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# Desert Patrol: Tobruk

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**November 12, 1942:** Commonwealth forces under General Montgomery have managed to recapture Tobruk following their victory in the 2nd Battle of El Alamein. US forces have recently invaded Tunisia. With the British pushing from the east and the Americans from the west, victory in Africa finally seems within grasp for the allies.



However, there is still a lingering fear that Rommel, the “desert fox,” might still have some fight left in him. Rommel’s swift counter-attacks are legendary. As British forces move forward, there is concern among their commanders that they are advancing into a trap.

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## *Who This Adventure is For*

This scenario is for an American or Commonwealth (Britain, Scotland, Canadian, Indian, or Australian) squad of 1st to 2nd level players.

If the squad is American, they have been sent as an auxiliary squad in an effort to promote good will between allied forces. They will have been flown in by transport aircraft and while they are able to take their standard requisition of equipment, they will not be able to bring along any vehicles that they may previously have been assigned.

## *Realism Level*

The realism level of this adventure is medium. The geographic locations and

time line are accurate. However, the exact placement and composition of fielded units

may not be historically accurate. No American forces are known to have taken part in any action in this region following the fall of Tobruk to Commonwealth forces.



## *Player Briefing*

Captain Hawkins of the British army will give the

squad a briefing inside a tan colored tent. It’s hot, but blowing sand is kept to a minimum.

There’s a large map of the area surrounding Tobruk on a metal stand at the back of the tent. As Hawkins gives the briefing, he paces back and forth in front of the map, occasionally smacking the map with a crop stick to emphasize a random point.

“Greetings gents, welcome to Tobruk.

Our offensive is going well against the Afrika Corps, to well some say. Our logistics are straining to help keep the pressure up.

Monty wants our armored forces to regroup and then pursue the Germans as they retreat west, thus trapping themselves between our forces and the Yanks. We believe the Germans have been cut off from supplies and thus are running out of options.

What concerns me is that Rommel has often solved his supply problems in the past by raiding ours. As our forces are moving up to Tobruk, we're getting a bit strung out due to breakdowns and fuel requirements. This is a prime moment for the Germans to hit us.

I'd like you chaps to do some recon to the south of our line here."

Hawkins delivers a good "Thwap!" to the map with his swagger stick.

"The Aussies are holding the line directly west, probing the area for any nasty German mines Rommel may have left us. I have a British tank battalion taking up positions south of Tobruk. Mostly Cruiser Mk IV's but we've also been getting in some of the new Yank supplied Shermans.

I've got an engineering company trying to get an airfield back in working order to the south, but with some of our armor having mechanical problems, I don't know what is between us and them. If the Germans have any armor assets at all and they swing round and hit us from the south we'll be rolled up like a rug.

"So head out down the southern road, take a peek around, then head on back. If you

see any large dust clouds caused by German armor give us a quick radio call.

Alright chaps, head to the motor pool, grab what vehicles you need and off you go."

### *Motor Pool*

The British have a number of vehicles that the squad can requisition out for this mission.

#### **4x4 GPW Jeep**



This jeep has had its tires slightly deflated reducing its top speed to 45 MPH. However, the deflation gives the jeep much better traction in loose sand. The vehicle is not equipped with a spare fuel can but its fuel tank is completely full.

This vehicle is equipped with a No. 18 wireless radio and power supply.

#### **4x4 GPW Jeep with 30 Cal Pintle Mount**

This jeep is configured that same as the first one, however it has been modified to carry a M1919A4 30 caliber machine gun. The machine gun is fed by a 250 round belt that emerges from an ammo box that has been welded to the floor of the jeep. These modifications reduce the crew number of the jeep to three (driver, front passenger, Gunner).

### M3A1 Stuart



This small scout tank has been with the British since their arrival in Africa. The fact that it still runs is amazing. Most other early war tanks would have long since succumbed to the harsh conditions of the desert.

However, this particular vehicle is probably nearing the end of its useful life unless it gets shipped somewhere without sand and rebuilt from the ground up. But with the great demand for vehicles of all types in this theater, the chance of that happening is zero.

Any character that makes an inspection of the tank may make a Vehicle Maintenance check (DC 16). A successful check will reveal that this tank's engine has metal shavings in its oil pan, sand has seeped into numerous worn seals, and the tracks appear to be badly worn.

The vehicle will require at least one maintenance check, at a time of the Game Master's choosing, during the patrol.

