

SO HOW DO WE START PLAYING?

Firstly follow the steps to determine which year and route you will be using. Then follow through with selection of ships to be convoyed and the escort available to them.

HANDLING A CONVOY ON THE PLAYING AREA.

Convoys are laid out on a tabletop in the columns and lines shown in the appropriate diagrams. Not all columns or line positions have to be filled. It was normal practice to make a convoy wider than it was deep, to avoid long flanks that would be easier for the enemy to attack. Therefore a small convoy of only eight ships could well have only four columns, each of two ships. A Nine ship convoy may use five columns, but with a single ship in one column. If some columns were shorter it was usual to put these on the wings.

Escorts are placed according to the alphabetical positions shown. It is unlikely you will have sufficient escorts to fill every position, but it makes it easier for you if you keep track of them according to the position they are filling, when contacts are reported to you.

If a support group is attached, they can be used to fill in other escort positions. But normally they were used to form a second line of escorts further out from the convoy than the first. This means an approaching U Boat would have to penetrate two screens in order to get into a firing position. Because the support group were placed further out they were also in the ideal place if a HF/DF contact was established and a ship needed to run it down and locate the boat that transmitted.

During the game, the convoy merchant ships are not moved. They are placed in their columns and lines, but to make the game move fast they are left in those positions unless damage or other events cause them to fall out of position. The escorts similarly do not move unless something occurs that causes them to act independently. This makes the game much faster as there is no need to move every ship, every move. With a large convoy this would be an arduous and time-consuming business. Instead, everything that happens around the convoy is moved relative to it. Rather like a satellite around a planet. The satellites are the escorts and attacking elements. The convoy itself is the planet. The convoy is always placed in the centre of the playing area. Everything else revolves around it.

After years of practice I have found it convenient to place the merchant ships on a board the size of a convoy, and distribute the escort ships around it. If a radical change of course takes place it is then possible to simply turn the whole board to the new course without having to move every single ship. This is the culmination of almost 30 years plus of fighting convoy wargames and it is by far the quickest way. Some of my boards are clear plastic, so the normal naval tabletop can be seen through them. I also have some painted for special sea conditions, such as one for the Arctic.

Such a prepared board can be conveniently marked with the column numbers and escort positions. This makes it easier and faster to set up a game. You just put the models on the corresponding number. If an escort is ordered to change a position it is told to go to one of the places identified by letter and thus easily understood even by inexperienced players. The same applies should the Commodore find it necessary to tell a depleted convoy, to close ranks and allocates new column positions for some of them.

When non-convoy vessels or U Boats appear, they will be declared as in a specific position. When players move them, they carry out their normal move first, and then they move the models 'relative to the course of the convoy'. Therefore if coming in from one edge, a U Boat might move 15 knots on the surface in the normal manner, but then depending on the speed of the convoy, it will be moved as if it was the convoy that was moving. This can prove a tricky navigation problem for the unwary, as you not only calculate where you want to move, but where your vessel will end up, relative to the direction and speed of the convoy. For example, you come in at right angles from the edge of the table at 15 knots, and do a move as normal. But then because the convoy is moving at 11 knots, you will have to move eleven knots directly down the table toward the rear of the convoy, as if it was steaming past. Of course this means you have to be very careful when entering the lines of a convoy. It is easy to make a mistake and find out that you have collided with, or been run down by, one of the ships in the convoy. Similarly once the escorts start moving independently, they too do a normal type move, but then are moved down the playing area at the speed of the convoy. On the rare occasions the convoy turns, just change the relative movements accordingly.

HOW THE GAME RUNS.

Once you have selected your convoy, its route and its escorts, proceed to the map.

Coloured event boxes equate to which convoy you are running. The boxes each represent a time period. The number inside each coloured box indicates which event box to roll on for that campaign move. Some boxes are shaded, representing a night move. Arrival and departure zones are also shown. Commence at the departure point with a die roll for the area indicated. The convoy then progresses along its route rolling for results on the appropriate boxes. Contacts are fought out before moving on to the next event box.

Event boxes Day, night, etc There are many chance factors and some of these create others, therefore no two convoys should experience the same passage, even though some events might be the same or similar on different days or nights. In play testing some convoys have run through with very little action. The majority have a pretty busy time of it, and an occasional convoy will have a nightmare run, with contact after contact that will test the skill of the players for it to even survive at all.

Investigation boxes As a result of various things that happen, you will from time to time, be referred to some boxes that give details of unknown contacts and so forth. These just enter the game in sequence with the event boxes and are easy to understand.

Surfaced submarines This occurs a lot during night moves. In play testing it was found best to put them on the playing area and move them in the normal manner. Until detected by one of the means in the rules, no ship can act against them and they therefore proceed as if the presence of the U Boat was unknown. If detected, escorts can act, but it is important to roll for each escort that is in a position to detect. Some may fail to do so even though others have. If the detecting boat illuminates the U Boat, then others within visual may engage it as per the allowances on the sighting chart.

