

AT THE SHARP END

A Press-Your-Luck Game of WW2 Combat

1.0 INTRODUCTION!

At The Sharp End is a simple “press-your-luck” game of WW2 combat for 2–6 players. The initial print-and-play version of *At The Sharp End* takes place on the West Front, though future expansions may add terrain cards for other theatres and other combatants.

The game rewards audacity and a “go-for-broke” mentality. The player who pushes the hardest over the course of an attack will have the chance to earn more Victory Points (VPs) and win the game. The game can be played over five, seven or nine turns. Players will alternate roles during the game turns, either leading the players as a Commander, or as an Officer making decisions about continuing the attack, or withdrawing from combat.

The game’s mechanics were inspired by many different press-your-luck boardgames and wargames (e.g., *In Magnificent Style*, *Deep Sea Adventure*, *Celestia/Cloud 9*, *Can’t Stop*, *Zombie Dice*, *Frontline D-Day* and *Fields of Fire*), with some randomizing mechanics thrown in for good measure and to add some minor fog of war and replay value to the game.

2.0 GAME COMPONENTS!

The following components are supplied as PDF files to play *At The Sharp End*:

2.0.1 Print and Play Components

- 72 Unit cards
- 20 HQ/Order cards
- 9 Terrain cards (plus one optional beach terrain card)
- 1 Random event player aid card
- 1 8-1/2 x 11” counter sheet (96 3/4” double-sided counters)
- 1 Rulebook

2.0.2 Play-supplied Components

In addition to the PDF print and play components provided outlined above, players will need to provide the following components to play:

- 4 Six-sided dice (d6)
- 1 Pencil and piece of scrap paper for each player (to record Victory Points (VPs))

2.1 COUNTERS

A sheet of 96 two-sided counters are included in the game as a PDF file. They include:

- 76 Objective counters
- 9 Variable enemy force counters (see optional rule 8.2)
- 6 Player counters
- 4 Fog of war counters (see optional rule 8.5)
- 1 Commander counter

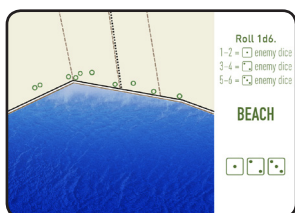
COUNTER TYPE	OBJECTIVE	VARIABLE ENEMY	PLAYER	FOG OF WAR	COMMANDER
FRONT	BASE VPS				
BACK					

2.2 TERRAIN

The battlefield consists of nine terrain cards set up from the lowest card value (1) to the highest (9). The terrain cards represent typical West Front terrain in Normandy and France. Each terrain card shows a type of terrain (narrative only), and the following information:

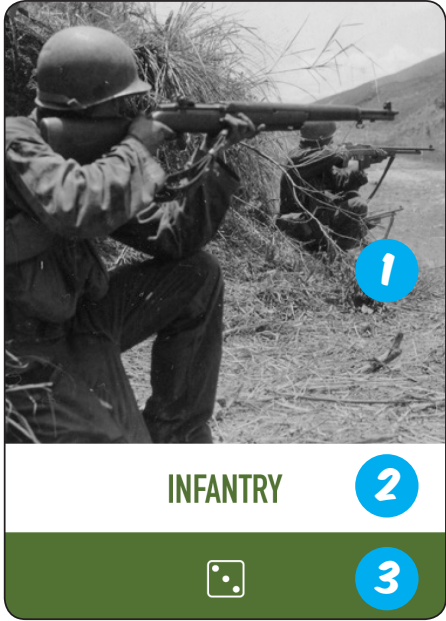
TERRAIN CARD	ELEMENTS EXPLAINED
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Picture of terrain. Illustrations by Markus Broeker used under a CCA-ShareAlike 3.0 licence. 2. Terrain card number (1–9). For game set-up. 3. Terrain card name and type. 4. Number of enemy defender dice rolled when the terrain card is attacked.

Note: Optional rule 8.4 allows the players to add a beach landing card to the game.



2.3 UNIT CARDS

Player will have a number of unit cards in their hand during the game. Each player keeps their cards hidden from the other players. Unit cards are used to defeat enemy defenders on a one-to-one basis by the commander during step 5.1.3 of an attack. At the start of each new turn (after the first) players will draw one new unit card into their hand.

