OCS 101 – All About DUKW Units

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DUKWs are hybrid vehicles which can convert from Landing Craft to Transport Points and vice versa. The rules must accommodate this transition, which can create some confusion. Let's try to clear that up . . .

The British Army crossing the Rhine River in Germany, 1945.
(Credit: Sgt. Harrison/IWM/Getty Images)

First, lets review the two ways DUKWs can function . . .

DUKWs when functioning as a Landing Craft

- Landing Craft (LC) are a type of Naval Unit, which can move into coastal hexes (OCS 18.1c).
- They can move in friendly Movement, Exploit and Reaction phases (18.1e). The white stripe on LC units denotes it as a "slow" ship, with 10 MP per Phase (18.1f). DUKW units have a Naval Movement of 8 MP per Phase.
- LC can be barraged by naval units, planes and Coastal Artillery (18.3c). A hit destroys one LC point and DGs all remaining LC in the hex, randomly select the target and cargo eliminated (18.3d).
- They have a capacity number on their counter and function much like Transport Point (18.4a). DUKWs can only carry the cargo types allowed on Air Transport missions (18.4e): SP and Combat Units which are in Move Mode with an MA of 10 or less Leg MP (14.9c). (Regular LC and LSTs can carry combat units, SP and Transport Points (18.4c)).
- Loading DUKWs that are acting as LC requires no movement cost, can only be done in port hexes (subject to current capacity), and the cargo cannot have been moved **before** being loaded (18.4c).
- Treat DUKWs as a Landing Craft if overrun (all Ships are destroyed if an enemy Attack-Capable unit enters their hex, per 9.14g).
- An LC's movement ends when they unload (18.5a).

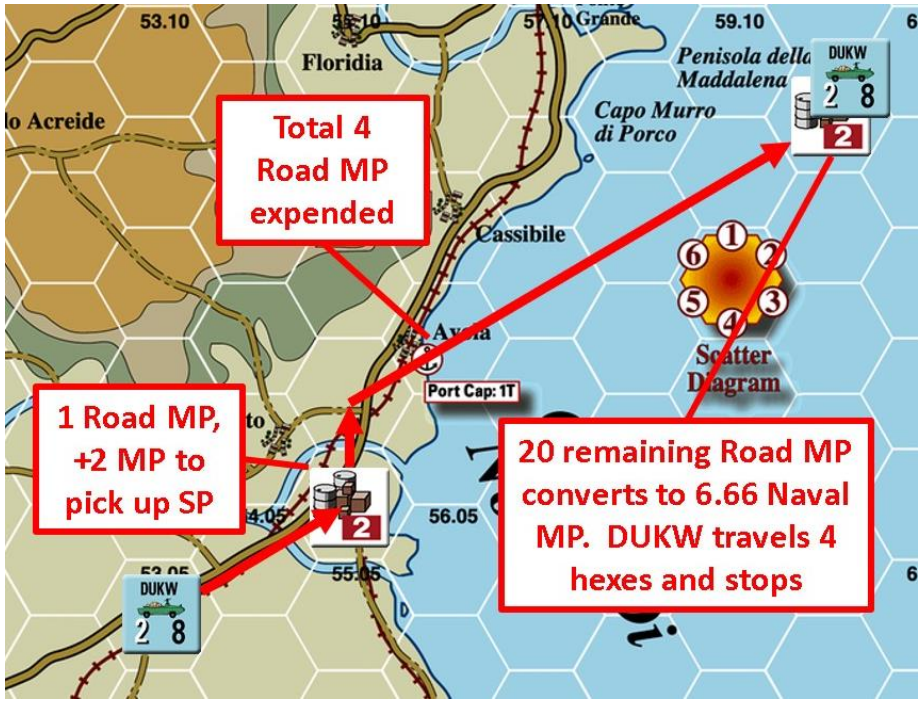
DUKWs only appear in Sicily and Sicily II

DUKWs when functioning as a Transport Point

- DUKWs can operate as Transport Points (see 13.2). When functioning as Transport Points, DUKWs lose their ability to move in all three Movement Segments (Transport Points can only be in Move Mode, so may only move in the Movement Phase, per 13.2d), but their MA is **tripled** to 24.
- When acting as Transport Points, DUKWs can only carry SP.
- Treat a DUKW as a Truck should it be overrun (Roll for capture/displacement per 9.14c. However, they cannot be captured per Sicily II 1.6b, so they are destroyed if not displaced).
- Loading/unloading cost is 2 MP (per 4.7d and 13.2f).