Combat between the convoy, aircraft, U-boats or surface ships, is carried out using the usual CONVOY tactical rules. If 'surprise' is specified in the events box, this must be allowed for.

Torpedoes In the majority of cases the torpedo will reach its target in a single move, and if not sighted there will be no evasive action.

Therefore players can simply proceed straight to determination of hits, and damage resolution. At night torpedo tracks were not visible. By day tracks of the G3e torpedo were also not visible. Although tracks of the G3a type were visible, merchant ships lacked the means of warning their fellows quickly. Therefore a torpedo sighted by one ship did not mean those nearby would be warned to watch for it or take evasive action.

Game referees may choose to control some contacts until their identity is established.

ALLIED PLAYERS are expected to control the convoy and escorts under their command. Their contribution to the game, and the mini campaign, is their skill in the tactical direction of defending their charges. The commanders at sea had no idea of 'the big picture'. That was the province of the Admiralty via Western Approaches Command, and its US equivalent. While in command of your convoy you will receive a certain amount of information. But apart from that you will be as in the dark as the real life commanders were but still required to meet everything the enemy throw at you. So grab your lifebelt and get ready for sea. Good luck... you will need it.

GERMAN PLAYERS will find a section for them to roll on to determine exactly when the convoy movement is taking place. They inform the Allied commanders who then roll for their convoys and escorts on the appropriate charts. The German chart also advise how many U Boats and which types, are available for the purposes of the contacts that will take place during the game. Make a note of these, and if you wish, allocate U numbers to them. You will need to mark their ship logs to indicate how many torpedoes have been expended. Once used the boat will return to base and is not available for any more contacts.

When contacts other than via your aircraft do take place, you will select which of your available submarines to use. You can perhaps build up an 'Ace' by using the same U Boat several times. If a particular contact looks 'risky' you may want to deploy a U Boat less valuable to you. The choice is yours.

CONVOYS work best with an independent person to act as referee during tabletop battles with miniatures.

However having performed that function over many years I can assure those who end up doing

it, that the role can be a really fun one. You get to see where everyone is, what their mistakes are, and if they start actually manoeuvring around the convoy itself, it can be a load of laughs as the escorts and submarines find out that wandering around inside a convoy is like having a herd of buffalo stampeding around you. Some of my happiest wargames memories of all are of desperate battles around convoys with some daring do, from individuals and disastrous navigation from others

CAN WE DO IT WITHOUT A REFEREE?

Yes. The game can be used without a referee as long as players can agree on various issues on non-sighted targets etc. Indeed for those who wish, they could play CONVOY between players, using the CONVOY tactical rules to resolve actions. In test play this has given fast paced, action filled game nights that have kept everyone on their toes.

CAN IT BE PLAYED SOLO?

Yes it certainly can. Many of the test players did at. In some cases they had no other way to test. So yes it can be done and its still lots of fun.

HOW TO PLAY.

Convoy Movement. The days are divided into three segments.

MOVE 1. 0401 – 1200. (Dawn until midday)

Also check for air support if in air patrol zone.

MOVE 2. 1201 – 2000. (Midday to dusk)

MOVE 3. 2001 – 0400. (Night)

Convoys roll according to the colour track they are following, and per move of the day. Therefore each convoy rolls three times per day for situation checks.

If sailing to the UK, the days are rolled for in reverse order.

A counter of some kind is an easy way to keep track of where your convoy is.

Daily Procedure

- (1) Check weather chart to see if it has changed.
- (2) Roll on the appropriate event chart for the first 8-hour move. Resolve events.
- (3) Roll on the appropriate event chart for the second 8-hour move. Resolve events.
- (4) Roll on the appropriate event chart for the third, or night move. Resolve events.

If an action occurs, or a ship is detached for some reason, roll D6 to determine what time this occurred in the campaign move. If a second or

third event occurs, roll D6 and add to the previous time.

However an event cannot occur during the next campaign map move, therefore if more than one occurs in the last hour, then the events will be 30 minutes apart.

In addition to the above, some events may cause you to roll more than once for a specific campaign map move. These still occur for the night move, even if the first was no contact.

Events that cannot occur due to weather do not take place.

Once you have selected your convoy, its route and its escorts, proceed to the map. The coloured boxes equate to which convoy you are running. The numbered boxes each represent one third of a twenty-four hour period. The number inside each coloured box indicates which event box to roll on for that campaign move. Every third box is shaded, representing a night move.

Let's presume we are running a green convoy from the UK to Gibraltar. We start from near EASTOMP and the first two segments are E1 & E2. To see what happens to your convoy, you roll a D12 and refer to results in the EVENTS BOX ONE. Whatever events occur, if any, are then resolved. You then roll on E2 for events. The third box for that day is a shaded one designated NEB1. The events NIGHT EVENTS BOX ONE carries through from dusk until dawn. Most night boxes are rolled on twice. The convoy continues on its way, rolling for each event box as it occurs, until it eventually reaches its destination.

