

Wilderness War Session: Spring 1757

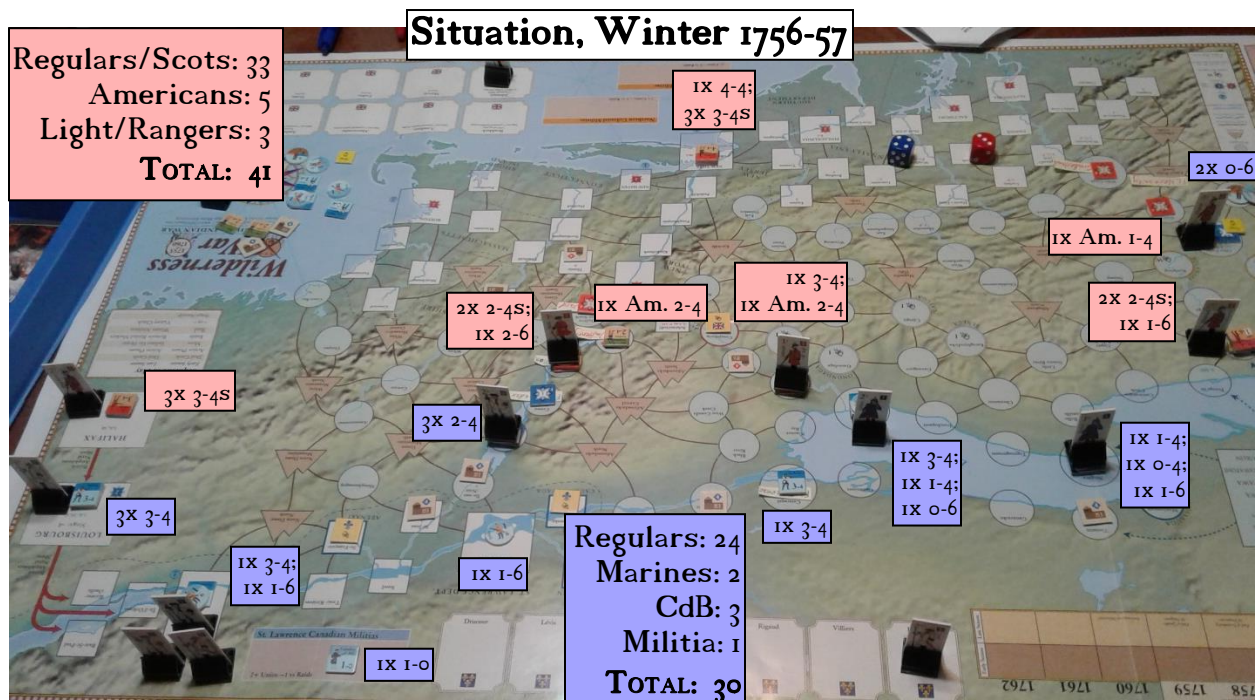
Tim Smith, August 2018

After submitting a report on my operations (not to say antics) over the course of 1755-56 and having received little of the solicited advice from *grogards*, I decided to barge into 1757 like Braddock in the, well, wilderness. Here's what happened.

Situation Assessment

Here's where we left the mournful year 1756, with the British thwarted in the Canadian Maritimes, Braddock rapidly decomposing in the Ohio Valley, but British pressure mounting seriously on the Hudson-Richelieu axis. In fact, the early rise of Pitt to Prime Minister and American colonial support for the war unleashed a robust flow of reinforcements that permitted the British to pound relentlessly, confident that reinforcements and replacements would follow. The Anglo-Americans nonetheless took care to act with prudence, determined to avoid ambush, avoid smallpox epidemics, and generally build the infrastructure required to sustain offensives (with the glaring exception of Braddock in the west). At the same time, neither Paris nor the Indians lent much in the way of material support. Few regulars arrived and Indian alliances never materialized.

Attrition was mutual but, on balance, superior numbers told and imposed greater losses on the hard-pressed defenders. Between these and the lopsided reinforcement rates, the correlation of forces has almost inverted over the course of these two grinding years, from a French-to-British combat-factors ratio of 1.44 : 1 to a British-to-French ratio of 1.36 : 1. If the French do not get relief, the outcome will become inevitable.



La Campagne

French Cards								
Quiberon Bay (3)	Colonial Recruits (2)	Ambush (1) (from 1756)	Amphibious Landing (1)	Call Out Militias (1)	Call Out Militias (1)	Rangers (1)	Mohawks (1)	Blockhouses (1)

Not a bad hand but not what we need. *Quiberon Bay* – okay, yes: better in French hands than Pitt's. *Amphibious Landing* as well, although the deck offers several of them. Otherwise: no reinforcements, either from France or among the Indians. In this season, we'll do well to hold what we have.

