# COMMANDOS AT ST. NAZAIRE

#### Designed by Morgan GILLARD, with assistance from Nicolas STRATIGOS

[Translation by Roy Bartoo, includes errata, clarifications & optional rules from a later issue of Vae Victis. But I *didn't bother to translate the historical article: find the* book "The Greatest Raid of All" and read it instead.]

On March 28th, 1942, around one in the morning, a British flotilla moved up the Loire estuary. Under intense fire from German batteries, the destroyer HMS Campbeltown rammed the caisson closing the river side of the great drydock of St. Nazaire, the only one along all the Atlantic coast capable of taking the great German battleship Tirpitz. Immediately groups of commandos debarked from it to begin the systematic destruction of all the parts of the drydock. Simultaneously, light motor-torpedo boats tried to dock at the Old Mole and the Old Entrance in order to land their soldiers. But these boats were wooden, powered by gasoline engines. Most were soon turned into torches, while the gasoline spreading on the water also caught fire. A few managed to escape this inferno, but the commandos who landed found themselves trapped, unable to reembark. Far from admitting defeat, in this desperate situation they tried to break out into the countryside, and almost succeeded, accomplishing one of the most heroic exploits in the annals of History.

Commandos at St. Nazaire is strictly a solitaire game, simulating Operation Chariot, the raid by British commandos on the port of St. Nazaire during the night of 27-28 March 1942. The game requires the use of a tensided die (noted as D10 in the rules), where 0 is read as 10. The term 2D10 indicates the use of two D10 in different colours.

# **1 - OVERVIEW**

## 1.1. Terrain

The game map (two A4 sheets joined together) represents the southern part of the port of St. Nazaire. Spaces linked by connection lines have been superimposed on the map to govern movement and combat:

Terrain offering a defensive bonus to units within.

O Clear terrain; units here receive no protection [Erratum, these two terrain effects are switched in the original French rules]

- Connection for both movement and firingFire connection only

*Note: the type of space (square or circle) has no effect on* movement.

Some spaces contain an objective number (on a yellow background) or setup number (on a white background), or both.

[Clarification: some objective are printed on the map, others are printed on the FlaK counters. For example, FlaK counter #1 (objective #1, target of Roderick's commando) must be placed in space A. thus, when a FlaK unit is eliminated, the counter is removed from the game, to be tallied when counting victory points.

The fuel depots, the three printed spaces #1, are objectives which must be destroyed by demolition (11.1). Three markers objective #1 destroyed are included in VV73.1

#### 1.2 Game Scale

The game lasts 10 turns and covers the period between 1:30 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. A game turn equals 15 minutes of real time and 1 cm on the map equals 40 m of real world distance. A unit counter represents a group of about 5 to 17 men or a single vehicle, and a FlaK counter (German antiaircraft artillery) represents one gun and its crew.

## 1.3 Play Aid

In addition to the map, a play aid is included, which has a turn track, two disembarkation tracks for the Old Mole (Vieux Mole) and the Old Entrance (Ancienne Entree), and a display for units on board the destroyer HMS Campbeltown.

[Note: The Play Aid has not been fully translated, but should be easily understood using these rules for reference]

#### 2 – COUNTERS

The counter sheet has the markers and unit counters necessary to play the game (p. 51). Some of the unit counters are double-sided, others single-sided.

## 2.1 Units

Each British unit counter shows the unit name, a colour code to shows its deployment on the map, and two numbers: the first is its combat strength, the second its objective space. There are several types of commando units:

**Demolition teams:** their objectives are to demolish the port facilities such as the lock gates, winding stations and pump houses. Note that some of these counters are single-sided.

[Erratum: A new counter for Commando Bradley is included on p. 59 (of VV73?) with the correct colour band, blue rather than red. The values on the counter are unchanged.]

- Assault teams: these men have two principal goals, • the first is to knock out the port defences, the second is to fight German units.
- Headquarters: only one for the British side, representing Lt.-Col. Newman and his bodyguards.