If the convoy had been proceeding to the UK from Gibraltar it would have moved along this route in reverse order. Note that all convoys passing through the 'close box' roll on that for events.

There are many chance factors and some of these create others, therefore no two convoys should experience the same passage, even though some events might be the same or similar on different days or nights. Some convoys will run through with very little action. The majority will have a pretty busy time of it, and an occasional convoy will have a nightmare run, with contact after contact that will test the skill of the players for it to survive at all

Surfaced submarines contacts can occur often during night moves. In play testing it was found best to put them on the playing area and move them in the normal manner. Until detected by one of the means in the Tactical CONVOY rules no ship can act against them and they

therefore proceed as if the presence of the U Boat was unknown.

If detected, escorts can act to engage or illuminate a contact. It is Important to check for each escort in position to detect. Some may fail to do so even though others have. If the detecting boat illuminates the U Boat, then others within visual range may engage it as per the allowances in *Convoy tactical rules*.

Ships with the convoy between them and a U Boat cannot use radar to detect it if they have the older "A" scope type radar. If the convoy, or any large ship is between, or directly behind the U Boat the extra radar signature will prevent any detection of a small vessel such as a surfaced U Boat. A scope Radars pick up all objects on their bearing and blend them as one.

The operator only sees a series of electronically generated lines on flat plane. The higher ones indicate a contact. All ships on that

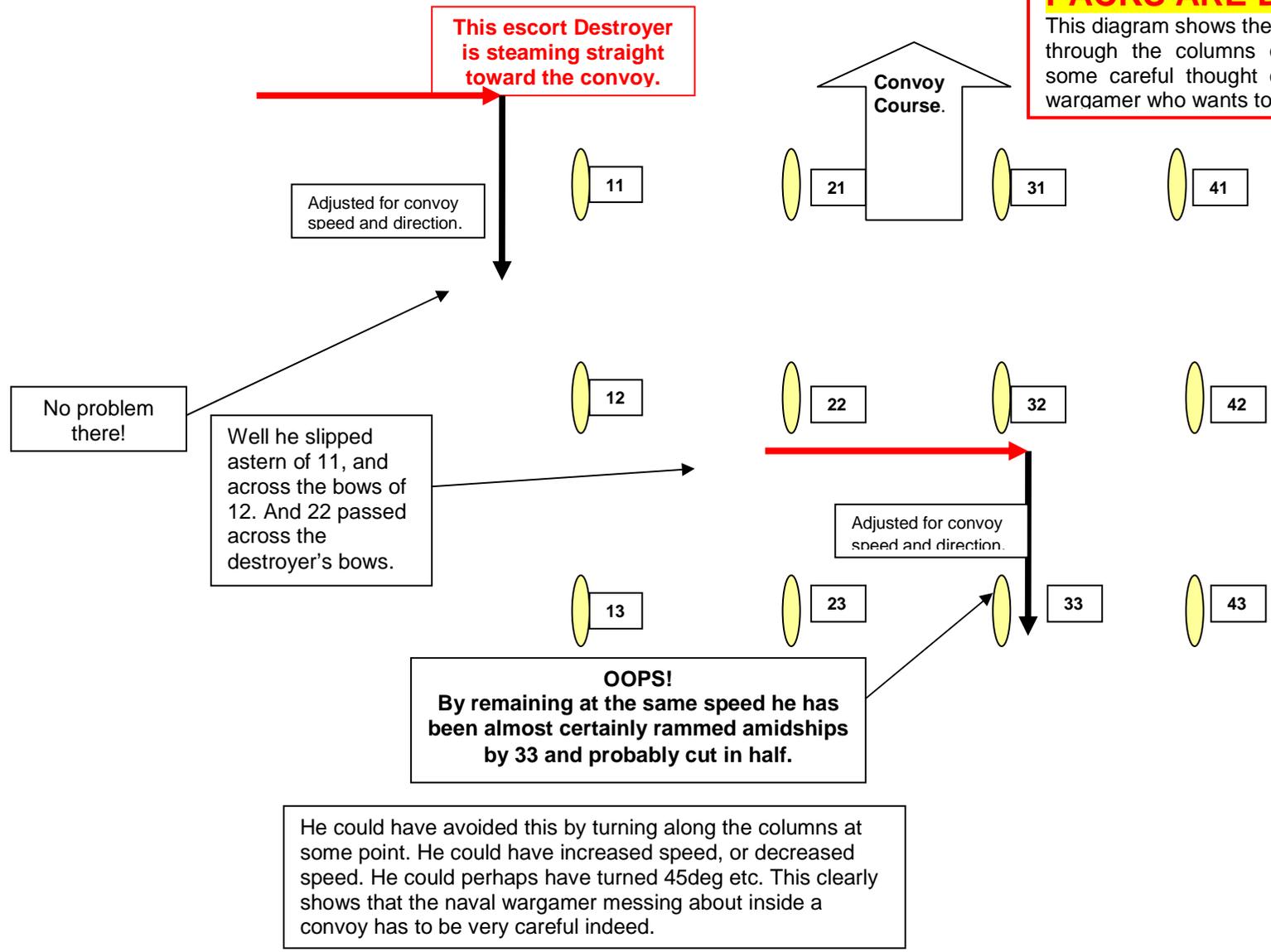
bearing will appear as the same while line. Small ones will be lost in the returns from the larger. Even the whole convoy of ships, will appear as one huge return, rather than as individuals. This should also apply to visual sighting when a U Boat is close to the convoy as it was hard to detect a smaller object against large ones, especially at night. Combat between the convoy, aircraft, U-boats or surface ships, is carried out using the Convoy Tactical rules.

