

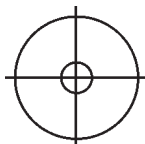
# ATS Briefing

ONLINE EDITION

SERVING THE ADVANCED TOBRUK SYSTEM HOBBY WORLDWIDE

## Advanced TOBRUK System

*Finnish soldier in a Vickers 6-tonner staring out of the turret from the upcoming ATS boxed game MANNERHEIM'S CROSS (bottom right); Battle of Berlin stamp issued by the former USSR (below left)*



Critical Hit, Inc.  
PO Box 279  
Croton Falls, NY 10519  
Tel: 845 278-9125  
Fax: 845 278-4822  
www.CriticalHit.com



The first issue of *ATS Briefing*, the newsletter for *Advanced Tobruk System* hobbyists, kicked off this new publication with a combined print/download version that reached some 5,000 readers. Since the first issue, an *ATS* magazine by the same name is coming and this newsletter will continue as the online arm of said publication.

### 2003—A Year of Battle

A whopping *eleven* system releases hit the street during 2003, making this likely a record for new products for any individual wargame system. And yet, the E-mails continue to come in along the lines of 'when' will Eastern Front, Pacific Theater, and so on, be coming.

Before moving to the future, a review of the year is in order.

A total of five boxed releases shipped during the year. First out of the gate was the duel 1944 designs, *Arnhem: Defiant Stand* and *Scottish Corridor: Lion Ram-*

*phant*, released during the winter. Both of the aforementioned titles treat the subject of British troops in 1944, the latter title depicting the fight for the so-called 'Scottish Corridor' in Normandy.

A new boxed edition of *Advanced Tobruk* hit the streets during the early spring of 2003. The new edition featured an updated rulebook and new Play Aids, bringing the original game up to speed in keeping with the materials found in *Arnhem* and *Scottish Corridor*.

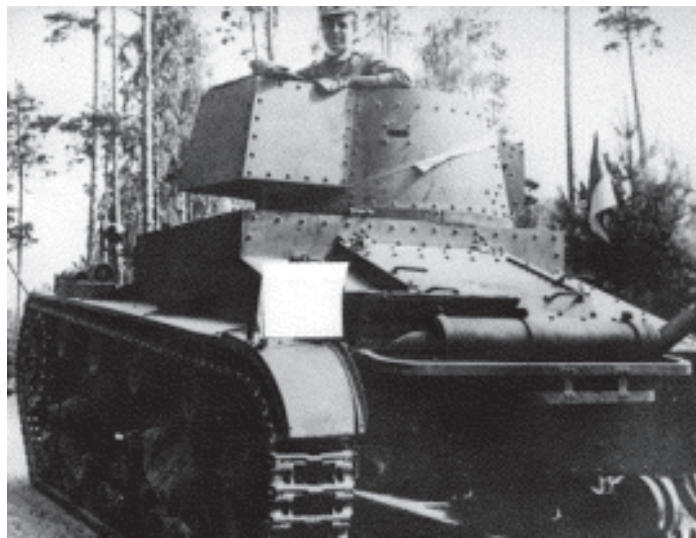
The next wave of boxed *ATS* action consisted of the long-awaited heir to *Combat! Normandy, Against All Odds*. The AAO map must be one of the most heavily researched pieces of game cartography: not only did original designer Ian DGLISH walk and map the terrain personally, 82nd Airborne Pathfinder and veteran of the battle Robert MURPHY went over the map and vetted the scenarios in one-on-one sessions with system de-

signer and publisher Ray Tapio. This kind of opportunity is heavy wine indeed, when one's publishing endeavor can link veteran, historian and customer in a very personal depiction of history—such as is found in *Against All Odds*.

Critical Hit the business entity delivered on its holiday promise to *ATS* customers with the release of *Santa Maria Infante—On the Road to Rome 1944* just before Christmas. It was a hectic time with the usual holiday orders combining with a new product release. Interest in *SMI* has been fairly high, considering it depicts action in one of the most neglected fronts in wargame history: The Italian Theater. This front is practically ignored if one attempts to recall the number of tactical simulations covering battles from the heel-and-toed country on the Mediterranean.

