

Act of War

Version 1.2

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¹Manual L^AT_EX'ed 13-Dec-92 by Thomas Bätzler, BAETZLER@IRAV17.IRA.UKA.DE

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1 System Requirements

Act Of War works under both Workbench 1.3 and 2.0, in both NTSC and PAL, and requires 1 meg of memory as a minimum. The game may need more than a meg to run it from a hard drive.

If you have a meg and the game refuses to run, try disconnecting or turning off any external drives or hard drives. This frees up more memory.

It should work fine on accelerated systems, if a little fast in some places! I've got some "slowdown" routines in it, but as I've only got a 68000 I haven't been able to test it.

As Act Of War was written with AMOS, it multitasks - use Left-Amiga A to switch between the game and Workbench.

2 Introduction

Act of War, or AoW as I've just decided to call it as it involves less typing, is a strategy game in the tradition of Laser Squad, Breach 2 (or so I'm told) and, if anyone can remember that far back, Rebelstar.

If you've never played any of those games, think of a childish fascination for big guns married to a fair amount of strategy and you won't be far wrong.

2.1 So what makes AoW different?

The game is played over a series of missions, three of which are included with the program. More missions are being worked on as you read this, by myself and others. And if you don't like these missions, there's no reason for you not to create your own!

On payment of a small shareware fee (more information later on) you'll get the mission designer that I use, which makes mission creation very simple. Everything from the map, to the weapons, to the sound effects can be changed.

2.2 Notable game features include:

- 1 or 2 players
- Sampled sound
- Completely extendable!
- 3 difficulty levels
- Optional line-of-sight feature

- Squad arming sequence
- Explosive scenery
- Keyboard and / or mouse controlled
- Halfway-decent user interface
- Revolutionary new ICASS AI system (see later)

2.3 New features for Version 1.2:

- Fire (as in flames)
- Units can return fire even if it's not their turn, under certain conditions
- Character/cursor movement can now be carried out using the mouse
- Weapons now have a range
- Four new types of weapons:
 - Scatter
 - Shrapnel
 - Incendiary
 - Multihit
- Landmines (and scanners to find them)
- Reinforcements

The new features are described in detail later in this document. If you've played an earlier version of AoW and don't want to plough through this whole file again, the file "update.doc" also contains the new descriptions.

The three missions included in this release are as follows:

Informant — An ex-director of your shady corporation is ready to spill your industrial secrets to a rival company. There's only one way to stop him - break into his sprawling mansion and take him out! (Obviously, negotiation comes a long way down the list with these people).

Escape — Taken prisoner by a corrupt Planetary Security Force for your part in the above escapade, you and two companions have been jailed in an orbital maximum-security prison. Initially armed with only a little smuggled-in plastic explosive, you must break out of your cell, somehow obtain a weapon, free your comrades and escape to a passing PSF shuttle to secure your freedom.

Terminator! — Soon after you make it back to your base after escaping captivity, a Terminator droid from a rival corporation stages an assault! Backed up by a squad of combat droids, it will attempt to kill you all . . .

3 Installation

AoW can be installed on a hard drive - just make sure that the files:

```
diskfont.library mathtrans.library
```

are in the libs: drawer, and that you've copied the "Spacey" font to the fonts: drawer. The directory that you put the game in must have the name "px:" assigned to it. In other words, if the game is in "dh1:Games/AoW", you should put:

```
assign px: dh1:Games/AoW
```

in your startup-sequence.

The mission directories should be in the same dir as the game, ie. "px:". The default missions also require that the "Pics" drawer and the "Snd" drawer, and their contents, are present in "px:" also.

The game is much nicer installed on a hard drive (isn't everything?). As it is so extendable, a fair amount of disk access is inevitable. However, there is no disk access during a game so the actual gameplay speed is identical on both floppy and hard drive systems.

To summarise then: the necessary files are as follows.

```
libs:diskfont.library
      mathtrans.library
fonts:Spacey/7
      Spacey.font
px:Pics/GameTiles
      EscapeTiles
      GameBack.iff
      WeaponBack.iff
      Weapons.1
Snd/Samples.1
Act_Of_War
Informant/Everything
Escape/Everything
Terminator!/Everything
```

4 Gameplay

I know, I know, you just want to know how to play!