German units only have their combat strength, the unit name, and a colour code.

Except for a couple of single-sided demolition units, all units are double-sided. For the British, units have a fullstrength front and a reduced back: for the Germans an unknown front and a back showing the unit type and strength. At the start of the game, British counters set up showing their full strength side, and Germans showing their unknown side.



#### 2.2 Markers

- **Pinned** [*Cloue*]: This marker is placed on a unit after a combat in which the unit suffers a Pinned result (for effects on the unit, see 10).
- **Objective destroyed:** This marker is used when an objective (port facility or German ship) is destroyed/sunk by the British (picture at right). Once placed, the counter remains in the game and will be used at the end when counting victory points.

#### 3 - SET UP

Assemble the two sides of the map and place the play aid to one side. Separate the units according to their identification colours: FlaK, German units, and commandos. The FlaK will be placed directly on the map; the player will use the play aid to set up the unit counters.

German units are set up unknown on the map except for FlaK. Separate the unit counters into their respective spaces on the player aid pool (except for Group A) and begin to draw counters as follows:

- 2 cm FlaK (each counter has an objective number indicated between brackets [] except for the last two): Area A (#1), B (#2), C (2x#7), D (#12), E (3x#13), and F (2x FlaK not marked with an objective number).
- 2 cm Quad FlaK: Area G
- **Kriegsmarine:** one unit counter drawn at random in areas H, I, J, K, L, M, N, and O (only unit on land at the start of the attack).
- Units of MarineFlaK-Bat. 705: one unit drawn at random in areas P, Q, R and S.
- Unit of Organization Todt: one unit counter drawn at random in Area T.

# 4 - SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Each game turn is divided into 7 phases played one in sequence. An additional landing phase is played once, at the start of the game.

- 0 Landing pre-phase
- A. Cohesion check for Pinned units.
- B. British units move (except first turn)
- C. Combat resolution
- D. Demolitions
- E. German reinforcements and movement
- F. Combat resolution
- G. Advance the Turn marker

#### 5 - BRITISH LANDING 5.1 Basics

Before German units get to move for the first time, all commandos will attempt to land at three places in the port of St. Nazaire: The Old Mole (Vieux Mole), the Old Entrance (Ancienne Entre), then the HMS Campbeltown. A play aid is provided on p. 38 of the magazine to simulate the landings, there are two landing spaces (Old Mole and Old Entrance) and a deployment chart for the HMS Campbeltown.

## 5.2 Using the Play Aid

Only the historical arrival order of the Commandos in their entry zones must be followed. After that, according to the luck of the dice and events, the landings may be modified or compromised. The player places the commandos in their respective spaces in each section on the play aid card.

The commandos land in phase 0 of the sequence of play. The player must attempt to have all of the commandos land in each landing area in the following order: Old Mole, Old Entrance and Campbeltown. The process must be completed in each zone before proceeding to the next one until there are no more units left on the player aid card.

## 5.2.1 Landings at the Old Mole and Old Entrance

The player rolls a D10 for each commando on the landing section of the player aid card and applies the result according to the following table. If the result is Boat successfully lands the commando, place the unit in the starred space (Old Mole or Old Entrance), and it may then perform a normal movement, the entry area not counting against the movement allowance. Then the player repeats the same process for the remaining commandos.

## 5.2.2 Landing of Commando Birney

If commando Birney successfully lands at the Old Mole, its objective is to destroy the FlaK (#12) located there. Perform a combat only involving this commando and FlaK unit. If the commando wins, the FlaK #12 counter is removed from the game and the Birney unit occupies the space. This commando can then move normally. Subsequent commandos will then have a bonus to their landing roll (see the landings section on the player aid).

## 5.2.3 FlaK on the Old Mole (optional rule)

If Birney does not land successfully, in order to improve the landings of other Commandos, the player may, if he wishes, use another (assault only) unit to destroy the Old Mole FlaK.

