

CRISIS AT KASSERINE

Scenario Design: Vance von Borries

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The battle at Kasserine Pass, February 18-20, 1943, perhaps epitomizes the courage and tenacity of the American soldier during World War II. This battle could have been fought better by both sides, but it was the Americans who learned the lessons from it that enabled them to eventually defeat the Axis war machine.

I chose to focus on the critical second day of battle, the 19th, and just the road to Tébessa. Had the Germans broken through on schedule that morning, they would have seriously disrupted Allied strategic plans. I included many of the important elements of that day: U.S. defenders holding ill-advised positions, occasional artillery support, fog, reconnaissance, infiltration, and more. Diversity of capabilities and goals can be found in all of my game designs from *Rommel's War* to *Decision at Kasserine* to the award-winning *East Front Barbarossa* series. I hope you find this scenario as exciting and challenging as I did.

Special thanks to playtesters Richard Diem and John O'Haver.

SCENARIO NOTES

In early November 1942 the Axis armies in North Africa under Field Marshal Erwin Rommel suffered a decisive defeat at El Alamein in Egypt. Then, on November 8, Allied forces landed 1,500 miles to the west in French Algeria and Morocco. It seemed certain that the Axis forces would be squeezed from two sides and destroyed. But that did not happen – quickly. Rommel's retreat gave ground stubbornly, and fresh Axis reinforcements stopped the American and British advance into Tunisia.

Rommel envisioned two general attacks against the inexperienced Americans, one by a separate *Kampfgruppe* (battle group) under General Karl Buelowius to capture Kasserine Pass. Alerted by German reconnaissance activities, ad hoc reinforcements were rushed to Kasserine and placed under Colonel Alexander N. Stark (commander of the 26th Infantry Regiment), who arrived at Kasserine at 0730 on the 19th, just before the German attack began. Stark found that American engineers had constructed entrenched positions and placed a belt of 3,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines across the approach roads. In all, fewer than 2,000 U.S. infantry held a thin line across three miles covering the exit roads from the pass.

The Germans began the battle by attempting a surprise breakthrough, but the defenders were alert and Stark's defences held. Buelowius switched to infiltration tactics. Small groups of German troops worked their way from the heights along both sides of the pass and cut behind defensive positions. By midnight the situation was very fluid. Some American troops were holding out, others were fleeing, many were missing, and ammunition was low. But the Americans still held the pass.

Renewed German pressure the next day finally caused the American position to collapse. By late morning Axis infantry and tanks were through the pass and Stark's headquarters was overrun. The American units were badly mauled but not destroyed, and with their sacrifice they had purchased valuable time to enable the Allied recovery that would defeat Rommel's last offensive.

BACKGROUND:

On February 19, 1943, German reconnaissance and the elite assault infantry troops of Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps attacked Kasserine Pass, attempting to rush through the pass to the main Allied supply dump at Tébessa. To stay on schedule, the German units had to force the pass quickly. The inexperienced American defenders, using the defensive preparations of the 19th Engineer Regiment, had to stand as long as possible until their position was overwhelmed.

OBJECTIVE:

At the end of any round, the Germans win if they have moved at least two tanks off of the board from the blue shaded hex on map 14A, and control the Victory Objective Marker.

The Americans win if the Germans are unable to fulfill their objective by the end of round 8.

HINTS FOR PLAYERS:

Although the Germans need to be aggressive, they cannot lose too many tanks taking the pass.

The Americans just need to hold on, and expect to lose units. Ideally, they should make the Germans pay dearly for every loss they suffer, or at least make it cost the Germans valuable time.

