

# Black sea black death

The soviet Operation Gory/Morsky and the battle around Novorossijsk  
A JTCS-Scenario by Ragnar



## Content

## Inhaltsverzeichnis

1. Introduction and why I did the scenario.....	2
2. Research and Sources.....	2
3. The remake.....	4
3.2 Map.....	4
3.2 Troops.....	6
3.2.1 Troops statistics.....	8
3.3 Scenario.....	10
4. FAQ's.....	13
4.1 The scenario looks too complex for me! How can I win it?.....	17
5. Epilogue.....	19
6. Sources.....	20

### Notes from the author:

It was lot's of work but also much fun to work on the scenario. I want to thank Peter D., Thomas M. and Michael K. for extensive playtesting, patience and feedback. Furthermore Jack R. for his helpful hints and of course Anthony K and Peter J for their support regarding this readme-file and the scenario description.

# 1. Introduction and why I did the scenario

This is my remake of the scenario "Death in the black sea", published in 1999 by M. Shane Peterson. First of all it was and is never my intention to discredit his hard work! Personally I think M. Shane Peterson did a great job. When I saw the scenario for the first time, I was blown away by the complexity and large scale of his work.

Despite the description "Best played against human opponents" I played it one time as the soviet side against the AI. This was quite fun and challenging but of course I won with a wide margin. Mr. Peterson himself admitted in his readme-file, "...My original intention was to make this scenario a human-human optimum scenario, but I have not played it in this manner, and therefore I can't comment on how it plays in that fashion." Nevertheless, later I played it two times as a H2H game and both worked out so badly for the Soviets that we had to cancel them. So I can clearly say, that it was not optimized for a H2H-match. I also had some serious doubts about the troops involved.

Still I saw great potential in the scenario. With it's features it is quite unique in the JTCS-scenario stock. So I decided to make it remake regarding map, troops, game flow and of course H2H balance. First I simply started to change his original scenario but soon abandoned this path because – as already mentioned above – I did not want to discredit or dishonor this hard work. I'm pretty sure every decision he made while making the scenario had a purpose and reason, and I personally would be quite angry if someone „stole“ my work and change it. So after abandoning this first path I decided to start my own scenario from scratch.

## 2. Research and Sources

Unfortunately I was unable to contact the original designer (email address down) but, during my research, I found out that the scenario was based on a board game called „Black sea black death“ [Boardgame: black-sea-black-death](#) published by Jack Raley (He also published „Borodino 41“ which also had been converted for JTCS and, I can really recommend to play that as well).

What I've found on the internet about it gave me the impression M. Shane Peterson converted the board game 1:1 into JTCS. A board game however, works differently compared to the algorithms and game mechanics in JTCS. I also got in contact with Jack Raley via email. My hopes and expectation had been to get the manual and maybe a picture from the map in the board game. Unfortunately all his data for the game had been lost but he gave me some very useful hints.

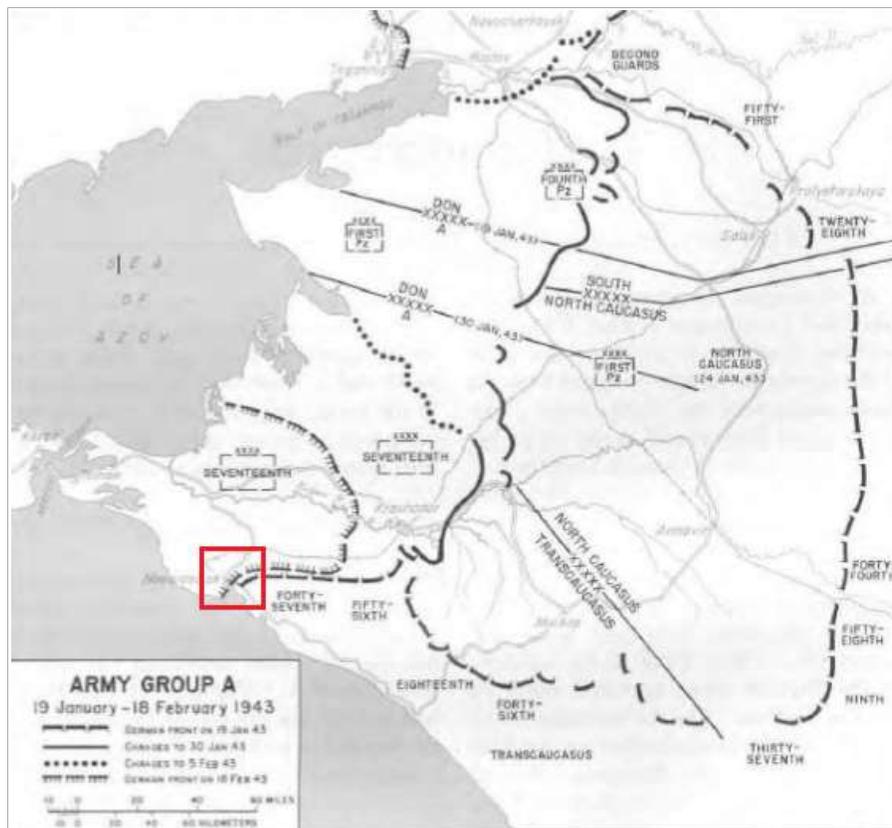
Bottom-line after my first phase of research was, I had a large lack of informations to work with.

