.
Each Commonwealth unit is now checked to determine whether it is in "trace supply". This requires being within 5 MPs of a road leading to a port or railroad from which supplies can be obtained, or within the throw distance of an HQ that itself is in trace supply. In this case, all Commonwealth units are in trace supply.

If a unit is not in trace supply, it must either use up SPs on the map (if within range) or be marked as out of supply and suffer potential attrition effects. Worst case, an unsupplied unit can be completely destroyed in this phase (it surrenders).

E. Reaction phase:

Now it is the Italians' turn to try to react to the Commonwealth movement. Units can be released from reserve and/or leaders and Raggs can attempt to move their stacks. Any of these active units can move (at ½ of their movement allowance), overrun, and conduct barrages. Ragg Babini is successfully activated (rolling a 4, which is at least the 4 needed to activate it). The Ragg expends 3T fuel to move the three armored units that it is stacked with. By staying in the Ragg, these units will also be fueled during the Italian player turn and so will be able to continue to move. Two other reserve stacks are released and move slightly southeast to better cover the coastal roads leading into Sollum.



Seeing as things are getting warm near Buq Buq, the CR.42 squadron rebases to Sollum. As a fighter unit traveling within its range, it even gets to stay active.

Next, the two Italian bomber groups move to barrage Commonwealth airstrip at Ghat Wahas.

They undergo flak that results in a step loss (randomly allocated to the Ca.309 unit). The resulting 6-factor barrage has no effect and the bombers return to their airstrips, inactive.

F. Combat Phase:

Now back to the Commonwealth player to conduct ground combat.

i. Barrage segment

To soften up one of the hedgehogs, the Commonwealth decides that it is worth some supplies to barrage the position with artillery units in hex C38.19. A total of 32 barrage factors are applied, which costs 4T in supply from the southern supply dump.

The barrage is shifted left one column due to the hedgehog. A roll of two dice yields a 6, which is enough to disorganize the defenders. A “DG” marker is placed on their stack, and they now

have halved combat and movement factors and a -1 modifier to their AR value.

Spurred on by this success, the Commonwealth also spends supplies to barrage another Italian hedgehog to the west using the 4th Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) Regiment.

There is a somewhat dense grouping of units in the target hex, where density is measured in Regimental Equivalents (RE). Maximum staking in any one hex is 10 RE. This target hex has a total of 4.5 RE (0.5 from 20th Light Tank battalion, 3 from Cirene Division, 1 from the 21 Italian HQ). The result is a shift of two column to the right on the barrage table (which is only partially offset by a 1-column shift to the left due to the hedgehog). The 5 barrage factors then attack on the 8-11 factor column. An excellent roll of 11 results in an outcome of "1/2" which means that there is a 50% chance of a step loss plus all defenders are disorganized. The step loss is realized, and the Italians kill off the light tank unit (figuring they won't be able to afford any fuel to move it later anyway).

ii. Combat segment

With two disorganized defensive positions, the Commonwealth can't turn down the opportunity to attack them in force. Three units decide to contribute to the attack (plus the leader Campbell) for a total supply cost of 3T. The Italian defenders pay their 2T supply cost.

Attacker AR is 4 (+1 more for Campbell) against 1 on the defense (2 reduced by 1 for being disorganized). Leader loss check comes out ok for Campbell, who is not wounded or killed in this action. Combat odds are 10:8.5 which reduces to 1.17:1 = 1:1.

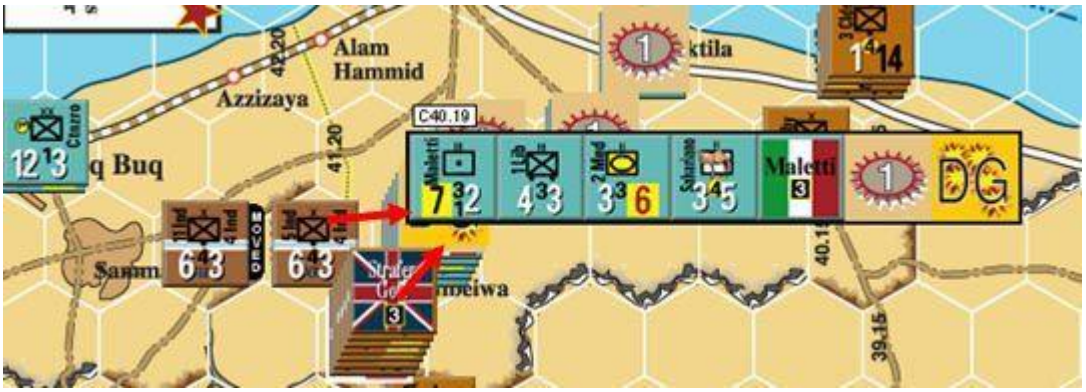
The surprise roll is a surprising 12 (+5 for attacker AR – 1 for defender AR -1 for hedgehog) = 15. The shift die roll is a 3, moving the combat from the 1:1 column to the 4:1 column. The combat roll is a 10 (modified to 13) for a result of Ae3 DL2o2DG. This translates to:
Attackers with ARs of at least 3 are placed in Exploitation mode
Defender must lose 2 steps, and then some combination of 2 more steps or retreat hexes, and all defenders are disorganized (which they already are).

Multiple step losses must come from different units where possible, so the Cirene division loses one step and the HQ is destroyed. The divison then retreats two hexes and the Commonwealth 16th Infantry Brigade and Campbell move into the hex the defenders just vacated.