Conversion

- The conversion between Landing Craft and Transport Point (and vice versa) can occur at any time during the Movement Phase—just triple the remaining MA when it starts to move by land (or divide by 3 when it starts to move by water).
- Make an ALT roll (see 18.5f) each time the DUKW converts from Landing Craft to Transport Point (**not** vice versa). This **can** be the same roll used to unload cargo (but this will end movement, per 18.5e).
- A DUKW loaded only with SP (or empty) that makes an ALT roll to convert from an LC to a Transport Point can continue moving—the ALT roll is for the conversion, not for unloading. They are not required to wait until all LC have finished moving before their Amphibious Landing ALT rolls (18.5f).
- It is the "conversion" from one unit type to another while following the rules for each that causes confusion. Let's look at the different scenarios . . .



DUKWs Conversion from Land to Naval Unit

- This transition is simple: move to a coastal hex, divide the remaining MP by 3, and result is the Naval MP available for continued movement. No ALT roll is required when going from land to water (18.4e).
- This transition must happen in the Movement Phase, since the DUKWs started the Phase as Transport Points.
- The transition hex happens to be a port in this example, but it could take place in any Coastal hex.
- 6.66 MP after the DUKW converts to an LC? MA is never rounded in OCS, fractions are retained instead (6.1h).

DUKWs can LOAD cargo in these situations:

- **Floating Forces Box** – DUKWs in the Floating Forces box can load cargo (units or SP) only at the start of the Movement Phase (Sicily II 3.2b and Sicily 3.3c). The "Floating Forces Box" represent units and materiel in nearby transport ships, ready for landing, and are used in OCS games Sicily and Korea.
- **SP in a Dump on Ground** – DUKW functioning as Transport Points can load SP from a Dump for 2 MP during the Movement Phase.
- **Ports** – DUKW functioning as LC can load units and/or SP in a Port. There must be sufficient Port Capacity to load the cargo (18.4c). Cargo loaded onto a DUKW is not allowed to move before loading in the current Movement Phase, but the DUKW isn't so constrained. It could move 24 MP, ending in a port, then convert to an LC, and load cargo (but not have MPs to move them anywhere). Note that a single unit can unload at a Port each phase even if that unit exceeds the Port's capacity (19.0a).

DUKW loaded with oil drums comes ashore at Gela, Sicily, July 1943. United States National Archives, 342-FH-3A27126-67105AC

DUKWs can UNLOAD cargo in these situations:

Supply Points: SP cannot be landed by ALT roll (18.5e), which limits how DUKWs can unload them:

- **Ports** – DUKWs functioning as Landing Craft can unload SP in a friendly Port, using that Port's capacity (18.5g). This can take place in a player's Movement, Reaction and Exploit Phases (18.5d), and the Port's full capacity to load/unload is available each phase (19.0a). A DUKW movement ends when it unloads when functioning as an LC (18.5a).
- **Ground hex** – DUKWs functioning as Transport Points can unload for 2 Road MPs. Note the restrictions in 13.2f, limiting Transport Points to unload in hexes containing a friendly combat unit, port, air base, or *existing* unloaded supply dump. Transport Points may continue to move after unloading, if it has sufficient MA (13.2a).
- **Direct Draw** – Units can Direct Draw from a DUKW acting as a Transport Point, even when it is "pausing" during movement (13.2a).
- **Adjacent Units when acting as an LC** – SP loaded on DUKWs acting as Landing Craft can only be used by units in the same or an adjacent hex (even if off-shore), and HQs are not allowed to "throw" supply drawn from a Landing Craft (18.5e).

