

CLASSIC TAC NEWS

A reprint of a popular article from the 1980s!

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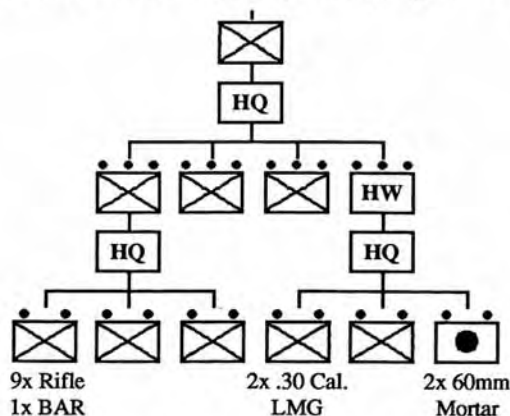
LEATHERNECK

by Edward Morris

The history and tradition of the United States Marine Corps dates before the formation of America as an independent nation. Its long history and rigorous selection process bred a cockiness and arrogance typical of elite formations. As an example, during WWII, the US Army jealously guarded the European Theater as their own turf and refused to allow Marine formations there. The Army felt the Marines stole their thunder in WWI with the action at Belleau Wood. Perhaps they were right, because if any one image embodies the American fighting spirit during WWII, it is six gyrenes raising the Flag at Iwo Jima.

The training of a Marine "boot" is well documented. What also formed the Marine spirit was the manner in which he was equipped. Particularly in the early stages of the conflict, the equipment issued to the Marines was, by American standards, mediocre. At Guadalcanal, the Marines were armed with bolt-action rifles and a lousy sub-machine gun called the Reising. When his personal equipment failed, the Marine was often left to his own devices, and it was not uncommon for a Marine to be festooned with a variety of personal weapons ranging from police pistols to shotguns.

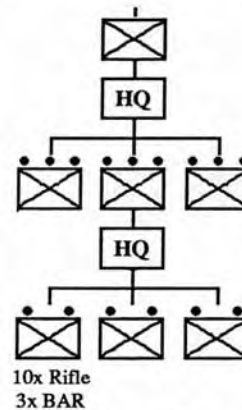
United States Marine Corps Company '42 to '43



A Marine battalion consisted of three such companies. At battalion level the weapons company had three machine gun platoons of 6x medium machine gun and a mortar platoon of 6x 81mm tube. There were three battalions to an infantry regiment and three infantry regiments to a division. The fourth regiment was an artillery regiment. The artillery regiment consisted of: three 75mm howitzer battalions of 12x 75mm pack howitzer, a 105mm battalion and a 155mm battalion. For specific tasks, 60 man combat engineer platoons were attached.

Tanks were assigned as follows: one platoon per rifle battalion, one company per regiment. The tank battalion was made up of three companies of three 6-tank platoons.

United States Marine Corps Company '44 to '45



The need for more firepower on the squad and platoon level necessitated the reorganization of the basic Marine squad. The squad became three fire teams, each based around a Browning Automatic Rifle. As the conflict progressed, drum-fed Thompson sub-machine guns gave way to the M3 "Grease Gun", and the M1 carbine saw widespread use.

USMC Order of Battle; Tarawa Atoll; Betio Island:

2nd Marine Division

(The anti-tank battalion was not used at Tarawa)

2nd, 6th and 8th Marine Rifle Regiments

10th Marine Artillery Regiment

(A company of 75mm guns was self-propelled)
 (The 155mm battalion was not used at Tarawa)

18th Marine consisting of:

- 1st Battalion (Combat Engineers)
- 2nd Battalion (Pioneers)
- 3rd Battalion (Seabees, not deployed at Tarawa)

One tank battalion

(Including 16 Sherman tanks)

One amphibian tractor battalion

(Including 50 LVT IIs and 75 LVT Is)



LVT-2.

DETAIL MODELS ADD REALISM

Study those photographs of a historic battlefield. In just about every instance there is some detail, some feature, that stands out in your mind. Civil War battlefields are full of them: Antietam needs a Dunker Church, a Burnside's Bridge, and you couldn't game Gettysburg without a brick Cemetery gate, a "copse of trees" and a pile of rocks nicknamed "Devil's Den." Each of these would have to be modelled in miniature to give the feel of history to your game. Whenever setting up an historic scenario, strive to add those little touches.

Tarawa has many little items that stand out in the photos. The four most important are the pier, the Japanese toilets, the airstrip control tower and the airstrip. They look great, were pretty easy to construct, and added a great deal of "life" to the scenario.

PIER

The main pier on Betio was a wooden pile and palmlog casemated structure that led from the island out to the deep water of the lagoon beyond the coral shelf. It measured almost 1/2 mile in length, and was very important tactically in the battle. It's a modelling must for Tarawa.