One new major source was a published master thesis „The Defence and Evacuation of the Kuban Bridgehead January – October 1943“ published in 2014. The thesis used as one primary source the Bundesarchiv

Abteilung Militärarchiv, Freiburg-im-Breisgau (Federal German military archive). This includes German official war diaries and battle reports from the involved axis forces. As secondary sources the author used historians like Beevor, Glantz and Keegan but also non-academic writers, like Carell, Tiedke, Zhukov or Kurowski. The Ministry of Defense of the Soviet Union is also used as a source.

Sure you can start to discuss the reliability of each author but with the Bundesarchiv I had a solid base to work with. Bottom-line I used the thesis as facts.

I got more information from various websites such as axis history, Lexikon der Wehrmacht and some books in my own shelf about the organization of the German army. After the setback of Jack Raley not being able to provide the map of the board game, a good alternative source was a blog from two miniatures campaign gamers. They had the original game and played it as a miniatures campaign game and documented their battle in their blog. Their blog also supported the assumption mentioned above that, M. Shane Peterson used the board game as his primary source.

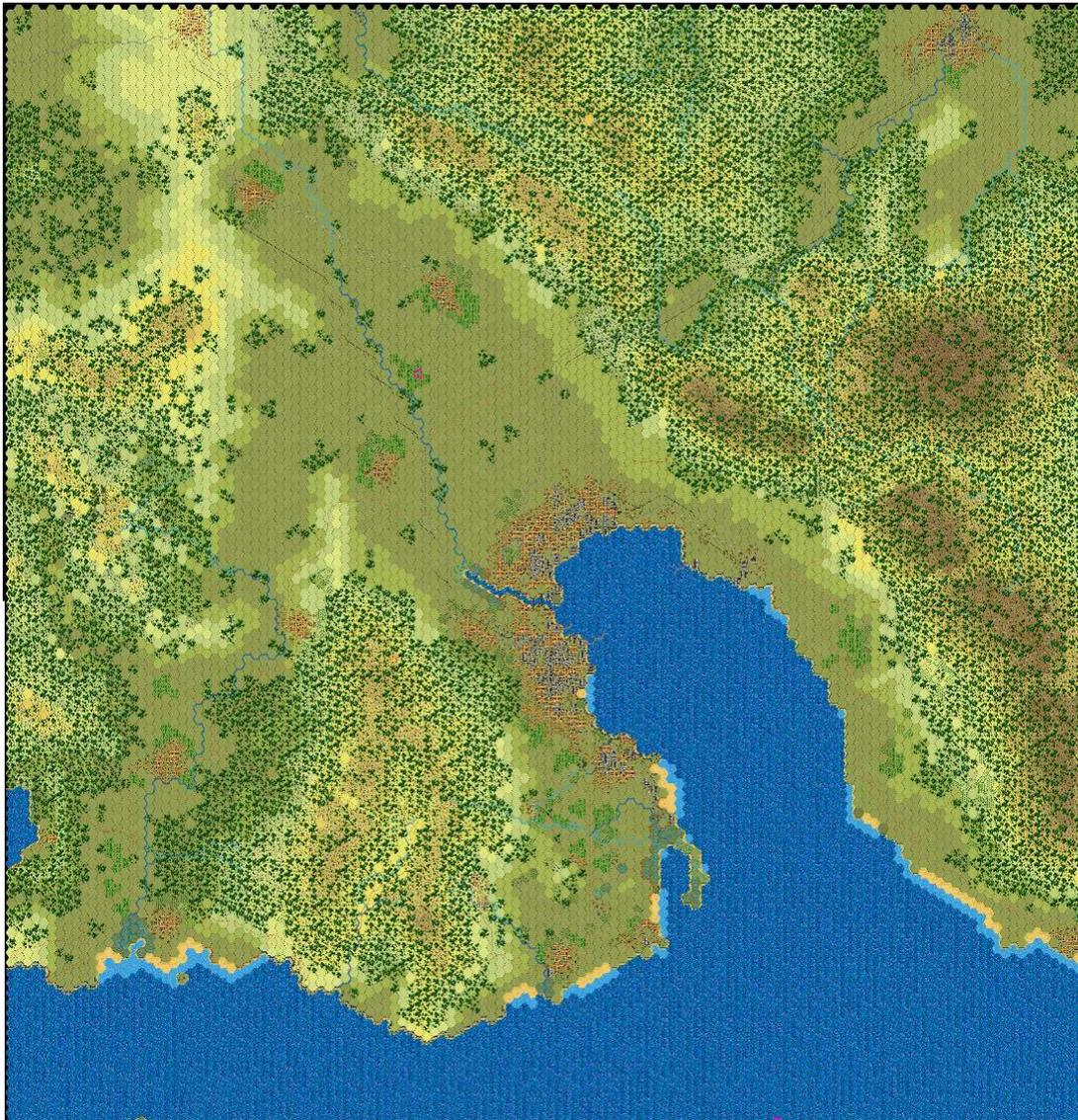


### 3. The remake

As I never want and will not, discredit the original scenario, the following chapter will mainly describe my own scenario. Sometimes it cannot be avoided to reference the original scenario but, not by judging too much on purpose.