Still, it is a tank, and its firepower is likely to overcome any small German patrol that might be encountered. Of course if it runs into German main battle tanks, the Stuart

will be in trouble, but that applies to most vehicles that the Allies currently have.

The Stuart is carrying 40 HE shells for its cannon and 2 100 round belts for each of its 30 caliber machine guns.

This vehicle is equipped with a No. 18 wireless radio and power supply.

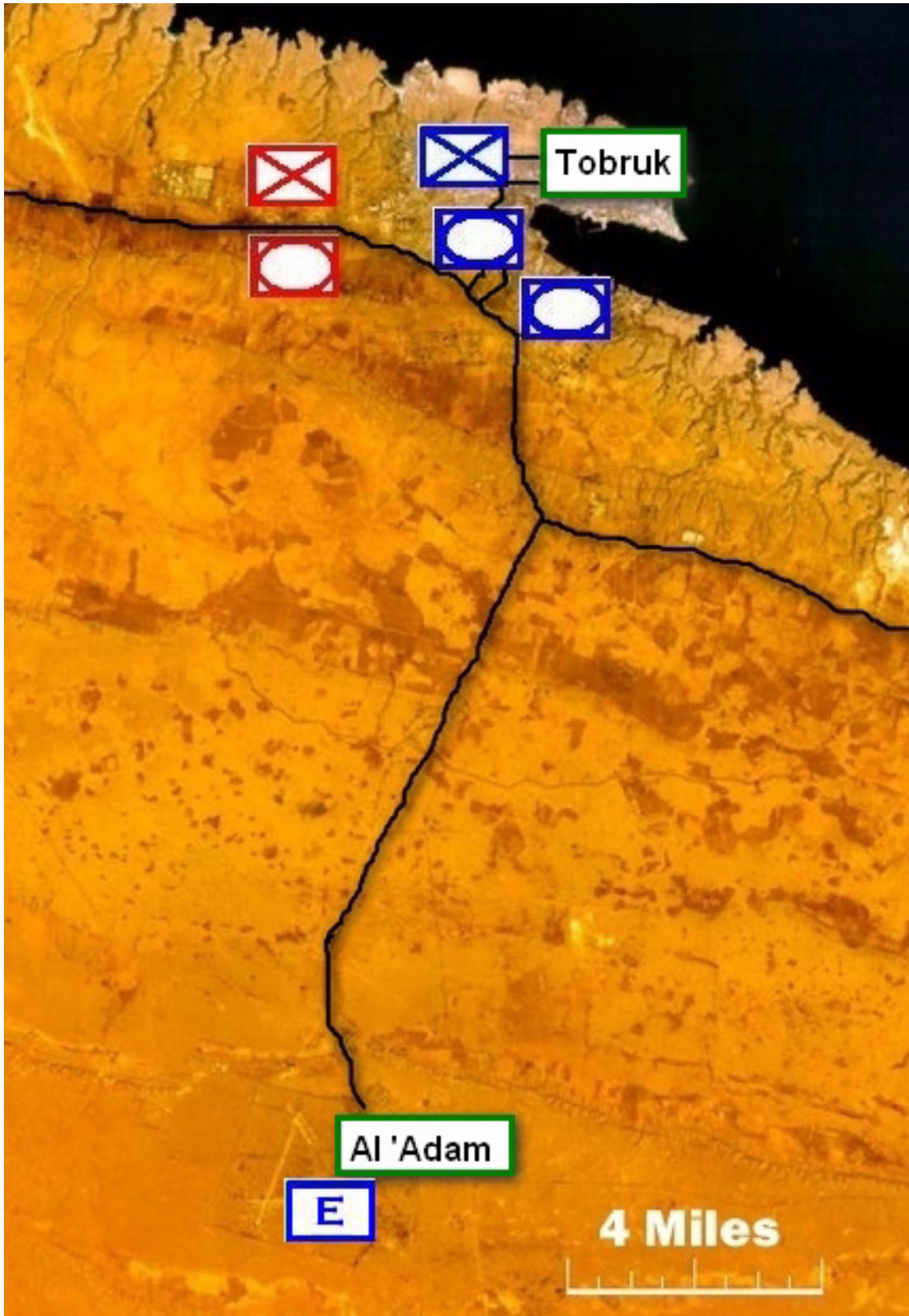
Note that a full sized rifle will not fit inside the vehicle. Long guns must be strapped to the outside of the tank.