#### 5.2.4 Landing from the HMS Campbeltown.

This landing takes place without rolling the die, the player places each commando in the starred space and then moves it in the order indicated on the player aid card (Roderick first, then Roy, etc.).

[Erratum: space 8 of the Campbeltown track should be Copland (green stripe)].

Note: starred landing spaces count as round spaces, and do not count against movement.

## 6 - MOVEMENT and ZONES OF CONTROL <mark>6.1 - Basics</mark>

All units (unless otherwise noted) may move a maximum of three spaces per movement phase. Movement is done via spaces linked by a movement connection. A Pinned unit cannot move.

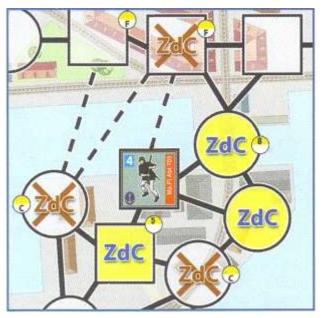
All units (EXC: Pinned and FlaK) exert into adjacent spaces (those linked by a solid connection line) a Zone of Control (abbreviated ZoC).

A unit must end its movement when it enters an enemy ZoC.

## 6.2 Commandos and ZoC

The following two rules only affect commandos: - friendly units nullify enemy ZoC.

- a commando may leave a German ZoC at the start of its move by rolling  $\geq 5$  on a D10.



## 7 - STACKING

The stacking limit in a single space is a maximum of 3 units of any type (including FlaK). During the movement phase, stacking in a space may exceed this limit, but must be within the limit at the end of the phase. The order in which pieces are stacked has no effect on the game, only the number of stacked units affects combat. If the stacking limit is exceeded at the end of the movement phase, use a D10 to randomly select excess units to be eliminated.

#### 8 - GERMAN UNITS

The player must, as he moves his British units, also move the German units a maximum of 3 spaces (EXC: see 8.3), during their movement phase (Phase D), according to the following rules. Unless otherwise specified in the rules, German units must move.

#### <mark>8.1 German Unit Movement</mark>

All [land] units and some Kriegsmarine troops are required to move. FlaK units and Kriegsmarine units on ships cannot move, but they may engage in combat with adjacent units. the following table indicates the movement priority for German units.

#### **German Movement Priorities**

Toward the nearest British unit/stack

1. If the German unit has a choice between several British units, it moves toward the unit/stack with the highest combat strength of Demolition Teams.

[Clarifications: Pinned status of British units has no effect on the movement priorities. German unit movement must comply with the stacking restrictions, 3 units per space

2. If the automatic movement of a German unit would place it into a space that already contains 3 units, the player ends its move in the preceding space. if the shortest route leads to two (or more) spaces adjacent to a British commando, and one of these spaces is already occupied by three units, the moving German unit will enter the other adjacent space.

**Rules variant**: during German movement, if the movement cost is the same and the player has a choice of several spaces adjacent to a commando, he may evenly (or by using a D10) divide the number of Germans in each space. If at the end of its movement a German unit has a choice of two spaces, it must choose in priority the square spaces, otherwise the player determines the destination space using a D10.

Vehicles may neither enter nor move through spaces 6 and 15. Likewise for spaces 8, 9, 14 and 17 if these contain an objective destroyed marker.]

## 8.2 Concealed Movement

Some German units have a front side with the unit type and combat strength, and a reverse side with an unknown side. As long as they are not in contact with a British unit, these German units remain with the unknown side showing, even during movement. The only German units without a dummy side are the FlaK guns. When a German unit moves next to a British unit or vice versa, the German unit is flipped to its revealed side. Such a unit then remains revealed for the rest of the game, even if no longer in contact with British.

#### 8.3 Exception

Two types of units, FlaK and Kriegsmarine units (the latter placed only on ships), cannot move until they are eliminated and removed from the map.

