



Formation Series №1

# MIRAGES

'40  
'41  
Compass  
Brevity  
Battleaxe  
Skorpion

A game by Dirk Blennemann



**Game-specific Rules**



## 13. GAME COMPONENTS OUTLINE

**MIRAGES** contains the following components:

- One Formation Series rulebook
- One game specific rulebook
- One mounted map
- 395 Counters
- Two trifold player aids
- Two double sided setup displays
- Two double sided turn track markers
- Two 10-sided dice, referred to as "d10".

### 13.1 GAME SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The game **MIRAGES** (Fata Morgana) is an operational-level simulation of the first battles that took place in North Africa from December 1940 to June 1941.

The game is intended for two players, but is also suitable for solitaire play. The game is played semi-interactively and keeps both players involved the whole time...

**MIRAGES** is the first game in the Formation Series. Further games will follow, all of which can be played using the same series rules.

#### Map

The map shows the area in North Africa where the campaigns took place. A hexagonal grid is displayed to show the movement of the playing pieces. There are several terrain features on the map, which can be divided into hexagons and hexagon sides. Each hexagon also has a unique identification number to facilitate placement.

#### 13.1.1 Combat Units

Combat units represent the military forces that took part in the historical campaign. Most combat units are subordinate to a division or brigade formation, each with its own unique coloured stripe at the top of the counter.

Infantry		Mot Infantry	
Rece (recon)		Motorcycle Inf.	
Machegun		Oasis	
British AFV			
Axis AFV			

Treat Machinegun and Oasis as (Leg) Infantry for stacking, movement and combat purposes. Treat Motorcycle Infantry as Motorized Infantry for stacking, movement and combat purposes.

- **Stacking Indicator:** Two or three units stacked together that are part of the same formation and are either two infantry type or up to three units of the same AFV model (see AFV silhouettes), count as a single unit for Stacking limits. Qualifying units are marked "A", "B" and "C". In other words, the maximum of one "A", one "B" and one "C" unit stacked in one hex count as a single unit for Stacking limits.
- **No Combined Arms bonus symbol:** Indicates that the unit (Italian tank or a British heavy tank) does not qualify for the Combined Arms bonus.
- **Scenario background color:** Used as an identifier for all units that are part of the same scenario.



#### 13.1.2 Initiative

For the Maximum Number of Initiatives in a Row (6.1.1) and the Maximum number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side (6.2), see scenario specific information (16.1-4).

### 13.1.3 Stacking

#### Stacking limits

The Stacking limits are different for both sides and are defined as follows (they can also be found on player aid):

**COMMONWEALTH LIMIT:** Two units of which only one may be of leg infantry type. One HQ unit stacks for free.

**AXIS LIMIT:** One infantry unit and two Panzer and/or recce units. One HQ unit stacks for free.

#### COMMONWEALTH LIMIT



Two units of which **only one** may be of leg infantry type. One HQ unit stacks for free.

#### AXIS LIMIT



One HQ unit and **one infantry** unit, two Panzer and/or recce units.

### 13.2 GAME SPECIFIC MAP INFORMATION

#### 13.2.1 Trails

A Trail is a special road type. Trails are considered to be the same as road in all respects, only the movement costs are different. See the Terrain Effects Chart for details.

#### 13.2.2 Ridges and Wadis

ZOCs cannot be projected across Ridge and Wadi hexsides. Units can never conduct Retreat before Combat (see 7.4.1.1) across Ridge or Wadi hexsides. Units may not conduct a Retreat across Ridge or Wadi hexsides, unless via a Road or Trail (see 7.4.2.2).

In addition to the usual restrictions for Supply and Command Paths (see 5.7.2 and 5.8.2), a Supply or Command Path can only be traced across ONE Ridge or Wadi hexside not intersected by a Road or Trail. If the unit tracing the path is adjacent to a Ridge or Wadi hexside itself, do NOT count that Ridge or Wadi hexside.

#### 13.2.3 Friendly Map Edges

For purposes of a Retreat, the east edge is a friendly map edge for the Commonwealth, the west edge for the Axis (see 7.4.2.2).

