

GRAND STRATEGY

This GS brochure is designed to share knowledge and techniques to get started.

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Desert Warfare



EARLY PREPARATIONS

In 1939 - first half of 1940 you should do traditional European campaign, conquering Poland, Denmark, Low Countries, and France. Ideally France should fall before Italian activation, but it's hard to achieve and it's not a must.

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SEALION OR BARBAROSSA?

When you do an Axis North Africa and Middle East strategy, I strongly advise that you launch a Sea Lion as well.

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NORTH AFRICA SUPPLY PROBLEM

The first challenge is getting more supply, since the default 15 supply points are not enough for a good campaign in North Africa.

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COMBAT OPERATIONS

Finally, we solved the logistics problem to support decisive forces and can send the DAK.

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*Rommel
conversing with
his staff near El
Agheila, January
12, 1942.*

Why Go to the Desert?

The first and most obvious reason is oil. The Middle East has large oil fields, which not only provide your army with a plethora of oil but also are PP sources.

The second reason is that it is one of the most reliable strategies, if you do things properly. The Axis in 1940-41 has a huge edge over Britain in PP income and troop quality.... Britain gets some convoys, but your U-boats should reduce them.

Britain has a poor manpower pool that will degrade quickly if British troops engage in heavy fighting. So if you plan your Middle East adventure well, Britain will not be able to defeat it.

A Panzer II of the Afrika Korps. Note the faded insignia on the front, left just below the turret.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-783-0110-12
Foto: Dömer | 1941 April - Mai

German soldier in North Africa during World War II



Handwritten note:
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October 31

EARLY PREPARATIONS - CONTINUED

I don't advise attacking other countries such as Norway or Yugoslavia, but if you think you have the resources to spare, why not?

The essential thing to take care of at the very start of the game are labs. You should build air (dog fight) lab at the very start of the game, and build a second one at the very start of 1940.

Why? Because later in Egypt your Luftwaffe fighters will engage the RAF. If you get good results you will drain Allied PPs. But if you get bad results you will be forced to repair fighters instead of escorting TAC. And if you can't use TAC, you can't advance.

Another important lab is the naval one. Since you will have captured the Suez Canal, you will be able to unite the efforts of the Kriegsmarine and the Regina Marina in the Atlantic. If you have naval tech upgrades, you will beat the Allies handily. I recommend starting with the Subs tech for both Italy and Germany. It is the cheapest naval tech and it progresses quickly. You don't have many BBs at the start of the game, but later you can switch focus to

surface ships, if you see your opponent mostly producing destroyers, for example. (Remember that in GS 2.0 you will have 2 free BBs in early 1941 - 1 German and 1 Italian.)

Other labs are also useful and should be maxed out as soon as possible -- you do want to have good troops! But it is not wrong to delay a lab purchase to build additional urgently needed units or leaders.

In terms of units, by the end of French campaign you should have built 2 additional TACs and 2 FTRs (and have a total 4 of each) and a [Fallschirmjäger](#) (German para) unit, and possibly a second German leader. If you have more spare PPs (and all labs built) build additional u-boats and then fighters.

The GS developers share a common goal and that is to make GS a more historical WW2 in Europe simulation without scripting the players from 1939 to 1945. It means that the players should be able to feel they're playing with the same constraints as the real WW2 leaders had, but they should have a chance to make different choices.

Rommel in North Africa (June 1942)



Sealion or Barbarossa ?

When you do an Axis North Africa and Middle East strategy, I strongly advise that you launch a Sea Lion as well. The reason is that both operations/strategies target Britain, which simply doesn't have enough resources to prevail. If you conquer both Britain and the Middle East, this achievement will give you more PPs and Oil income than would any Barbarossa campaign. Then you can aim to win an attrition war with Soviet Union or at least hold them at bay. Not doing a Barbarossa may look bad at first glance, but it has a deep advantage. It is not a good idea to DoW Soviet Union, unless you have superior forces. Remember, you likely will not have superior forces against the USSR if you concentrate in the Middle East.