In general the detecting ship needs the area behind the U Boat to be clear of other obstructions. Later PPI radar scopes provided a plan position which removed this problem.

In the majority of cases the torpedo will reach its target in a single move, and if not sighted there can be no evasive action. Therefore players can simply proceed straight to determination of hits and damage resolution in the Convoy tactical rules.

HEY! YOU THINK THE WOLF PACKS ARE DANGEROUS?

This diagram shows the dangers of trying to cross through the columns of a convoy. It requires some careful thought on the part of the naval wargamer who wants to tackle this problem.



This escort Destroyer is steaming straight toward the convoy.

Adjusted for convoy speed and direction.

Where he moved too.... and... Where he actually is relative to the convoy once adjustment is made.

Destroyer moved to here. But he has to be adjusted for the convoy and ends up here.

The destroyer has its position changed by 10 knots, which is the speed of the convoy. Dotted ship shows where he moved too, Solid shows where he actually is relative to the convoy movement.

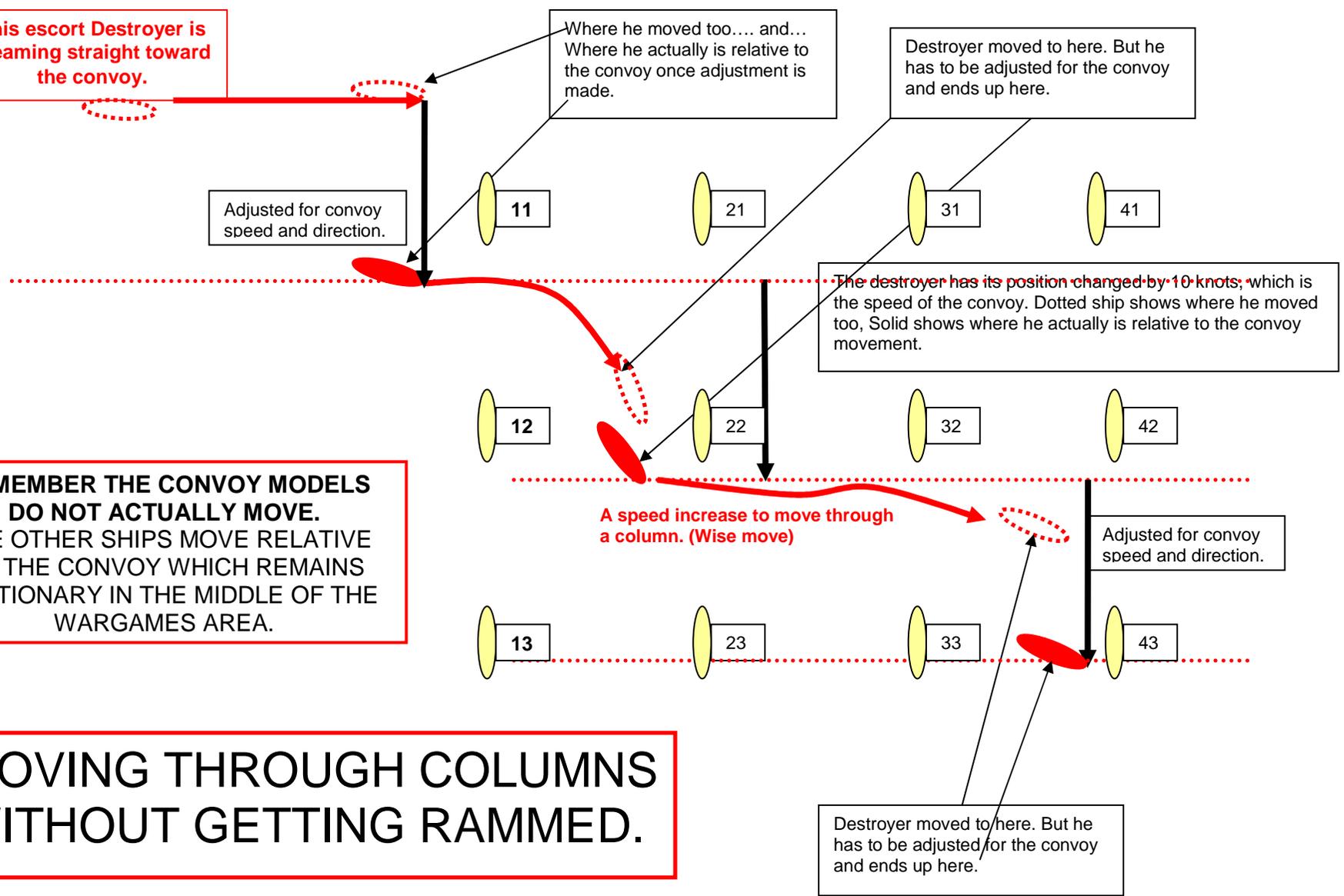
REMEMBER THE CONVOY MODELS DO NOT ACTUALLY MOVE. THE OTHER SHIPS MOVE RELATIVE TO THE CONVOY WHICH REMAINS STATIONARY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WARGAMES AREA.