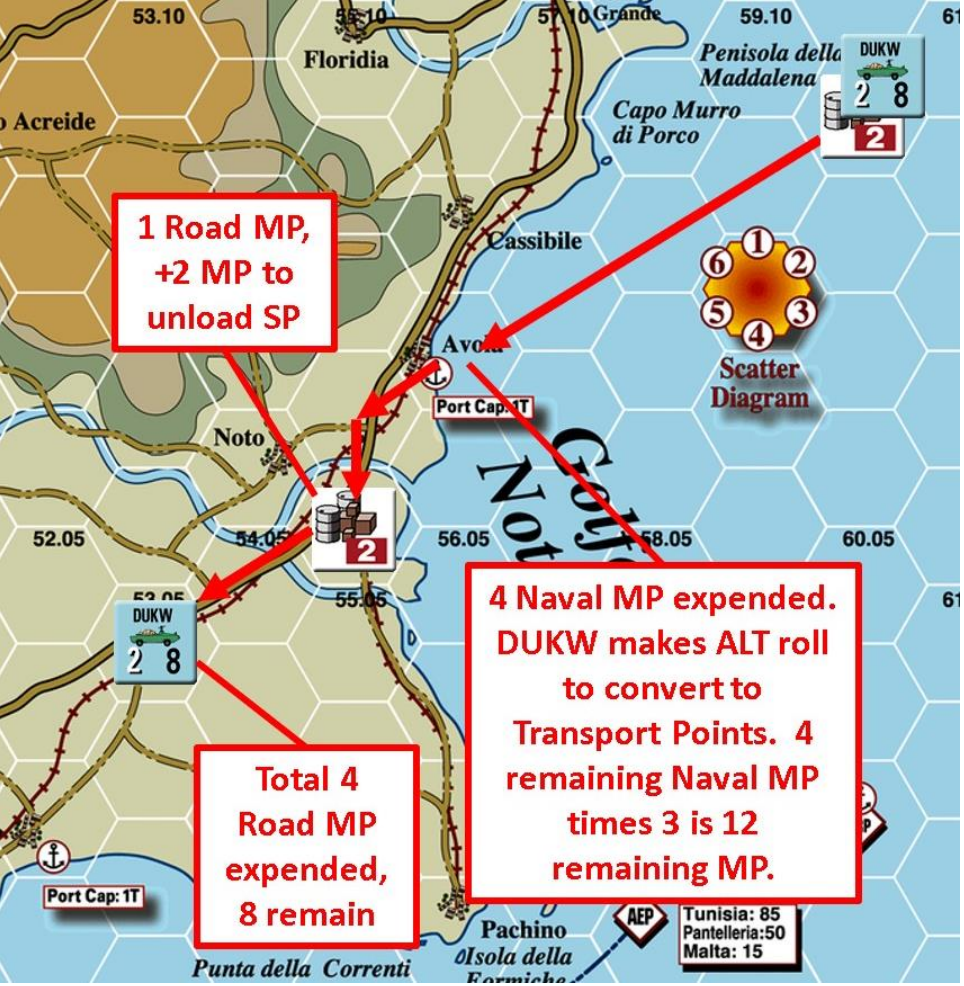
US DUKW carrying supplies in Porto Empedocle, Sicily (US Army Center of Military History). Over 21,000 DUKWs were built.

Ground Units:

- **Ports** – Same as landing SP as described above. As long as the unloading uses the port's capacity no ALT roll is required, BUT the units involved do not get any after-landing movement (18.5h). Landed units are in either Combat or Move Mode.
- **Amphibious Landing (18.5)** – These are landings requiring an ALT roll. The DUKW moves to a coast hex, the units land (no additional movement cost) and the DUKWs movement is ended at that point (18.5a). This may only take place in the Movement Phase (18.5b). Units must land in either Combat or Move Mode (18.5c), and they may move up to half their MA (18.5h). The DUKW can either remain a Landing Craft at this point, or transition into a Transport Point using the same ALT roll (18.5a—note that the rules point to 18.5e, which will be in the next errata). Either way, its movement is ended at this point. (18.5h says DUKWs can "continue to move a proportion of their remaining MA (per 18.4e)" but this refers to DUKWs making an ALT roll just to transition into Transport Points without simultaneously landing ground units. That particular point can be confusing the way it is currently written.)
- **Beach Assault (18.6)** – Move the DUKW to a Sea hex adjacent to the Coast hex that will be the target of a Beach Assault. Movement ceases at this point until the Beach Assault (BA) is resolved in the Combat Phase. Because units making a BA can only be in Combat Mode, Beach Assaults cannot happen in Exploit. The DUKW remains an LC during this process.