BARBAROSSA

If you launch a Barbarossa in these circumstances, you will get bogged down; you will boost the Soviet war effort; and you will suffer heavy casualties. If you do the smart thing and refrain from Barbarossa, you will have 40 turns (almost half the game!) to deal with France and Britain. Instead of launching Barbarossa, prepare an eastern defensive line. Build infantry corps and DoW against the Soviet Union just before its automatic activation date. I suggest the last September 1941 turn, since it's guaranteed fair weather and the Soviets will suffer their DoW penalty. You may want to take border cities like Brest-Litovsk, Lvov and Kaunas to deny their use as rail hubs for the Red Army. Bad


weather will likely start one or two turns after you DoW the USSR, and will slow down Soviet troops. The idea of all this is to delay any real fighting in the East as long as possible. You will aim just to collect your PPs and build overwhelmingly good troops. By 1942 the Axis should be done in both Britain and the Middle East, and can focus on the Soviets.

Another reason to delay a DoW against the USSR is that, once you do, Soviet troops will most likely march into Persia and Iraq to help their British allies.

I hope everything discussed above explains why, if you decide to focus against Britain, you should do it everywhere, not just in one theater.

SEALION

There are two usual times to launch Sea Lion: summer 1940 or spring 1941. Summer 1940 is preferred, and Sea Lion typically is launched immediately after the Fall of France. You will know the time for Sea Lion is approaching when, during a French campaign, any of the following happens:

-  RN in the MED badly hurt
-  RAF FTR in MED hurt badly
-  BEF in France & not recovered

Any of these is a good signal for Sea Lion's success.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST 1940 SEALION

You don't have many naval units, and even if you have ordered naval builds they take many turns to appear.

You don't have a second fallschirmjäger available.

You don't have SS units. (Both SS and fallschirmjäger units are great -- the fallschirmjäger for surprise, and the SS for power while counting as normal units against transport and invasion caps.)

You may not have achieved a higher level of industry tech that would enhance your transport capacity.


Another drawback of 1940 Sealion is that the Allied player will probably expect it, and will have made preparations against it.


1941 SEALION


If you go for 1941 -- you will have more air, naval units, SS and para units noted above, and the surprise effect. All British income will be gone to pay for heavy fighting in Egypt most likely, so they will be fewer in numbers and short in PPs.

WARNING: If the Allied player has not reinforced Egypt, and if your reconnaissance shows that they have prepared an intensive defense against 1941 Sea Lion, do NOT launch it !!

Instead:

 Attack some minor countries in Europe, or

 If you have done well in North Africa and are advancing into the Middle East, launch a Barbarossa (just make sure that Russian troops cannot reach the Middle East oil fields before you do), or

 Hurt the British by indirect approaches (convoy raiding, strategic bombing, invasion feints, etc.).

North Africa Supply

The first challenge is getting more supply, since the default 15 supply points are not enough for a good campaign in North Africa.

British Forces will have:

- 5 INF + MECH + ARM + 1-2 FTR
- Whatever reinforcements they send
- Good defensive positions - the "bottleneck" mentioned later

If the Allied player realizes what you are doing and maintains a defensive posture, the Axis player will have difficulty attacking successfully with just 15 supply points in North Africa. Exceeding your allowed supply points produces harsh penalties and will lead to an Axis defeat.

So let's look into supply sources. The goal is to increase your supply allowance so that it can support enough Axis forces to permit a decisive conquest of North Africa and the Middle East with the DAK (Deutsches Afrikakorps).

GOING FOR SPAIN AFTER BARBAROSSA

This is not the best option. Spain has a reasonable army, rugged terrain and a high partisan spawn rate. It takes time to conquer, and even after Spain surrenders you will need to capture Gibraltar to get your North African supply improvement. If the Allied player replaces the Gibraltar garrison unit with something more resilient, you may find yourself besieging the fortress forever. So if you choose to go for Spain, deploy subs to screen near Gibraltar, to stop British reinforcements.

Capturing Gibraltar does have strategic importance -- it is the gateway to the Mediterranean, after all, but is closing the

Med so important? The oil and PP increase from the Middle East is still a better strategic win.