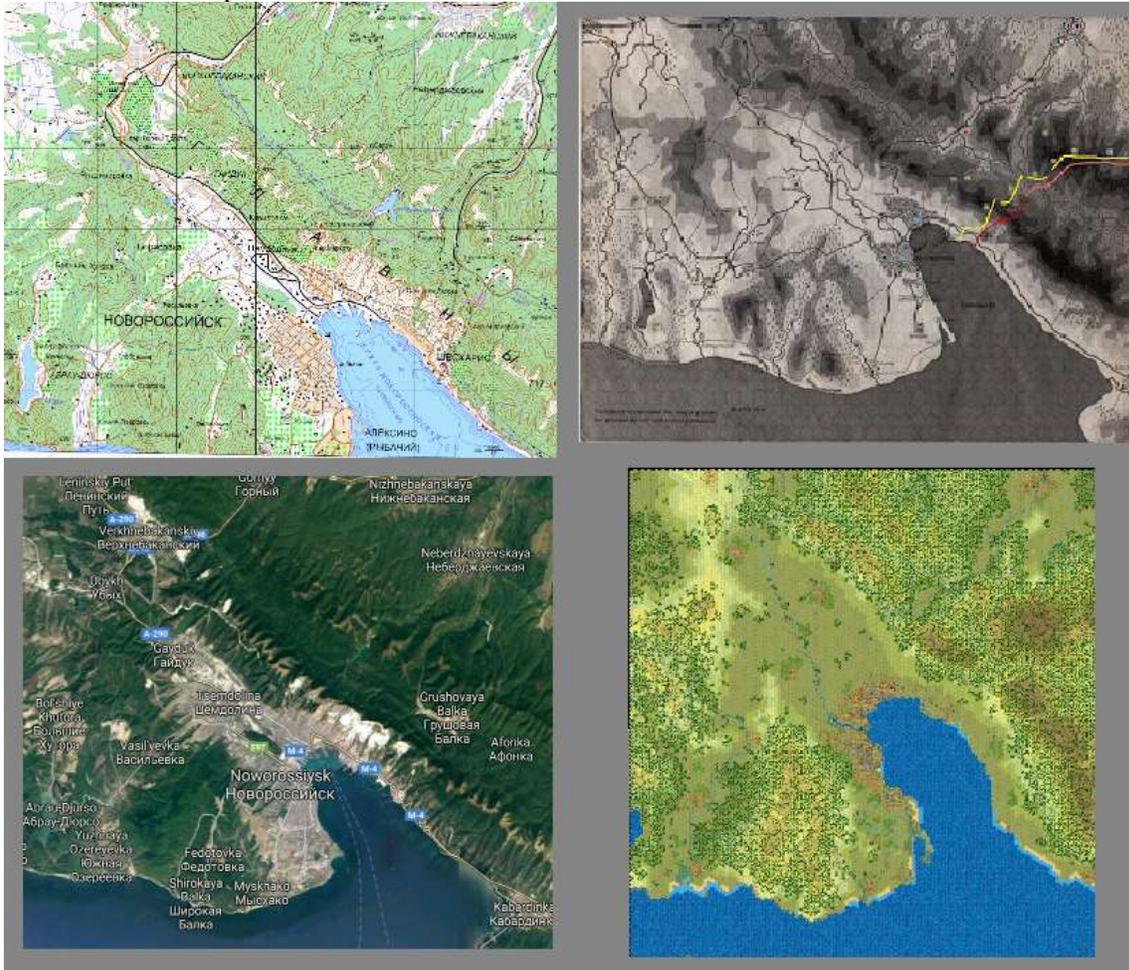
#### 3.2 Map

The map covers an area 111x131 hexes (28x33 km) with the town Novorossijsk in the center. The road and rail network is very basic but, a wise player will find ways to get troops to every location. The terrain and the entire map favours the defender with lot's of hills and vast forests.



To get the map right I used various sources and sometimes combined them. Of course I also looked at M. Shane Peterson's version but bottom-line I started from the scratch based on the following sources:

Clockwise from top left: -



### **Blog: blacksea blackdeath**

This is the original map used in the board game on which this scenario is based.

### **Google earth**

Of course a modern map but it clearly shows a large areas of wood and distances. I also used it to verify the mountains on the board game map.

The vast urban area northwest of the bay are mostly plains on my map as the city of Novorissijek was smaller in 1943

### **<http://m.loadmap.net/>**

This site was a recommendation from a gamer friend and supports my path that the area northwest of the bay was mostly plains. Also it supports the vast amount of woods.