The ALT (Amphibious Landing Table) Roll:

- The actual ALT chart itself is found in the game-specific rules for each game, not on the OCS Charts & Tables player aid.
- The process described in 18.5f applies when units are landing. Essentially, move all the LC onto coast hexes, then make ALT rolls after all LC have finished moving for the Phase (18.5f).
- The "after LC have finished moving for the Phase" applies to landing units, not DUKWs transitioning while carrying only SP or empty, which can happen at any point.

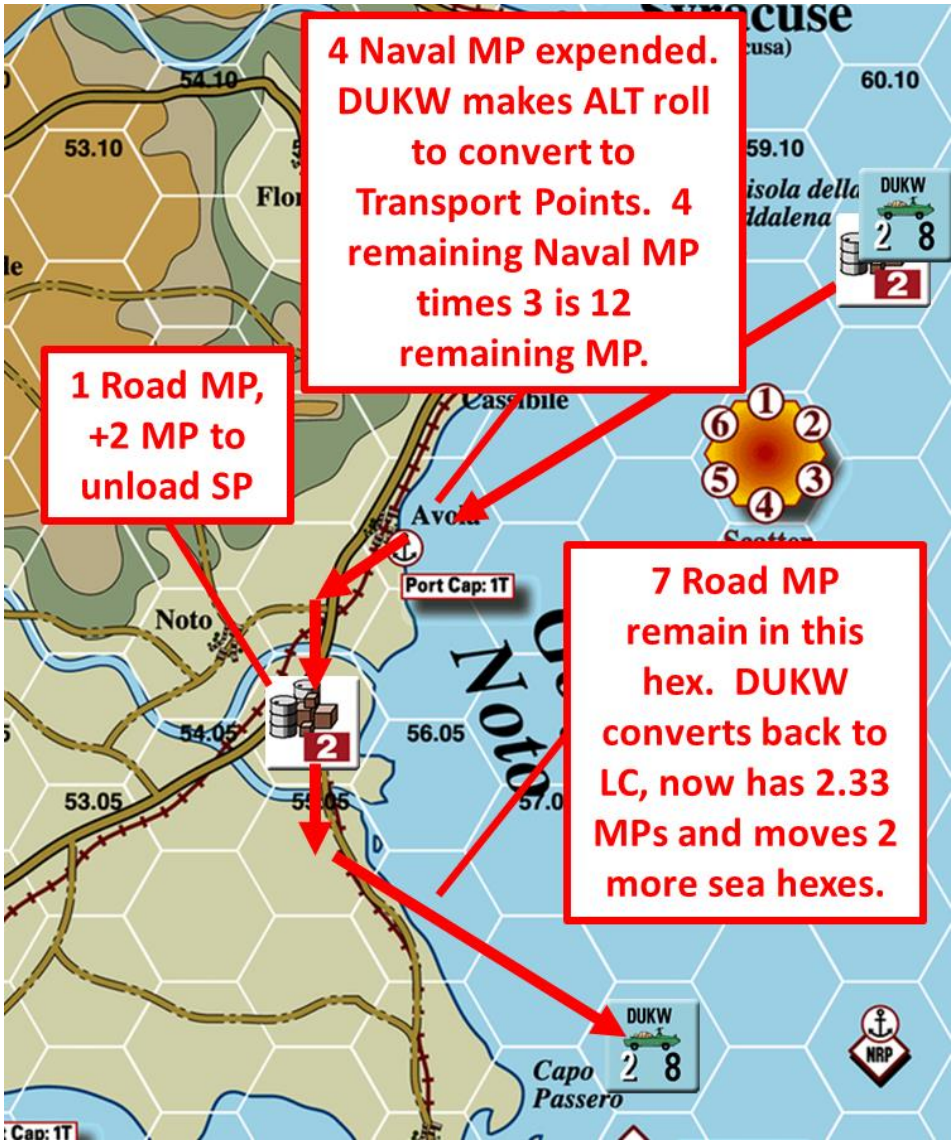


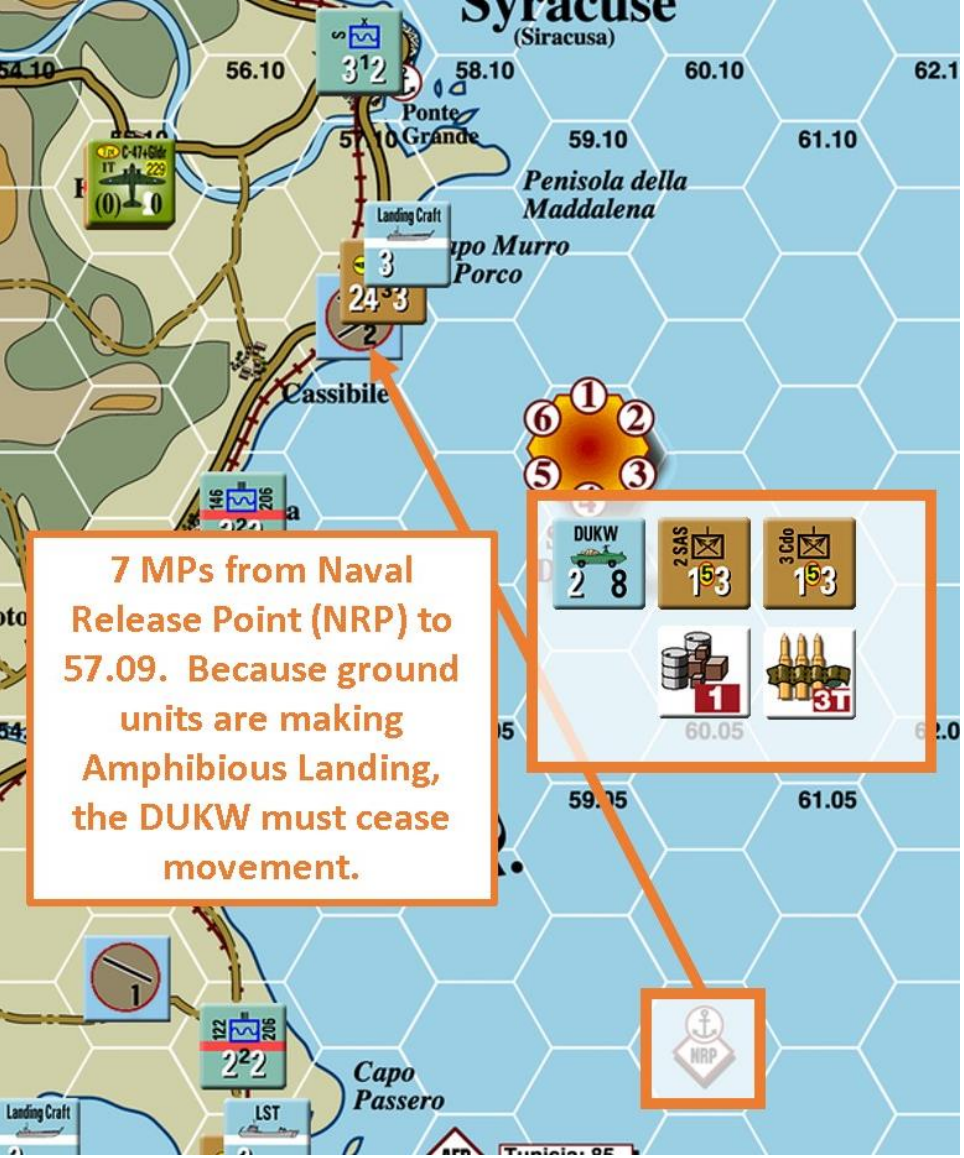
DUKWs Conversion from Naval Unit to Transport Point

- Move to a coastal hex, roll on the ALT table, multiply the remaining MP by 3, and result is the MP available for continued movement. A Port hex has a better ALT roll in Sicily II than other terrain.
- The DUKW unit can continue moving on land in the Movement Phase. Should this be Exploit or Reaction, the DUKW would cease movement after the ALT roll, since Transport Points cannot move in those Phases.
- Unloading the SP must be in a hex containing a friendly combat unit, port, air base, or *existing* unloaded supply dump.

DUKWs Conversion from Naval Unit to Transport Point and back again

- The DUKW in this example could also continue its movement back to a coast hex, transition back to an LC and head out to sea. It could have unloaded only some of the SP and still have some as cargo if desired. A DUKW can convert multiple times in a Movement Phase provided they make the required ALT rolls and have sufficient MP.