### Other Available Equipment

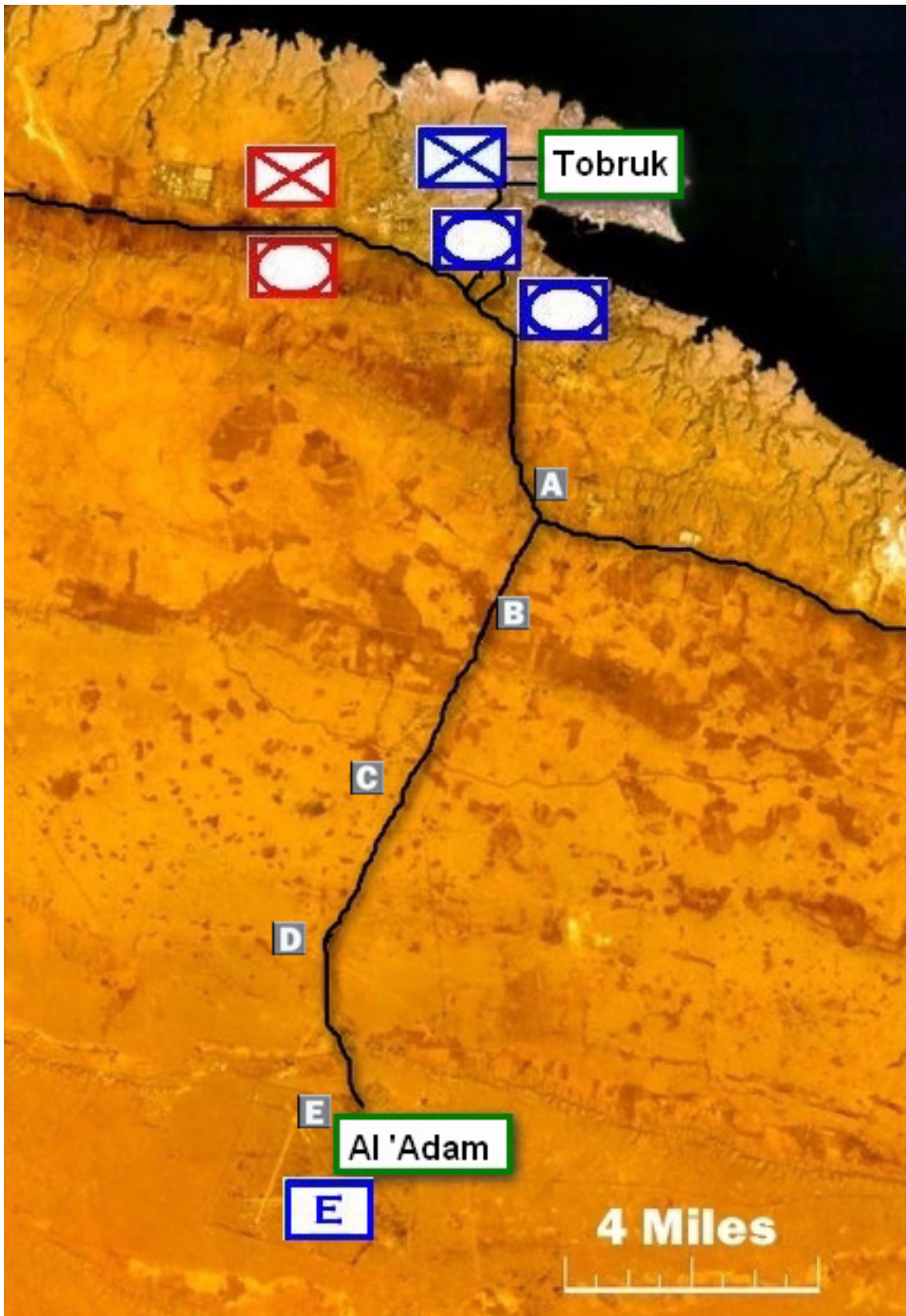
In addition to the character's standard requisition of equipment, these additional supplies are available if the squad wishes to take them.