#### 9 - COMBAT

Combat occurs when two opposing units are in spaces linked by a connection line (either solid or dashed). Combat is resolved in phases C and F of the Sequence of Play, and is resolved separately for each unit. Combat is mandatory for German units, but not for British units. Multiple units cannot combine their strengths to attack another unit. A unit may only attack once *[in each of*  *phase C and F, per errata]*, but may be attacked multiple times in a turn.

[Combat Results Table key:

- C: The target unit is Pinned, see 10.
- -1C: Target unit loses 1 step and is Pinned.
- **DE:** Defender Eliminated.
- -: No effect

Cumulative modifiers:

- 2 or more defending units: +1 to the D10
- Defender in a square terrain space (except vehicles): -1 to D10]

# 9.1 Combat Resolution

Each unit may attack a maximum of once per [combat phase] against an enemy unit that is in an adjacent space with a movement connection (solid line) or a fire connection (dashed line). To resolve an attack, the player rolls a D10 and cross-indexes the result with the column corresponding to the units Combat Strength (applying modifiers as appropriate) on the above table. If as a result of combat, one of the two spaces is left vacant: - one or more commando units may occupy the space; - All of the German units in the attacking stack must occupy the space.

As combat is simultaneous, results are applied after both spaces have attacked. A German unit which suffers a step loss is eliminated. the counter is returned to the appropriate pool on the play aid card. A Pinned unit which suffers another Pinned result remains Pinned. [Clarification: the most precise term is exchange of fire. *When opposing units are in adjacent spaces, combat takes* place between the unit(s). Each unit fires on one enemy unit (the Germans according to the priorities given in 9.1.1), applying any appropriate bonuses). Results of this fire are applied immediately, but the effects only apply at the end of the exchange of fire between the two spaces. For example, a normal unit which receives a Pinned result during an exchange of fire may fire normally until after the exchange of fire between these two spaces). in any case, a unit which is Pinned at the start of a combat phase may not fire but may be fired upon.]

# 9.1.1 German attacks

An attack by one (or more) German units against a commando is done according to the following procedure:

**1.** Choice of (target) space if British units are present in several spaces adjacent to the German unit(s). The German unit(s) must attack, in order of preference:

- a. A Demolition Team (or the stack of units with the highest combat strength of this type of unit), otherwise
- b. An Assault Team (or the stack with the highest combat strength of this type of unit), otherwise
- c. Newman's HQ

**2.** Order of attacks against a stack of Commando units. On the following table, the Germans MUST obtain a combat result (Pinned, step loss, or elimination) against all units of the same type before attacking other types.

# Attack preference against a stack, in descending order of priority:

- **a.** Assault Teams (highest combat strength of this type of unit first), then
- **b.** Demolition Teams (highest combat strength of this type of unit first), then
- **c.** Newman's HQ

**Example:** A stack of German units attacks a British stack containing 2 Assault units and a Demolition Team. ALL of the assault units in the stack must suffer a combat result (C, -1C, or DE) before the German can attack the Demolition Team.

**3.** Attack order of several German units stacked in the same space.

If several German units attack the same enemy space, the player MUST have the German units attack in decreasing order of combat strength.

# 9.2 FlaK Attacks

FlaK units are able to attack non-adjacent units provided that the two spaces are connected only by dashed lines. To make such an attack, use the same Combat Table as above and apply the results as usual, with the difference that the defender cannot attack back. A Pinned FlaK unit cannot fire.

## 9.2.1 Multiple FlaK attacks.

The Quad 2 cm FlaK can make multiple attacks against the same target space. When this unit attacks, roll a D10 (of a different colour) in addition to that normally used to resolve the attack. If the roll on the coloured D10 is less than or equal to the combat strength of the FlaK (even if the combat results die indicates a no effect), the unit may fire again during this phase. Such attacks may continue as long as the coloured D10 indicates success or there are no more enemy units in the target space.