A speed increase to move through a column. (Wise move)

Adjusted for convoy speed and direction.

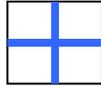
Destroyer moved to here. But he has to be adjusted for the convoy and ends up here.

MOVING THROUGH COLUMNS WITHOUT GETTING RAMMED.



Merchant Pennants.

Convoy
Commodore's
pennant.



Convoy Vice
Commodore



Convoy Rear
Commodore.



Submarine in sight.

Naval pennants.

British Vice Admiral.



British Rear Admiral



British Commodore

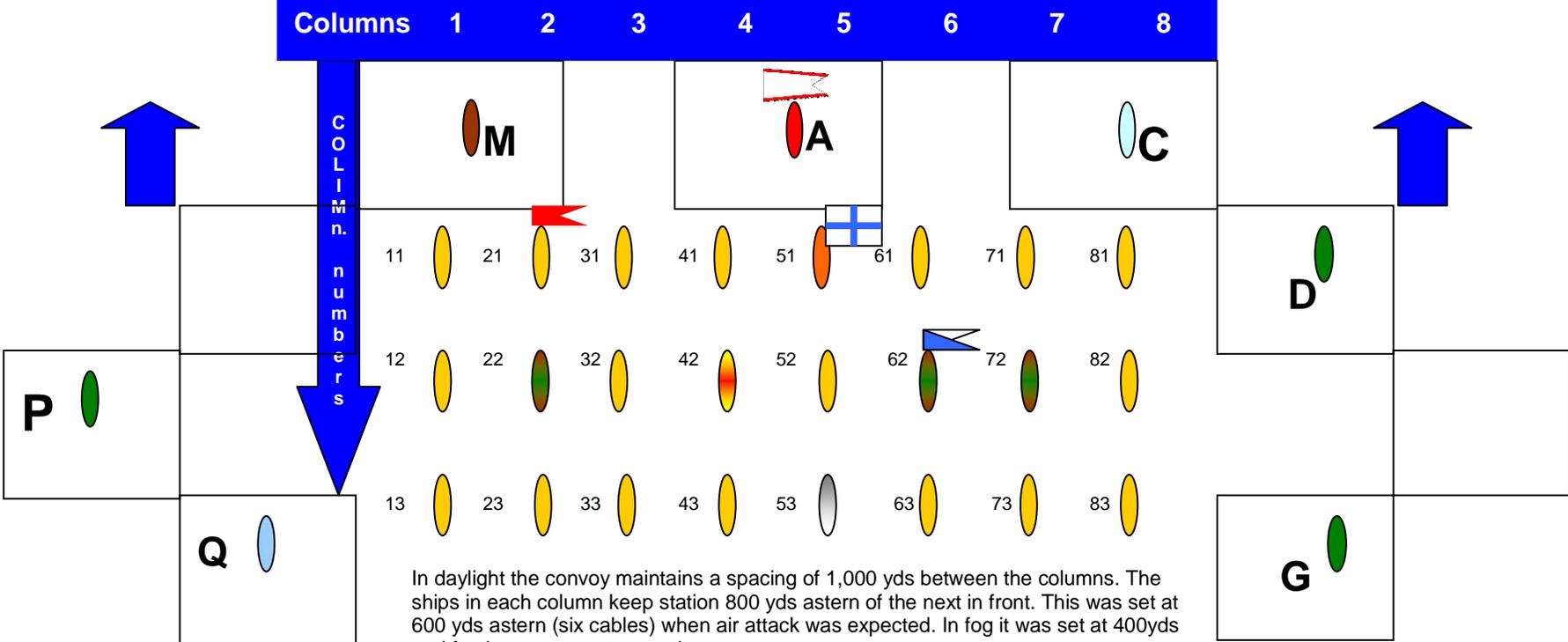


British group commander.
(Escort – Flotilla)



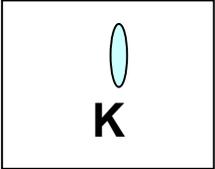
Example escort layout for a convoy, from the UK to Gibraltar.