The year 2003 also included a re-make of *Combat Rangers*, aptly titled *D-Day Rangers*, depicting the 2nd Ranger Battalion in the hedgerow country south of Point du Hoc. Despite the absence of a box (avoided to keep cost down to a low \$29.95), this is also a complete game, as long as the players own a ten-sided die or two.

A bevy of new *Tobruk* expansion packs made their debut, with three more sets fleshing out the *ATS* desert scenario collection to eighty-four individual historical scenarios. And in keeping with the *ATS* approach, each of these contains a detailed historical summary and photo.



New additions to the ATS counter collection, below right (top to bottom) the Russian Militia Squad, DP 28 light machine-gun and the dreaded Politruk, the Soviet Commissar



Eastern Front warfare has been called for by ATS enthusiasts since there was a first hint revealed that TOBRUK would be exiting the desert. Needless to say, there was nary a reason to avoid answering the calls. Like everything in this realm, it was simply a matter of time—AND customer support in the form of purchases of each new system release prior to the *Ostfront* gear.

**The Russians ARE Coming**

In our last issue of this newsletter we promised you Eastern Front releases and on February 19, 2004 the printing process began for the Stalingrad, Kursk, and Panther Line products. Work is also pretty far along for the Berlin products. At the time of this writing the maps for BERLIN—RED VICTORY are in and we're just waiting on the last few game pieces from the art department. We initially considered the game piece art "100%" done, but during development it was decided to add even more unique new personnel counters, these last including Hitler Youth squads, Volksturm soldiers, and more.

The Eastern Front action will continue with the release of MANNERHEIM'S CROSS, a new boxed release depicting actions from all three of Finland's World War II era wars, namely

the Winter War (or Talvisota), Continuation War (or Jatkosota), and the war to eject German troops from the country (or Lapinsota).

**Releases Large and Small**

With the expansion of the ATS counter collection, we're on track for delivering on the promise to reward customers for their support of the system. Lots of additional AFV, vehicle and gun counters have been provided—way above the types and numbers needed for the scenarios contained in each release. There is a clear method to this apparent 'madness'. By providing counters that flesh out the OOB for a particular era of World War II, we can deliver additional maps and scenarios (plus the requisite AFV cards), in expansions tailor-made for the customers of these games.

Where we plan to put some distance between ATS and competing tactical-level game systems is in the availability of numerous 'micro purchases', i.e., a couple of interesting scenarios on a small new map. Literally bringing World War II to the enthusiast one yard at a time.

*The Militia squad with '4' Gunfire Factors, a Range of '3' and Morale of '6'; DP 28 GF of '3' and Range of '5'; Commissar GF and Range of '1' and never has to check morale.*

This presentation plays to one of the strengths of CH; we are cartography crazy and look for any excuse to pore over topography, aerial photos and the like to bring you new maps.

The BATTLEFIELD WALKAROUND documents that are included with each new release are also quite enjoyable to create and have received lots of positive feedback from customers.

Another important component of the 'micro' approach is accessibility. The customer gets a new piece of cartography with a couple of compelling actions on it—no long rules to assimilate. And this access includes the price-point. These add-ons will be in the ten dollar range, with the hopes of them receiving a retail price UNDER ten bucks. So the customer can get

1. Each weapon or vehicle counter represents one weapon or vehicle. Personnel units represent squads, crews, artillery Forward Observers, BAR gunners, officers and non-coms.
2. Each game turn represents about ninety seconds of elapsed time. Each hex represents 50 yards of terrain from hex side to hex side. Game play is conducted in 'real time'.
3. Gunfire and the fall of shot is modeled in great detail. Casualties are permanent. Morale is modeled realistically. The game is all about 'one Bazooka firing at one oncoming Panther tank'.



his new-map fix, while maximizing the investment he's already made in game pieces—on an ongoing basis.

The size of the new maps will be 9" x 15" for each mapsheet, with the ability to link the maps provided through a geomorphic edge design.

#### **Battle of the Bulge**

Along with the components for the three East Front releases, the printing initiated on February 19, 2004 will include DARKEST DECEMBER—THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE 1944. This is the first ATS design by longtime ASL® designer Pedro Ramis.