#### 13.2.4 Off-Board Map Areas

The game comes with two off-board map areas: The eastern off-board area is friendly to the Commonwealth whereas the western is to the Axis. Off-board areas can only be used by friendly units for retreat or setup of reinforcements. There is no regular movement/combat in, into or out of off-board areas. ZOCs cannot be projected into or out of off-board areas. Off-board areas are neither supply sources nor are they applicable for tracing supply or a command path.

##### 13.2.4.1 Retreating into an friendly off-board map area

A combat unit retreating as a result of combat both voluntarily as well as per Forced Retreat 7.4.2.3 may (owning player's choice) enter a friendly off-board map area. Retreating from a hex to an adjacent off-board map area equals an unlimited number of retreat hex(es) on the standard hexgrid. In other words: An off-board retreating unit negates any (all) remaining retreating hexes.

A unit retreating into an off-board area is immediately placed on the game turn track and becomes available as reinforcement during the

#### 9.4 Reinforcements Segment of the NEXT game turn.

If a HQ must be displaced (see 5.3.3) and all surviving combat units of the same formation are already on the game turn track the HQ is displaced there, too. All standard rules for HQ Displacement are in effect.

An HQ located on the game turn track during the Recovery Phase due to aforementioned reasons is considered to be In Supply: Advance the formation's Formation Activation marker on the corresponding track. If during the Reinforcement Segment a HQ is located on the game turn track and must be replaced by a substitute HQ counter, the following procedure is in effect:

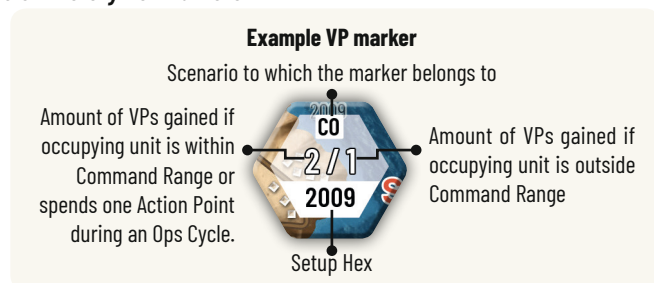
- Replace the original HQ counter with the substitute HQ counter.
- Move the formation's Formation Activation marker on the corresponding track if required by scenario's Special Rules.
- Place the substitute HQ counter as reinforcement on the map.

#### 13.2.5 Turn Tracks

The map has a designated space where a scenario-specific turn track is placed. Place the turn track that belongs to the scenario being set up.

### 13.3 GAME SPECIFIC MARKER INFORMATION

#### 13.3.1 Victory Hex Markers



These hexagonal markers are placed on the hexes marked on them and are used to track the player's objectives and their VP values. The amount of VPs gained depends on the conditions in which the VP hex is occupied: A combat unit that is within its parent formation HQ's Command Range during the End of Turn Phase or spends one Action Point during an Ops Cycle will gain the number of VPs on the left side of the marker, while a combat unit that is outside of Command Range will gain the number of VPs on the right side of the marker. See 16. Scenarios – Victory Conditions for details.

## 14. REINFORCEMENTS SPECIAL RULES

### 14.1 PLACEMENT OF REINFORCEMENTS

The Axis player receives his Reinforcements first.

Reinforcements are always In Command when entering the map.

**Eligible reinforcements enter on any map edge hex that:**

1. Contains a friendly supply source.
2. Does not contain a Supply Blocked marker and
3. Is not in an EZOC.

Should no friendly entry hex be available, reinforcements may enter on any hex adjacent to a friendly off-board map area (see 13.2.4), but not adjacent to an enemy unit.

- ❖ No reinforcements may be placed in BARDIA town hex (1703) or any strong point hex.

### 14.2 NEW REINFORCING FORMATIONS

The Formation Activation marker of a new reinforcing formation is placed on the formation's maximum value.

## 15. OTHER SPECIAL RULES

There are no Replacements in this game.

BARDIA ceases to function as an Axis supply source for the remainder of the game the instant any Allied unit ends a Movement Action in the BARDIA town hex (1703).

The number of Initiatives in a Row for one side (6.1.1) and the number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side (6.2) are limited. The limits are given in the special rules section of each scenario.