In this diagram the red ship is the ESCORT COMMANDER or SOE, with his recognition pennant. The brown ship in M is a destroyer. The green ships are corvettes in D G and P. The sky blue one in Q is an AA ship and the two very pale blue ones are sloops. The Orange ship in position 51 is the Commodore with his pennant. The ship in 21 is a freighter with Vice Commodore pennant. 62 is a tanker with the rear Commodore pennant. The grey ship in 53 is the designated rescue ship. This is only if there is not a trawler or other escort designated for rescue. The brown and green ships in 22 and 72 are tankers, while the orange and red vessel in 42 is an ammunition ship. Note that the tankers and ammunition ship have been placed within the columns as the most dangerous place is in columns 1 or 8. Position 32, 42, 52, 23, 33, 43, 53, 63, 73 are also good positions for high risk ships. Generally the oldest ships with the least valuable cargo were placed on the outer areas of the convoy. The most valuable were placed inside the columns. If an escort carrier was present it might take up position 42 as would an old battleship or any other valuable warship added to the convoy. Ships of that type would usually be allocated an escort specifically to accompany them if they need to operate detached.



In daylight the convoy maintains a spacing of 1,000 yds between the columns. The ships in each column keep station 800 yds astern of the next in front. This was set at 600 yds astern (six cables) when air attack was expected. In fog it was set at 400yds and fog buoys were streamed

NOW HEAR THIS.
Remember that all movement across the front of the convoy, or through its columns, must allow for its relative speed, and therefore the danger of collision with the merchant ships.



ESCORTS.
The number of escorts allocated to a convoy varied according to what was available. In this case they have to make do with a fairly thin screen for the route of the convoy. Making do was something escort commanders had to contend with.

HOW A CONVOY RECEIVED ORDERS.

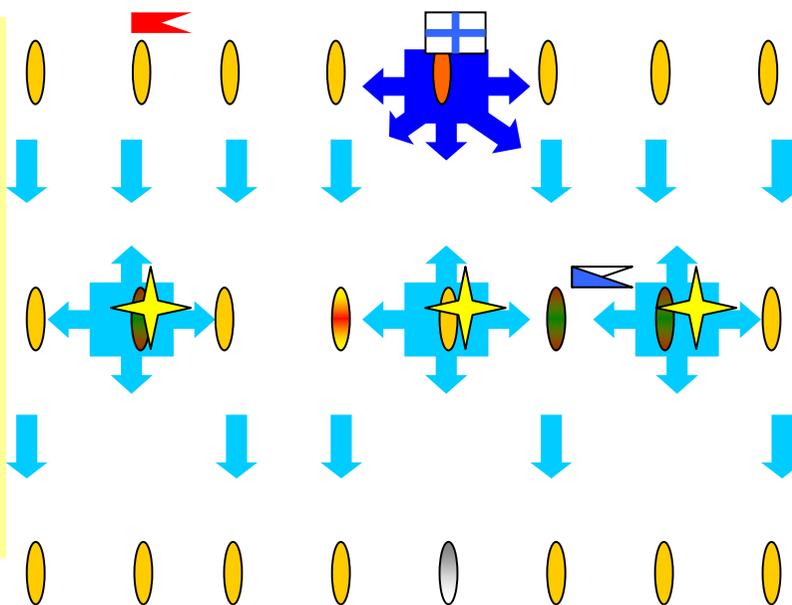
Signals could be sent via flag hoist or signal light by day. At night via shaded blue lights that were directed at the ship being contacted and were not visible at longer ranges. The Convoy Commodore issues his orders and they are sent to all those in visibility of him, and to the designated signal repeating ships. The repeating ships ensure that everyone else gets them, especially ships that are out of line of sight from the Commodore, or beyond the short range of the blue light signal. When ships acknowledge the signal is confirmed back to the Commodore. The blue lights used were unlikely to be seen by a U boat unless it was already inside the convoy lines. The U boat would be unable to understand the message, although the light may give away the position of the signalling ship. However if the U Boat was already in such close contact it would not matter much. Messages were kept very simple, usually being prearranged groups of numbers or letters that indicated a manoeuvre and would be meaningless to the U Boat.