### **the final map**

## 3.2 Troops

Again this is a thin grey line not to talk too much about the original version and I won't cross it on purpose as I don't know the sources and intentions of Mr. Peterson. In short, he used some units, designations and equipment with which I did not agree from an historical point of view. During my research I tried to verify every unit involved and then build the OOB on my own results and conclusions.

As I will explain in chapter 3.3 and the FAQ's, it is not really possible to portray everything 100% right as the soviet plan went historically wrong. E.g. the 255<sup>th</sup> brigade landing in the Yuzhnaya bay lost nearly 2.000 men in the 24 hours of the battle (killed, captured, drowned). Also only ten tanks made it ashore because they disembarked too early in deeper water caused malfunctions of their engines.

Additionally the landed tanks ran out of ammunition soon, as the soviet high command did not send in any supplies and instead focused on the successful, alternate landing at Stanitchka.

I carefully researched and optimized both OOBs for a fluent and balanced game.

With some minor exceptions I can say all troops (down to regimental level) used in the scenario historically took part in it.

Not historical, or not 100% to verify on the soviet roster are:

- 573rd Independent Tank Battalion (fictional)
- NKVD Battalion 3rd Corps (fictional, but I got hints that there have been of course NKVD troops in the area)
- Coastal Artillery Brigade (sources mentioned strong soviet artillery on the eastern coast but no specific unit)
- 328th Penal battalion (this is taken from the original scenario, but I found no evidence. Nevertheless I decided it is a good feature but I switched from regular rifle to the new available penal platoon units to make it more detailed)
- Partisan Detachment (sources mentioned partisans during the landing in the Yuzhnaya bay)

For the axis OOB, it is more verified because I had much better sources. The two German corps around and north of Novorissijek were the

V Army Corps:

- 5th Luftwaffe Field Division
- 19th Romanian Infantry Division
- 3rd Romanian Mountain Division
- 9th Infantry Division
- 73rd Infantry Division (involved)
- 10th Romanian Infantry Division (involved)
- and the XXXIV Army Corps (Gruppe de Angelis)
- 198th Infantry Division (battlegroup involved)
- 125th Infantry Division (battlegroup involved)
- 101st Jäger Division (battlegroup involved)
- 97th Jäger Division

Furthermore the LII Army Corps send a battlegroup from the 13th Panzer Division.

The pictured situation on 1st of March below will give a good overview about the German troops involved. The map has been take from „Lexikon der Wehrmacht“. Unfortunately there was no map for the situation one month earlier right before the operation started.

For all non German speaking players „+Tle“ means Teile → parts in the meaning that all these Divisions only had battlegroups send into the fight there.



The smaller German single formations like

- Kriegsmarine Command 16 / 18
- Train Department Novorossiysk

are mentioned by name in sources but with no real detailed order of battle.

I found some hints that Harbour command 16 and 18 each had one security company and some engineers (more for construction and not combat) alongside, with some guns to defend against enemy vessels.

– Penal Battalion 501

This unit is mentioned in the original game as penal battalion 10. Despite the fact that I found no proof that a penal unit was involved in the battle, I kept it in the scenario. In the original scenario its platoons had a moral of 3, which I increased. According to my sources and understanding the Bewährungsbataillone (probation / parole -battailon) had the same equipment like other Wehrmacht-units and, most of the men had a high spirit and moral as they wanted to remove the guilt that brought them there. The unit also includes Luftwaffen-Platoons as the Luftwaffe send their prisoners to the Heer. The Luftwaffen made up 15% of the prisoners according to my sources.. Additionally I added a HQ company to present the non prisoner personal („Rahmenpersonal“ → permanent staff)

### 3.2.1 Troops statistics

I often mentioned that one of my focuses was balance. In test games I was sometimes kind of accused that the game is not balanced and phrases like „impossible to achieve“ or „I have no chance“ came up. Actually it came up no matter if I played the soviet OR the axis side in the test....so I came to the conclusion that it is ~90% up to the player to use his troops at their fullest potential. Nevertheless I really spent a lot effort on the topic. Below and in the game folder you will find a summary and more overview details about the exact strength on each side. It will give a good indicator to build your strategy on it.

Both tables compare the total and relative strength of the axis forces to their soviet counterparts e.g. in the detailed (second) table the axis have a total of 137 less infantry platoons which means 76% of the soviet number of infantry.