To the north, the 11th Indian brigade engages the 64th Machinegun battalion. This costs 1T on each side. ARs are 4 on the attack and 3 on the defense, and odds are 6:2 or 3:1.

Surprise roll is 9, adjusted to 10 which just barely results in attacker surprise and a subsequent shift of 1 column to the 4:1 column. Attack roll is a 6 (adjusted to 7) which results in Ao1DL1o1. This kills off the machinegun battalion, and the 11th Indian brigade chooses to retreat one hex rather than take a step loss (brigades in DAK have two steps).

The final attack in the combat segment is a large-scale assault on the disorganized stack of Italians (and General Maletti) in the small town of Nibeiwa. A total of 4 Commonwealth units participate, burning 1T from the 4th Indian Division organic truck and 3T from the nearby HQ supply dump. There are 2RE of defenders, requiring a payment of 2T, which the Italians do using their stocks in Sidi el Barrani.



ARs are 5 (+1 for Gott) on the attack vs. 4 (+1 for Maletti) on the defense, or 6 vs. 5, and both leaders are fine.

Combat odds are 24:5.5 which reduces to 4.4:1 or the 4:1 column. (Note that unlike most other games, had the odds been 4.5:1 they would have rounded up to the 5:1 column).

The surprise roll is 8, modified to 9, resulting in no surprise for either side. The combat roll is another 12! modified to 13, resulting in Ae3DL2o2DG again.

The Italians must unfortunately kill off their elite camel-back-riding Sahariano battalion since they used its AR in their defense. They also kill off the Maletti artillery battalion and retreat two hexes. Some of the attackers take up position in the hedgehog that was just vacated.

G. Exploitation Phase:

i. Movement segment.

Now, units marked with exploitation markers can move to capitalize on the fluid situation at the

front.

First, the 6th and 7th Royal Tank Regiments attempt to overrun the adjacent hedgehog containing the 5th Libyan battalion. This requires 2T on the attack, and 1T on the defense. ARs are 5 vs. 2, and combat odds are 10:3 or 3:1 (the defenders are positioned in low hills which prevents the Commonwealth armored units from gaining an attack multiple that applies in open terrain).

No surprise results, and the outcome of the combat is Ao1Do1. The attackers decide to retreat rather than take the (permanent) step loss. Since the attackers chose to retreat, the defenders need not take a loss or retreat, and in fact they choose to stay in place.

The other exploit-mode Commonwealth units move but do not attack in any overruns at this time (supply is getting very tight now indeed!)

Finally, O'Connor (under the 4RHA unit) attempts to activate (3 or better on one die), which he does. This allows him to move a couple additional units in the exploitation phase.

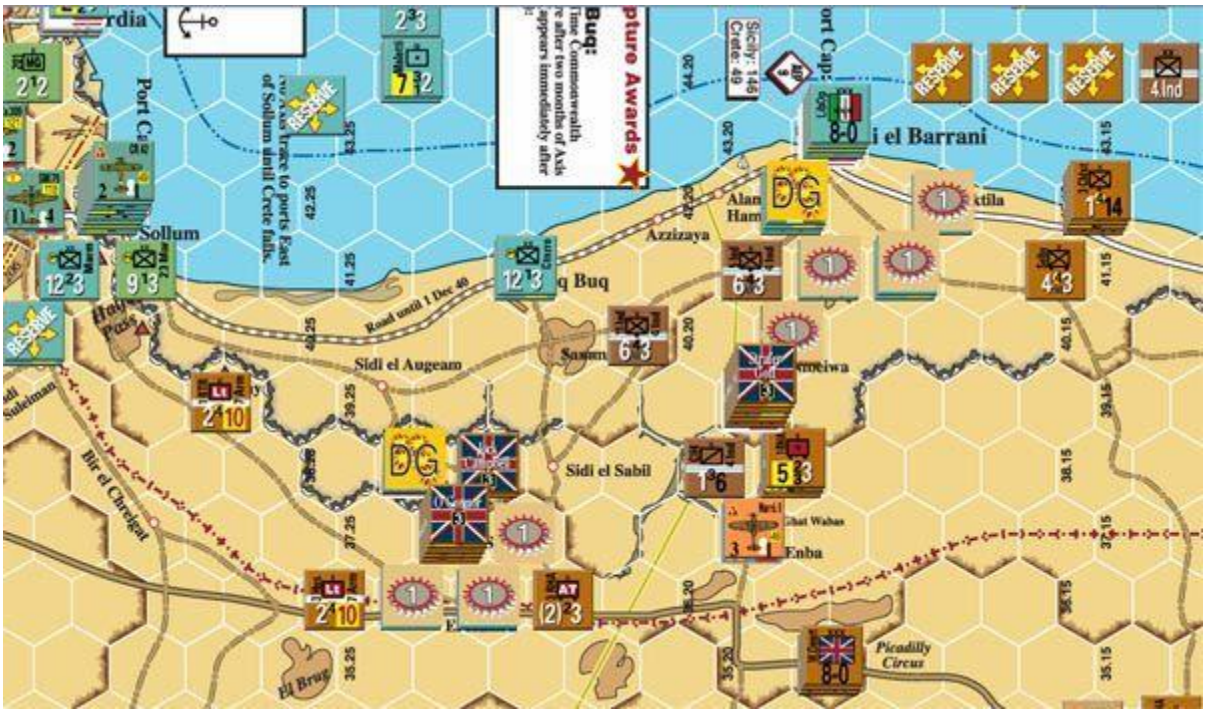
As an example of some of the mobility possible in this desert terrain, the 1st Royal Tank Regiment moves out nearly all the way to Sollum while the 3rd Hussars battalion shifts west to cut supply to the remaining Italian hedgehog in the southwest. O'Connor and two other units also shift west adjacent to the disorganized Cirene division (though they are separated by an escarpment). The 1RTR unit is now placed in position to block Italian supply along the road between Sollum and BuqBuq. Unless the 1RTR is dislodged or Italian units move in to cover the supply lines, all of the Italian units east of Sollum will be out of supply and may suffer attrition or surrender.

ii. Barrage. No barrages are conducted.
iii. Combat segment. No combat occurs either.