Amphibious Landing Example

- This is the situation at the start of Scenario 5 (Operation Husky) in Sicily II. The setup recreates the historical landings in Sicily with units already at their landing sites, but let's look at how their movement took place.
- The DUKW loads in Floating Forces Box at the start of the Movement Phase (Sicily II 3.2b).
- Moving to the NRP has no MP cost, just place the Naval Units from the Floating Forces box (Sicily II 1.5b).
- The DUKW moves 7 MP to 57.09. Because it is unloading units, movement ends (18.5a). Remember, Amphibious Landings can only take place in the player's Movement Phase.
- Once all LC have finished moving for the Phase (18.5f), make all the ALT rolls for the landing forces. 57.09 is an Open terrain hex, within 2 hexes of two enemy Coastal Defense Units (cumulative -2 modifier) and there are 3 +1 modifiers (cargo is commandos, Invasion turn and having 25+ Barrage Factors of Naval units within range—not visible). Only a "2" or "3" roll will have a negative impact per the Sicily II ALT Table.
- The DUKW can either remain an LC or use the same ALT roll to become a Transport Point (18.5a). If it stays an LC it can move in the Exploit and Reaction Phases, but its SP are harder to access.
- The units conducting the Amphibious landing capture the Airfield (9.14 Specialized Combat). They can move ½ their MA, and the division and one of the Commandos moves to 57.10 to attack Syracuse.
- Units which move to 57.10 in order to attack Syracuse can obtain Combat Supply from the DUKW in 57.09 since they are adjacent, assuming it remained an LC.
- If it stayed an LC, in Exploit the DUKW could move to Syracuse and unload. Or it could move to the NRP and go to the Floating Forces box to pick up more SP. Note that it is 9 MP by water from the NRP to Syracuse, so it might make sense to send the DUKW back to the Floating Forces box and return fully loaded next turn.

Sneaky DUKW Tricks

- This example is from the setup for Sicily II, Scenario 4, Driving to Messina. The turn is 24 July 1943.
- The DUKW in 56.13 (Augusta) is functioning as an LC. It loads the three units (one is a Marine unit, the other two are commandos), which collectively require 2T of capacity. It also loads 2T of supply. The Allied player would like to take more, but the Port Capacity of August is 1 SP when fully repaired.
- The DUKW proceeds to hex 53.20, where the units conduct an Amphibious Landing. The DUKW must halt here, because it used all its MPs (it can't move further when the units are doing an Amphibious Landing in any case). Assuming success, some of the units move inland to 52.20. The DUKW could remain an LC or convert to a Transport Point using the same ALT roll.
- **Strategy Note:** This is a very aggressive move. It does cut the Axis forces off from their main road, and forces them to attack 5 AR units to escape. But a lot could go wrong—Axis planes could bomb/eliminate the DUKW or the Allied attack up the coast road could stall.
- **Alternative #1:** This might be a better move to threaten than actually conduct. Fondle the DUKW unit lovingly, ostentatiously count out hexes to potential landing sites, remark on Amphibious Landing rules, rub hands with maniacal glee, etc.
- **Alternative #2:** Load the units, then proceed to 52.16 and hide under the MG unit in the hex. The next turn the DUKW can land the units further north.
- **Alternative #3:** The DUKW could stay in Augusta, load another 1 SP in the Exploit Phase and then move (but not conduct a landing—perhaps this is when it hides in 52.16).
- **Alternative #4:** The DUKW could load and move the units to 52.16, where they do an Amphibious Landing. They can still move half their movement and can join the assault on Catania. Units in Augusta don't have enough MP on their own to move that far. It is 5 MP by water to 52.16, so the DUKW could have expended 9 MPs by land before doing all this.

Duck tours are excursions that take place on purpose-built amphibious tour buses or military surplus DUKWs and LARC-Vs. Duck tours are primarily offered as tourist attractions in harbor, river and lake cities. Some of the London Duck Tours, Ltd. vehicles saw service on D-Day. Unfortunately, a number of the Duck tour companies have gone out of business after accidents or fatalities (a DUKW driver does not have good visibility when on land, and they can capsize in choppy water).