

Sneak Peek: V for Victory: Gold - Juno - Sword

by Karen Kaye

NOTE: Screen shots and information presented in this article are based on a pre-release version of V for Victory: Gold - Juno - Sword, and are therefore subject to change. Screen shots have been adapted to a system palette and then dithered, and thus may not represent the precise look of the game. Scott Evans contributed significantly to the writing of this Sneak Peek. This article is not a review.

June 5th, 1944. The massive Allied invasion force, moored in the harbors of southern England, impatiently waits for a break in the seasonably bad weather over the English Channel. Allied meteorologists know that the cross-channel tides will favor the invasion fleet for one more day only, and that any delay will result in having to postpone the invasion for 28 more days. On June 6 the weather breaks and 152,000 men of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) are launched against Hitler's vaunted Atlantic Wall: 10,000 Allied soldiers are expected to give their lives in the initial assault.

V for Victory (V4V): Gold - Juno - Sword is the newest gameset in the wargame series published by Three-Sixty Pacific (360). It examines a much overlooked segment of D-Day: the Commonwealth invasion beaches of Gold, Juno, and Sword. Powerful infantry and armor units of a combined British/Canadian landing force attempt to push southward from their respective beaches and capture the Axis transportation hub of Normandy: the city of Caen. They are opposed by a diverse contingent of Axis troops. Their single-minded purpose: push the invasion back into the sea!

The Allied forces selected for the operation include the elite British 6th Airborne division, the Canadian 3rd Infantry division, as well as numerous other infantry and armor divisions of the Commonwealth forces. The Axis player must initially hold the line with some troops of dubious quality. The reinforcing units represent some of the most powerful armor units ever assembled: the 2nd and 21st Wehrmacht Panzer divisions, the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th, and 12th SS Panzer divisions, as well as one of the strongest units in the German Army: the (130th) Panzer Lehr division.

The new gameset continues the tradition of excellent graphics and interface that were a hallmark of V4V from the beginning. A large number of improvements have been made to the game system — including supply handling, movement, and the combat resolution system. For example, the characteristics of Headquarters units were not appropriately represented in past versions. This is a fundamentally different formation from that of a

combat battalion. It is a group of several thousand men distributed over a wide area and performing numerous support functions. The game engine now recognizes the dispersion of these types of units and normally allocates all artillery attacks as interdiction as instead of barrage.

The gameset features several new units, including Commonwealth and Inter-Allied Commandos. "Funny Tanks" are also introduced in this outing: they are a generic name for the various combat engineer tank units that participated in the battle. The artificial intelligence (AI), long considered one of the weakest aspects of the game, also receives a major facelift. The AI is not only better on the defense, but it is much improved on offense. It will attempt to surround exposed units, and will readily exploit an opening in the player's line. This improvement is much needed, since modem and network play is still not included.

he scenarios cover various stages of the battle, and as usual, there is a complete Campaign. What is unusual now is the inclusion of a hypothetical scenario. It postulates that German High Command had become aware of the invasion, and through improved intelligence had been able to present a more coordinated defense to the invasion. There are fewer scenario variants than in past gamesets, but some of them — such as the one impacting the quality of several Commonwealth divisions — have a major effect on the outcome. Both sides still face their traditional enemies: the Commonwealth forces are in a race against time to capture objectives, while the Axis must overcome the limitations of their overburdened supply system in order to manage an offensive.

Gold - Juno - Sword also includes data patches for the three previous game sets in the V4V series: Market Garden, Velikiye Luki, and Utah Beach 2.0. The whole product has been subjected to an extensive beta testing process that gave testers different areas of responsibility. This ensured that all elements of the gamesets were examined by several individuals. 360 is keen not to have a repeat of the customer dissatisfaction they encountered with the release of the bug infested Market Garden. 360 has also installed an automated mailing system, which will distribute the data patches to the appropriate registered users. The upgrades are also currently available on those online services that support file transfers.

The whole package appears very impressive, and clearly reflects the combined efforts of 360 and the beta testers. Gold - Juno - Sword seems poised to fulfill the promise held out by the publication of Utah Beach, the first V4V gameset: a grand tactical simulation offering a challenging and thoroughly satisfying environment for novice and veteran alike.