H. Clean up phase.

Exploitation and DG markers are removed from Commonwealth units and the 7th Armored Divison marker is returned to its unfueled state.

Overview at the end of Commonwealth Turn 1



The Commonwealth has made significant progress toward cutting off supply lines to the eastern group of Italians, but it has come at a large cost in supplies. Only 3T remain to the southeast in trucks or supply dumps, meaning that defending against any large-scale Italian counterattacks may have to be paid for from supplies internal to Commonwealth units.

One of the exciting challenges in OCS is deciding when it is worth paying supplies to conduct combat. It is quite possible that the Commonwealth could have made similar inroads into the Italian defensive positions without expending quite so much supply. Then again, the barrages helped soften up several Italian positions, and the combat led to exploit mode units which were able to push deeper.

At this point, the Italians have a 9T supply reserve between Sidi el Barrani and BuqBuq, but they will have trouble ensuring they can receive trace supply during their half of the turn. In addition to the 1RTR unit, the 11th Indian and 5th Indian brigades also block the coastal road that the Italians rely on to trace their supply lines to Sollum.

Summary of supply usage (measured in SP):

Commonwealth
Starting supply: 19.00
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Fuel: 2.00
Barrage: 1.50
Combat: 3.25
Remaining: 14.25

Italians
Starting supply: 6.75
Reinforcement supply: 0
Fuel: 0.75
Barrage: 0
Combat: 1.75
Remaining: 4.25

III. Italian Turn 1

The general Italian goal this turn is to consolidate and set up a better defensive posture while burning as little supply as possible. The Italian ARs are generally so poor that any assaults are likely to fail anyway. Might as well force the Commonwealth to spend the SPs to move the Italians to the dead pile.

A. Air refit phase
The Italians spend 2T from Bardia to refit their two bomber squadrons.

B. Reinforcement phase
2 SPs arrive at Bardia.

C. Mode Determination and Movement Phase
i. Breakout: none
ii. Mode and movement

Initially, there was some discussion at the Italian HQ about whether to cut and run from Sidi el Barrani and BuqBuq. Doing so would waste some precious supplies, and the Italians look like they can hold out another turn or two. The tradeoff is between retreating in an orderly fashion during the Italian turn to maintain forces but give up territory, or hold in place and delay, but eventually have large numbers of troops cut off and surrender. With the Commonwealth supplies currently so low, the Italians will try to hold out a bit longer. (Note that this is something I lose by playing solo since there is much less fog of war regarding supplies and stack contents than would be the case in a face-to-face game).

To save on supply, the Italians only move infantry units with the objective of maintaining the supply lines from Sidi el Barrani to Sollum. Maletti scoots over to a position just south of Sollum where he meets up with the Ragg and its three armored battalions. They are in a good position to reinforce or react where necessary. The advantage of the Ragg is that it can fuel all three battalions for a complete turn, but the disadvantage of stacking Maletti with the Ragg is that only one of them can be used to attempt to activate the stack in the Reaction or Exploitation phases. The Italians also put the 28 October Division in Sollum in reserve mode in case additional infantry support is needed nearby.

iii. Barrage segment

The two Italian bomber squadrons attack the air strip at Ghat Wahas. Flak is ineffective, and the bombers successfully reduce the Hurricane squadron to half-strength. So far the Italians are winning the air war.

D. Supply Phase

Thanks to the units that now cover the road between Sollum and Sidi el Barrani, no units are out of trace supply. Normally, enemy Zones of Control (ZOC) block truck-based movement (the basis for most supply traces). However, a friendly unit in the ZOC can act as a carpet allowing other truck units (or supply) to travel through the ZOC freely.

E. Reaction Phase

i. Movement

The Commonwealth attempts to activate Campbell and O'Connor. Both activations are successful and used to shift infantry units slightly northwest. It would be very nice to fuel the 7th Armored Division at this time since the fuel would last from now through the next Commonwealth turn, but alas the necessary 1 SP doesn't exist anywhere nearby!

ii. Barrage: not enough supply to even think about it!

F. Combat Phase
No actions. Let's force the Commonwealth to spend their supplies.

G. Exploitation Phase
The Italians try to activate Maletti in the hopes of running the armored battalions up the Halfaya pass to take out the 1st Royal Tank Regiment. Alas, Maletti is busy polishing his shoes and no such reaction is possible. Perhaps this is just for the best, since the attack would have required 3T to carry out. Still, it seemed attractive to use those armored units while they still were fueled up.

H. Clean-up Phase
DG markers are removed and the Ragg is flipped to the unfueled side.

Overview of the situation at the end of Turn 1

The Italians have a defensive ring around Sidi el Barrani and many units in position near the corner of the bay by Sollum.

For a nice Google-map view of this area that clearly shows the large escarpments and other terrain features, go to
http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=libya&ie=UTF8&ll=31....