4.1 The front end

- The first thing you have to do is load a mission in. Select “Load Mission” from the menu. The disk will grind a bit, and a list of the available missions will come up. Choose the one you want, again using the mouse.
- Select the difficulty level you want. Easy gives you a lot of cash for the arming sequence (see below). Medium gives you less cash and introduces the line-of-sight feature, where you can only see enemy units that are in your line of sight. Hard keeps line-of-sight and gives you the least cash.
- Choose a 1 or 2 player game. The AI is not brilliant, but I think it's good enough to be called “not bad”. It even has its own acronym, which is obviously essential for any program these days. So, when you play a 1-player game of AoW, you are experiencing ICASS - the Intellectually Challenged Artificial Stupidity System (tm).

Now, don't you feel proud?

4.2 Arming

- Next comes the arming sequence. A total amount of cash is shown, and you can either accept the default weapons (use the “Next Unit” icon, which looks like a tick, to see each unit's weapons) or choose to buy your own. To keep the defaults, click the “Quit” icon; to buy weapons, click either of the two “Buy” buttons.
- The squad's default weapons are usually round about what you could buy at the Medium level of difficulty. The amount of cash you get at each level is as follows:

Easy	—	250 per unit
Medium	—	200 per unit
Hard	—	175 per unit
- If you do buy new weapons, the first button is “Buy Weapon”, the next is “Buy Ammo”, the two arrow icons let you see the weapons and the “Next Unit” button is used when you've finished arming that unit. You can always go back to it, until you quit the arming.
- The cash shown is a total for your whole squad, try to divide weapons fairly equally. It's always better to have, say, four men with Pulse rifles rather than one man with a Plasma Cannon and tons of ammo.

- If you buy something, then decide you don't want it, you can sell it back at no loss by clicking on the object's name in the inventory.
- Click on the Quit button (bottom right) when you've finished.

4.3 The game

- The screen is divided into four windows:
 1. The largest window, at the top left, is the view window. This is where the action happens.
 2. Directly below this is the message window. Always keep half an eye on this for reports and updates.
 3. At the top right is the status window. Here you can see the stats of the current unit.
 4. The final window at the bottom right is the mini-map window. Apart from giving you an idea of the overall shape of the map, you can keep track of your units here via the flashing dots which show their positions.
- Player 1 always moves first. You begin the game fully armed and ready.
- There are several ways of moving around the map. You can use the cursor keys, the joystick or the small direction buttons with the mouse to move the cursor around. You can click with the left mouse button on the view window to place the cursor directly onto a square. You can click on the mini-map to jump directly to another area.
- To select a character, press the joystick fire button or the space key when the cursor is over a unit. You can also click the right button on a unit to select it. You are now in move mode, where believe it or not you get to move the unit around.
- To move a unit, use either the cursor keys, the keypad or the joystick. The keypad allows movement in 8 directions, using the keys:

7	8	9
4		6
1	2	3

If you have an A600 without the keypad, you can use the normal number keys with the same effect.

- To deselect a character, use the space key, the joystick fire button or the right mouse button at any time.
- If you are playing on Easy level, you'll be able to see all the enemy units as you look around the map. This takes a lot of the fun out of the game, so the default

Finally, multihit weapons are very powerful. Like Scatter weapons, they can hit several targets with one shot, but unlike Scatter only one line-of-fire is used. In other words, the projectile fired carries on in a direction until its power has been exhausted. With an extremely powerful weapon such as a Particle Cannon, a unit can actually shoot through a wall and hit an enemy standing on the other side!

Non-explosive weapons, the majority, simply damage characters. Armour worn by a character affects how much damage they sustain. Beware of firing any type of weapon near things like oil drums, petrol tanks, ammo crates etc. Even non-explosive weapons set them off! Windows, too, can be smashed by any type of weapon.

You have to be very careful when shooting at the enemy, as under certain conditions they can return fire immediately. If a unit ends a turn with 50% or over of its actions unused, and has a skill of 8 or more, it can return fire when shot. Obviously, player units can do this too, it's not restricted to the computer.

Hand-to-hand weapons are also available, though the only one available in the three included scenarios is the Laser Knife. These are used purely for hand-to-hand combat.

This type of combat is initiated during a character's movement, by walking into an enemy unit. The attacker always has the advantage, but if the enemy is strong and skilful, it is possible for the aggressor to be injured rather than his target. You always have to be careful during hand-to-hand combat! If possible, make sure your enemy is less suited to it than you.