## 16. SCENARIOS

**MIRAGES** comes with four scenarios. The scenarios are listed in chronological order. The third scenario (see 16.3) **Unternehmen Skorpion** has the character of an introductory scenario. It is recommended to play this scenario first.

Each scenario comes with its own set of HQ-, combat and static units, markers and tracks. The initial deployment and any reinforcements can be found in the setup displays. Both players setup their units simultaneously since all units have fixed starting locations.

You will find details regarding special rules and victory conditions in the relevant section of the setup display for each scenario. Please note that the special scenario rules supersede all general rules of the game.

Each scenario begins with the Ops Phase, so the first Admin Phase is skipped.

### Victory Conditions

Depending on the scenario, either the Axis OR the Allied player earns Victory Points for locations. See special scenario rules for details.

VP markers are adjusted immediately on the Victory Points track if a player spends one Action Point during an Ops Cycle. Only a VP hex NOT scored during the Ops Cycle may be scored during the End of Turn Phase (see 13.3.1). Note that each VP hex may be scored a maximum of ONE EVERY game turn.

The Victory Condition Chart defines the Victory Conditions for each game turn. If either side fulfills the Victory Conditions, the game ends. Otherwise, the game proceeds to the next game turn. The game ends as Draw if neither side fulfills the Victory Conditions at the last game turn. The game immediately (read: regardless of Sequence of Play) ends as Automatic Victory if all combat units of one side are eliminated; ignore any reinforcements.



## 16.1 SCENARIO ONE: OPERATION COMPASS (DECEMBER 1940)

This scenario recreates the opening stage of the Allied attack against Italian forces in western Egypt and Cyrenaica December 1940. It was the first large British Empire forces operation of the Western Desert Campaign (1940 – 1943).

The scenario can be completed in under ten hours. Due to the historical setting, the active role in this scenario falls on to the Allied player.

### The Situation

In September 1940, the Italian 10th Army advanced into Egypt approximately 60 miles. The small British force withdrew, but the Italians stopped the advance awaiting reinforcements and supplies. The Italian dug in and built five fortified camps.

Italian forces seriously outnumbered Allied forces by infantry, artillery, tankettes / tanks, and aircraft. But only a very small part was motorized and (lightly) armored. No Italian tank and almost no Italian AT or artillery gun could penetrate the armor of the British Matilda tank.

In November 1940, the command of British Troops Egypt planned the limited **Operation Compass** (Italian: *Battaglia della Marmarica*) as a five-day raid with the option of continuing the operation to exploit success. Due to the strength of the forces, a favorable opportunity was seen as a prerequisite for launching **Operation Compass**. British command viewed this condition as valid at the beginning of December 1940.

### Game Duration

Ten game turns.

### Special Rules

#### Italian Surrender

In the Recovery Segment of the Admin Phase, the Axis player checks for Italian Surrender for qualifying Italian combat and static units and removes units failing the check from play.

Italian combat and static units which cannot trace an unbroken path of consecutive hexes to an Axis supply source (see 5.7.3) during the Recovery Segment of a game turn, must check for surrender. Ignore Axis strong points as Axis supply sources for Italian surrender.

The path is considered broken if it cannot be traced without entering a hex that:

- Contains an enemy unit of any type.
- Contains an EZOC, unless at least one friendly unit of any type (even if Disrupted) is also present.

**Procedure:** Conduct an EC. If the unit fails the EC, the unit surrenders and is removed from play.

❖ *Italian HQ units do not check for Italian Surrender but are removed from play when all their subordinate units have been eliminated (see 3.3).*

During the Reinforcement Segment of Game Turn 7, the Allied player replaces the formation HQ counter of 4<sup>th</sup> Indian by its substitute HQ counter. Move the Formation Activation marker of 4<sup>th</sup> Indian -2 spaces down on the Formation Activation track if the substitute HQ counter has been placed on the map or Game Turn Track.

During the Reinforcement Segment of Game Turn 9, the Italian Babini group (four combat units) enters play via hex 1001.

In addition, the Axis player replaces the formation HQ counter of Italian XXIII formation by its substitute HQ counter. Place substitute HQ counter in hex 1001 and treat as reinforcement in terms of the reinforcement rules (only) if all subordinate units of Italian XXIII formation have been eliminated.