Bottom line ➔ invading Spain takes too long, costs too much, and your goals can be stymied by a determined British defense of Gibraltar

British troops and Soviet armoured cars in Iran.



VICHY FRANCE

Vichy has several poorly protected ports in Algeria, which will provide you with supplies for the North African campaign. As a free bonus you will get a couple of good cities in France.

Disadvantages: it takes time; the Allies will gain two more battleships (at a low step level, but it takes 15 turns to produce these units from scratch); and sailing invasion troops to Algeria is not safe if the Royal Navy is roaming the area.

Note: If you conquer both Algeria and Spain/Gibraltar, you will be able to establish rail supply in Libya. But what good will this do if it occurs so late?

Bottom line ➔ again, it takes too long; costs too much; and a determined RN can sink your plans.

It really is worth spending the PPs to upgrade units to SS rather than building additional units that are more easily destroyed by the enemy

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North Africa Supply Continued

MALTA SUPPRESSION

This is the best option. The goal is to disable Malta's capability. You do not to invade and conquer it -- just hurt it!

All you need is a couple of fighters, a strategic bomber, and maybe a tactical bomber and a commander. Additionally, it is useful to keep the Italian Navy in bases near Malta to engage the RN if it attempts to support Malta. Additional tactical bombers also can suppress roving RN support.

Base all these forces on Sicily, and start attacking the British air unit deployed on Malta airfield with FTR's and bombing the Malta port using SAC. They will degrade fast, thus raising your supply allowance for North Africa and Middle East operations.

As a bonus, the Allied player's repair of the British fighter on Malta will help to drain the British economy. Once you destroy Malta port to 0 repair value, it will become a death trap for naval unit, if any are placed there.

Bottom line ➡ this is the best option, with minimal risk, known enemy forces, limited British response capability, and increased supply allowance for you.

DESTROYING THE RN IN THE MED

Another way to get +10 supply is to reduce the size of the RN in the Mediterranean. The easiest way is to sink the British carrier, if you spot it unescorted. The general rule of thumb for the Axis is that if you want to engage the RN with Italian capital ships, you should do so within range of German tactical bombers. The RN usually will try to avoid this kind of engagement!

If the battle goes against the Axis, the Italian fleet will be reduced instead of the Allied one. Another risk is that more British or American naval units can be sent to the Mediterranean, decreasing your supply allowance by -10 and forcing you to pay a huge penalty for several turns.

Some players think that Greece is valuable for the African campaign (because of Crete's potential as an air base), but I don't agree. Air units in Crete can reach Libya, but aren't we going to Egypt and beyond?

Bottom line ➡ this is not a good move. For the Axis to succeed, the British have to use the RN unwisely. So you might lose the naval battle, and the Allied navies can reinforce the Mediterranean in any case.



British 6-inch howitzers firing on Tobruk, January 1941.

BELOW: Advance of the Afrika Korps' 39th battalion tank hunters








ABOVE: An Indian Pattern Carrier Mk IIA named 'Dhar IV', North Africa of the type used by 3rd Indian Motor Brigade



Officers of the 11th Hussars use a parasol to give shade during a halt, while out patrolling on the Libyan frontier, 26 July 1940. The vehicle is a Morris CS9 armoured car.

Combat Operations

BALANCED DAK FORCE

-  2 fighters (FTR)
-  2 tactical bombers (TAC)
-  Armour (ARM)
-  Mechanized infantry (MECH)
-  Corps infantry (INF)

They require a total of 19 supply points (+1 for the Italian mechanized infantry already in Africa). If you want more forces, and have supply (PPs), it's always good to have more air units. You may want to replace the suggested infantry unit with a mech, or even a second panzer unit. The force balance is up to you. Remember, it is a balance between support here, Sea Lion operations, and other needs. The goal is to bleed the British of units and of PPs!

ADDITIONAL UNIT CONSIDERATIONS

Sending lots of INF corps is not recommended. There is little area to maneuver in so front line units need to be powerful.