UNIT CARD	ELEMENTS EXPLAINED
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Picture of type of unit. Images sourced from public US government military archives. 2. Unit name, for game purposes. 3. Type of enemy defender the unit card defeats.

Note: If a Random Event unit card is drawn during the game, pause the game and resolve the random event before continuing. See rule 5.4.

2.4 GAME LENGTH

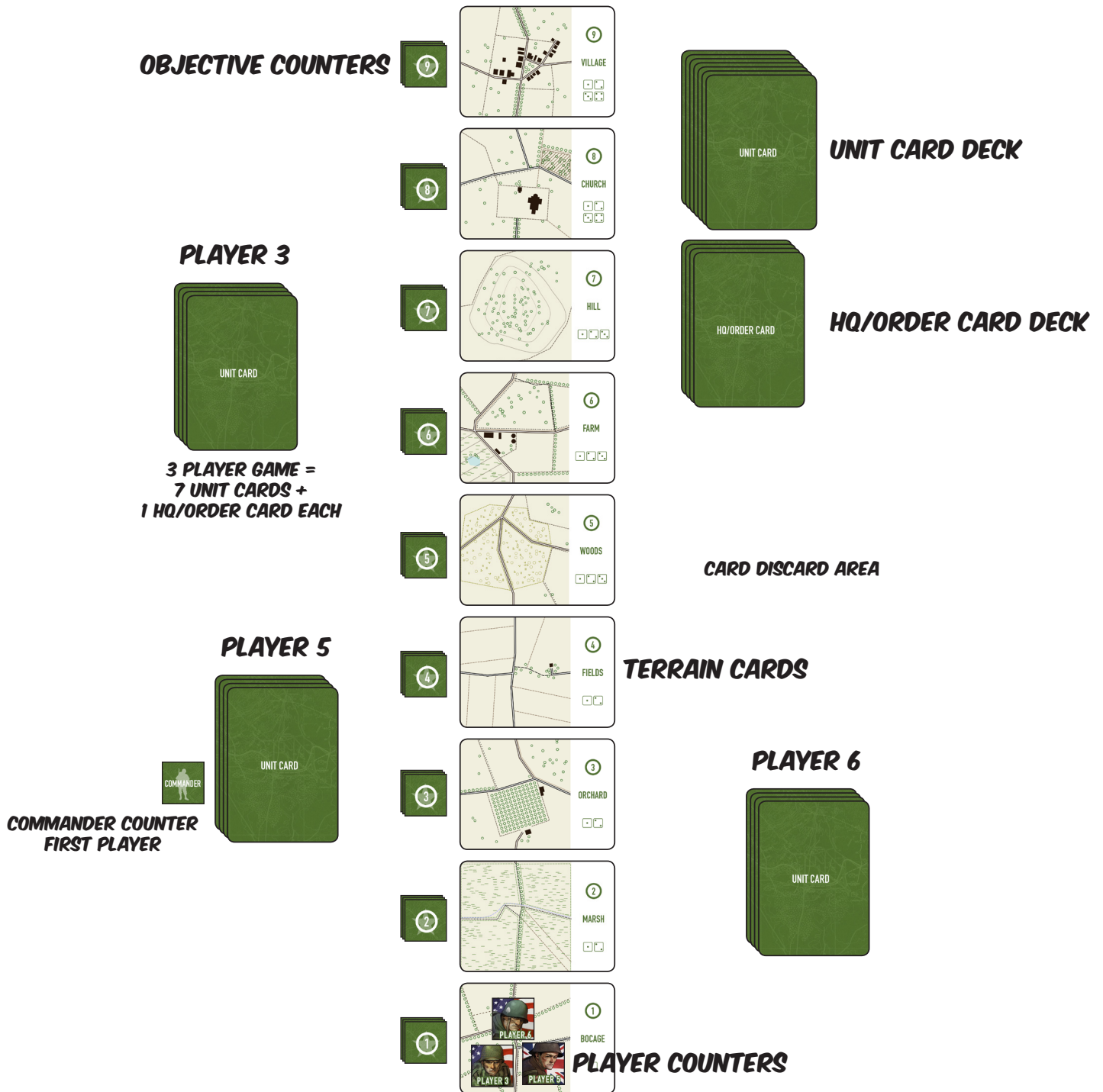
The game is limited to either five, seven or nine turns. Games take approximately 30–60 minutes to play.