Turning a convoy was difficult due to different types of steering in use and very diverse turning circles. Therefore, a convoy usually turned in increments of 30 or 60deg. For wargames purposes and due to the limitation of hexes, we will use 45deg. So to turn the convoy 90deg to starboard the Commodore would order a turn to take place at a stated time. All clocks had been co-ordinated before sailing. For example this order might be effective ten minutes from being given, half an hour later and so forth. So to turn full starboard he would issue an order to turn 45deg at a stated time, then 45deg more at another stated time. (These would be two separate messages). Increases or decreases of speed were signalled in a similar manner. The convoy would then turn back in increments of 45deg until it was once again on its heading. Because convoys operate in the open ocean, fancy manoeuvres are not called for, which is just as well considering the mix of nationalities and ship types in most. Generally an OMP was set up offshore. This is an OCEAN MEETING POINT. The convoy ships would sail more or less independently, even if in company, through more restricted waters when leaving harbour, passing through minefields etc until it was in the open ocean. It would then form up on arrival at the OMP, the escorts would take up position, and the show would 'get on the road' so to speak. Once that had been done the convoy would only take evasive action as above. If required to turn about, it would do the same thing and turn in increments of 45deg. Remember allied convoys only formed up in the open sea. Trying this in restricted waters could have been a disaster.

If the convoy was ordered to disperse, in an emergency situation, each column would lead off on a different bearing and gradually those ships would break off too. The idea being that a surface raider would have to contend with the convoy ships scattering in all directions, therefore making it harder to catch them all. Other signals were used to indicate ships that had been torpedoed, damaged, engines broken down and so forth. These were various lights, coloured rockets and so on. They are not relevant to this wargame so we will presume that when used, they are seen. In some instances these are distress signals, rather than a specific message. The same applies to the turning and speed signals; however in their case we do need to know how long it takes, or at least, that all ships have received the signal.

With our model convoy, it is of course stationary in the middle of the playing area and everything else revolves around it like a satellite. Thus if making such a turn the convoy models would be turned in the increment stated, and the relative movement of escorts and attackers adjusted accordingly.

The convoy Commodore commands the convoy, but not the escorts. He is usually a retired flag officer and acting on wireless intelligence sent to him, he determines if the convoy alters course etc. Occasionally he would be ordered to do so and had to accept that the Admiralty had direct knowledge of the reason why, even if he did not. Sometimes the Admiralty got it wrong as with the order for PQ17 to disperse. Good relations with the escort commander usually resulted in a joint decision to do various things, but the escort commander only escorted the convoy, he did not run it.



Blue lights used for signalling are directional and they are not bright enough to be seen much beyond the ship they are intended for.

Messages originate from the convoy Commodore. They are relayed to other ships by the signal repeaters until all have acknowledged. In some cases attention might be attracted, by sounding a ships siren if an inattentive ship has not acknowledged.

As stated we found during the development and testing of this game that it was easier to put a model of the submarine on the tabletop as nothing can act against it unless they achieve detection.

In the following charts there are four examples of submarine movement. They are provided to allow a certain amount of random movement by a submarine during battles.

Crash dives were very noisy and while getting the boat well below the surface quickly, gave the escorts a chance to hear it on the hydrophones that are part of their ASDIC or SONAR sets. A crash dive has many dangers to it. Therefore the boat must level out as quickly as possible. Equipment needs to adjust to the pressure and if the boat kept crash diving for too long it may get out of control altogether, plunging to its death in the depths.

Similarly, fast movement under water could create noise that would give its position away. It is useful in enabling you to put distance between yourself and the hunter, as long as he doesn't detect it.

Normal dives are the safest. They give off less noise and the boat remains under control.

Creeping speed was the movement at very slow speed, in order to try to avoid being heard, but still keep moving away from that location.

WHY DO WE NEED THESE BOXES?

They are particularly helpful if playing solo, or with a person controlling several boats. The crash dive box below must always be used.

CRASH DIVE.

FAST EVASIVE MOVE

CREEPING SPEED

Exception.....

NORMAL SPEED

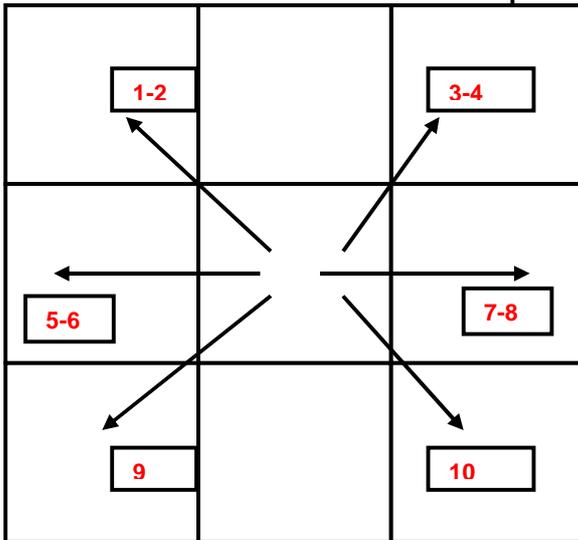
If he has not been detected, a player can nominate not to use the normal move box and simply maintain a steady course.