Summary of supply usage (measured in SP):

Commonwealth
Starting supply: 14.25
Reinforcement supply: 0
Fuel: 0
Barrage: 0
Combat: 0
Remaining: 14.25

Italians
Starting supply: 4.25
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Refit: 0.50
Fuel: 0
Barrage: 0
Combat: 0

Remaining: 5.75

Turn 2: 12 December 1940

The battle calms down slightly, with units generally maneuvering into position rather than participating in active combat.

I. Pre-Turn Phase
1. Weather: roll is 1,3 = clear
2. First player determination: Italians win the toss and opt to go first

II. Italian Turn 1
A. Aircraft refit: Spend 2T to refit the two Italian bomber squadrons

B. Reinforcement phase: 2 Supply Points (SP) arrive at Bardia

C. Mode determination and movement phase
i. breakout: none
ii. Mode & movement

Maletti just can't pass up the opportunity to kill off the 1st Royal Tank Regiment. The Babini Ragg fuels up (3T) and moves to conduct an overrun.

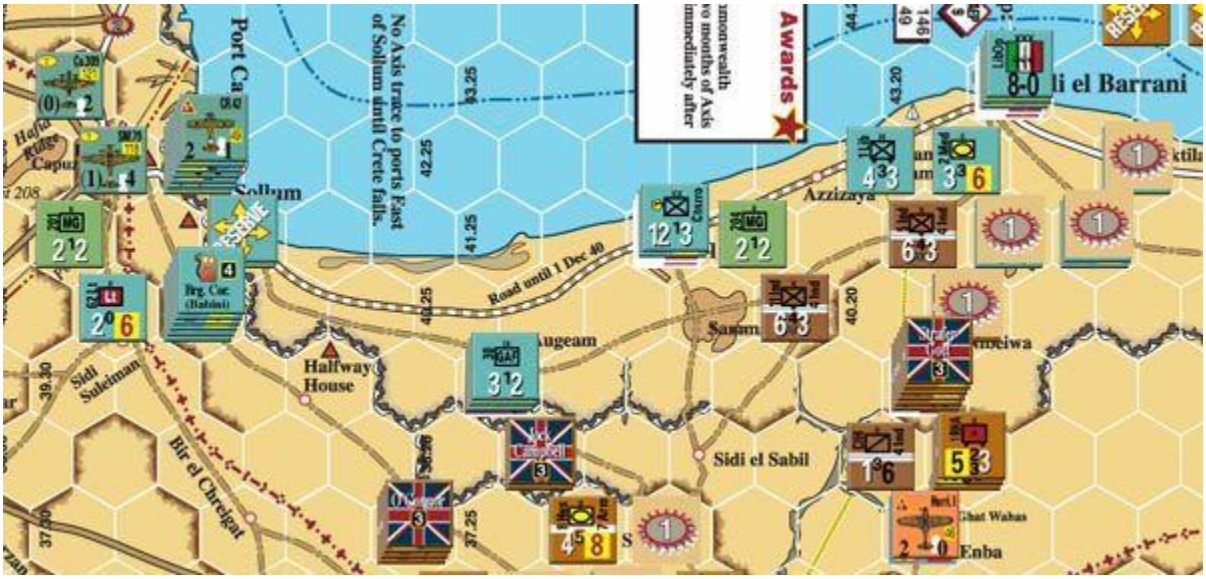
The attack costs 3T more (3rd Med Armored and the 21 and 60 Light Tank battalions). The defense would cost 1T, but the 1RTR unit is unable to gather supply due to the 63 Machinegun battalion's ZOC. The 1RTR then burns some of its internal supplies and is marked with a Low marker.

ARs are 3 (+1 for Maletti)=4 vs. 4. Unfortunately for Maletti, he is blinded by some dust, takes a wrong turn, and is captured! Perhaps later he can be exchanged for a British leader…

Combat odds are 7:1, and attacker surprise occurs, shifting one more column to the 9:1 column. Attack die roll is a wimpy 3, leading to Ao1 DL1o1. This kills off the 1RTR and the Ragg takes the option to retreat. Mission accomplished, though now the Italians no longer have Maletti.

Other movement involves trucks shuttling 2T from Bardia to BuqBuq and a few other minor infantry moves. The path connecting Sollum to BuqBuq is now much freer without the 1RTR in the way.

Situation after Italian movement phase



D. Supply phase.
All Italian units can trace supply.

E. Reaction phase.
Campbell attempts to activate but fails.
O'Connor does activate, and moves forward slightly to once again threaten the Italian coastal road.

F. Combat Phase
No actions

G. Exploitation Phase
The Babini Ragg attempts to activate. It is once again tempting to use these units while they are fueled, and O'Connor's group is vulnerable. Unfortunately, the Ragg fails its activation roll.

The two Italian bombers decide to bomb the airstrip holding the Hurricanes. Their attempt fails to cause any damage. They would have liked to barrage Gott's position instead, but the lack of an adjacent spotter would have made any effect very unlikely.

H. Clean up phase.
Ragg marker turned back to its unfueled side.

III. Commonwealth Turn 2

A. Air refit phase
The Mersa Matruh airbase refits its Gladiators and Blenheims for 1T. The Hurricanes are not refitted owing to the severe supply shortage.