#### Summary:

Summery	Germany	Romania	Axis total	Comparison	Comparison	USSR
	# Platoons	# Platoons	# Platoons	total	%	# Platoons
Total combat troops (Infantry, AFV, FV)	477	84	561	-173	76%	734
Total combat support troops (guns)	104	39	143	13	110%	130
<b>Total combat and support troops</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>-160</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>864</b>
Land transport	239	53	292	51	121%	241
Sea transport	0	0	0	-324	-100%	324
<b>total transports</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>-273</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>565</b>

Detailed:

Units types	Germany	Romania	Axis total	Comparison	Comparison	USSR
	# Platoons	# Platoons	# Platoons	total	%	# Platoons
Infantry (all types, incl. Cav.)	287	49	336	-147	70%	483
Engineers (all types)	48	15	63	-8	89%	71
Maschineguns (all types, incl. AA-MG's)	71	19	90	-19	83%	109
<b>total foot troops</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>-174</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>663</b>
Light/medium granatlauncher and infantry guns	33	23	56	15	137%	41
Heavy granatlauncher and artillery	27	4	31	-11	74%	42
<b>total Artillery</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>105%</b>	<b>83</b>
Light and medium antitank/aircraft	39	10	49	4	109%	45
Heavy antitank/aircraft	5	2	7	5	250%	2
<b>total guns</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>119%</b>	<b>47</b>
armored recon and halftracks	40	0	40	32	500%	8
unarmored fighting vehicles	2	0	2	2	100%	0
<b>total light FV</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>525%</b>	<b>8</b>
Tank hunters and selfpropelled guns	14	0	14	13	1300%	1
Light tanks	1	0	1	-14	7%	15
Medium tanks	10	0	10	-15	40%	25
<b>total AFV</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>41</b>
motorised transports	149	6	155	-24	87%	179
Waggon and horses	86	47	133	72	218%	61
Trains	4	0	4	3	400%	1
<b>total transports</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>121%</b>	<b>241</b>
Armoured combat vessels	4	1	5	-17	23%	22
Transport vessels	0	0	0	-324	0%	324
<b>total vessels</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-341</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>346</b>
Btl. HQ	40	8	48	-22	69%	70
Regimental HQ	11	3	14	7	200%	7
Brigade HQ	0	1	1	-7	13%	8
Division HQ	1	0	1	-2	33%	3
Corps HQ	1	0	1	0	100%	1
<b>total HQ</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>-24</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Leaders</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>34</b>

### 3.3 Scenario

The scenario covers the first two days including one night-phase from the morning of the 4th of February 1943 until the late afternoon of the 5th of February. I made this decision and ignored the rule „1 turn = 6 Minutes“ to make the arrival of reinforcements more realistic compared to the original scenario. Furthermore the night-phase opens quite a few new opportunities for players and adds some complexity and tactical depth. To contain all different battles into such a complex historical battle already M. Shane Peterson had changed the timeline and time frame to fit everything in and explained it in his readme. In my opinion a very good idea, because in 1999 the night-feature was not available. His scenario started in the morning around 8 AM and covered with 130 turns the whole day.

My approach was different but went beyond this point, which made it necessary to change the „1 turn = 6 Minutes“-rule a bit but, before a quick overview about the historical events:

The historical battle started on 3 of February with the offensive of the 318th Mountain division and its attached brigades.

The supportive amphibious and airborne operation started in the early morning of the 4th of February. The main landing was scheduled for 1:30 AM but due to poor equipment and coordination the first landing craft headed for the beach not before 3:30 AM.

It's quite hard to say (for me) when the first phase of the Operation Gory/Morsky was over because from the 4th of February onwards both sides throw more and more troops into the line. From my point of view the first phase of the battle lasts until the 7th of February. At this point many decisions and crucial events had taken place which shaped the whole, further battle.

1. a stand still on the northern land front
2. the elimination of the Yuzhnaya landing and beachhead (both events have taken part in the first 24 hours)
3. the consolidation of the Stanichka bridgehead later called Malaya Zemlya („little land“) and the inability of the Germans to remove it, despite several attempts in the first phase and also later, e.g. in Operation Neptune on 19<sup>th</sup> of April.

After the 7th of February, until the recapture of Novorossijek by the red army in September, the whole operation was just a battle of attrition with several German attempts to wipe out the Stanichka bridgehead.

With this cornerstone and assumption fixed, I set up a timeline over a period of two days and one night. In normal game terms this would be 340 turns:

4th of February: 8 AM to 23:59 PM	= 16 hours
5th of February 0 AM to 6 PM	= 18hours
total	= 34 hours (340 turns)

No question this was way to long to get players deal with it! So I changed each day to 8-9 hours of combat represented by ~40 turns each. I judged this quite realistic because more than 9 hours of combat seems not possible. (From my own experience in the army of course we had several exercises where we spend several days permanent on the training ground but never had more than a couple of hours with action) The night phase I calculated with only ten turns assuming both sides are exhausted and need to rest. Of course combat can occur but only limited, due to the needed rest. So the night-phase need to be seen as the part where troops will move a bit, raid or maybe probe some enemy positions. The part where the troops rest has been cut out of the time frame in the scenario but should be remembered here.

Another – abandoned – idea was to start the scenario historically correct in the early morning at 3 AM and have the main landing in the dark. The intension was to give the landing a better chance to get ashore due to the cover of darkness.

This idea led to the problem that all motorized units (which included all vessels) need the double amount to move. In case of the landing crafts who normally need 33 AP per hex during day can move during night only one hex. Thereby just to get to the beach the fleet would need 3 times longer which would be quite boring for both sides. Reducing the LOS was also not a good option to me because of the moonlight and the axis spotlights the landing fleet was quite visible for the defenders when they headed for the beaches. Bottom-line I saw no real advantage for either the game flow or any tactical gain and kept the landing in the daylight-phase.