# 9.3 Mortar (optional)

During the mission, Godsons team carried a mortar (the symbol is marked on the counter). The mortar is be used against distant targets, it can only be used against a space connected to the commandos space by dashed connection lines. In case of this type of combat versus a FlaK unit, the combat is resolved normally, that is both sides fire simultaneously.

[Clarification: the mortar may ONLY fire along a dashed connection. In each combat phase, commando Hodgson may either fire normally, OR fire the mortar, but not both; it may do both during a game turn.]

[Combat example]: during Phase F, two German units (a 3 strength unit in one square space, and a 4 strength Kriegsmarine unit in a different square space) are adjacent to a stack of two British units, Birney (5) and Brett (3), in a round space. An exchange of fire will therefore occur. The player decides to do two distinct attacks: the first between Birney (5) and the Kriegsmarine (4) unit; the second between Brett (3) and the other German unit (3). First combat:

The player rolls 2D10 (black for the Germans, red for the British), resulting in 4 (black) and 6 (red). Then modifiers are applied: 0 for the commando (+1 for two units in a space, -1 for Germans in a square space), 0 for the Germans. Results: no effect on the commando, -1C on the

*German who is eliminated at the end of the phase. Second combat:* 

7 (black) and 5 (red); modifiers are +0 vs. both sides. Result: Commando Brett is Pinned, no effect on the German.

If he wishes, the player may displace commando Birney into the space formerly occupied by the Kriegsmarine unit. Translators note: I think that this example is mistaken, or rather that it uses the old, incorrect terrain effects. If the Germans are both in square spaces, they would each benefit from a -1 die roll modifier when fired upon; and the British, stacked in a round space, would both suffer a +1 modifier when fired upon, for two or more units in the same space. The example is correct if the Germans are both in round (i.e. clear terrain) spaces and the British in a square space.]

## **10 - PINNED UNITS**

As a result of combat, a unit may become Pinned and receive a Pinned [*Cloue*] marker. A Pinned unit can neither move nor attack, but it can be attacked. A Pinned unit may become normal in two ways, both during Phase A of the Sequence of Play:

**Cohesion check:** the player rolls a D10 for each Pinned unit, on a roll less than or equal to that sides cohesion level (German = 6, British = 7), the unit returns to normal. Add +1 to the die roll per adjacent space occupied by the enemy.

**Newman HQ bonus:** The Newman counter reorganises automatically during this phase (even if German units are adjacent). In addition all British units stacked with Newman also automatically return to normal.

[Clarifications: A Pinned unit cannot fire (phases C and F), exerts no ZoC, and cannot attempt demolition, but still attracts German units (according to the movement priorities 8.1).

A unit which is Pinned after combat cannot occupy a vacated enemy space.

Variant for an easier game: A Pinned unit may occupy a vacated space if it is part of a group of units, at least one of which is not Pinned, and the group attacked the same stack of enemy units.]

#### **11 - OBJECTIVES AND DEMOLITIONS**

The player wins if the British units destroy as many (or more) of the objectives as they did historically.

There are two types of objectives:

- port facilities (cluses, bridges, pump houses, etc.), the main targets of the Demolition Teams.

- Destruction of artillery pieces [*FlaK*?] and German ships by Assault Teams.

The destruction of the south drydock gates will occur automatically thanks to the sacrifice of the Campbeltown and the explosive charge it carried. This objective, considered already achieved, does not therefore concern the commandos.

The game map contains a number of objective spaces, which are marked with an identification number, as almost all of the FlaK units. Thus, each objective is the target of a single Commando. Note that a commando may have several objective spaces, there can therefore be multiple spaces with the same objective number.

#### 11.1 Demolitions

Demolition attempts take place during the movement phase. To demolish an objective, a commando unit (full or reduced strength, but NOT Pinned) must be in the same space and may not attack during phase C of the current turn. To discover the results of the demolition attempt, the player rolls a D10 and applies any modifiers from the table below. If the result is 3-6, the objective is destroyed. Place an objective destroyed or ship sunk marker on the space. If the result fails, the commando may try again (on a subsequent turn) as many times as it wishes.