B. Reinforcement phase
2 SPs arrive at Mersa Matruh.

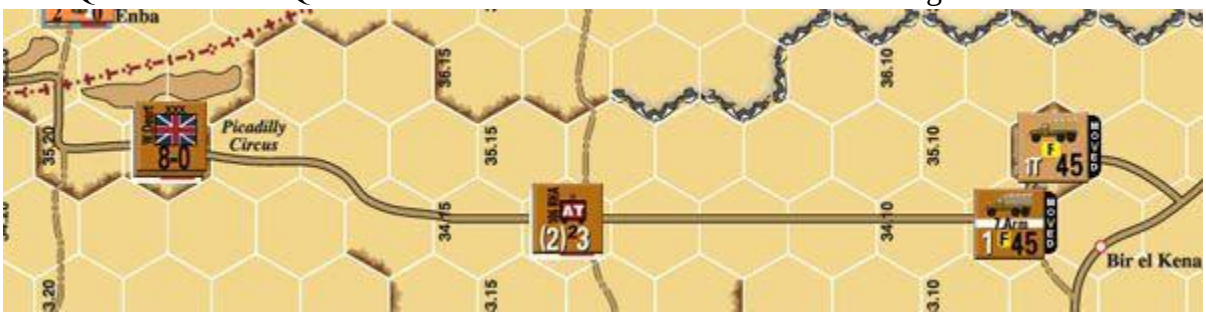
C. Mode Determination and Movement Phase
i. Breakout: none
ii. Mode and movement

The Commonwealth's only objective this turn is to push units to the coast in strength while maintaining a well-defended supply corridor back to the Western Desert HQ.

The first order of business is getting more supplies to the front. The 4th Indian organic truck runs to Mersa Matruh, fills up, and returns (requiring 28-1/3 MPs)

The 7th Armored organic truck also runs to Mersa Matruh, loads up, runs back, and then pauses to fuel up the 7th Armored Division. Note that the HQ is allowed to draw supply from the organic truck and throw it to all the 7th Armored units, so the truck actually need not go too far west before being used. The rules allow a truck to pause to fuel, and then continue moving. So, after fueling the division, the truck runs back to Mersa Matruh and picks up another load of 1 SP, returning to a position from which the HQ can draw supply later.

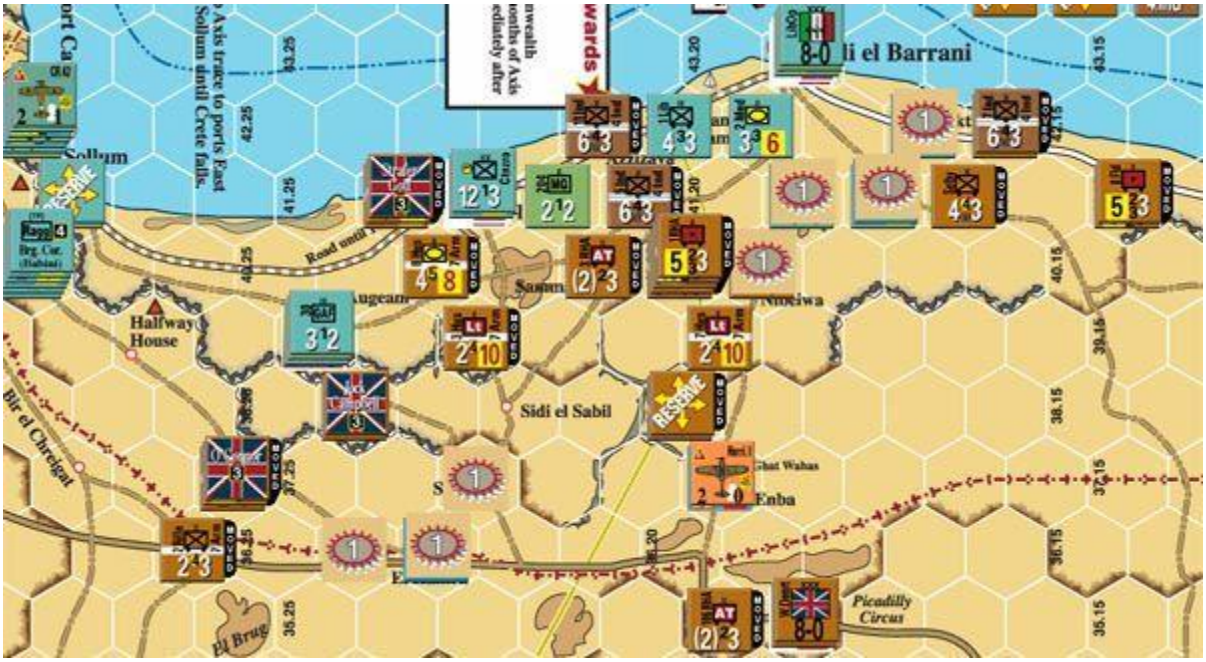
The generic truck also reloads, brings 1T to the HQ, reloads again, and stops just at the range of the HQ's draw. The HQ can draw from both trucks shown here on the right.



The HQ's draw range (5 MPs) gets to the 7th Armored organic truck, which, since this is adjacent to the generic truck, is also far enough to draw supply from the generic truck. In OCS, you only need to get adjacent to a supply dump (or hungry unit) to have access to the supplies. This is one trick to squeeze as much efficiency out of the supply system as possible.

The Gladiators rebase from Mersa Matruh to a small air strip south of the HQ.

Many of the Commonwealth units move toward the coast and set up such that supply can be traced back to the Western Desert HQ. Two brigades from the 4th Indian Division cut off Sidi el Barrani while Gott and some 7th Armored Division units cut off BuqBuq. O'Connor pulls back a bit to shorten the front line and ensure he himself is not cut off. The Italians are going to have a very hard time saving their eastern units now.



iii. Barrage segment

A 12-point naval barrage on BuqBuq disorganizes the defenders but does not inflict any casualties.