Move the Formation Activation marker of XXIII formation +2 spaces on the Formation Activation track if the substitute HQ counter has been placed on the map or Game Turn Track.

### Victory Conditions

Allied player earns Victory Points.

**Automatic Allied Victory:** An Allied combat unit, regardless if In or Out of Command, is located in the Bardia hex 1703 during the End of Turn Phase.

### Initiative Determination

- The Allied player is automatically considered to have won Initiative Determination for the first Formation Activation of Game Turn 1. Move the Initiative DRM marker to the first space (+2) on its Axis side.
- The Allied player receives a +2 DRM in addition to any other Initiative DRM during each Initiative Determination Segment of Game Turn 1 only.
- In case of a tie, the Allied player wins the initiative (all game turns).

**Maximum number of Initiatives in a Row for one side: 2**

**Maximum number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side: 2**

### Victory Objectives

Allied player earns Victory Points

First value: "In Command" / second value "Out of Command"

- Bardia 1703: Automatic victory / Automatic victory
- Sollum 2009: 2 / 1
- Ridotta Capuzzo 1609: 1 / 0
- Buq Buq 3212: 1 / 0
- Sidi Barrani 4308: 2 / 1

Victory Conditions										
	GT1	GT2	GT3	GT4	GT5	GT6	GT7	GT8	GT9	GT10
VPs	0-1	0-2	2-3	2-4	4-7	6-11	7-15	10-20	14-25	20-31
Victory Points < range: Axis victory / Victory Points > range: Allied victory										

## 16.2 SCENARIO TWO: OPERATION BREVITY (MAY 1941)

This scenario recreates the limited Allied offensive against Axis front-line forces in the Sollum–Capuzzo–Bardia area of the border between Egypt and Libya in May 1941. It can be completed in under four hours.

### The Situation

After the invasion of Egypt by Italian forces in September 1940, the British counter-offensive in December 1940 to February 1941 (see Scenario One: Operation Compass) destroyed the Italian 10th Army and liberated the greater part of the Cyrenaica. Reinforced by the German Afrikakorps, the Axis drove the Allied forces back across the Egyptian border by April 1941. But Tobruk had resisted the Axis advance and the port's substantial garrison constituted a significant threat to the Axis' supply chain. Therefore, the majority of Axis' forces besieged Tobruk whereas the front line in Egypt was only thinly held.

By May 1941, the Allied started planning an offensive toward Tobruk to relieve the siege. Operation Brevity was meant as a preparation for this offensive with three main objectives:

- Acquisition of territory from which to launch the planned offensive toward Tobruk.
- Destroying Axis forces in the area.
- Training of the limited battle-ready Allied units.

### Game Duration

Six game turns.

### Victory Conditions

Allied player earns Victory Points

### Initiative Determination

- The Allied player is automatically considered to have won Initiative Determination for the first Formation Activation of Game Turn 1. Move the Initiative DRM marker to the first space (+2) on its Axis side.
- The Allied player receives a +2 DRM in addition to any other Initiative DRM during each Initiative Determination Segment of Game Turn 1 only.
- In case of a tie, the Allied player wins the initiative (all game turns).

**Maximum number of Initiatives in a Row for one side: 2**

**Maximum number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side: 1**

## Victory Objectives

Allied player earns Victory Points first value: "In Command" / second value "Out of Command"

- Bardia 1703: 12 / 6
- Sollum 2009: 6 / 3
- Halfaya Pass 2011: 4 / 2
- Ridotta Capuzzo 1609: 2 / 1

Victory Conditions						
VPs	GT1	GT2	GT3	GT4	GT5	GT6
	4-11	10-19	16-27	22-33	24-36	26-39
Victory Points < range: Axis victory / Victory Points > range: Allied victory						

## 16.3 SCENARIO THREE: UNTERNEHMEN SKORPION (MAY 1941)

This scenario recreates the limited Axis counter-offensive to re-capture the Halfaya Pass after Operation Brevity in May 1941. It can be completed in well under two hours and is recommended even for experienced players to allow them to get their feet wet with the game system.