- A map of the general area
- A compass
- 2 Enfield No. 2 revolvers each loaded with 5 rounds so that the hammer doesn't rest on a loaded chamber.
- 2 fully loaded bullet chargers for the revolvers
- 3 Enfield No. 4 rifles
- 50 British.303 5 round stripper clips (A total of 250 bullets)
- 1 red smoke grenade
- 1 flare
- 6 Hawkins No.75 Grenades
- 1 M1928 Tommy Gun with 2 full drums of 45 caliber ammunition. (The British will insist on the return of this weapon after the patrol.)
- 10 Canteens of water
- A dozen rock like objects that the British insist on calling "biscuits."






*Player Map*



*Game Master Map*



*Map Legend*

Symbol	Description
	Allied Armor
	Allied Infantry
	Allied Engineers
	Axis Armor
	Axis Infantry

*Environment*

This area of the Libyan desert is composed of two major elements, rock and sand.

There are numerous rock outcroppings that form permanent hills and valleys. However, these features are made unpredictable by the large volumes of sand that moves over the rocks. A small rocky rise can turn into a very large hill of sand over the course of just a few days. Small valleys can be filled in until that are flat. Entire hills can move from one side of a road to the other.

Because of the uneven ground, visibility on the best days is generally limited to around 8 miles before some terrain feature blocks the line of sight. On the day of the patrol, a medium wind is blowing southwest. It is not quite strong enough to be classified as a sandstorm, but it does create enough of a haze to further reduce vis-



ibility to around 4 miles. Additionally, the stinging grains of sand are irritating

Perhaps worse than the sand is that the temperature will quickly rise to 101 fahrenheit. Squad members will have to consume double water rations or lose 1 Stamina point per day.

Vehicles, unless otherwise noted, can travel at full speed on the road, but only at half speed on the sandy desert terrain

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### *Encounters*

On the Game Master's map there are encounters marked by gray alphabet lettered boxes. Each of these markers indicates something that the players may notice, have to deal with, or cause them harm. Each encounter details at what distance players will have the opportunity to see or detect whatever it is that the encounter details.

The Game Master should only read the description text to the players once they have successfully seen whatever is at the encounter. The description text is in italics. The remaining parts of the encounter should be kept from the players until they further investigate or an event in the encounter is triggered.



As the squad's vehicle(s) begin to turn past a rocky hill, they will have the opportunity to see something a half mile in the distance.

A **Spot** check (DC 14) reveals the following detail.

*A twenty foot high sand dune has begun to spill onto where the road forks ahead. The steady wind is sending a slow cascade of*

*sand into the road. In perhaps three hours, this patch of road will no longer be visible.*

*A few rocks have been carried by the moving sand and an oddly white colored one has already tumbled onto the road.*

The "white rock" is actually a camel skull, something that anyone approaching within 25 feet will automatically realize. The skull is not dangerous, but what has become hidden underneath is.

Under the skull is an anti-tank mine. The camel died long before the mine was ever placed, but like the camel's skull, the moving sands have shifted the mine from its original location.

A jeep travelling over the skull only has a 25% chance of detonating the mine. Any vehicle that is heavier than a jeep will automatically set the mine off.

The squad may safely move around the skull with no risk. However if the mine is left in place, it will become buried again by the time the squad travels back up the road. If at that time the players make no effort to find the mine (**Spot** check (DC 18)), then the players have a 25% chance of rolling over the mine.

The mine can be successfully disarmed with a **Disarm Explosives** check (DC 12). There is no chance of the mine going off in an attempt to disarm it. Failure simply means that the mine is not disarmed, although the disarmer will believe it has been.

The mine can be picked up and handled safely. It will only go off if something weighing as much as a vehicle runs over it.

**B** This is a two part encounter, the first time the squad has this encounter, they will only find an abandoned tank.

### 1st encounter

At 600 yards the squad will have the chance to **Spot** a tank (DC 15), half buried in the sand, nestled between two small rocky hill-tops.

*Half buried in sand, lies a once mighty armored beast. The desert seems to be slowly swallowing the vehicle. Its right side is*

*sloped down, sand upon its deck, while the left side of the vehicle juts out, its multiple wheels barely in contact with the desert floor.*

*A tan steel turret is mounted atop the vehicle, its gun pointing to the ground.*

An **Enemy Recognition** check (DC 15) will reveal that the vehicle is a Cruiser MK IVA. The vehicle's left side track has broken off of the vehicle. What remains of it lies buried in the sand. However, even if uncovered, an additional track section would be needed to replace the part of the track that was hit by a German anti-tank gun.

The vehicle appears to have been abandoned some time ago. This area has seen multiple engagements over the past year and with the shifting sands it is not difficult to see how a tank could become lost and thus thwart any recovery effort.