British Cards								
Brit Regulars (2)	Louisbourg Sqdns (3)	Amphib Landing (1)	Gov. Vandrouil (3)	Provincial Regts (2)	Fieldworks (2)	Foul Weather (2)	Call Out Militias (1)	Lake Schooner (1)

Well whaddaya know. Spring 1755 all over again. Not only do we have a 'Francophobic' trifecta, it's now a 'quadrifecta'. We have *Louisbourg Squadrons*, which means they don't. So if we play this right, *Gov. Vandrouil* pulls Montcalm to where he's clearly needed supporting the central front. *Brit Regulars* land in Halifax (risking the smallpox threat for a short moment). (And who will arrive at their head? Someone better than Monckton?) Then, *Louisbourg Sqdns* (3) can activate the naval lift to Louisbourg (irony? – what irony?). And the *Amphib Landing* will complete the four-card sequence. No ambush threat: Monckton has no light troops, but Cape Breton Island is cultivated (thank you, former Acadian farmers! – okay, some irony is not funny at all). Then we should have time in the fall to extricate Br'er Braddock from his briar patch.

Strategies

- French:** hold Louisbourg, the Hudson lakes and Lake Erie. Exploit raiding opportunities, especially wrt the exposed enemy salient at Oneida Carry and the Mohawk Valley.
- British:** take Louisbourg. Hold anywhere else the French might threaten.

Operations & Outcomes

Activated with *Colonial Recruits* (2), Levis and his force at Winooski re-occupy Ft. St. Frederic at Crown Point. (Note: he has three 2-4s, each of one-step – a very fragile force. But then, that's pretty close to what Wolfe has at Ticonderoga.)

In order to buttress the mainland fronts before striking east, and perhaps mislead the French as to British intentions, the Brits *Raise Provincial Regiments* and assign one to Wolfe at Ticonderoga, two to Johnson at Oneida Carry West (OCW), and one to reserve status in Ft. Wm Henry at Hudson Carry North (HCN).

Dismissing any threat from Braddock while wanting to block or even outflank the somewhat over-extended Johnson at OCW, the French play *Rangers* (1) to deploy Dumas from Niagara to Ft. Frontenac at Cataraqui with one 1-6 *Coureur de Bois* (CdB) while dropping off one 1-4 *Marine* at Oswego en route.

Then the great 'conjunct operation' commenced. *British Regulars*: three 3-4s to Halifax, under the leadership of...lessee...who do we have...Amherst! A blind grab (I promise!) from the cup of *bon fortuna* for the British. Amherst (activation: 2; span of control: 7; tactics: +1) can bring the entire force to Louisbourg, Monckton simply standing by in case the august personage falls in battle.

Playing *Quiberon Bay* (3), the French naval-move Drucour with one 3-4 Regular and 1CdB to join Montcalm in Louisbourg. (*All or nothing, monsieur!*)

The British then enlist the aid of *Gov. Vandroof*: Montcalm and Dieskau change places, the former landing in Winooski, the latter at Louisbourg. *Note: Dieskau (o DRM) takes precedence over Drucour (+1 DRM).*

Somewhat desperate to get Montcalm back to Louisbourg, the French play *Mohawks (1)* and move him to Quebec. *(This was too little, too late: Montcalm might be needed at Crown Point sooner than at Quebec, and the French should have inferred that the Brits had cards to implement the Louisbourg op immediately, before Montcalm could get there.)*

The Brits then conduct the landing. As planned, *Louisbourg Squadrons* gets the force (6x 3-4s) to sea and *Amphib Landing* gets them ashore. Battle, outside the fortress: 18 combat factors (CFs) & +1 DRM vs. 13 CFs & no DRM. Brits roll 5+1=6=five enemy steps lost. French roll 6=4 enemy steps lost. Narrow margin but enough. French withdraw into the fortress (nowhere else to go). Amherst passes his leader check. 1 Brit VP for a total now of five. Louisbourg besieged.

Confounded, the French see that all their remaining cards offer activation levels of one. Neither Dieskau nor Drucour can even sortie. They play *Amphib Landing (1)* to move the 0-4 Marine at Niagara to Cataragui.

Amherst then uses *Foul Weather (2)* to mount his full investment, achieving, however, only siege level 1

The French, unable to render succor to Louisbourg, send Montcalm back to Crown Point, using *Call Out Militias (1)*.

