

# Strategy & Tactics: Operation Crusader - 2

by Andy Veres

## Tactics

The first place players should check for recommended tactics is section "33. Hints on Play", found on page 70 of the game guide. It is the work of a fellow extreme tester, based on his experiences during the game's beta process. I will not rehash his work, because quite frankly, he states his points in a very succinct and effective way. However, I would like to draw particular attention to two of his recommendations:

- "Don't let overruns tempt you into leaving your armor out on a limb." All the armor strength in the world will not help you against a massed infantry counter attack. Make sure that your tanks do not operate without infantry support. The game will punish you if you ignore this most fundamental principle of mechanized combat.

- "On the attack, look for good odds, greater than 3:1 if possible." I will even go further, and recommend that you try to achieve odds of 5 to 1 or greater whenever possible. The Commonwealth is well supplied with artillery, and a few battalions of supporting fire can reverse a low odds attack. In addition, even if the battle is a success at such low odds, the casualties on the winning side may be double that of the defenders.

In addition, I would like to describe the following two tactics:

- Sucker Punch: take the opportunity to bait the enemy into a trap! Pick a location where the enemy is likely to attack. Attach Rommel to one of your defending units. Provide at least a regiment or more of defensive artillery support, and one of the most effective squadrons that can be spared. If possible, try to move one or more battalions (located one hex away) into the defending hex. Pick a unit that has the most desired effect against the suspected attackers (i.e. Hvy Flak against armor). Don't worry if you get an overstack indication when you "SHOW PLANNED MOVES." Units will continue to attempt to move throughout the execution phase, so if any of your formations are eliminated during combat, new units will move in up to the stacking limit of the hex. IF everything is timed just right, by the time the attack is executed, the odds will have been radically shifted in favor of the defender. The enemy should take heavy losses and maybe even suffer a rout. (Can't take credit for this one. Rommel himself came up with the idea of baiting enemy armor into an aircraft, artillery and anti-tank gun ambush.)

well designed trap. The artillery and air support will blunt the Commonwealth attack, and even if it succeeds, fresh troops have orders to move into to the hex to replace any casualties.

- Recon Probe: the information available about units is MUCH MORE inaccurate in Version 1.1. This is especially true when encountering units for the first time. The need for probes (which cause few casualties regardless of the final odds) to establish the enemy's true strength can not be stressed enough. You can also learn this lesson the hard way, by finding out that your 10:1 assault executed at an actual odds of .3:1!

### Parting Thoughts

I despise a cookbook approach to gaming. As much as possible, I tried to not to provide a step by step guide to winning OC. Instead, the intent was to demonstrate the analysis process that any commander goes through when determining the suitability of his troops for particular missions. In addition, I tried to break the map area down into artificial areas or regions, which should focus the player's thought processes on the development of suitable objectives toward the achievement of the overall goal: victory! The game does not lend itself to discussion in phases, since the battle was extremely fluid. Therefore, I chose a very rough time line to address some of the potential developments in the campaign.

The ideas discussed here are by no means foolproof. The evacuation of the 55th ID may not succeed, and instead leave the division badly dispersed and in the open. The 101st is really not strong enough to hold out against a good sized armored force at the "Wadi Crossing." It may need to be reinforced, which can only be achieved at the expense of weakening another area of the front lines. The New Zealanders, and the accompanying armor can refuse to impale themselves on the the two German PD. A feint in the direction of Sidi Rezegh may demand that the PD come to the aid of the the 17th. The British "Honeys" will be waiting for just such an opportunity: they can reach Gambut, and by blocking the roads in between the escarpments, seal off the lines of supply to the panzers. The relatively open terrain, the low

troop density of the overall campaign, and the numerous avenues of approach available to the Commonwealth make this a challenging situation. Against a human player, the opportunities for the application of Murphy's Law are endless.

Despite a well conceived attack and murderous British casualties, the Axis retreated 2 km after this attack. OC will recreate those moments when units made heroic stands (British view) or Murphy's Law struck (German view of same event).

Before you despair, consider the historic outcome. Rommel himself was only able to manage a Substantial Commonwealth Victory. Based on this scale, even if you only manage to avoid the liberation of Tobruk, you have achieved a measure of success. The balance between the forces is roughly equal, and the terrain favors the Axis. Place yourself at the front of the column. Adopt Rommel's mentality and make a name for yourself and the men of the Afrika Korps. Your Field Marshall's baton awaits!