But the vehicle now offers valuable salvage. With a heavier tank, the crippled Cruiser could be towed back to a repair yard. (The Stewart lacks the pulling power to do accomplish this.)

The vehicle has a pintle mounted Bren machine-gun mounted near the commander's hatch. It has a clip with 28 bullets loaded into it. Amazingly, it is still capable of firing, although it will jam on a 1 or 2 until the weapon is thoroughly cleaned.



The main cannon and coax machine-gun have become filled with sand and are not capable of firing. It will take several days of maintenance to restore them to working condition.

Inside the tank are 10 HE rounds and 12 AP rounds for the main gun. The coax machine-gun has a belt of 875 .303 rounds.

### 2nd Encounter

This encounter occurs when the squad passes by the area on their return trip.

At 500 yards, the player squad will have the opportunity to spot (DC 15) activity near the vehicle.

A group of five German Engineers are using an Sdkfz 11 and heavy chains to tow the abandoned Cruiser tank free of the sand.



An **Enemy Recognition** check (DC 16) will allow players to identify the enemy half-track.

What the squad took or did to the abandoned tank in the 1st encounter will affect what options the German salvage crew have.

If the players are in a tank, the Germans will only be interested in escape. They will promptly remove the chains from the Cruiser tank while two members of the squad engage the player's tank with anti-tank rifle grenades.

The Sdkfz has been modified to include a ring mounted MG-34. This weapon is fed by an ammo box that contains 600 rounds.

If the players left the Bren gun behind, one of the Germans will use this weapon to provide further cover.

It will take the German squad two rounds to unhook their half-track from the stranded tank, after which the Germans will all move to the half-track in an attempt to escape.

If the player squad does not have a tank, the German engineers will make an attempt to defend their captured prize. The players will be engaged with HE rifle gre-

nades and the machine-guns mentioned above.

The Germans will only attempt escape if it becomes clear they are not capable of winning the engagement. They will only surrender if their half-track is immobilized.

**C** A nomad and his family have set up camp atop a flat plateau of rock. At a mile distance (1760 yards), the squad will have the opportunity to **Spot** (DC 14) the outline of a camel atop the ridge line.

By the time the squad is within a half-mile (880 yards), they will be able to clearly see the entire camp.

*Ahead on a flat hilltop are a pair of large tan tents. A half dozen camels mill about the tents. These animals are watched over by a pair of young boys.*

*A tall man dressed in desert robes and holding a long rifle is looking in your direction from atop the hill.*

Unless the squad has taken some action to disguise their approach, the nomad will automatically spot them. Any attempt at closing in on the camp with a vehicle will result in automatic detection.

The elder nomad will send his family into the tents and approach the squad if the squad approaches him.

He carries a 1918 Mauser. It is similar to the K98 and fires the same ammo but has a longer barrel. This weapon ordinarily would have better range accuracy than the K98 at the cost of increased weight, how-

ever this particular rifle has seen considerable wear. It has been repaired with whatever was available and so is a unique mishmash of parts. It weighs 10 pounds and has a -1 **To Hit** penalty.

The nomad will approach the squad cautiously if they begin to approach him. His rifle is only for use against common bandits and he is well aware that he is no match for trained soldiers. If a weapon is pointed at him he will surrender immediately in the hope that cooperation will keep his two sons safe.

In addition to his native tongue of Arabic, he speaks a smattering of English, French, and German.

If the nomad does not feel threatened, he will be reluctant to share any information with the squad. He does not consider himself involved in the conflict.

In exchange for a new rifle and some ammo, however, he is quite willing to tell the party that he observed a squad of Germans digging into a position four miles to the south.

A player may use his **Negotiation** skill to limit the amount of ammo that the Nomad wants, in addition to a rifle of some kind, for this information. The nomad has a **Negotiation** skill of 3 and a **Charisma** score of 12.

In addition to a rifle, the nomad would like 100 rounds of ammo.

**Note:** In the World War Two Roleplay rule book, the **Negotiation** skill is defined as an opposed **Diplomacy** skill roll. **Diplomacy** was renamed to **Negotiation**. So it should be defined as an opposed **Negotiation** roll.

**D** At 300 yards, the squad will have their first opportunity to **Spot** (DC 18) this German observation post. If the squad was warned by the nomad about Germans to the south, then the squad gets a +2 to the **Spot** check.