3.0 SETTING UP A GAME!

Complete these steps—in order—to set up and start a game of *At The Sharp End*.

- Place the nine Terrain cards in increasing order on the table, from the lowest terrain number (1) to the highest (9). (See optional rules 8.1 and/or 8.4 for variations.)
- Separate the Objective counters by terrain card number, and shuffle each of the nine piles, placing the the counters face down next to the matching terrain card.
- Each player chooses any one of the player counters, and places it on the first terrain card (1).
- Shuffle the 72 Unit cards into one deck. Each player receives: 7 cards (2–3 players) or 5 cards (4 or more players). Place the remaining cards in a face down deck. Note: If a player receives a Random Event card at this point, shuffle that card back into the deck and draw a new card instead.
- Shuffle the 20 HQ/Order cards into one deck. Each player draws 1 card, and adds that to their hand. Place the remaining cards in a face down deck.

- Decide how long a game you want to play. Games can be 5 (short), 7 or 9 (long) turns.
- Choose one player to be the Commander on the first turn. That player receives the Commander counter.



This example shows a game set up for three players (no optional rules being used).

4.1 GOAL OF THE GAME

Each player's goal is to participate in the attack as it moves forward, until they feel it is no longer safe for them to do so. The longer a player participates in an attack, the more Victory Points (VPs) they will earn. The player with the most VPs at the end of the game will win.

5.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY!

At The Sharp End takes place over a series of turns during which the Commander and Officers move their player counters from the first terrain card (1) to the next one after successfully defeating enemy defenders, towards the final objective, the village terrain card (9).

Each player, in turn, will take the role of the Commander. The commander is in charge of ordering his officers to move forward and attack the next terrain card in front of them. Each time they do this the players will face enemy units that may appear. In the basic game, the further the attack moves forward, the more likely it is that enemies will appear.

Officers must decide before each attack if they wish to carry on, or Withdraw at the current terrain card and capture one of its Objective counters. If the Commander is able to defeat the enemy forces that appear using the Unit cards in his hand, the attack will continue to move forward, otherwise the attack fails.







5.1 TURN





Each turn consists of five steps:

- The commander rolls for enemy defenders (5.1.1)
- Each officer decides if they will participate in the attack or withdraw (5.1.2)
- The commander fights the enemy defenders (5.1.3)
- The commander and attacking officers move their counters forward onto the successfully attacked terrain card (5.1.4)
- The commander passes the commander counter to the officer to their left (5.1.5)

5.1.1 The Commander rolls for enemy defenders

Each terrain card may have enemy forces defending it. This chance is represented by a number of dice icons on the terrain card. Each dice icon represents the chance that one enemy unit will appear. The commander rolls a number of six-sided dice (d6) equal to the *number* of dice icons shown on the terrain card. The results represent the type of enemy defender encountered:

-  or  = None (no encounter)
-  = Light
-  = Medium
-  = Strong
-  = Fanatic

In order for the attack to continue the commander must be able to defeat the enemy defenders by using (discarding) Unit cards in their hand for each defender (i.e., for each die result of    ). See step 5.1.3 for more details. **To repeat:** The number of dice icons on the terrain cards indicate the number of d6 you roll ... **roll 1d6 for each dice icon that is shown** ... they do not indicate the defender types that appear.

The commander must wait to attempt to defeat the enemy defenders until *after the next step has been completed*.

5.1.2 Each officer decides if they will participate in the attack or withdraw





One by one, starting with the officer to the commander's left and moving clockwise, officers must state whether or not they will attack or withdraw. Officers will state their decision by announcing:





- "I will attack." The officer believes that the commander can defeat the enemy.
- "I will withdraw." The officer believes the commander can *not* defeat the enemy. In this case, that player removes his player counter from the current terrain card, and draws one of the Objective counters (see 5.3) randomly from the current terrain card they occupy.