D. Supply Phase

All Commonwealth units can trace supply.

E. Reaction Phase

The CR.42 in Sollum flies to the Gladiator strip in a fighter sweep operation. Both squadrons abort and are now inactive.

F. Combat Phase

The eastern-most Commonwealth artillery units can't pass up an opportunity to barrage the Italian coastal hedgehog. A 2T barrage (paid by the dump close to the coast) fails to inflict any effects. Perhaps had the defenders been disorganized, the Selby brigade and 7th Indian brigade would have attacked. But they stay put for now.

G. Exploitation Phase

None

H. Clean-up Phase

Turn 7th Armored Divison marker back to its unfueled side.

Overview of the situation at the end of Turn 2

The Commonwealth lockdown on the coast seems strong. It will be interesting to see what happens to the units now under seige in BuqBuq and Sidi el Barrani. Will the Italians attempt to relieve them, or leave them to valiantly (futilely?) delay the Commonwealth before becoming prisoners of war?

Summary of supply usage (measured in SP):

Commonwealth
Starting supply: 14.25
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Refit: 0.25
Fuel: 1.00
Barrage: 0.50
Combat: 0
Remaining: 14.50

Italians
Starting supply: 5.75
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Refit: 0.50

Fuel: 0.75
Barrage: 0
Combat: 0.75
Remaining: 5.75

Turn 3: 15 December 1940

I. Pre-Turn Phase
1. Weather: roll is 1,4 = clear
2. First player determination: Italians win the toss and opt to go first

II. Italian Turn 3
A. Aircraft refit: All three Italian aircraft squadrons are refitted for a total cost of 3T.

B. Reinforcement phase: 2 SPs arrive at Bardia

C. Mode determination and movement phase
i. breakout: none
ii. Mode & movement

The Italians in Sidi el Barrani will attempt to break-out to the west. The units in the hedgehogs will move closer to Sidi to ensure supply from the town to can still be accessed. Units will also be dispatched from Sollum to try to relieve the seige of BuqBuq.

The attack west out of Sidi needs to be carefully planned. Since these units will probably be out of trace supply, any attacking units will need to expend on-map supplies garrasoned in Sidi (or else have their combat values halved). This on-map expenditure goes at the rate of 1T per 2 RE.

The Italians plan on moving the 2 Med Armored battalion and 3 January Infantry Division to the position currently occupied by the 1st Libyan Infantry Division. These three units will then attack the 11th Indian brigade. It will cost 1T to fuel the 2 Med battalion so that it can move, and the Italians will need to expend 2T to maintain their trace supply for those three units. Finally, the Italians will need 4T for combat. The total cost is then 7T, and they currently have 8T stockpiled in Sidi Barrani. The Italians place the 21 Corps artillery unit in Sidi into reserve mode. Should the combat go well, it can be released from reserve and escape to the west during the Exploitation phase.

Near Sollum, the Ragg fuels up its 3 armored battalions and moves adjacent to Gott.

The two Italian bomber squadrons barrage Gott. Flak has no impact, nor do the Italian bombs.

Situation after Italian movement:

D. Supply phase.

Many units in BuqBuq and Sidi el Barrani are out of supply. The Italians use 3T to supply the 3 units adjacent to the 11th Indian brigade plus the 5th Libyan regiment. Attrition due to being out of supply results in a 1-step loss to the 2nd Libyan Division in Sidi el Barrani. The 1st Libyan Division and 9th Light Tank battalion surrender en masse.

Near BuqBuq, 2T are spent to keep all units supplied. All other Italian units are ok.

E. Reaction phase.

Upon hearing on the radio that the Italians are attempting to break out of Sidi el Barrani, O'Connor scoots over to the 11th Indian brigade to help them out. Gott will defiantly stay put in the face of the large Italian group that is coming closer.

F. Combat Phase

i. Barrage segment
The 30 GAF artillery brigade (26 factors) opens up on Gott's position. This costs 4T supply from Bardia. There is a one-column shift to the left since Gott only has 1 RE in his hex. The roll (a 3) is disappointing and has no effect.

ii. Combat segment
Near Sidi el Barrani, the battle of Alam Hammid begins. the 2nd Med, 1st Libyan, and 3 January units attack O'Connor. The attack costs 4T; the defense costs 1T which is paid for by the nearby organic truck. ARs are 3 on the attack (1st Libyan regiment) and 5 on the defense (using O'Connor, who is killed in the action!)

Odds are 19:6 or 3:1. Surprise roll is 10 (+3 – 5) = 8, no surprise either side. The combat roll is 4 (+3 – 5) = 2 which yields AL1o1. Anything better would have at least inflicted a Do1 outcome! The 1st Libyan regiment dies off, and the Italians retreat. Sidi el Barrani remains under siege.

Next, the attack on Gott. Actually, the Italians decide to attack the 8th Hussars next to Gott. The Marmarica Division, 23 March Division, 3rd Mediterranean Armored battalion, and 21 Light Tank take part, for an attack requiring 7T in supplies (1T on defense). ARs are 3 on the attack and 5 on the defense. Odds are 30:4 or 7.5:1 or 8:1. In open terrain, this reduces to the 7:1 column.