### The Situation

Even if Operation Brevity (see 16.2 Scenario Two) was an Allied failure, the Halfaya Pass was Allied controlled and the frontline had moved further to the west thereafter. The Axis feared that the Allied would use the conquered area as a starting point for the *Entsatzangriff* (relief attack) towards the siege of Tobruk. To avoid this, the Axis launched a counter-attack to retake the important Halfaya Pass and to force the Allied to retire from the area from Bug Bug to Sofafi. A *Scheinangriff auf breiter Front* (diversionary attack on a broad front) conducted in the southern part of the frontline area was intended to mask the main objective of the attack.

- ❖ *The limited Movement Allowances and Activation Levels reflect Axis fuel shortage and the effect of the diversionary attack on Allied reactions.*

### Game Duration

Four game turns.

### Initiative Determination

- The Axis player is automatically considered to have won Initiative Determination for the first Formation Activation of Game Turn 1. Move the Initiative DRM marker to the first space (+2) on its Allied side.
- The Axis player receives a +1 DRM in addition to any other Initiative DRM during each Initiative Determination Segment of Game Turn 1 only.
- In case of a tie, the Axis player wins the initiative (all game turns).

**Maximum number of Initiatives in a Row for one side: 2**

**Maximum number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side: 1**

### Victory Conditions

To reflect the character of a training scenario, the victory conditions have been streamlined and differ a little bit from the other scenarios.

The only Victory Objective is the Halfaya Pass (2011). If the Axis player (Game Turn 1 and 2) or the Allied player (Game Turn 3 and 4) fulfills the Victory Conditions, the game ends. Otherwise, the game proceeds to the next game turn. The game ends in a Draw if the Allied player does not fulfill the Victory Conditions at the last game turn.

**Game Turn 1:** Axis In or Out of Command combat unit located in hex 2011 = Axis major victory

**Game Turn 2:** Axis In Command combat unit located in hex 2011 = Axis victory

**Game Turn 3:** Allied In Command combat unit located in hex 2011 = Allied victory

**Game Turn 4:** Allied In or Out of Command combat unit located in hex 2011 = Allied major victory

## 16.4 SCENARIO FOUR: OPERATION BATTLEAXE (JUNE 1941)

This scenario recreates the Allied offensive to raise the Siege of Tobruk and re-capture eastern Cyrenaica from Axis forces in June 1941. It was the first time during the Second World War that a significant German force fought on the defensive. The scenario can be completed in under six hours.

### The Situation

Though Operation Brevity (see 10.2 Scenario Two) had failed to yield any territory to the Allied, it showed that the Axis front line defenses were quite easy to breach. In addition, Axis' preparations were driven more by the critical supply shortages than tactical aspects.

After the arrival of the Tiger Convoy (238 tanks and 43 Hurricane fighters), the Allied planned Operation Battleaxe as an operation in three stages:

**First stage:** Advance in a three-prong assault to destroy Axis forces on the frontier and secure the area of Halfaya Pass, Sollum, Fort Capuzzo and Sidi Aziez.

**Second stage:** Raise the siege of Tobruk by capturing the area around Tobruk and El Adem.

**Third stage:** Join with the Tobruk garrison and drive the Axis as far back to the west as possible.

### Game Duration:

Eight game turns.

### Special Rules

During the Reinforcement Segment of Game Turn 3, 5th Leichte enters play via hex 1001 and certain units of 15th Panzer via hex 1400. Treat hex 1400 as a friendly Axis Supply Source for this purpose.

In addition, the Axis player replaces the HQ counter of 15th Panzer by its substitute HQ counter. Place substitute HQ counter in hex 1400 and treat as reinforcement (only) if all subordinate units of 15th Panzer have been eliminated.

Move the Formation Activation marker of 15th Panzer formation +3 spaces on the Formation Activation track if the substitute HQ counter has been placed on the map or Game Turn Track.

### Victory Conditions

Allied player earns Victory Points.

### Initiative Determination

- The Allied player is automatically considered to have won Initiative Determination for the first Formation Activation of Game Turn 1. Move the Initiative DRM marker to the first space (+2) on its Axis side.
- The Allied player receives a +2 DRM in addition to any other Initiative DRM during each Initiative Determination Segment of Game Turn 1 only.
- In case of a tie, the Allied player wins the initiative during Game Turn 1 and 2, and the Axis player wins the initiative during Game Turn 3 to 8.