The pier can easily be simulated using panels of styrene plastic, and building pier pieces out strips of Evergreen Scenics Styrene. These are most easily cut with a single edged razor blade, and assembled with Testor's liquid plastic cement. (Use a very small paint brush to apply this cement, not the huge brush in the cap!) A sheet of narrow siding styrene, .020 thick, was then cut into strips 3/4" wide to serve as the decking. Paint the structure grey and sand white: wooden members light grey and the packed coral inside the casemates white.

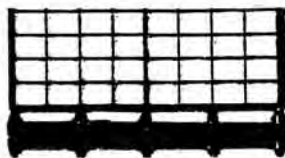
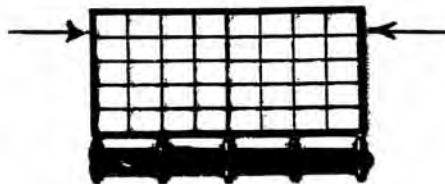
An easier method, though less attractive, is to cut strips of 1/4" hex material. Two strips come from each hex. Bevel the edges by scraping excess foam beads with your thumb-nail, and then painting the pier sand white. A brown or black wash will add alot.

JAPANESE TOILETS

The Japanese latrines were flimsy wooden structures built on stilts in the lagoon. About 10 surrounded the island, mostly near the airfield and barracks areas. Though they must have had a foul effect on swimming, they add a great deal to the personality of the game board. They are easy to model by "kit-bashing" HO scale model railroad fences and windows together.

Build in sub-assemblies. First we will make the gangway out to the latrines.

1] Cut a strip of deck material 1/4" wide and 3" long. Next we cut the legs and plates by carefully chopping the HO window casting with a single edged razor blade.

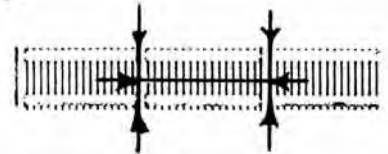


Using the liquid cement, glue the leg assemblies to the underside edges of the gangway strip.



2] Cut a 1" strip of the 1/4" gangway material, and 2 strips of window "legs" and cement them on the underside. This gets the latrine up out of the water, and at the same height as the gangway.

3] Use your blade to remove 1 section of fence from it's sprue. Measure the mid-point horizontally on the single fence section, and cut it in half there using the razor blade. Turn the two halves so that the reinforcing rods on the back are touching one another and cement the pieces together. Set aside to dry.



4] Your model Japanese will appreciate a roof over their heads. We'll use 3 supports and a sheet roof for this. Cut 3 pieces of .010 strip 3/16" long. Cement 1 inside each end of the outhouse, and 1 to the center inside of the rear wall. Try and tilt the tops of the end supports slightly downhill to the rear of the outhouse to provide drainage. (see illustrations) Glue a strip of plastic across the top for a roof.

5] Glue the outhouse to the floor unit, and then the gangway to the outhouse. See the photos for placement. Paint the latrines light grey to look like old wood, and wash them with a blackwash for weathering.

These latrines can be made in less than an hour each, and add a lot to the appearance of Tarawa.

CONTROL TOWER

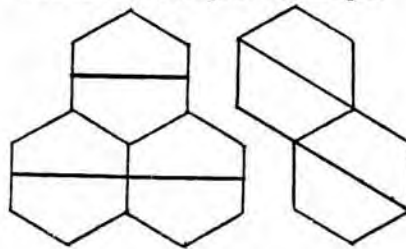
Another easy styrene project, the tower is built of .030 x .030 strip styrene and sheets for the top.

- 1] Layout the pattern for the front and back trestles using a pen on paper. Tape this to the workbench, and cover with a sheet of waxed paper.
- 2] Cut strip styrene and assemble it over the pattern. Make 2 of these trestles.
- 3] Cut 2 more sets of crossbars and diagonal sway braces from the strips. Use them to connect the 2 trestles into a tower.
- 4] The room at the top of the tower is made of 1 base plate and wall panels. Once these are glued together, add 4 upright posts to support the roof. Cement the roof in place, and paint light grey.