CENTRE VIEW

Keyboard: C

Action needed: —

This button centres the view screen on the square currently occupied by the cursor. You can recognise it by its four inwardly-pointing arrows.

OPTIONS MENU Brings up a sub-menu in the mini-map screen.

Which menu you get depends on whether you have a character currently selected or not. If you don't, you get the standard menu:

Next Unit

Keyboard: N

Action needed: —

Moves the view to the next selectable unit.

Success Rate

Keyboard: P

Action needed: —

Each game is won on the destruction of all enemy units, or the accumulation of success points. You are always told when your success rating goes up, and in the documentation for each individual mission you should be told exactly what gets your success up. It can be reaching a particular place, or blowing it up, or killing a particular enemy. The game is won when you or your opponent has a 100% (or over) success rating.

Anyway! This option shows your current rate in the message window.

- Drop** Keyboard: D Action needed: 4
Lets you drop an object from your inventory.
Note: any weapon you drop will have its ammo reduced to 0. This is NOT a bug, it is a “feature”. Although I admit, it’s a pretty bloody stupid feature.
- Load Weapon** Keyboard: L Action needed: varies
Loads your weapon, if you have any spare ammo.
- Change Weapon** Keyboard: W Action needed: 5
If you have a weapon, this swaps your current weapon for one in your inventory (you choose it, of course). If you have no weapon, you choose one to use.
Note: grenades and plastic explosives don’t need to be held as weapons to be used, they just need to be in your inventory.
- Next** Flips to the next option screen.
- Open Door** Keyboard: O Action needed: 2
Opens a door adjacent to you. If there is more than one, you can choose the correct one by clicking on the arrow pointing to the door.
If you have to click on an arrow, you can use the keyboard instead. (cf p. 5.)
This technique works with all the menus with arrows to click on, such as Shut Door and Use Explosive (see later).
If you’re going to walk through a door, there’s no need to open it first. Just walk into it, it’ll open for you.
- Shut Door** Keyboard: S Action needed: 2
Operates identically to “Open Door”, except in one vital respect (it closes them).
- Teleport** Keyboard: T Action needed: 20
If you stand on a teleport, this option operates it. It uses a large amount of actions, as it’s a bit draining to be split up into your component molecules and stuck back together several hundred metres away. Or so I’ve been told.
- Use Medikit** Keyboard: M Action needed: 8
Medikits restore a unit to full health. If a character is injured, the injury is healed also.
Of course, you need to possess a medikit to be able to use one.
- Place Mine** Keyboard: — Action needed: 8
If you have a mine, clicking on this option allows you to choose a place to lay it. Mines can only be placed on floor squares, and once placed they are invisible to both sides.
A unit which steps on a mine is killed, and shrapnel from the blast may injure nearby characters.

However, if you like the game, I would like a minimum of £5, which isn't too much really (better than £3000 anyway). If you **really** like the game, I'd very much appreciate it if you sent more. If you think it's commercial quality, you could send £10 or £15, or even more if you've got more money than sense. Of course, you get benefits yourself!

A "donation" (polite word for payment) of £5 will get you a nice letter and a disk containing the mission editor, the latest version of the program and any extra missions I've got. £10 will get you a **very** nice letter, the mission editor disk, and the source code of the program (all 275K of it) on a second disk. If you send me more than £10, you'll get an unspeakably nice letter, all the above, and probably Christmas cards for life as well. In addition, I'll nominate you for "Best Supporting Actor" at next year's Academy Awards, and make sure your house is looked after when you go abroad. If you know what I mean.

I'd like the money in either:

- A British cheque or postal order, or
- UK Pounds Sterling (cash) at your own risk.

When I tried to cash some US cheques recently, I was told the minimum charge would be £10. So, it has to be UK currency I'm afraid, unless you make me an offer I can't refuse (like a \$500 cheque, or your DAT player, or your sister).

Now all you need to know is where to send the money!

From now (September 1992) until June 1993, with gaps for Christmas and Easter, you can reach me at the following address:

98 Thornton Road,
Morecambe,
England
LA4 5PJ

During the gaps (approximately December 15th - January 15th, and March 15th - April 15th) and after June 1993, you can reach me at:

4 Cleveland View,
South Bents,
Sunderland
England
SR6 8AP

6 Updates

This is version 1.2 of the program (if it was a Mac program it would be version 1.0.2). I've tested it as much as possible, to the extent that I'm sick to death of it, so it should be

as bug free as possible. If you find any bugs, or have any suggestions for a future version, please let me know when you register.