Surprise roll is 3 (+3-5) = 1, defender surprise! The shift is 4 columns, to the 2:1 column. The combat roll is 6 (+3-5) = 4, for a result of AL1o1 Do1.

The 3 Med is lost (since its AR was used), and the option is used to also kill off the 21 Light Tank battalion. The 8th Hussars retreat, and now Gott finds himself trapped against the sea!

[edit: I made an error here as the 8th Hussars should be DG'd due to retreating into Italian ZOC]

G. Exploitation Phase

The Italians lack the supply necessary to really capitalize through exploitation using the Ragg, so no actions take place.

H. Clean up phase.
Ragg marker turned back to its unfueled side, DG marker removed.

Situation at the end of Italian Turn 3

Up next, Commonwealth Turn 3: Can Strafer Gott be saved??

III. Commonwealth Turn 3

A. Air refit phase.
The Hurricanes return to active service using 1T from the generic truck.

B. Reinforcement phase
2 SPs arrive at Mersa Matruh

C. Mode Determination and Movement Phase
i. Breakout: none
ii. Mode and movement

Time to try to break out Gott! 1T (from the 7th Armor Divison organic truck) is used to fuel the 8th Hussars, who then immediately conduct an overrun into BuqBuq. The attack requires 1T (again from the organic truck), and 2T are needed on the defense (1 from BuqBuq, 1 from Bardia). ARs are 5 vs. 1, and combat odds are 4(x2)=8 vs. 14, which rounds UP to 1:1.

[edit: another error here. This should be 8:14 -> 1:1.75 -> 1:2 odds]

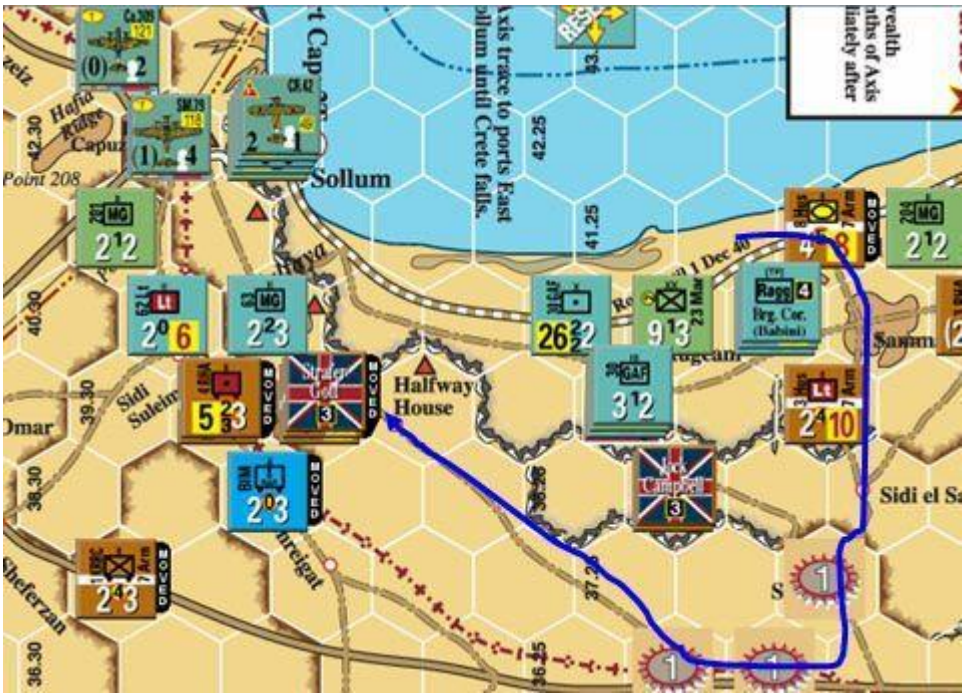
Surprise roll is 7 (+5 -1) = 11, resulting in attacker surprise. The column shift is 3, bringing us to the 3:1 column. The combat roll is another 7 (+5-1) = 11, resulting in Ae4 DL1o2. The 63 Light Tank battalion is eliminated and the Catanzaro Division takes two step losses as their option.

That overrun required 3 MP. The 8th Hussars have 8 MP to use, so they conduct another overrun against the same hex. The Commonwealth spends one more T for the attack; the defenders decline to spend the 1T they require (figuring it's a lost cause). ARs are again 5 vs. 1. Odds are 8:2 or 4:1. Attacker surprise occurs again on a 7, with a 6 column shift to the 13:1 column (as far as it can go). The combat roll is 4 (+5-1) resulting in the same outcome as before: Ae4 DL1o2. The Catanzaro Division is destroyed and the 8th Hussars triumphantly enter Buq Buq and break the seige on Gott!

Next, the eastern set of units (4th Indian Divison and Selby brigade) close in on Sidi el Barrani:

Now for something exciting: the Commonwealth spends 2T to fuel Gott's two armored battalions, which race around, up the escarpment, and to the west. A few other units from 7th Armored and independent units join up. How quickly the hunted can become the hunter!

One error here, though it doesn't affect the game: Gott actually can't get his fuel just yet since the low hills between 3rd and 8th Hussars are within Italian ZOC and have not been negated by a friendly unit. Later in the turn I moved an AT gun into those hills, which then allows supply trace. Strictly speaking, I could not fuel up Gott until that occurred



Next, the 4th Indian and 7th Armored organic trucks return to Mersa Matruh to load up supplies and bring them back to within reach of the front. The generic 1T truck also drops off 1T at the HQ and returns with another 1T loaded up.