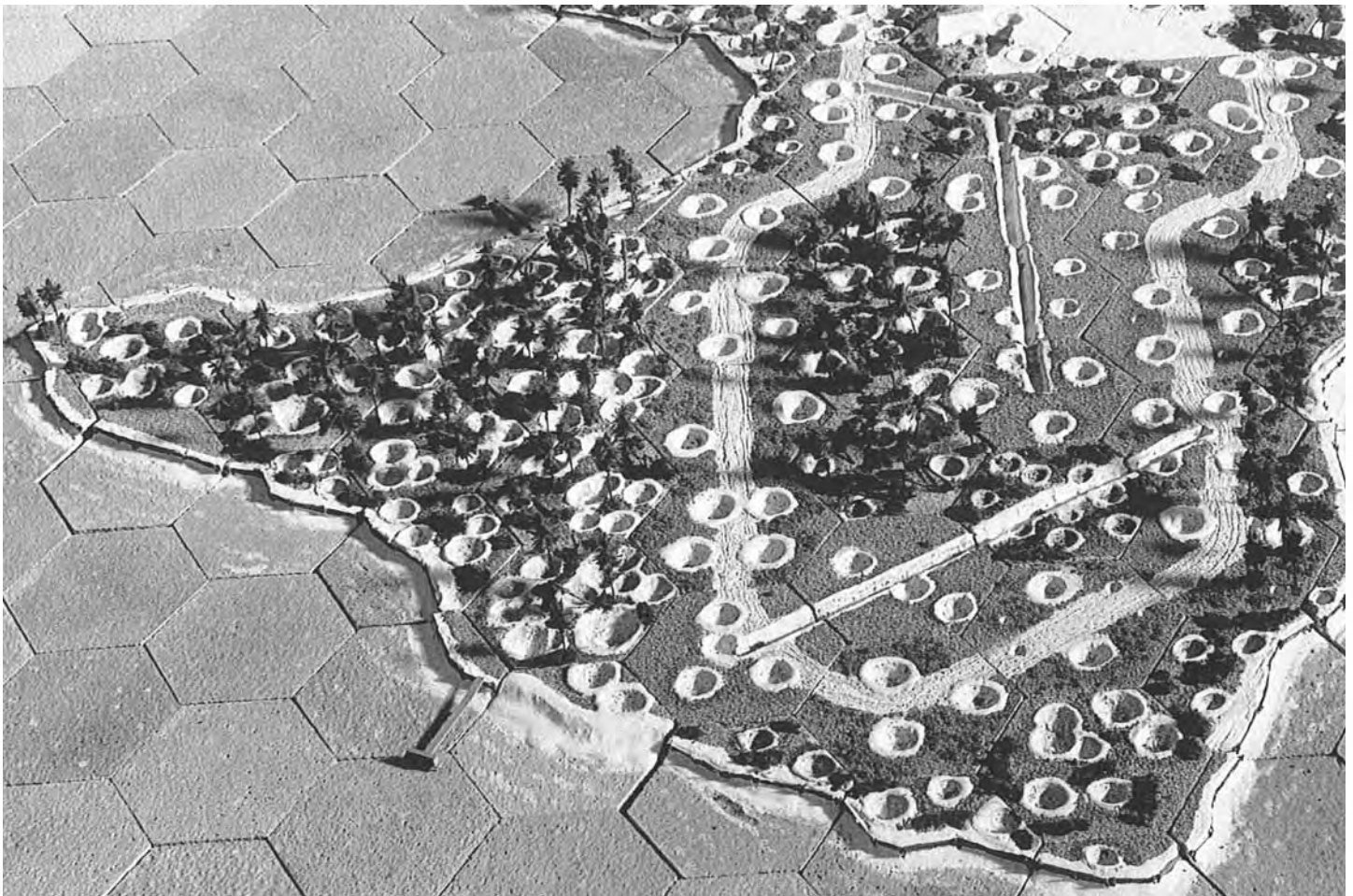
AIRSTRIPS

Most islands the USMC attacked in the central Pacific had airstrips. Terrain Maker™ works very well to provide the geomorphic medium to model most of the common patterns used in World War II. This technique will work for other fronts as well.

Essentially, all basic airstrip hexes are made by drawing a line through the center of a hex. Main runway hexes have the lines drawn from horizontally, and taxiway hexes have the line diagonally (corner to corner). Paint the airstrip area first, and allow to dry. Then paint the grassy areas and cover with sawdust. It's just that simple.



Most airfield will require some specialty hexes: rounded turning circles, plane revetments, intersections, etc. These are easily made using the same techniques.



MODERN SAMURAI

by
Edward Morris

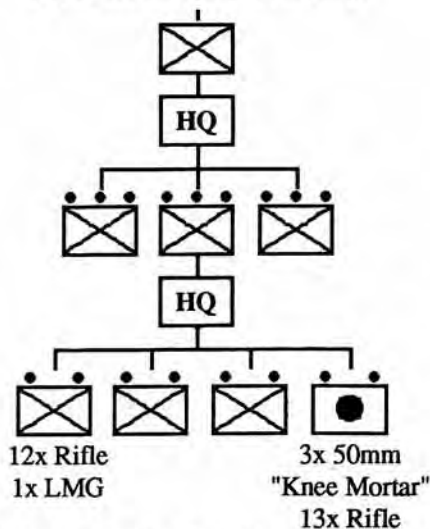
The Japanese soldier of World War Two was a man with a medieval code of honor, fighting with unfurled flags and swords, in a war that was to inaugurate the atomic age. In spite of tremendous handicaps, the Japanese soldier acquitted himself in a manner that brought grudging respect from his adversaries.