*"Snafu (Situation Normal, All F***** Up)" – "Damned Right"*
— American password and counter-sign at Kasserine Pass, 1943

AMERICAN SETUP

DIVISION 1

- 7 Squad Bases
 - 23 Regular Infantry
 - 1 Officer
 - 2 Machine Gun Crews



x1



x1

DIVISION 2

- 1 Squad Base
 - 3 Regular Infantry
 - 1 Officer
- 2 M3A1 Half-Tracks
(see *special rules*)

• Starting Strategy Cards: 2

• Strategy Decks

- Disruption I* (remove both "Stolen Supplies" cards)
- Artillery II (remove both "Top Priority Barrage" cards, see *special rules*)

• Operations Cards

- Shaken Defenders (see *special rules*)
- Heavy Fog (see *special rules*)

• Deployment Zone

- Division 1: At least one squad in each of the hexes on maps 13A, 16A, and 21A with a green border, plus one squad may be in one of the hexes on 14A or 17A with a green border.
- Division 2: The green bordered hex on map 20A.

*From *Days of the Fox* expansion

GERMAN SETUP

DIVISION 1

- 6 Squad Bases
 - 11 Regular Infantry
 - 8 Elite Infantry
 - 1 Officer
 - 1 Machine Gun Crew
 - 1 Mortar Crew
- 1 Flak 36 AT Gun*



x1



x1

* From *Days of the Fox* expansion

DIVISION 2

- 2 Squad Bases
 - 5 Regular Infantry
 - 2 Elite Infantry
 - 1 Officer
- 3 SdKfz 251 Half-Tracks



x2*

* From *Days of the Fox* expansion

• Starting Strategy Cards: 3

• Strategy Decks

- Command I
- Morale I (remove both "Go To Ground" cards)

• Operations Cards

- Clear Mines
- Elite Tank Crew

• Deployment Zone

- Division 1: Any hexes on map 15B.
- Division 2: Any hexes with a grey border.

SCENARIO DETAILS

- **Rounds:** 8
- **Starting Initiative:**
Americans
- **Actions per Turn:**
3 actions per side

REINFORCEMENTS

American Division 2 receives the following reinforcements during the Status Phase of round 1:

- 2 Sherman M4A1s

German Division 2 receives the following reinforcements during the Status Phase of round 3:

- 3 Panzer IIIs
- 2 Panzer IVs

American Division 2 receives the following reinforcements during the Status Phase of round 4:

- 2 Squad Bases
 - 7 Regular Infantry
 - 1 Officer
- 2 M3A1 Half-Tracks (see *special rules*)

SPECIAL RULES

- Dunes are not blocking terrain.
- The blue-shaded hex on map 14A is the exit hex for the German tanks. A German tank on a blue shaded hex may spend 1 movement point to exit the board.

- Pinned German infantry squads may not move, but may still fire or use their specialization token as long as they are not fatigued.
- American half-tracks are tank destroyers armed with a 75mm gun. Against German vehicles their Range is 6, Firepower is 6, and they have Concussive Firepower. They may not transport squads.
- For attacking purposes only, units may use their longest range, regardless of target type.
- At the start of the following Status Phases the noted Strategy cards are put in the German player's Play Area. The command cost for these cards have already been paid (by higher headquarters).
 - Round 4: "Top Priority Barrage" card from the Artillery II Strategy deck.
 - Round 5: "Top Priority Barrage" card from the Artillery II Strategy deck.
 - Round 5: "Go To Ground" card from the Morale I Strategy deck.

- Modify these Operations cards as follows:

- "Shaken Defenders" – This represents green troops. American squads suffer -2 to all cover (terrain, entrenchments, officer, fog, etc.) during Suppressive Fire Attacks (including artillery). Only one American squad may support an attack with Combined Fire. The Four-Player Team Restrictions on cross-Division support also apply to a solo American player.
- "Heavy Fog" – This also represents overcast skies. In addition to its normal affects, all units gain additional cover, depending on range, when attacked by enemy units as follows:

| Range | Cover |
|--------|---------------------------|
| 1 – 3 | +1 |
| 4 – 7 | +2 |
| 8 – 12 | +3 |
| 13+ | no Line of Sight possible |

This additional cover is not provided to Area Attacks.

All Artillery cards receive +1 to their Drift Numbers (to a maximum of 6).

TERRAIN FEATURES

- 4 Entrenchments
- 6 Razor Wire
- 5 Minefields