Finally, the 11th Hussars Armored Car battalion fuels up (1T) and shifts west, along with a couple anti-tank battalions to close up any gaps. Three reserve markers are placed out on the units to the rear to allow them some flexibility in the near future.

Situation after the Commonwealth move phase:

D. Supply Phase

All Commonwealth units are in supply.

E. Reaction Phase

The Babini Ragg successfully activates and moves west with the Marmarica Division.

F. Combat Phase

Gott fires up and attacks the 63 Machinegun battalion. This costs 2T. The Italians pay their 1T for defense. ARs are 5 vs. 2 (Gott will not directly participate) and odds are 14:2 or 7:1. The combat goes very well (surprise plus good combat roll) eliminating the Italian and placing an exploitation marker on Gott's units who advance into the hex.

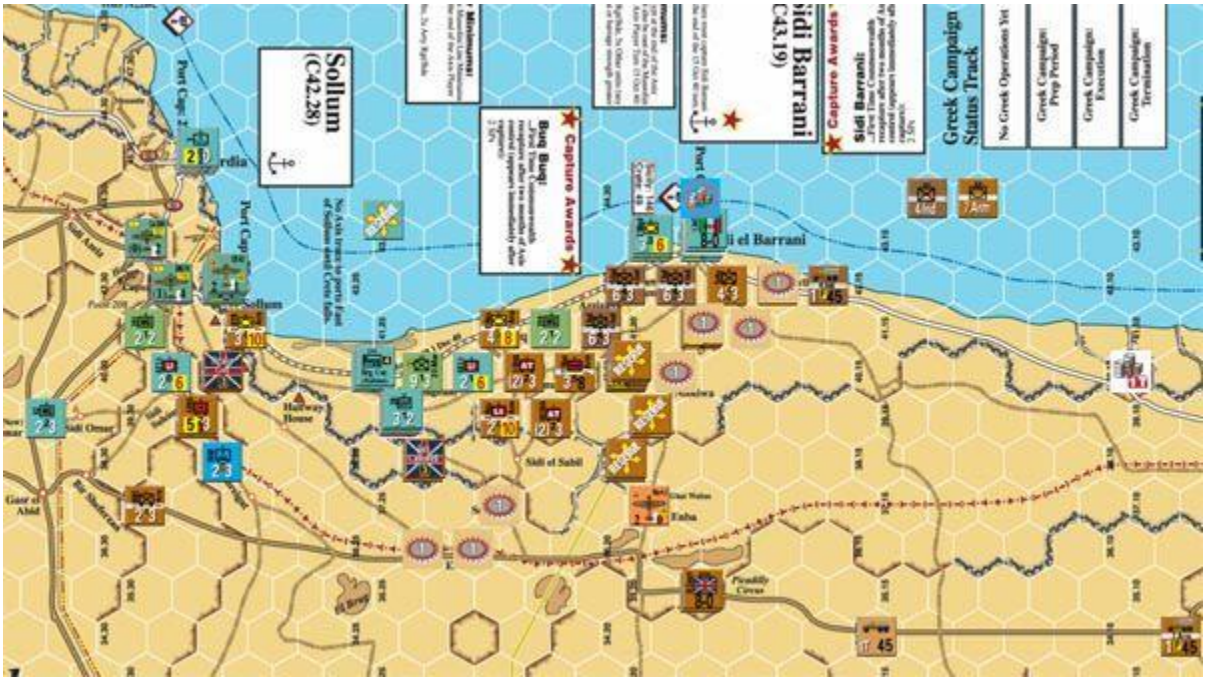
G. Exploitation Phase

The 2nd Royal Tank Regiment (in Gott's group) moves down the Halfaya Pass to block the coastal road just outside Sollum (1T fuel payment). Although they are in a weak position there, they will require the Italians to forcibly remove them if they wish to maintain a supply trace to their main body of troops west of Buq Buq.

H. Clean-up Phase

Exploitation markers removed.

Overview of the situation at the end of Turn 3



The Italian counterattack to relieve Sidi el Barrani has failed in a big way. Now there are even more Italian infantry divisions at risk of being cut off from supply and lost.

Summary of supply usage (measured in SP):

Commonwealth
Starting supply: 14.50
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Refit: 0.25
Fuel: 1.25
Barrage: 0
Combat: 1.50
Remaining: 13.50

Italians
Starting supply: 5.75
Reinforcement supply: 2.00
Refit: 0.75
Supply: 1.25
Fuel: 1.00
Barrage: 1.00
Combat: 3.50
Remaining: 0.25

I played out the rest of this scenario but won't include it here. Basically, the bulk of the Italians in the isolated pocket surrendered due to lack of supply. From there, it's relatively easy for the Commonwealth to clean up the rest of the Italian units.

I think the only way the Italians can survive this scenario is to pull back immediately and set up a defense in depth around Sollum and Bardia. Trying to hold out in Buq Buq and Sidi el Barrani just dooms all those units to surrender, and doesn't really delay the Commonwealth significantly. The Italian Action Ratings are so low that just about any combat is going to go against them, regardless of who initiates it. So, the Italians should attack as rarely as possible and force the Commonwealth to spend the supplies to gain territory. By spreading the defense out in depth, the Commonwealth will need to expend supply for every hex they need to attack. By stacking Italians in a single hex, the Commonwealth can probably kill off more Italians per supply unit.

All in all an interesting scenario, if a bit frustrating for the Italians since there is no real opportunity to do much other than run away. A more exciting counterattack needs to wait until February 12, 1941, when Rommel arrives on the scene.