If the squad fails to spot the German position, then they may make another **Spot** check (DC 16) at 100 yards. (Nomad bonus still applies.)

The Germans have made an ancient tomb that they happened upon into a defensive position.

The tomb sits atop a small hill. In between the hill and the party is mostly open sand with a few rocks that could give limited cover (+2 to defense).

Two German soldiers that are using the tomb as a foxhole get a +5 to their defense. These two soldiers are armed with an MG 34. They have three boxes of 100 round belts. One of the German soldiers is acting as a loader, so that the shooter will not have to stop to reload.

The German machine gun will open fire if the party gets any closer than 100 yards to

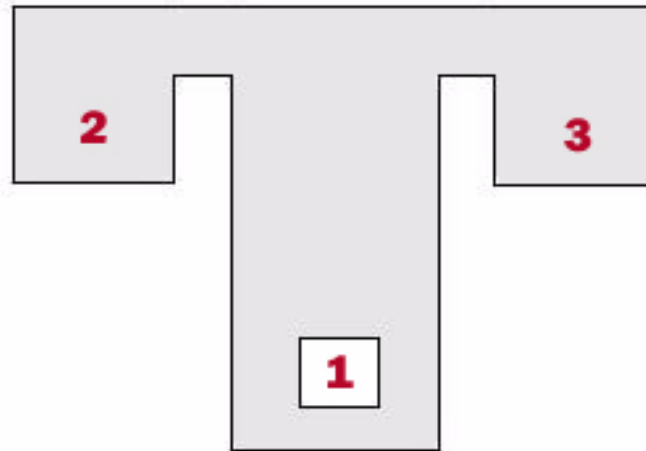


the German position or if the position is fired upon.

A 3rd German soldier armed with a K98 and anti-tank grenades has taken cover behind the hill itself (+3 to defense).

Two more German soldiers are within the tomb itself and are unable to fire at the party or be fired upon.

If the players' squad never spots the German position, the Germans will hold their fire. Their job is to report British movements, not to engage in skirmishes.



The tomb has a small four foot by four foot square opening. It is this opening that the machine gun team is using for cover. It is a five foot drop into the tomb.

On the tomb map, all of the shaded areas are underneath the surface. The area marked as "1" is the tomb's opening.

A German soldier is located in area "2" and a German Sergeant is located at area "3."

The main corridor is 20 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 5 feet high.

If the players kill the machine gun team and enter the tomb, the soldier at position 2 will roll a Eiergranate grenade down the corridor and then duck back around the corridor. Players that make a **Reflex** save (DC 14) will be able to scramble back out of the tomb and take no damage, those that fail will be caught in the grenade's primary blast radius.

After the German soldier throws the grenade, he and his sergeant will fire at anyone that enters the tomb from behind their respective corners. Both Germans have 50% cover giving them a +5 to their *Defense*.

If the player squad throws grenades down the hall, both Germans can make a **Reflex** save (DC 14) to duck back into the end rooms which will deflect the blast. If they fail this save, they will be within the thrown grenade's primary blast radius.

The German soldier at location 2 has a -3 to his *To Hit* rolls because firing around the corner is forcing him to awkwardly fire left-handed.

In area 2, there is a box of 250 8mm Mauser bullets. There is also a 5 gallon drum of water and 20 cans of rations that contain some odd kind of meat (horse meat).

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In area 3, there are skeletal remains, 2 clay pots, and a small gold statue of a human holding a spear. The pots are considered rare for trading purposes. The statue is considered very rare. If the players fire directly into area 3, the clay pots will be shattered.

Behind the hill that the tomb is dug into is the German squad's means of transport, a Type 82 Kubelwagen. The Kubelwagen has a half-full tank of gas. It's been through some hard times, so its failure rate is 4/100.



**E** The only truly flat piece of land that the player squad will see on their patrol is the airfield at Al'Adam.

The airfield was heavily bombed by the British when it was occupied by the Germans. Several burnt out hulks that were once ME-109s can be seen along the edge of the airfield. Some one hundred British engineers are busy getting the base repaired. They have a pair of bulldozers that they are using to fill in the many craters in the runway. They also have a large collection of trucks and jeeps for transportation. A pair of M4A1 Shermans provide protection for the repair effort.

The British engineers have a number of supplies that they are willing to trade.

