

Advanced Task Force, as it appeared in The Broadside, May-June 1983

Advanced Task Force

by Jim Eliason

I have always had a liking for naval games, so I bought Task Force as soon as it came out. I was not disappointed. The game system gives the players lots of chance to use deception and tactical finesse. The scenarios are interesting and mostly balanced. I have experimented with variants of most the wargames I own, and I came up with some optional rules for TF that fill some gaps in the game.

A. Aircraft vs. Sub

The first thing that struck me was the total inability of aircraft to attack submarines. Both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft are thought to be more effective than surface ships as sub killers.

Helicopters in particular shouldn't even try to do ASW work under the present rules because a passive search is much more effective than a helicopter ASW search.

To make helicopters more useful, change the helicopter search rules as follows:

- 1) Any number of the available helicopters, not just one or two, may be sent to search a megahex. This cost only one action point regardless of the number sent, but can be done only once per turn. To search the megahex again, another search method or helicopters from another TF must be used. The search has a search value of double the number of helicopters (searching for TFs) or the numbers of helicopters (searching for subs) up to a maximum value of 5.
- 2) A helicopter search may be directed to a single hex instead of just a megahex. Several hexes in the same megahex may be searched by helicopters from one TF, but not a hex and its megahex in the same turn. Search values are 4 per helicopter when searching for TFs up to a maximum value of 8, and 2 per helicopter when searching for subs up to a maximum value of 6.
- 3) Instead of a helicopter ASW search, a player may announce a helicopter ASW attack. This counts as helicopter search and is conducted exactly the same way except it costs two action points, the range is reduced by one megahex, and the helicopters may attack. If a search of a megahex during an ASW attack results in a precise search report, one seventh (rounded to the nearest whole number) of the helicopters may attack with a strength of 1.

Carrier-borne ASW squadrons may also attack during search. A search is conducted as in the rules except that one search may comprise more than one strength point. Each additional ASW point sent to the same megahex increases the required search report by one level. e.g. two ASW points find an enemy subron in shallow mode. The search report is precise instead of accurate. A search directed against a single hex also increases the search report by one level. These effects are cumulative. No more than one search per megahex per turn may be made unless all are hex searches in different hexes, regardless of the number of carrier task forces. Carrier ASW planes may search megahexes already searched by long patrol earlier in the turn. Each of the ASW points may attack with a strength of two (2) if a search results in a precise search report. There is no range reduction.

Long range ASW patrol missions may also attack. The rules are identical to carrier based airplane attacks except that Soviet long range patrols have an ASW strength of only 1.

B. Airplanes vs. Airbases

- 1) Fixed wing aircraft units, including long range patrols, may attack land airbases.
- 2) CAP may be assigned to cover them.
- 3) Bombing airbases takes place on the tactical display and is resolved exactly like an anti-ship mission, including all die roll modifiers. The airbase occupies arc 1. The target size is -2. The airbase itself has an AA value of 4*, and a jamming value of 1.
- 4) An airbase is never totally destroyed, but if it has accumulated 3 "flotation" hits it is not operational. "System" hits never affect an airbase. Planes may not take off nor may they change boxes on the airbase display of a non-operational base. Each "flotation" hit the airbase currently has reduces the AA and jamming values by 1. During each terminal phase, each airbase may remove one hit on a die roll of 1 or 2.
- 5) Aircraft which are on an airbase while it is under attack may be destroyed. Each "systems" hit on an occupied airbase causes one damage point on an aircraft unit occupying it. "Flotation" hits never affect aircraft. Half the hits from the entire airstrike (not each attacking squadron) are permanent, the rest temporary.

C. Gunnery Combat

While modern warships mount an unimpressive number and caliber of guns, these weapons are quite accurate and have a high rate of fire. Considering the nearly complete lack of armor in their targets, guns are probably as effective as ever for damaging ships. The hard part of gunnery is getting within range. This is not reflected in the game. Initiating gunnery combat is fairly easy, but gunnery is quite ineffective.