The following picture will give you a good overview about the historical operation. Your game may develop totally different as you will not make the same mistakes like soviet high command. Neither will you sit and drink beer in your German headquarter but instead give hell to the Soviet “invaders“ and, deploy your reinforcements in a different way than history.



No Question this game is complex and not for rookies. You will face an extremely, difficult terrain and have several separated battlefields to coordinate. You have to be skilled in urban and close combat as well as long range combat to keep the enemy pinned down. You know how to coordinate air and artillery strike with amphibious operations and deploy onboard vessels. Furthermore you need to know how to use all types of engineers at their fullest potential and be an expert in bunker busting against strong, fortified positions including pillboxes. Mobile warfare must also be one of your advanced skills and you must always deploy your tanks and hunters and grenadiers in a fashion which would make Guderian and Zhukow tip their hat!

A setback does not cause harm or concern, because you always plan several turns ahead and still know how to use even a local defeat to your overall advantage. In general you understand how to get the tactical upper hand and still maintain the operational overview. Tactics like going in head first, into the doghouse will lead to an early defeat and you know how to use terrain to your advantage – no matter whether on the defense or offensive.

## 4. FAQ's

During the test games I had several situations where I wondered how and why my opponent did certain things or not. Also complaints about balance came up quite often. Off course every player acts differently but, sometimes the player is just unaware how to use troops. In discussions I often found out that the scenario is quite complex at first look due to it's various locations and landscape.

So I decided to put some questions and issues in an FAQ.

### **Why are there "Allied German" ships in the allied OOB?**

Historically, the Soviets used gun- and torpedo boats to provide smoke and close support for the landing parties. Unfortunately there are no such units available in the editor for the SU. For Germany, allied Germany and Romania S-Boats (S => Schnell => Fast) are available so I used allied German vessels to portray the close support from sea.

### **But additionally to the S-Boats there are "Marine-Artillery Leichter". Such units certainly never existed in the Red Navy!**

That is correct. The S-Boats were simply too weak to provide proper support. Historically the MAL were German Ad-hoc constructions to provide close support for landings. So they matched perfect for my needs.

I personally think there is a bug in this unit. Armed with 88mm or 105mm guns (Softattack 22) and a range 76 hexes it comparable to the 105 mm artillery gun but can only perform direct fire. Nevertheless it is quite useful even in this role.

### **So you used S-Boats and MAL's. I also saw Off-Board guns from Cruisers and Destroyers. Why didn't you then use the new naval units? There are destroyers , cruisers and frigates available in the editor for the SU!**

This was indeed one of my ideas but I abandoned this path. Looking at the units firepower and ranges they will destroy all balance. Moreover, I assume there is a mistake regarding the data. Destroyer, cruiser and battleships all have the same data:

Range	100 hexes
Soft attack	124
Hard attack	100

Playing a map 131x111 hexes with a bay in the center they could shell and destroy every stronghold on the entire map with the first salvo.

Only the frigate has different data:

Range                66 hexes

Soft attack        72

Hard attack        20

This sounds more reasonable unless you look closer to the armament. The frigates two main guns are 102mm. Comparing them to the also available offboard-unit "102 mm Naval guns" (also a battery of two guns):

Range                60 hexes

Soft attack        21

Hard attack        10

you can clearly see the imbalance. Even the weaker frigate would have a devastating influence on the game play.

Despite the odd fact that destroyers, cruisers and battleships have the same attack values, I personally think that the high firepower could result from the numerous gun turrets (e.g. Battleship with 4 twin turrets 380mm) , the secondary armament (100mm guns or AA-guns) and not least the torpedoes. Even if I am correct here it led me to the conclusion that these units can not be used in an amphibious scenario.

The official game manual stated in the chapter 21.1 Naval Forces "Keep in mind that the Campaign Series is a land based warfare game system and it does not model naval fighting very well." I agree here.

### **There are several HQ-Companies and single staff platoons. Aren't they included in the HQ-units (Btl. HQ, Reg. HQ)?**

Yes and no. The HQ-units in the game are in my point of view a blackbox. For some countries there is a description about the men included in some don't. After research I've found out that e.g. a German

Regimental

headquarter-company included:

- staff platoon

- signal platoon

- cavalry platoon

- later also the 15th Co of each regiment (just one engineer platoon) also got included

I've "extracted" these four platoons from the "Regiment HQ"-unit to make them present on the map.

In my opinion the HQ-units also represent the supply units. This is also quite reasonable looking at the combat data: Soft attack of 6 with a range on 3.

Assuming the HQ-units only consist of supply drivers, clerks and staff officers armed with only pistols and maybe some rifles, this reflects the real conditions. The theory also explains why the much smaller supply teams in battalion HQ-units have only a soft attack of 4.