Designer Pedro worked the battlefield over in person to create the three maps included in the game. The village of Hotton is faithfully recreated, down to every last house and shed. The battle-site at Melines, and Quatre Bras Crossroads are also provided their own maps.

The counters provided in DARKEST DECEMBER will equip the ATS gamer with the ability to enjoy the upcoming 'micro' *Bulge* battlefields and actions we'll be providing. A few moments leafing through a book like *Battle of the Bulge: Then and Now* should serve to whet the appetite of ATSers for the numerous tactical battlefields we can provide those among them wise enough to grab a copy of DARKEST DECEMBER.

#### **ATS Briefing—The Magazine**

When a system like ATS builds its following to a certain, say, 'critical mass', it is time to consider creating a unique print publication for its enthusiasts.

The 'mass' has boiled over to 'critical' and a print edition of ATS BRIEFING is on the way.

While history will be regularly treated in the magazine, feedback from enthusiasts points up their demand that game-oriented material rule the editorial roost at the new mag.

Your desires are clear and we'll do our level best to jam as many 'how to' and replay style pieces in the new mag. Trusting, of course, that your feedback will continue to be, well, continual, as we go along.

We won't be selling subscriptions to ATS BRIEFING print edition in order to retain creative freedom to add more, or less, to each issue. The first issue will include a map of the area in Belgium where Green Devils of the German 7th Fallschirmjäger Division dropped in an attempt to seize the vital Albert Canal bridges. A brisk battle broke out, as the Belgian High Command responded quickly, including the deployment of T13 tanks.

New art is featured on the 1940-style German paratrooper personnel and more new counters are provided for the Belgian personnel of the period.

The first issue is expected to ship in late 1st Q/early 2nd Q 2004 and can be advance ordered at [www.Criticalhit.com](http://www.Criticalhit.com).

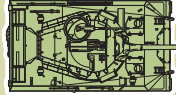
#### **New Website**

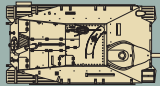
The hue and cry for a download version of the ATS rulebook was intense and sustained. We heard all the arguments, pro and con, and decided to not only provide the book as a downloadable PDF document, but to park it on a brand-new page filled with downloads—all on a newly designed CH website.

Customers have been fast to praise the new site for its improvement in just about every phase of what a website does. And then some.

And just as importantly for a company that need tangible signs of customer satisfaction—in the form of those things known as purchases—that kind of 'support' has been there too in the form of a record-breaking single sales week since the debut of the new site.

There is still *plenty* of work ahead on the site, but we're at it almost daily in the form of the addition of new product listings, downloads and the like. Repeat visits are suggested.

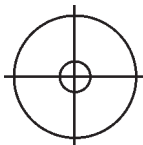
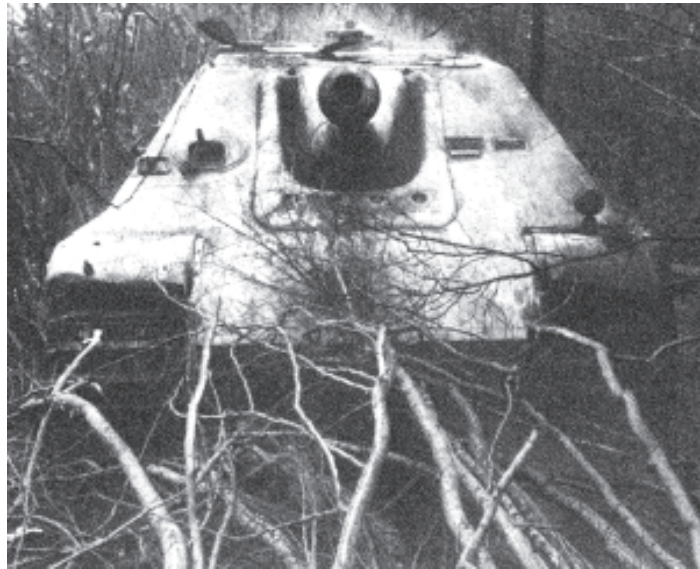
M18 18|7  
  