His basic training was surprisingly sparse. He received but 20 hours of drill and weapons training. During training, he was savagely beaten by his NCOs at the slightest sign of disobedience or hesitation. Even though he was renown for the art of "digging in", he received virtually no training for this craft. After training was completed, the regiment he joined was "straight legged infantry"; there was virtually no motor transport. Therefore, he was required to carry tremendous loads under the most arduous conditions.

The weapons he was issued were at best, mediocre. The pistols were just as likely to maim the shooter, as the they were to hit the target. The "Arisaka" rifle, with it's bayonet, was generally taller than the soldier firing it; and the Type 96 light machine gun manual listed 26 different types of stoppages or malfunctions as being likely. His elan served him better than his tactics or weaponry.

The Japanese foot soldier persevered because he was embodied with a martial and personal code quite alien to any other fighting force in World War Two. It is the qualities that are unique to the Japanese persona that led to the early victories and the final suicidal defeats. These traits which were, and still are, so alien to the West have continued to serve the Japanese. They have now become economic adversaries that have earned our grudging respect.

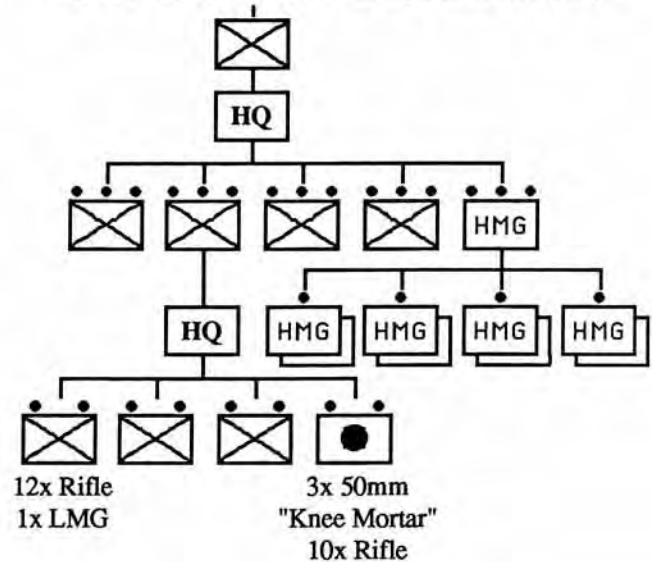
Japanese Infantry Company:



There were 3 companies to a battalion. At the battalion level there was a heavy weapons company consisting of an anti-tank platoon of 3x 37mm gun, a machine gun platoon of 6x MMG, and a howitzer section of 3x 70mm infantry gun.

There were 3 battalions to a regiment, and 3 regiments to a division.

Japanese Special Naval Landing Force Company:



The SNLFs were organized into battalions of about 2000 men of four companies. The first three companies were organized as illustrated above. The fourth company had a heavy weapons platoon with the following compliment: 4x 3in naval gun, 2x 75mm regimental gun, and 2x 70mm battalion infantry gun.

The 1st and 4th Mobile Brigades were assigned a light nine-tank company.

The Japanese SNLF's training was extremely mediocre. As the Germans did with Volksgrenadiers, the Japanese supplemented these formations with additional automatic weapons.

Japanese Order of Battle; Tarawa Atoll; Betio Island:

American Intelligence scored a unique coup at Tarawa. The nature of Tarawa did not allow the digging of latrine trenches; instead the Japanese built wooden latrines on tiny wooden piers extending over the water, the tides sweeping the area clean. The elimination of bodily waste falls within certain Japanese cultural norms, and the equation of men per latrine was known. Therefore, when US Intelligence estimated 4,840 Japanese on Betio they were off by only 4 men. Of the 4,836 men on Betio, only 2,619 were combat troops. They were:

Sasebo 7th Special Naval Landing Force

3rd Konkoyochitai (attached directly to HQ Unit)

Major Weapons:

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| 4x 8in Vickers Naval Rifle | 4x 14cm gun |
| 6x 80mm anti-boat gun | 10x 75mm mountain gun |
| 6x 75mm battalion gun | 9x 37mm anti-tank gun |
| 8x 75mm dual-purpose gun | 14x Type 95 HA-GO tank |
| 4x 12.7 twin-mount dual-purpose gun | |
| 27x 13mm single and 4x twin-mount machine gun | |
| 31x 13mm single-mount and twin-mount AA machine gun | |

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