For the Russian side I've discovered similar details (Steel Panthers at war manual). Russian formations from regimental level onwards had NKVD, cavalry and staff platoons in their HQ-companies. In the game the Russian hq-companies sometimes only consists of one or two platoons to reflect their exhaustion in this stage of the war in the Caucasus.

### **Why does the Marine formations (323rd bataillon, 83rd and 255<sup>th</sup> Brigade) include veteran rifle platoons?**

Here I have to start a bit earlier. Mr. Peterson used Guard Rifle Platoons in his original EF2 scenario. I assume he did this due to lack of the naval rifle and SMG platoons available in JTCS.

When I started to build up the OOB used of course the naval platoons but soon I realized the much lower combat value of these units. In tests this led to the problem that the Soviet naval companies were simply too weak to get a foothold even against the weak Romanian and Cossack forces.

To compensate this fact I switched in each naval company one platoon to a veteran rifle. This led to a good average uplift of firepower and defense in each naval company without leaving the historical reality.

The following table shows the values of each unit type used in the original scenario and my own version.

If you sum up the firepower of a guard rifles company with three platoons you will get 24 (3x8). With my mixed calculation of two naval SMG and one veteran rifle you get 22 (2x6 + 1x10). As my both unit types need less AP to fire they can put more shots to the enemy, which makes them a bit more powerful.

	<b>Soft attack</b>	<b>Hard attack</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Defense</b>	<b>AP (fire)</b>
<b>Guard Rifle</b>	8	4	3	7	35
<b>Rifle (V)</b>	10	4	3	8	33
<b>Naval SMG</b>	6	4	2	6	33
<b>Naval Rifle</b>	6	4	2	5	33

Actually, this mix reflects the reality in those days quite well in my opinion. As far as I have been able to find out, the Red army had two types of naval troops. The naval infantry consists of "real" marines with ground combat experience while the naval rifle was made up from sunken ship survivors and yard personel, with little or no combat training. Nevertheless all naval units had a high morale due to stubbornness defending their precious bases to the last man.

**A lot of German (and some Soviet) infantry formations have trucks. I read that the German infantry division had no trucks and the men marched on foot only!**

I have the same knowledge. For long journeys the German infantry was transported primarily by train and during action by foot. Nevertheless of course also an infantry division had motor vehicles.

In total it had:

919 waggons  
527 Motorcycles  
615 Trucks and tractors  
394 Car

The motor vehicles were primarily used for supplies, rear units and staffs, but in urgent cases also used for quick deployments.

In the scenario I honestly pushed the limits a bit here to make it work better. Of course an infantry division could not lift entire regiments on trucks, but in urgent cases they really could assign some of their supply trucks to move troops.

In the original scenario and also in my first own first version the infantry on both sides were hardly motorized. I worked a while with a compromise to insert reinforcements simply directly in Novorossisk but this was not what I wanted to have.

**Day/night/day? The scenario lasts only 94 turns which respresent 90 hours and twelve minutes. There must be a mistake.**

No, it is on purpose. I already explained it in chapter 3.3.

The scenario covers two days and a night.

4 <sup>th</sup> of February	7 AM to ~ 5 PM(turns 1 – 41)
4 <sup>th</sup> / 5 <sup>th</sup> of February	~ 5 PM to 8 AM (turns 42 - 52)
5 <sup>th</sup> of February	8 AM to ~ 5 PM (turns 53- 94)

**Concrete pillboxes? I would have expected them in Normandy but not in the deep Caucasus!**

Actually me neither but I made up two sources who mentioned them. The first one is Jack Raley who had designed the board game on which the scenario bases. According to him the romanian batteries had concrete gun emplacements.

The second source is Carell's book "*Scorched Earth* " who mentioned "bunker" in the axis sector on the beach at Stanitchka. I am aware that the german word "Bunker" has not 100% the same meaning like the english "Pillbox", but during tests I discovered that the soviet marines do not even have even a little chance of survival without the support of the pillboxes.

## **Following the description of the scenario, as the axis player I am not allowed to call in air attacks until the 10<sup>th</sup> turn! Why?**

In the original scenario the axis had only 3 and the soviets 8 air attacks available. I agree here with all of my testers that such few air attacks for such a long scenario was much to less.

Despite this I discovered in several tests that the axis can cripple the schedule of the southern landing with some well-placed air attacks in the first turns. In one test I was able to always destroy the units close to the shore and so delayed the landing by 8-10 turns. This gave me valuable time to set up my defence and later caused serious damage to the soviet marines.

Furthermore the axis simply had no planes available during the first hours of the operation. Later into the 4th indeed the German Luftwaffe struck and sunk two of the soviet destroyers.

### **4.1 The scenario looks too complex for me! How can I win it?**

I will not give any detailed advice here. I designed the scenario with the focus and historical accuracy and playability.

In my first approach I tried to get all facts 100% right to portray the battle as it was. This turned out not very balanced and totally pro axis who in my opinion won the battle on tactical level while the soviets won it on strategical level.

The design of the scenario was very tricky as the historical operation did not work out as planned. My intention and motivation was absolutely, to not let the players just replay the historical battle but also to give both sides the opportunity to change history.