Hesitating to use *Fieldworks* while Wolfe and Johnson stand exposed, but lacking other high-activation cards, the Brits expend it to tighten the siege, achieving level 2 and immediately mounting an Assault. 14 Brit CFs to 8 French. Brits one column shift left but +1 DRM. Result: both lose two steps totaling two CFs. Assault fails; siege continues (pix below).

Then, making their move against Johnson, the French use *Blockhouses (1)* to send Villiers and one 1-6 CdB to Raid the Mohawk Village at Canajoharie, succeeding in destroying the village while suffering no losses.

In a belated move to back up Johnson, the Brits use *Lake Schooners (1)* to river-move one 3-4 Regular from NYC to the ruined Mohawk village, where a stockade must now be built.

Louisbourg, 1757: Amphibious Op



Amherst mounts the grand 'conjunct' operation'...



Wins a narrow victory.



And forces the French to seek refuge behind stone walls.

Louisbourg, 1757: Siege and First Assault

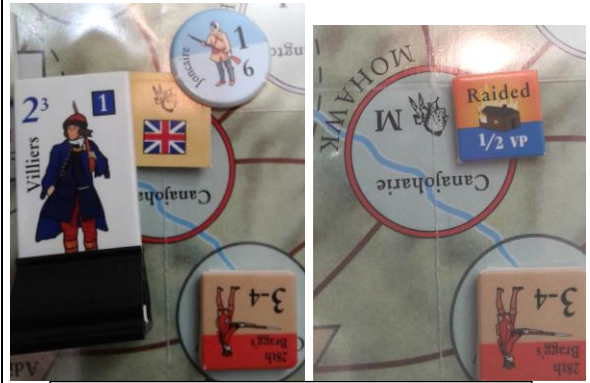


Amherst hurls his entire force over the ramparts,



But is forced back in frustration. (*Vive le Roi* and all that poppycock!)

Raids Against Johnson's LoC



Villiers and CdB cut Johnson's Main Supply Route (MSR) at Canajoharie



But lose the entire elite force at Schenectady.

The French then attempt another Raid. Using their last *Militias* card,

Villiers and the same CdB strike out against Schenectady. Here, alas, they fail and lose both steps of their intrepid auxiliaries.

Rounding out the season with administrative moves, the Brits rather belatedly *Call Out Militias* (ix American 1-0 in the North). The French, not permitted to hold a card for a second season in a row, cough up the *Ambush* card ruefully to move a 3-4 regular from Ft. Frontenac to Quebec in expectation of desperate times ahead.

VPs: One British VP; VP total: British 5. Successful Raid ensures one for the French at year's end.

After-Action Assessments

French: Louisbourg cannot be saved, although the forces there are delaying the inevitable. Unfortunately they constitute fully half of French regular (drilled) troops in country, and when Louisbourg falls, they'll go into PoW camps or parole, while Amherst's entire force will be free to proceed up the St. Lawrence.

Montcalm's posture on the lakes front is fragile. If we cannot reconstitute the regulars there to two-step (3-4) strength, the position will crumble at first contact. Wolfe clearly has numerous fresh units ready to reinforce. And, although we seem to get Ambush cards regularly, lack of French auxiliaries combine with the presence of Roger's Rangers in Wolfe's force to place the French now at greater danger of Ambush than the British.

Only in the west have things stabilized. Braddock is defanged for some time to come, while Johnson himself has now been cut off from supply. Both must withdraw or find a way to restore their lines of communication. Whether they succeed or not, Villiers and Dumas will soon have to pull all the way back to Montreal or even Quebec.

Losses: 7 steps, 5 from regulars (5 CFs), 4 from CdB (2 CFs).

British: The fall of the great maritime bastion is only a matter of time, at which point the sea road to Quebec will open. It would be nice to get a *Surrender* card to reduce loss rates associated with Assaults. Both we and the French have naught but one-step 2-4 regulars left there, so steps lost there could measurably tilt the theater-wide correlation of forces.

Our posture everywhere else is in disarray. Braddock had better scuttle back into supply before winter, and Johnson now also has to restore his communications. And at the same time Wolfe's forces are unready to assume the offensive. He'll have to move reinforcements forward while shuttling depleted units back in order to reconstitute a fresh force. Given delays at Louisbourg and the need to shore up the west, it looks like fall will see little advance on the mainland axes.

Losses: 6 steps from Brit regulars (6 CFs).

Bradman & Robin (Dunbar) are still stuck in muck & briars a long, long way from home (thataway)

Situation, Late Spring 1757