#### **Demolition Table**

Objective destroyed on a result of  $\geq 6$ Die roll modifiers:

• Adjacent space occupied by a German unit or stack: -1 per space UNLESS at least 1 (non-Pinned) Assault Team is with the Demolition Team.

• **Demolition Team has suffered a step loss:** -1 If the demolition succeeds, a commando may displace into an adjacent space (that is not occupied by Germans) during the same game phase. This movement is free.

#### 11.2 Commando Burtinshaw

Demolition team Burtinshaw does not have an assigned objective, it is held in reserve. The player may use it to demolish any objective that is normally assigned to another Commando. Note that Burtinshaw may only destroy an objective by replacing an eliminated commando, and is subject to the usual rules in 11.1.

## **11.3 Demolition of an objective by another** commando

If a commando is eliminated from the game before it has demolished its objective, another unit may perform the mission even if it has different objective numbers provided that the commando is of the same type as the one it is replacing. (Example: only a demolition team may perform the mission of another demolition team). A single commando may make an unlimited number of demolitions.

*Optional rule: any commando (regardless of type) may demolish an objective.* 

## **12 - GERMAN REINFORCEMENTS**

During the game, new German units will enter the battle, through the four points on the map indicated by yellow triangles A, B, C and D.

At the start of the game, after placing all [at-start] units on the map, the player groups the remaining units (EXCEPT those of the 679.Inf.Rgt.) in pool A on the play aid card. The units of the 679.Inf.Rgt. are placed in Pool B. Through Turn 4, the player draws reinforcements at random from Pool A (without replacing them). On Turn 5, all of the counters remaining in pool A are added to Pool B. Through the end of the game, the player will draw reinforcements only from Pool B. Reinforcement units enter (showing their unknown side) the map during the German movement phase. Each turn the player rolls two D10 of different colours; the first D10 indicates two numbers of reinforcing German units, the second two entry zones for them. Each unit number in the first table corresponds to an entry zone in the second. The entry space counts against their movement allowance.

German Reinforcements table										
Black D10	1	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
number of units-	-	1/1	1/1	1/2	2/1	1/2	2/1	1/3	2/3	3/2
Colour D10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
entry area	C/B	A/D	C/A	D/C	B/D	C/D	D/A	A/C	D/B	B/C

Example: the player rolls 4 on a black D10 and 8 on a coloured D10, the reinforcements are therefore 1 unit via Entry Area A and 2 units via Entry Area C.

[Clarification: If the randomly-chosen reinforcement entry space is occupied by a commando unit, or already contains 3 German units, then it will not enter. This does not prevent the entry of other reinforcements during the same turn (if there are any).]

## **13 - VICTORY CONDITIONS**

Two elements are considered when calculating victory points: objectives achieved and commandos surviving. Historically, the boats that landed them were either destroyed or, too badly damaged, returned to sea, leaving the commandos on their own. Once their objectives are achieved, the commandos may attempt to escape off the map (exits A, B, C and D) but may not return to the game once they have exited. Any commandos still on the map after Turn 10 are considered to have been captured and do not count towards victory points. Calculate the number of victory points per the following table.

Objective name and number	VPs				
FlaK #1, #2, 2x #7x2,#12, 2x #13	2 each				
Ships sunk in the Basin #10	4 each				
Fuel Storage Tanks 3 x #1	2 each				
Ships sunk in the drydock #11	4 each				
Pump House #3	6				
Swing Bridge and north lock gates of the New Entrance #14	12				
North and south winding-stations of the drydock #4, #5	6 each				
Central lock gates of the New Entrance #15	6				
North lock gates #6	10				
Electric Generator Station #16	6				
Customs Bridge #8	6				
Swing bridge and south lock gates of the New Entrance #17	12				
Swing bridge and lock gates of the Old Entrance #9	6				
Commando eliminated* or captured (demolition, assault, or HQ)	-2 each				
*except those that were unable to land because their boat was too badly damaged and withdrew					

[Erratum: A commando lost during landing (boat destroyed or fled) does not count in the VP calculation.]