The historical battle was influenced by several incidences and decisions and it is up to the player to go his own way.

An example was the deployment of the 90<sup>th</sup> airborne. Historically, 1/3 of the planes missed the drop zone and returned to base. Later these troops were one of the first reinforcements to arrive in the Stanichka bridgehead to turn the tide of the first German counterattack.

Another example was the quite slow and uncoordinated counter measures of the axis troops against the landing at Stanichka.

I've also read – and seriously doubt it – that the very first counterattack of the axis troops was decided by just one russian sailor who carried out a suicide attack. According to Carell this sailor attached himself to a belt of hand grenades, climbed over a wall of a compound and jumped into the assembling area of a german platoon/company who was about to cut the bridgehead and doom the whole landing operation.

More examples are the confusing schedule of the Russian navy and army and the ineffective shore bombardment at the main landing in the Yuzhnaya bay.

I could continue with more examples but even now it should be clear that the operation, from the Soviet point of view, went absolutely not as planned and, the axis counter measures were equally inadequate or, as they say, "too little, too late".

I designed the whole scenario to give both sides the most freedom without leaving the historical path too much. Both sides have plenty of time and enough transport capacity to regroup and detour on the map if they want to. There are several routes and possibilities to make and achieve targets and locations. The Soviet player may land his marines on the historical beaches or elsewhere. His land forces could attack the German 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry head on or make a detour to the south. The paratroopers could offensively strike in any direction or consolidate their positions. It's also possible by time to cross the mountains and attack Stanichka from the west. It is all up to the player.

In the same way the axis troops of the 173<sup>th</sup> ID could sit and hold their line or aggressively attack the Russian mountaineers. As the majority of their reinforcements are motorized they can strike into every direction, overrun the lightly armed paratroopers, attack the „little land“-bridgehead, strengthen the line of the 173<sup>rd</sup> ID or even attack along the eastern coast of the Tessen bay and destroy the Russian rear with the valuable artillery.

Both sides can win in several ways. The Soviet player needs to gain and defend both bridgeheads to the last men! Later regarding the circumstances he should break out / expand it.

If you lose one of your bridgeheads you are in trouble and the shit hits the fan but you can still turn the tide. If you lose both bridgeheads the game will come to an early end. (I've played several other large scenarios like „Salerno – a bridgehead to easy“ or „Borodino 1941“ where I lose and/or won in 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the available time)

If the player can link up both bridgeheads with the land forces and capture Novorissijek, victory is assured. Another option is to reach the northeastern exit hex with troops from Yuzhnaya bay or also the land forces. Both options would be a realistic historical victory as well because the mission goal was to flank and cut the 17<sup>th</sup> German army.

As a rough orientation:

1. Major defeat: no bridgeheads secured, Novorissijek in German hands or one bridgehead only and high Soviet losses
2. Minor defeat: one small bridgehead and no territorial losses northeastern of Novorissijek
3. Draw: two small bridgeheads secured and no territorial losses northeastern of Novorissijek
4. Minor victory: two large bridgeheads secured and parts of Novorossijek captured
5. Major victory: bridgeheads are linked up with the troops from northeast of Novorissijek, the city captured or a major breakthrough to the northwestern exit hex

Of course in general both sides can gain the upper hand by bleeding the opposite side “white” in the meaning of inflicting higher losses to them. Especially during the amphibious landings the Soviets and suffer high losses and should be careful here to keep them low by silencing the Axis heavy guns.

The German player needs to hold the line of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry and take all necessary steps against the landing. If you can remove one bridgehead you are well off but at least you have to contain them.

Your reinforcements are quite powerful but limited in numbers compared to the Soviets. So it's like in several EF scenarios „quality against numbers“. Of course the German player has some weaker formations like the Romanians and local auxiliary troops like the Cossacks but bottom-line a powerful formation.

As already mentioned in chapter 3 you will need patience and passion to win the scenario. Strike when there is a chance but keep an eye on the overall situation.

## 5. Epilogue

I am personally very satisfied with the scenario. After extensive playtesting it is ready to play but I cannot exclude that there are still some things I need to fix or rebalance.

I hope to get many gamers to play it and be open for feedback regarding what could be better in the scenario.

You can contact me via email by [KARE79@gmx.de](mailto:KARE79@gmx.de) on theBlitz.org „Ragnar“ as well as through the Wargamers Club for Gentlemen (WGCG), same email.

## 6. Sources

Honestly I do not remember all little sources I used but I focused a lot on the following:

<http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/5581/1/DGalbraithKubanBridgehead.pdf>

<http://blackseablackdeath.blogspot.de/?view=classic>

[https://www.flamesofwar.com/hobby.aspx?art\\_id=1197](https://www.flamesofwar.com/hobby.aspx?art_id=1197)

[www.axishistory.com](http://www.axishistory.com)

Das große Buch der deutschen Heere im 20. Jahrhundert (Bruce Quarrie)

Verbrannte Erde (Paul Carel)