- 1) In order to initiate a gunnery action, the attacking TF must either
 - a) Obtain an accurate search or precise search report by active helicopter search of the defending TF earlier in the turn, or
 - b) Spend 2 action points for the gunnery action.The search in a) cannot be done for the attacking TF by another TF or by a patrol mission. It must have found the enemy TF by itself.
- 2) Gunnery combat may last more than one round, even if one player doesn't want to continue. After the first round, if both players elect to withdraw, combat is over. If both elect to continue, another round is fought, and each player's screening die roll is decreased by one. If one player elects to continue and the other elects to withdraw, each player must immediately from the tactical display any ships that were screened on the previous round. Each has the option to remove the ship that occupied arc 1, even if it was not screened. If some ships of each player still remain, another round is fought. Both players may move each ship to an adjacent arc on the tactical display and each makes another screening die roll. The withdrawing player may add 1 to his screening die roll before the roll, but if he does he must also add 1 to all his combat die rolls. After the second round the "pursuing" player decides to continue combat or not. The withdrawing player must elect to withdraw. If combat continues, each player withdraws more ships as above and a third round is fought. Rounds are fought until the pursuing player elects to break off the action, one side has no ships left on the tactical display, or four rounds have been fought.
- 3) Ships with a gunnery factor of 3 or more have enough gunpower to score more than one hit when they fire. The number of hits is assigned like AA hits, ie. hits gun factor minus die roll with a "0" also giving one hit. Ships with gunnery factors of 4 or more and ranges of A or B can also cause serious hull damage. Reroll for each hit; a 1 or 2 means a flotation hit in addition to the systems hit

D. Repairs

US and UK ships may attempt to repair ship capabilities reduced by damage. At a cost of one action each ship in the TF or subron may attempt to repair one capability by rolling one die. On a roll of 1 or 2, one may be added to the ASW, AA, gunnery, or jamming value or to the SSM simultaneous launch capability or number of helicopters. A carrier that can move normally may regain the capability to conduct flight operations on a roll of 1 or 2. Repairs may be attempted only once per action sequence.

Repairs do not remove hits and do not affect the number of hits needed to sink a ship.

If a 6 is rolled during the repair attempt the damage becomes permanent. For example, if a ship with an AA value of 3 takes 2 system hits and rolls a 6 for repair of AA, it may never have an AA value greater than 1. It may attempt to repair again if it takes another system hit. It may attempt to repair any other capability even if it takes no more hits.

E. Miscellaneous

- 1) A ship is sunk if it has taken as many flotation hits as its flotation value, as before, or if it has absorbed double that number counting both flotation and system hits. The regular rule penalizes regular bombing attacks and SSM's that can cause flotation hits because each causes hits in exactly the proportion that the target can best absorb. It should never happen that a flotation hit is less effective than a systems hit for sinking a ship.
- 2) As the rules stand, no ship with a flotation value of less than 3 can be crippled. Consider a damaged ship crippled if a single systems hit would sink it, as well as when it has absorbed more than half its flotation value in flotation hits.
- 3) AA fire from aircraft with a strike rating of "L" or from final protective fire against bombing attacks cause half permanent and half temporary losses but the odd losses are permanent instead of temporary.
- 4) A TF, but not a subron, must spend two action points to initiate an ASW action or have located the target subron by its own search, similar to the rule for initiating gunnery combat. This does not apply to ASW attacks during a torpedo combat action.
- 5) All ASW attacks from TF's, planes or helicopters, but not subs, must add 1 to the die roll if the defending subron is in deep mode.
- 6) The die roll for a submarine torpedo attack is increased by one (1) for each arc the target is away (the modification may now be more than plus 2).
- 7) All strike and patrol missions for both players are written during the air status segment. All missions during a turn take off during the CAP segment and all strike and patrol missions land during the terminal phase. If the units' base carrier was sunk by an earlier attack the planes may attempt to land elsewhere. They have a range of 6 megahexes from the target hex to the alternate air base which may be a friendly land airbase (active in the scenario or not) or a carrier of the same nationality. They may not fly again, but do not count as destroyed for victory conditions. Air units that go down with a carrier or are unable to find an alternate landing site do give victory points.
- 8) A helicopter search die roll is reduced by 1 for every ten ships in the enemy TF, not for every four.
- 9) A player may decline to have any of his groups spend any action points. He need not roll a die to determine the number of actions available for these groups or otherwise inform his opponent of their existence, except by responding appropriately to searches.
- 10) A player may announce an action sequence for one "phantom" group each turn. A phantom group may only execute a movement action. A leader counter from the spare leaders box with no group under it is placed on the map to represent the phantom. A phantom has no true location on the map and can never be found by search. The leader of a phantom group may be given command of

a real life group as if it were still in the spare leaders box. The phantom then ceases to exist until another leader becomes available.