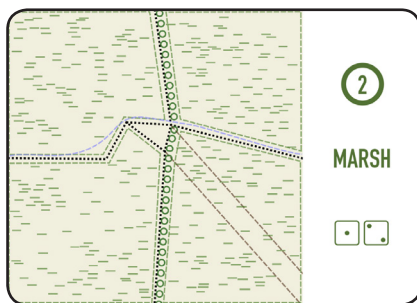
If an officer withdraws, they are no longer part of the attacking force and must wait for the next turn to start to take part in further attacks. A commander may not withdraw, except in special situations (see 5.1.5).

Once all officers have announced their decision but *before* the commander starts the next step, multiple HQ/Order cards (see 6.0) may be played by *any* player (even by an officer who has withdrawn, if applicable).

5.1.3 The commander fights the enemy defenders


The commander now attempts to defeat the enemy defenders by playing unit cards from their hand. One card must be played for each enemy defender that appeared on a dice roll (results of    ).

If multiple dice show the same number, the commander must play one matching unit card for each die. A Light enemy defender  can only be defeated by playing an Infantry card. A Medium enemy defender  can only be defeated by playing a Support card. A Strong enemy defender  can only be defeated by playing an Artillery card. A Fanatic enemy defender  can only be defeated by playing an Hero card.

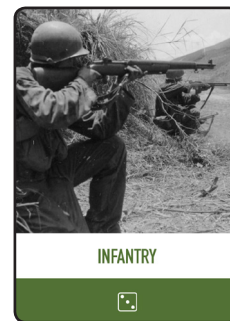






2d6 rolled for enemy defenders.



 = no enemy

 = Light enemy defeated by ...



The previous example shows: A commander is facing the marsh terrain card (2). They rolled 2d6 in the first step (5.1.1). The results were  and . The roll of  means that no enemy was encountered, but the  means that there are Light enemy defenders in the marsh that must be defeated. The commander plays one Infantry unit card and defeats the one enemy defender.

5.1.4 The commander and officers move their counters forward onto the successfully attacked terrain card

If the commander defeated all enemy defenders by playing the appropriate unit (or HQ/Order) cards, all players who did not withdraw move their player counter onto the successfully attacked terrain card. All cards used during the previous step are placed in separate discard piles.

If the commander can not defeat *all* the enemy defenders, they *do not play any unit cards at all* and the attack fails. None of the officers or the commander who are attacking receive an Objective counter.



5.1.5 The commander passes the commander counter to the officer to their left

If there are no officers remaining (i.e., the commander is attacking alone), the commander may continue attacking (start step 5.1.1 again), or simply take an Objective counter and announce they are withdrawing. This is the only time a commander may withdraw. If they choose to withdraw, ***or if the attack failed*** (see 5.1.4), pass the commander counter to the player to the left and begin a new turn immediately (see 5.2). If the attack is continuing with at least one officer and a commander (starting step 5.1.1 again), pass the commander counter to the first officer to the left who has *not withdrawn* from the attack.

5.2 END OF TURN

The end of a turn occurs when the attack on a terrain card fails for one of two reasons:

- The commander can not defeat the enemy defender dice using unit cards from their hand (5.1.4), **OR**
- A newly appointed commander choose to withdraw because they would be attacking the next terrain card alone (5.1.5)

When either of these happens, the current turn is over. All players now place their player counters back on the starting terrain card (1), and a new turn begins. ***Each player draws one new unit OR HQ/Order card.*** Remember to record what turn this is— at the end of the last turn (fifth, seventh or ninth) determine a winner (see 7.0).

5.3 OBJECTIVE COUNTERS

Players keep objective counters they have gained face down in front of them, keeping them secret from the other players, but may look at them at any time. They hold them and use them during the game as described (for each type) below.

5.3.1 Victory Points

Victory points come in two types: “base VPs” and “VPs±X”. If a player receives a base VP objective counter, they secretly record VPs worth the value of the terrain card they received them from. If they receive a VPs±X, they secretly record VPs worth the value of the terrain card they received ± the indicated value. For example, if the player received a “VPs+1” Objective counter on the (4) terrain card, they record 5 VPs scored.