There's no reason why I can't do a V1.3 of the game, so any suggestions will be gratefully received.

The most fun part of the game is of course mission designing, so I'm working on a few more. I'll distribute these in a couple of ways:

- Upload them to FTP sites.

If you don't know what an FTP site is, you probably can't reach one! Basically, an FTP site is an on-line software library, usually allowing anonymous access. They can be reached over the Internet/JANET, so if you're at University you can probably use the mainframe to use them.

My preferred sites are:

amiga.physik.unizh.ch (130.60.80.80)

wuarchive.wustl.edu (I forget the number)

- When I've got another diskful, I'll send it to UK PD libraries.

Hopefully, soon other people will be doing missions too, so if the game takes off you should be seeing a lot of missions eventually!

Missions that I and others are working on at the minute:

- Firefight - A fight in an ammo factory
- Arena - Combat in an alien arena
- Meltdown - Destroy a reactor, and escape before it blows
- Supergun - Break into a complex and steal a new experimental weapon, then use it to get out
- Zoo - Alien exhibits have escaped!
- Haunted - Destroy a mansion populated by werewolves, vampires, ghouls... lots of silver bullets and stakes here!
- Disney - You know as much as I do!
- Fantasy - Wizards, elves, orcs etc.

There's only one way to make sure the game takes off... register!

As for my next project... does anyone remember a game called "Krakatoa" on the Spectrum? This was released in about 1983 or 84, it was reviewed in the first issue of Crash magazine anyway. It was stunning! You were this helicopter pilot, who had to protect a village and an oil tanker from a huge volcano. Also, there was an enemy who launched rocket attacks every so on.

You could do all these brilliant things like bomb the oil tanker until some survivors jumped into a lifeboat, rescue them from the lifeboat, then fly them to the volcano and drop them in! This set off the volcano, which erupted all over this innocent little village, sending people running from their homes, ready to be rescued, or bombed, or landed on, or shot, or drowned, or dropped from a great height, or lowered into a volcano.

It really was something else. Anyway, I'm planning to do a version of this. I don't know who the original authors were, but if you're by any chance reading this, let me know. And if you want to see a game like that on the Amiga, register for AoW so I have an incentive!

7 Acknowledgements

It's impossible to do something like this entirely on your own, and so I've got a few people to thank.

First, my girlfriend Louise for putting up with endless boring monologues on the difficulties of AI programming and the benefits of so many enormous guns when faced with a rampant Battle Droid.

Gary Dietachmayer helped an enormous amount with the AI, without his brilliant ideas this may well have ended up two-player only. Oh, and he was incredibly patient with my useless terminal and its failed attempts at uploading files (not to mention the frequent mis-spelling of his name).

Martyn Brown, of Team 17 Software, granted permission for me to use several samples from the brilliant game "Alien Breed". Listen out for that "Load Weapon" sound. Best sample I ever heard!

Thomas Bätzler for the encouragement, support, numerous suggestions and gratuitous two-page review in "Amiga Special"!

Nigel Mansell for winning the British Grand Prix (never mind the World Championship), giving me a fantastic day out even if I did have to stand from 4am until 4pm to see it.

This game was brought to you with the aid of:

- Bruce Springsteen — Just about everything
 - REM — Out Of Time, Green
- Cyndi Lauper — She's so Unusual, Night to Remember
- Gerry Rafferty — Right Down The Line (Best Of)
- The Eagles — Best Of
- Enough Coke to float a cruise liner (that's the drink, by the way)
- AMOS and Compiler, both versions 1.34, from Europress Software DPaint III
- Boredom staved off with Civilization, which also gave me the inspiration for the "Centre view" function and the keyboard shortcuts.
- And of course, inspiration by the fantastic Rebelstar / Laser Squad.

8 Various Rubbish

If you're the sort of person who likes useless facts, you might be interested in this bit.

- The source code for this program is 345K long.
- Approximately 70K of this is sound and graphics data, the rest is just text.
- It needs a 280K text buffer in the AMOS editor to load it all in.
- The variable buffer is 85K! (The default is 4K)
- AMOS takes 50 seconds, after pressing the "Run" button, to actually run the program. The delay occurs while it tests the code.
- Saved as ASCII, it needs 120 sides of A4 to print it out.
- The hardware setup I used consists of:
 - Amiga A500+ with 2MB
 - ICD IDE hard drive + interface
 - External floppy
- V1.0 of the program was begun on April 15th, and finished on September 1st, 1992. V1.2 was begun on September 5th (!), and finished October 11th, 1992. It was actually, really, finally finished on November 1st 1992 (don't ask).