11) One victory point is awarded for destroying a support squadron or downing a long range patrol.

12) A subron containing only SSN's may move 2 hexes while in deep mode, but must use 2 actions.

13) A subron containing an SS must use 2 actions to move 2 hexes in shallow mode. It may never move 2 hexes in deep mode.

14) A TF containing freighters must expend 2 action points to move 2 hexes. The "freighters" accompanying US CV's are fleet auxiliaries and are exempt from this rule.

15) Moskva looks more like Kiev than a cruiser, so call it a CV instead of a CG when issuing a precise search report.

16) The following destroyers should be classified as frigates for search report and victory conditions: Esparta, S. de Agosto, V. de Juilio, Azueta, Ajax, Rhyl, Zulu, Velos, and Gayret.

17) An AEW on CAP over a TF has the following effects:

i) It subtracts its strenght from the entry die roll of enemy SSM's attacking the TF.

ii) It may perform an "AEW search". It is conducted and resolved exactly like a subron passive search except it effects only enemy TF's. This search costs one action, and can only be done if the TF is in normal mode. The AEW may make as many searches as it has strenght points.

iii) Combat squadrons in the same CAP may attack an incoming SSM or airstrike twice instead of once. If the AEW is reduced, it must roll a 1-3 for the bonus to apply to a given airstrike or SSM wave.

iv) Aircraft in the launch ready box can fly off before the incoming airstrike arrives, even if no mission was planned for them.

v) A long range patrol attacking a TF with a CAP of both AEW and an "L" combat squadron is destroyed on a roll of 1 or 2.

vi) The AEW adds its strenght to the first round screening die roll of the TF when defending against a gunnery action.

18) SSM entry die rolls are reduced by the range the missiles are fired from. If the accuracy plus the modified die roll are less than 1, the SSM's can enter through area 1

19) If an air unit suffers more losses than its strenght during a single AA phase the excess losses are always permanent. Permanent losses on previous phases reduce the strenght for this rule, temporary ones do not. e.g. a unit with a strenght of 4 has one permanent and one temporary damage point from a previous AA phase, and suffers one permanent and three temporary damage points. It would now have three permanent and one temporary damage points.

20) The search value of an active ASW search is the number of ships with an "S" for active ASW.

21) Ships in the same hex as an airbase may bombard that base. Only flotation hits affect the airbase. Half the system hits (rounded down) inflicted by any one ship are permanent damage on any one air squadron of the defenders choice. This counts as a gunnery action and only one round may be fought.

22) SS units are not found by passive search unless the megahex they occupy is called.

23) USS Iowa seems destined to join the fleet soon. Its gunnery and protection are so different from other units in the game that several special rules need to be used for her if she is going to be used in player-constructed scenarios.

i) Use the counter values from Super Task Force (Moves #57). Active ASW-0 Flotation-6, Helicopters-4, ASW-0, AA-3, Gunnery-5A, Jamming-3, and SSM-A8 (X2)

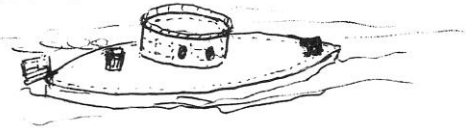
ii) Allow the Iowa to initiate gunnery from an adjacent hex. Only one round may be fought, and the defender may select any one of his ships to be the target before the die is rolled. Screened ships may not be fired on, and Iowa's

gunnery is only 4.

iii) Each gunnery hit inflicted by the Iowa counts as a flotation hit as well as a systems hit.

iv) During a normal gunnery action, Iowa may fire if she or her target is screened, but not both.

v) For the purpose of reducing Iowa's capabilities, system hits on her are halved, rounded down.



Added later:

5A) The ASW strength of a TF (not subron) in an ASW action is the total of the starred ASW strengths of the shops in the TF divided by 6. Round to the nearest whole number; round halves up. A TF containing a CV may not initiate an ASW action.

22) This does not apply to SNs.

24) A player who must make an approximate report may pretend that an accurate report is required and state a hex(es) as the location of the group(s). The hex need not be the actual location of a group. The presence or absence of a group in the searched megahex must be correctly reported. A player who must make an accurate search report may pretend that a precise report is required. The player must report the true hex(es) the group(s) are in, but may report incorrect compositions.