If still wanting to continue on the same course despite being detected, he may do so.

If however he has been detected and wishes to shake off the hunter, the normal move box must be used.

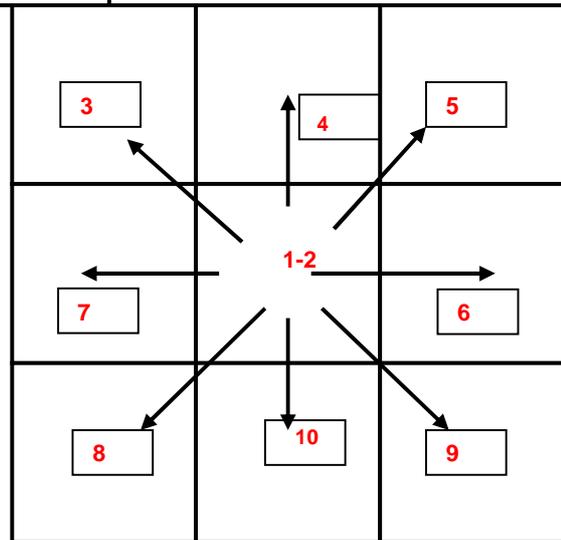
The submarine movement boxes apply evasive action where it is possible to achieve it, at the speed the U boat is moving at. Thus sometimes it may not occur at all. On other occasions the boat may successfully complete a change of course in a quite new direction. Several such moves can result in the submarine gaining enough distance for it to be outside detection range.

1000vds



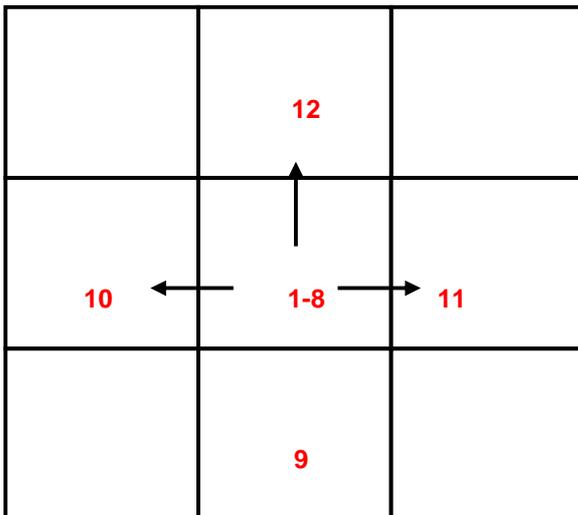
Fast evasive move (Noisy)

Submarine dives or was already submerged in the central square. The following move it will be inside one of the other squares shown, but will then be in that square for one move before it can check on normal or creeping. Add 1 to detection.



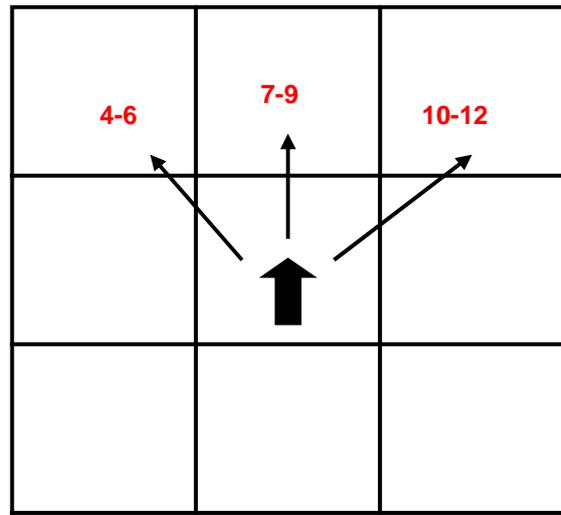
Normal move

Submarine dives or was already submerged in the central square. The following move it can try to be inside one of the other squares shown. It will remain in that square for one move before it can check or move again. Detection as normal.



**Creeping speed (Set for silent running)
(Not available on a move it has crash-dived)**

Dived submarine rolls each move to see if it has been able to sneak into another 1,000 yd box undetected. But it must remain 2 moves due to slow speed. 1 – from detection.



Location after a crash dive

Surface momentum will carry the boat forward, or down, but not radically port or starboard. Roll on this to show where it is when the crash dive is finished. Add 2 to detection.

WHERE DID IT GO?

Location of U Boats that have dived or are already dived in the playing area around or within the convoy. To speed things up the Axis player rolls a die to see where his dived submarines moved too. If they are still on the surface he moves them where he wishes. If dived, the player nominates the speed he wants to move at then rolls a D10 to see where his boat ended up.

A submarine that remains undetected for three moves is considered to have escaped. This is the case in attacks on convoys. However when investigating a contact, the search may be prolonged to six moves. If units of a **support group** are doing the search they can continue for nine moves. However such support groups will not appear until later games. They were not in use during the period of DEADLY WATERS.