9 Background Information

As I mentioned at the start of this documentation, AoW is “in the tradition of” Rebelstar and Laser Squad. I understand that many people outside of England have never heard of either of these, so here’s a bit of information on them.

Both Rebelstar and Laser Squad were written by the same people, the man behind both being Julian Gollop. Rebelstar Raiders was the first game, released on the Spectrum around 1983-84, before being re-written and re-released as Rebelstar later on. This really was a fantastic game, way ahead of its time, with brilliant graphics and sound (well, for a machine with a built-in speaker **underneath**, the sound was good)! It was the first game I know of that used the “action points” system.

Laser Squad followed a few years later, finally making it to the Amiga around 1989. This was still a brilliant game, and introduced the line-of-sight feature, the explosive weaponry and the concept of missions. However, for some reason it just didn’t have the charm of its predecessor, or so I felt anyway.

I understand that Julian is working on Laser Squad 2 at the minute. I hope this game not only fills the gap between LS 1 and 2, but stands on its own. I’ve tried to make it as original as possible, while still obviously being “strongly influenced” by the other games.

Anyway, I think AoW has a lot to offer of its own, apart from the influences of these games. Most obviously is the mission editor... it’s possible to do a lot more with this than you would think. Units don’t have to be people, they can be Battlecars, fighter planes, nuclear missiles... The three missions here are all sci-fi scenarios, but there’s no reason why they have to be. I know of someone who’s doing fantasy scenarios. Special Forces (SAS, Green Berets) are a possibility, and I’ve heard an unconfirmed rumour that someone is working on a Disney mission! I always wanted to see what the Chipmonks could do with a rocket launcher.

I have to mention Space Crusade by Gremlin here. That game has the honour of being the reason I wrote this. The game is OK, but I couldn’t help comparing it to Laser Squad. It contains several things I hate:

- Completely random death (“AutoDefences”... aargh!)
- You can stand right next to an enemy, shoot him with, like, a huge Autocannon, and miss him! How realistic. It wasn’t just that, it’s the way that the shot doesn’t hit anything else, it just disappears if it misses the assigned target. Ironically, you can still miss someone from right next to them in this game, but at least it’s a) unlikely, and b) fun when the shot hits his team member next to him!
- Randomly-appearing aliens. You get the feeling that, as the game realises it’s losing, it just rolls up another alien to throw at you.

These features are all the result of the game being a conversion of a boardgame, it’s inherently limited. It’s still a decent game, though I think the random deaths spoil it.

10 The End

Wow! You didn't read all that rubbish, did you? You're dedicated! Or very bored.

I always like doc files that rabbit on, like Jeff Minter's epics. I suppose it sort of gives you an insight into the person that wrote the thing, rather than the "Press Z to go left" sort of file.

I'm going to stop here before I put the last of the audience to sleep!

Thanks for taking the trouble to look at the game, I hope you like it. I wrote it rather than get a job over the summer, so somebody better appreciate it!

Feel free to spread AoW around as much as you like - it's in the Public Domain, though I keep the copyright. Upload it to bulletin boards, send it abroad, copy it for your friends.

Play the game, and get your chequebook out!

Dave Smith
2.49 pm
September 1st 1992

Updated October 12th, 1992.
Updated again November 1st 1992, though it should really have been done sooner.

11 A Note From The Editor

So here I am, left with an empty quarter page to fill. Darn me, I've tried all the tricks in the book, but this time there's no way to prevent the text from spilling over on this side, and yet no way to fill it without stretching the other pages unnaturally. I've tried it, though — if you're a fellow \TeX nician you can tell that from my gratuitous use of `\pagebreak`.

Anyways, I'll use these last lines to tell you about a forthcoming project: An illustrated \LaTeX 'ed manual for this truly outstanding game. Graphics will be included by ways of Amiga \TeX 's `\eps` macro, and the distribution will also contain PostScript output for the manual, which can then be printed using Adrian Aylward's PostScript Interpreter. If you don't already use Post, go and get it — it's great!

Thomas Bätzler
1.51 am
December 13th 1992