**Maximum number of Initiatives in a Row for one side: 2**

**Maximum number of initiatives transferred in a row to one side: 1**

### Victory Objectives

Allied player earns Victory Points

First value: "In Command" / second value "Out of Command"

- Bardia 1703: 12 / 6
- Sollum 2009: 4 / 2
- Halfaya Pass 2011: 6 / 3
- Ridotta Capuzzo 1609: 2 / 1
- Point 206 1612: 2 / 1
- Point 208 1410: 2 / 1

Victory Conditions								
VPs	GT1	GT2	GT3	GT4	GT5	GT6	GT7	GT8
	2-8	6-12	10-18	14-22	16-26	20-30	22-32	26-34
Victory Points < range: Axis victory / Victory Points > range: Allied victory								

## 17. DESIGNER'S NOTES

Note: The following comments refer to Mirages and highlight basic aspects of the game.

After the release of Operation Theseus, VUCA Simulations was confronted with strong player's demands for a game with limited components and a rather short playing time using a similar game system. Since I already created the concept and research for Operation Brevity, Unternehmen Skorpion and Operation Battleaxe years ago, this request could be realized timely. During development, I decided to cover the opening stage of Operation Compass as well as the operation can be represented on the same map and requires limited special rules.

Important for the project was the possibility to use the same one map, the same rules and the same player aid cards for all four scenarios, but to provide each scenario with its own counter set and setup cards. This gives the player four independent games in one box with short setup time.

Mirages is the first game to benefit from the concept to split the rules into two parts: Series Rules and Special Rules. This approach makes it a lot easier for veterans of the series to get started with a new game and fits perfectly to players' demands for a game with modest playing time.

### Scenarios

Operation Brevity, Unternehmen Skorpion and Operation Battleaxe contributed significantly to the myth that characterizes the war in North Africa 1940 - 1943 until today. Besides the standard parameters like terrain space, especially in relation to troop strength, or inhospitable conditions, the three operations underline the different doctrine and equipment / weapons of the combatants. While the operations of the DAK up to El Alamein were characterized by a remarkable professional smoothness and nonchalantly that often paralleled carelessness and overconfidence, British thoughtfulness in the preparations of operations and stubbornness especially in defense were remarkable. Moreover, the correlation between doctrine and equipment / weapons becomes clear, especially in the field of combined arms. In addition, iconic leaders, unique weapon systems, and (in)famous landmarks contributed to the appeal of this theater of war.

The character of Operation Compass is different from the other three scenarios. Although there were only a few months between Compass and the other operations and the site was nearly identical, the style of (mobile) warfare had evolved significantly with the appearance of the DAK. Compass is often referred to as the first British blitz, but it cannot be compared to DAK operations a few months later because of the different settings and capabilities. In addition to the British decisive C3I superiority, the Italians had few defensive options against certain British weapons like heavy tanks. The separation into (slow) infantry tanks and (fast) cruiser tanks was essential for British success in December 1940, but caused serious drawbacks against the sophisticated combined arms warfare of the DAK.

I am very pleased with the four scenarios. On the one hand, the scenarios perfectly map the requirement for short setup and playing time including a training scenario. On the other hand, the scenarios provide interested players a detailed and profound insight of warfare in North Africa 1940/1941. The proper cooperation of infantry, tanks, and combat support as well as their interaction with terrain is especially vital for success in combat in this theater of war. And last but not least, the scenarios offer fun, excitement and close game results.

### Research

At first glance, the research situation for all four scenarios is excellent in both breadth and depth. However, the majority of the sources cover the (theoretical) administrative structure including headcount and equipment. The challenge was to focus from the administrative organization on the manoeuvre units dominating the operations. Often these manoeuvre units are beared the character of Kampfgruppen / task forces, reinforced by a myriad of (independent) sub-battalion outfits. The intention to limit counter quantity and density to a playable measure required some abstractions, especially in the fields of unit size and designation. In other words: An obviously missing unit or obviously incorrect unit designation is not an Order of Battle error but definite intention to avoid sprawling special rules and a hard to manage number of counters. ("It is not a bug, it is a feature!").