5.3.2 +1 Unit card

Allows a player to draw one unit card *at any time* they want during the game. Once used, this objective counter is discarded.

5.3.3 HQ card

Allows a player to draw one HQ/Order card *at any time* they want during the game. Follow the instructions on each HQ/Order card as written (see 6.0) when it is picked up or at the appropriate time during the game. Once used, this objective counter is discarded.

5.3.4 Supply card

Allows a player, when acting as commander, to defeat any one enemy defender die during step 5.1.3. Once used, this objective counter is discarded.







5.4 RANDOM EVENTS

When a player draws a Random Event unit card, play stops. Refer to the random event player aid card and roll 1d6. Resolve the event, or note the result of the random event, by following the instructions on the random event card. Then draw a replacement unit card. Follow the same procedure if the “roll random event” fog of war counter is revealed (see 8.3).



6.0 HQ/ORDER CARDS!

There are six different HQ/Order cards. Players start the game with one HQ/Order card in their hand, and may draw one at the start of a turn (instead of a unit card) *and/or* if they use and discard an appropriate objective counter during play.

HQ/ORDER CARD	EFFECT	HQ/ORDER CARD	EFFECT
 <p>COUNTER-ATTACK</p> <p>Forces the commander to re-roll all of the [] and [] result dice they rolled. Can be played <i>even after</i> the commander has stated they can overcome the enemy.</p> <p>— Officers only, even if they have withdrawn. All Officers have declared orders.</p>	<p>If played the commander <i>must</i> re-roll all of the no encounter [] or [] enemy defender dice results. Can be played <i>even after</i> the start of step 5.1.3 when a commander stated they could defeat the enemy. Officers only, even if they have withdrawn, after step 5.1.2 is complete.</p>	 <p>DIG IN</p> <p>A player has successfully gained a foothold in the terrain card that was being attacked. The player takes an objective counter from that terrain card as if the attack has been successful.</p> <p>— Commander or Officers. The attack has failed.</p>	<p>A player may take an Objective token from the terrain card that was being attacked if the attack fails. Commander or Officers.</p>
 <p>INTEL-RECON</p> <p>Ignore all enemy encounters on the terrain card being attacked. Can only be played <i>once</i> for this effect during the game. If players hold an INTEL-RECON card at end of game: +1 VP.</p> <p>— Commander or Officers. All Officers have declared orders. The Commander has stated they can not overcome the enemy.</p>	<p>Ignore all enemy defenders rolled on a terrain card. One time only, else held for +1 VP. Commander or Officers. After step 5.1.2 is complete. The commander has stated in step 5.1.3 that they can not defeat the enemy defenders.</p>	 <p>REINFORCEMENTS</p> <p>Allows the commander to defeat any one rolled enemy encounter, regardless of type. Multiple REINFORCEMENTS cards may be used.</p> <p>— Commander only. Does not have to be used.</p>	<p>Allows a commander to defeat any one enemy defender regardless of type. Multiple copies of this card can be played. Commander only. Does not have to be used.</p>
 <p>TACTICS</p> <p>Allows the commander to re-roll any number of encounter dice they want. Can be played <i>even after</i> the commander has stated they can not overcome the enemy.</p> <p>— Commander or Officers. All Officers have declared orders.</p>	<p>Commander <i>may</i> re-roll any number of enemy defender dice they want. <i>May</i> be played the commander has stated in step 5.1.3 that they can <i>not</i> defeat the enemy. Commander or Officers. After step 5.1.2 is complete.</p>	 <p>WITHDRAW</p> <p>A player who played this card selects another officer. That officer is forced to stay on the current terrain card and must withdraw.</p> <p>— Commander or Officers. All officers have declared orders. Commander has not yet played any Unit cards.</p>	<p>When played, select another Officer (not the Commander). That officer must withdraw, even if they declared they were attacking. Commander or Officers. After step 5.1.2 is complete. Commander has not started to play unit cards in step 5.1.3.</p>

7.0 WINNING THE GAME!

The player who has collected the most victory points (VPs) at the end of the game is the winner. VPs are earned by taking an objective counter from a terrain card that indicates a number of VPs (based on the terrain card number they were taken from, *possibly* ± a modifier), and by having an unused Intel-Recon in your hand at the end of the game (+1 VP each). In case of a tie, all tied players are considered the winners.