C  
76|B 2 .-|5

PzJg 38t 10|6  
  
B  
75|B .-|2

*Hetzer (for 'Agitator') SP-AT guns face down M18 'Hellcat' TDs in the Battle of the Bulge in the new ATS boxed game Darkest December by designer Pedro Ramis of Belgium—another on-site created game map is featured depicting Hotton, Melines and Quatre Bras Crossroads, all heavily fought for during the battle*



The 3rd 'Spearhead' Armored Division faces down the cream of the Wehrmacht, circa Wacht am Rhein, in the form of the 116th 'Greyhound' Panzer Division reinforced by the 560th Volksgrenadier Division



Critical Hit, Inc.  
PO Box 279  
Croton Falls, NY 10519  
Tel: 845 278-9125  
Fax: 845 278-4822  
www.Criticalhit.com

The near future of the *Advanced Tobruk System* will keep us busy on this end just getting the current releases out the door. That effort should take us to mid-year and will include the Berlin and Omaha Beach products, both serious undertakings.

Some have been asking about Oosterbeek Perimeter. It is still an ongoing work-in-progress, and is slated for release some time during 2004 with 'TBA' having to suffice until we can get a further report to you. Those that advance ordered at \$24.95 saved themselves some cash. This item will be bumped up to \$29.95 by the time you read these lines due to the costs of the two mapsheets.

#### PTO Anyone...

Inquiries continue to come in about system releases depicting Pacific Theater of Operations battles. And work continues on Wake, Buna, Iwo Jima and others. Sitting back and NOT buying current ATS products is NOT the way to make sure the PTO gets to your gaming table.

Your decisive and Rommel-like support of the ATS system will literally hack a path through the sharp Elephant Grass to your

mailbox—getting you all those insane 'Banzai' charges you're hankering for down the line.

#### Stable Rules; Ongoing R&D

One of the central tenets of ATS support voiced by prospective customers has been the desire for a *stable* rules-set. By customers' own account we've delivered on that promise through what is already a deep lineup of ATS releases.

The above said, we reserve the right to continue with R&D efforts to make this the *lingua franca* of tactical-level gaming systems.

Your collective input has been an important part of the drive to make this the most *fun to play* game in the genre, while retaining historical integrity.

One change afoot is the inclusion of ALL on-board firing weapons in the Direct Fire Phase of the Combat Segment. No more forcing personnel units that have enough Stacking Points to fire additional Gunfire Factors when using an L|MTR to have to choose to lose the use of their remaining GF during the Direct Fire Phase because they used their light mortar during the Indirect Fire Phase of the Combat Segment.

The day we can announce the rules-set 'closed' will be sweet and cannot be accomplished without your continued input.

#### I Play Alone

If the majority of your gaming is done SOLO, you are anything BUT alone! In fact, the designer of the ATS system is right there with you, supporting your gaming habit.

Playing ATS solitaire is designed to be an enjoyable experience. That this is no accident needs to be stressed. The designer's intent is to deliver the full ATS 'experience' to the SOLO gamer. Let's face it, if a game system is designed to revolve around 'concealment' counters, or secret side notes, one can still find a way to enjoy said games solitaire. But were they designed for the SOLO gamer in mind, with the express aim of delivering the full game experience the game engine in question has to offer?

ATS has been designed and developed to provide the full experience to the SOLO gamer.

When playing ATS solitaire, some easy artifices can be used to provide Fog of War. One technique is to simply pluck Light infantry weapons out of a cup and place them on personnel units face-down. You won't know what's under there until it finds a target in its LOS and a reason to engage.

You can do the same thing with Heavy weapons, and vehicles for that matter. You can align the covered arc using the generic tank and gun icons on the FOW side (yellow back) OR let a random die roll decide the facing once the unit is flipped. So you won't know what that enemy vehicle parked alongside the bridge is as you approach. It may flip to reveal a Tiger...or a half-track!

1. The first step to advance order a new ATS title is to surf over to our website, [www.Criticalhit.com](http://www.Criticalhit.com).
2. Simply click on the item you are interested in and read up on the product specs.
3. Click on the button 'Add to Cart' and follow the instructions to create your account and checkout.