In particular the mobile elements of the DAK followed the Kampfgruppen principle and were formed according to the situation. This led to changing and inconsistent designations, including historical sources such as force or after action reports. In case of doubt, I followed the common informal Wehrmacht practice and named manoeuvre units after their commanding officer.

Often Italian counters represent combat units on a different (larger) scale than German or British counters. This elegantly illustrates the fundamental differences between British, Italian, and German units without the need for burdensome special rules, especially in the Operation Compass scenario.

Fort Capuzzo (Italian Ridotta or Forte Capuzzo) was a base with an airstrip in Italian-Libya near the border to Egypt. The site symbolizes the misjudgments typical for this theater of operations. Contrary to its designation, Fort Capuzzo was by no means a World War II fortress but rather a reinforced barrack setup to serve as border security of the Italian colony Libya. Therefore, the key factor was not its defense value, but the infrastructure available there. Due to the exceptional dimension of the area and the overall resource situation, this aspect must be evaluated as important.

### Special Rules

I am pleased that the number of special rules could be kept very limited. The addition of trails as well as ridges and wadis is necessary to show the specific characteristics and effects of the terrain. Trails speeded up movement due to the nature of the surface and simplification of orientation. Ridges and wadis are natural terrain obstacles with severe effects on movement, combat, (terrain) control, supply lines and C3I.

Since the epic Campaigns for North Africa game, players know that Italian units without water to cook spaghetti have a strong tendency to surrender. This of course humoristic interpretation has a serious background. The defensive mentality of the Italians, outdated equipment, especially in the areas of mobility, combined arms / armored warfare, and C3I, led to heavy dependence on static supply and communication lines along with limited self-initiative. If supply and communication lines were broken, Italians often interpreted their situation as hopeless and were willing to surrender.

### Hints on Game Play

Sociologist Niklas Luhmann describes creativity as the "use of accidents to build structures". Creatives in particular experiment more often and fail more often. "You waste 100 percent of the shots you don't take," said Wayne Gretzky, probably the greatest hockey player in history.

What does this mean for Mirages? The system is designed in such a way that none of the numerous random events dominates or even decides a game (see also Designer's Notes of the Series Rules). Due to the compact size and playing time of the Mirages scenarios, this can cause irritations as an ongoing match seems to be one-sided and the situation hopeless. It is important that players keep cool in such circumstances, believe in themselves and their creativity and

keep trying. Playtesting has shown that random events balance out during the course of a scenario and seemingly hopeless situations can be turned into the opposite by skillful gameplay.

### **Victory Conditions**

Veterans of my designs know the approach I follow in my games: Keeping the victory conditions in line with the historical situation including realistic options, while at the same time trying to keep bookkeeping as low as possible. Due to the nature of the four scenarios, it was possible to create the victory conditions solely by geographic objects and avoid the counting of step losses. Again, VUCA Simulations did a great job with the design of the victory hex markers, fitting excellent in the game's art design and speeding up gameplay.

Why is it possible to ignore losses even though they played a role historically? The selection of geographic objects and the dynamic victory point contribution is chosen in such a way that victory results more or less automatically cause certain step losses. This becomes especially clear in the Operation Compass scenario, because without serious losses of the Italians by surrender, the British player cannot archive his victory conditions.

### **Final Thoughts**

We put a lot of sweat and heart to streamline the game system compared to Crossing the Line and Operation Theseus without changing it's basic character and principles. The few special rules of Mirages underline the flexibility and suitability of the basic game system to model World War II (armored) warfare on the operational scale. Both approaches result in reduced complexity and speeded up game play. Comparable to a television series that has been running (too) long or a US muscle car of the last period, some game series have also become a parody of themselves. At a particular stage, the focus is no longer on the historical situation, but on the game system. I consider avoiding this to be the main challenge for future games of the Formation Series.

We are currently working on the next games of the Formation Series and are focusing on the North Africa WW II Theater of Operations.

- Operation Crusader (November 1941 to January 1942)
- El Alamein (three battles, July to November 1942)
- Operation Frühlingswind (February 1943)
- Mareth Line (March 1943)

Feedback on these proposals is appreciated. Interested players may follow VUCA Simulations on social media to get details including concrete release dates.

**Dirk Blennemann – August 2024**





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