Paratroopers also are good, since they are more powerful units with no supply cost. A German paratroop, Fallschirmjäger, can paradrop if it is based next to an air unit. There are few, if any, well positioned cities in which to base the German paratrooper.

Remember that Italian paratroopers cannot reach high enough effectiveness to make a paradrop before they have two levels of Organization tech. That takes a long time.

Last but not least, the DAK should have a strong German commander with 7-8 leadership. Try Rommel or Kesserling. Ideally place the

commander on an armor or mechanized unit.

DAK TRANSPORT TO LIBYA

There are several options for transporting the German forces to Libya.

A relatively safe option is to send them one by one from Reggio port to Bengazi port. This is a slow process but there is less risk of suffering damage from the RN.

The fast and dangerous way is to send troop convoys all at once, covered by the Regia Marina and by as much airpower as you can. If the RN tries to interfere you can beat them, but you can't guarantee that the troop transports will escape unscathed.

LIBYA OPERATIONS

Ideally allies will have started to attack Tobruk and be defeated there. That is quite easy with the recommended force balance. Then you are free to advance towards Cairo and the Middle East. Unfortunately, the allies will wisely retreat to "bottleneck" position and form solid defense.

A second defensive lines use the Nile and Suez, but they are easier to breach. There is more maneuver room for your troops and British have likely been somewhat depleted by The Battle of the Bottleneck!

If you dealt a significant blow to the RN in the MED, you may want to land troops near Jerusalem to flank allies defending Nile area. Generally, this should not be needed once you breakthrough the bottleneck.

After taking Egypt the situation you will face as Axis commander is

hard to predict. Advancing into Iraq is hard to recommend specific strategies. You may be facing Brits, Americans, Russians or all of them. It depends on how fast you advance and take Egypt. Patrolling transportation loop near western African coast with naval power to interdict allied efforts to reinforce the Middle east. Possible Soviet forces cannot be directed interdicted, but have reduced supply when operating in the Middle East. Thus, the faster you advance and later the DoW on the USSR the better. Air support will help you to fight through any allied resistance and take Basra and oilfields.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Conquering Turkey can also give you rail supply into North Africa, but Turkey will be hard to overrun. They have a reasonable army, have rail capacity when linked to British or Soviet territory, and Turkey's air force and navy can cause you problems also.

The Atlantic-Red Sea transportation loop can be used by both sides, no matter who controls Suez and Basra. The Allies may attempt to land here and outflank your forces by fighting somewhere in Persia.

Italian infantry have no supply cost -- have as many as you need in North Africa and the Middle East, to prevent Allied landings from the Red Sea, in Libya, or elsewhere.

If you do not plan to increase the Italian air units' technical level, do not take them with your army into North Africa and the Middle East. They have poor combat value, but consume valuable supply points (less than German units, but valuable supply.

Tricks of the Trade

This bottleneck, shown below, is hard to break through. The brown North-South ridge acts as a river, with a penalty for the attacker.

TIP ► *If the enemy's unit can't retreat back, always leave a room for it to retreat forward, closer to your troops! After the forward retreat - hit it again with more air and land units and poof - it is gone!! Tricks of the trade!*

This way you will kill 1 British unit per turn, and soon

the Brits will not have enough units. If you feel tough or lucky you may try to occupy the vacated hex, empty after destruction of British unit, but its not safe the safest move.

Please note below: on the left - the wrong way to attack; on the right - the correct way to attack that allows a "forward retreat" Use TAC air units to hit the middle allied corps INF unit first. Then attack with the German panzer (ARM) to the north-east hex - again at the middle allied corps INF unit with no river penalty. This will

likely force allied unit to retreat and it can only go forward. Then be destroyed by the waiting Axis INF and/or air units!



El Alamein 1942: British Matilda tanks move forward at Tobruk.



Following a Tradition!



*A Matilda tank of the 7th
Royal Tank Regiment in the
Western Desert.*



One great thing about the GS victory conditions is that you won't know who will win and at what level until Berlin has fallen. It means the Axis player has good reason to continue fighting till the very end. So both sides get a chance to excel both at the offense and defense.

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