8.0 OPTIONAL RULES!

The following optional rules, in any number or combination, can be added to the game if all players agree.

8.1 RANDOM TERRAIN

Instead of arranging the terrain cards from lowest value (1) to highest (9), player may choose to shuffle terrain cards 2–8 and randomly distribute them between terrain cards 1 and 9. The bocage (1) and village (9) terrain cards should always be the first and last card even when using this rule.

8.2 VARIABLE ENEMY FORCES



Instead of rolling the number of enemy defender die as indicated by the icons on the terrain cards, players take the nine variable enemy forces counters and shuffle them face down. Place one on each of the terrain cards face down so that it covers the standard enemy defender dice icons on a terrain card. Reveal the first counter on the bocage terrain card (1) and begin the game normally. Reveal the variable enemy force counter on the next terrain card only after the players have successfully defeated the current enemy defenders. If the bocage terrain card (1) has an enemy force on it (other than 0), players should place their counters off that terrain card and must defeat the enemy normally to move onto it. This randomized set-up of enemy defenders should happen every time the players start a new turn (i.e., when players are starting back on the bocage terrain card).

8.3 FOG OF WAR COUNTERS



At the start of each odd-numbered turn, take the four fog of war counters and shuffle them face down. Take three of these and place them face down on any terrain card, except the bocage (1) and village (9) terrain cards. Set the fourth one aside face down. When the players have successfully defeated the current enemy defenders, and a random event counter is on the *next* terrain card, flip that counter over. There are four random events that can occur:

- All quiet. Nothing happens, simply remove the counter.
- + enemy. Roll one extra enemy defender die on this card.
- - enemy. Roll one less enemy defender die on this card (can mean no enemy defenders).
- Roll random event. Immediately roll 1d6 for a random event (see 5.5).

8.4 BEACH LANDINGS



Place the beach terrain card before the first (bocage) terrain card. Roll 1d6. The result will be divided by two (rounded up, i.e., a roll of 3 = 2) and indicates the number of enemy defenders dice that are rolled and must be defeated on the first turn of the game. Contrary to normal rules, only Unit cards can be used to defeat enemy forces. Also, *all* players—starting with the commander then moving clockwise around the table—*must* take turns using one of their unit cards if they are able to, to defeat the enemy forces. (This rule is meant to represent the effort required to defeat entrenched enemy forces on a beachhead.) May have a fog of war counter placed on it (see 8.3). May *not* have a variable enemy force counter placed on it (see 8.2). The beach terrain card is the starting card only on the first turn; on subsequent turns, remove it from play and have players start on terrain card (1).

9.0 GLOSSARY!


The following terms are used in this rulebook, and are defined in this section.

Commander. The player who is currently in charge of defeating enemy forces on the next terrain card, and moving the attack forward if they succeed.

Officer. A player who will decide during a turn if they will continue to attack, or withdraw their support from an impending attack on the next terrain card to save themselves.

Terrain card. A location that the players move their player counters through during an attack.

Random event. An occurrence common to WW2 combat that can happen during play that can be either beneficial or detrimental to the players.

Enemy Force/Enemy Defenders. Opposing units that are defending a terrain card and must be defeated. There are four different types that match a 1d6 die roll of .

HQ/Order card. A special card that allows players to perform special actions during the game.

Attack. When an Officer declares he will be trying to move forward during an attack on a terrain card, and will continue moving if the attack succeeds.

Withdraw. The order an Officer states when they do not wish to continue with the attack.

Unit card. A card that the commander uses to defeat enemy defenders in a one-to-one exchange. There are four different cards that are matched to the four different defender types.

Fog of war. An optional rule that allows for three of four extra counters to be placed on the terrain cards at the start of each odd-numbered turn.

10.0 DESIGN NOTES!

[to do]

11.0 CREDITS!

[to do]