3 Hammers - Common

1 Welding Torch - Uncommon

1 Pintle gun mount kit - Uncommon

100 pounds of scrap metal - Common

1 Toolkit - Common

5 Hawkins No. 75 grenades - Common

1 Luger - Very Rare

8 9mm bullets - Uncommon

100 feet of barb wire - Common

3 Shovels - Common

1 Bren machine gun - Uncommon

3 spare clips for the Bren - Uncommon

250 .303 bullets - Common

The British will trade any item for an item of equal availability.

The British have a negotiation skill of 3 and a bonus from their Charisma score of 1. The Game Master will roll a d20 for the British Engineer that the players are negotiating with and add 4 to the die roll. The result will be the negotiating player's difficulty check (DC). If the player is trying to talk the engineer into handing over a less available item for a more common one, add + 2 to the DC for every step up in the item's availability.

*Enemy Stats*

The German soldiers of the Afrika Corps were once professional veterans that were almost always superior to the green Allied forces they fought. Now, however, they are broken men. They've been in almost continuous combat for two years or more. Attacks on Axis shipping have stripped them of supplies so most have been on half rations and dwindling water supplies for many months. In their last action against British forces at the second battle of El Alamein, they found themselves outnumbered and suffered heavy losses.

All of these factors have greatly reduced the effectiveness of the remaining German soldiers who are now really more a band of survivors than a professional army.

**Battle Wary German Soldier**

Attribute	Score	Modifier
STR	11	+0
INT	12	+1
ALR	12	+1
DEX	12	+1

Attribute	Score	Modifier
CON	12	+1
CHA	9	-1

**Level 1 Infantry**

Initiative	+1	Defense	14
Stamina	9	Wounds	12

Base Attack: +2

**Saves**

Fortitude	Reflex	Willpower
+2	+0	+1

**Feats**

Bolt-Action Rifle  
Automatic Weapons  
Throw Grenade

**Skills**

Skill	Rank	Bonus
Small Arms	3	1
Maintenance		
Spot	3	1
Prepare	1	1
Defensive		
Position		
Drive	1	1
Wheeled		
Vehicle		

**Equipment**

Desert uniform, boots, & helmet  
Karabiner 98k  
12 5-bullet stripper clips  
65 8mm bullets  
2 Eiergranate grenades  
1 Smoke (white) grenade

**Battle Weary German Sergeant****Level 2 Infantry**

Initiative	+1	Defense	14
Stamina	17	Wounds	12

Base Attack: +4

**Saves**

<b>Fortitude</b>	<b>Reflex</b>	<b>Willpower</b>
+3	+0	+1

**Feats**

Bolt-Action Rifle  
Automatic Weapons  
Throw Grenade  
Self Control

**Skills**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Bonus</b>
Small Arms Maintenance	5	1
Spot	4	1
Prepare Defensive Position	1	1
Drive Wheeled Vehicle	2	1

**Equipment**

Desert uniform, boots, & helmet  
MP-40  
3 32-round clips loaded with 9 mm  
2 Eiergranate grenades  
1 Smoke (white) grenade

***Debriefing***

Captain Hawkins will initially be satisfied with whatever report the squad gives him. This satisfaction will be short-lived if the squad failed to find and report the German observation post in the tomb. In such case, he will recommend a reduction in rank for the squad's top ranking character. The character can use his skill in **Military Protocol** (DC 16) to avoid this. If he does not have the military protocol skill, he'll just have to rely on a **Charisma** check (DC 16).

If the players managed to capture two German vehicles, or three German prisoners, or a vehicle and two German prisoners, Hawkins will put the whole squad up for promotion. This promotion will be approved except in cases where it would

make an enlisted man rise into the officer corps.

For more information about rewarding experience refer to the Dungeon Master's Guide<sup>1</sup>.

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### *Experience*

For characters that are level 1 to 3, 300 experience points should be awarded for each German soldier captured or killed and 600 experience points for each German sergeant captured or killed. A 500 experience point bonus should be awarded for each German vehicle that is captured and brought back with the squad. A 1000 experience point bonus should be

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### *Credits*

**Author:** Michael Burnside

**Reviewer:** Chris Minniear

**Photography:** Courtesy US National Archives



given for the giving the British upper command the gold statue from the tomb.

**Terrain Maps:** NASA World Wind 1.4

<http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov>

“That belongs in a museum.” - Indiana Jones

The resulting total of the experience should then be divided by the number of players in the squad.

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