Compare the result against the list below to know the result of the raid. For reference, the commandos historically achieved 47 victory points.

**0 - 45 points:** The raid failed despite the Commandos best efforts.

**46-70 points:** Despite the losses and unattained objectives, the raid inflicted serious damage to the German war machine by damaging or destroying port facilities.

**71-100 points:** The raid is a success. By damaging the port of St. Nazaire for long months or even years, the British commandos won an important victory for the Allies in their quest for supremacy in the North Atlantic.

**101+ points**: The raid results exceed all expectations. The Commandos accomplished their mission in style, above and beyond all that the high command could have hoped from them.

#### 14 - Historical Losses

The following rule allows you to judge a defeat or minor victory. This rule accounts for the number of commandos lost during the game.

If the player loses fewer than 17 commandos (of all types including Newman), he has done better - historically - than the British.

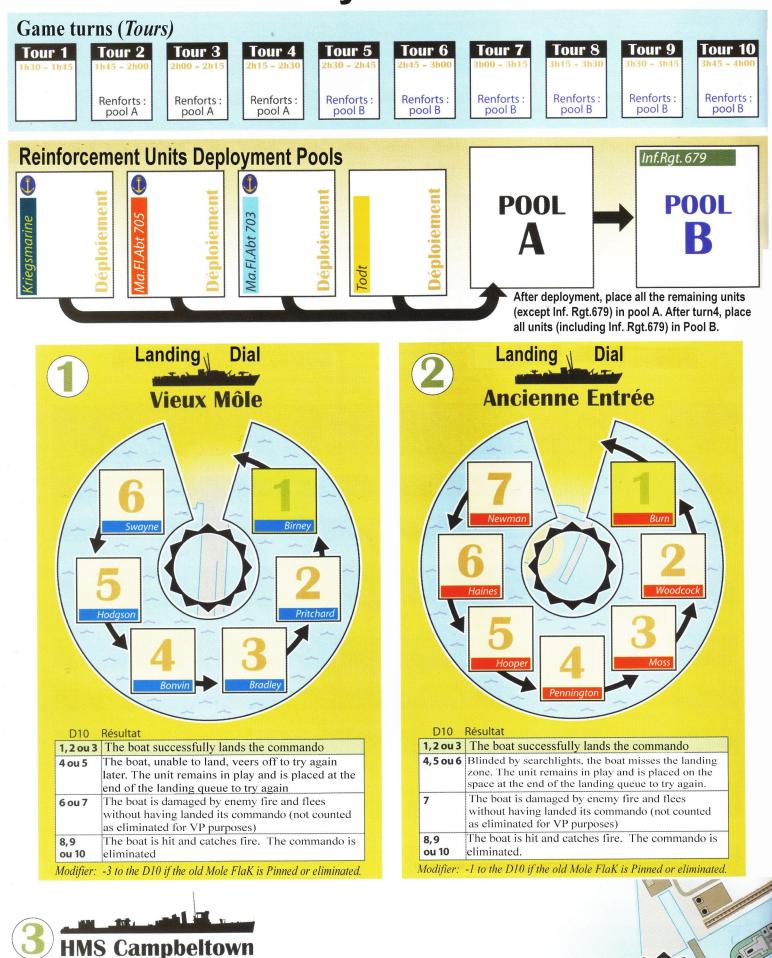
If the player loses exactly 17 commandos, his losses are equal to the historical result.

If the player loses between 18 and 21 commandos, he has done worse than historically.

A commando is considered lost if it is removed from the map as a result of combat, or is still on the map after Turn

10.]

# COMMANDOS SUR SAINT NAZAIRE Player aid



7 6 5 4 Burtinshaw Brett Purdon Smalley

Roy Roderick