

STATREP

COMMANDO

A Statistical Report of Game Characteristics

by Claude Bloodgood

Commando was eagerly awaited by gamers at the Virginia State Penitentiary, and a small group of hard core gamers jumped at the chance to try it out. While the game was anticipated for its role-playing variations, the play here centered on the historical scenarios. Some attempts at role-play games have resulted in gamers reverting back to the basic historical variations; the mixture of the two seems to lack something.

The game features some excellent areas, but also has a few snags. The wide range of weapons that can be utilized should be great; unfortunately, the game system bogs down when too many types of weapons are used. Key statistical data used for both sides is too complex for easy scenario design — a definite drawback in a game that is offered specifically for gamer expansion along the role-playing lines. To balance all the key data is a major undertaking.

Commando will hold your interest with the regular scenarios provided, and does create a good historical replay of several events. It offers a fine insight into small unit and individual problems in combat, and it is great as a small unit tactics primer.

The role-playing variations lack feeling, personality, and other key attributes that

make other role-playing games flow so well. Perhaps this will be improved in subsequent games of this type, and if it is, a future *Commando* type game could just become the hottest game in town. The promise is there, but only a promise so far; the potential needs to be better developed.

Statistical Analysis

Participating Players: 31

38.3% of active players selected *Commando* from an inventory of over 90 titles available during the six months ending 4/15/81.

Repeat Players: 21

67.7% of 31 participants played the Actions off Vaagso Island scenario after completing one set (both sides played) of the Raid on Entebbe scenario.

Total Games Played: 66

The Raid on Entebbe scenario was played 34 times, and the Action off Vaagso Island scenario was played 32 times.

Average Playing Time: Varied with scenario and level of play

Participation in the Raid on Entebbe scenario totalled 215½ hours for 34 games, an average of 6.34 hours per game; the average is a good indication of the time required for an initial game of *Commando* between players with average gaming experience, but new to *Commando*. The experience gained in playing one set makes a repeat set much quicker to play — e.g., in the Actions off Vaagso Island scenario, only 105 hours were required for 32 games, an average of 3.28 hours per game. These times reflect historical game play only, and do not provide data on the role-playing game. With insufficient data for meaningful averages, a good estimate of role-playing scenario times would likely run about double that of the same scenario in the historical game.

Shortest Recorded Game: 0.67 hours

British Commandos caught landing on beach by alert German defenders in the Actions off Vaagso Island scenario. When luck runs bad, it can be very bad! The final tally was 4 dead, 4 wounded commandos; the Germans suffered only one casualty, a wounded man. Both sides were played by moderately experienced gamers with prior experience in *Commando*.

Longest Recorded Game: 13.50 hours

The Actions off Vaagso Island scenario can get involved if the play is drawn out long enough for the German reinforcements to begin arriving. This one was botched by the British player after near success in the early stages, culminating in disaster when the Germans pinned them down and held them until enough reinforcements were available to make a final assault on the trapped commandos. Both sides were played by experienced gamers with prior experience in *Commando*.

Raid on Entebbe Results: Israelis 27-7

Victory conditions were modified to provide a clear result. Israelis win if both hostage groups are exited (with no more than 10 hostages killed), and no more than three Israeli men are killed or incapacitated; failure results in a Ugandan victory.

Actions off Vaagso Island Results: British 18-14

Victory conditions were modified to provide a clear result. British player wins if target building is at least partially destroyed, and there are fewer than six British casualties; failure results in German victory.

Game Imbalance: Varied with scenario

The Raid on Entebbe victory conditions, as modified, produced a total imbalance of 58.8% which is unplayable. The problem is not with the victory conditions, but with the scenario itself; sleeping guards won't win under any set of victory conditions, and the Observation Code assigned to the Ugandans is the equivalent of a sleeping unit's expectations when they are surprised. This is contrasted by the fine balance in the Actions off Vaagso Island scenario, which has a 12.5% imbalance that can be improved with minor modifications of victory conditions.

Game Balance Analysis

The range and scope of provided and potential scenarios in *Commando* is limited only by the imagination of gamers. Most scenarios which are provided will require adjustment to victory conditions to make them competitive. These were designed to duplicate historical actions, and unfortunately, few historical actions were balanced. Scenarios created by gamers are likely to prove more competitive, and thus also more interesting because a balance can be achieved. Balancing a created scenario is not easy. Every piece of data provided can throw the balance of a scenario completely out of whack. Designers should create very simple scenarios and once these are balanced then expand them gradually to keep them in balance.

Subjective Analysis

Play Balance: 6.51

Average of 31 responses: 9 is perfectly balanced, 1 is totally unbalanced.

Playability: 6.96

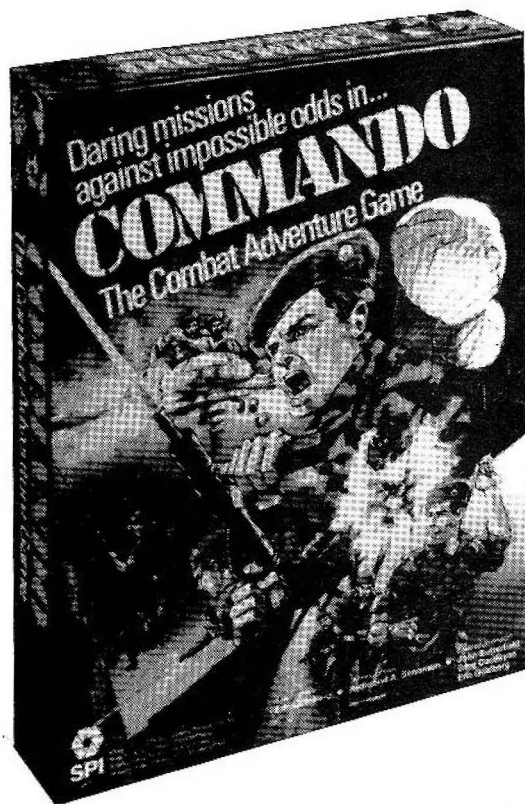
Average of 31 responses: 9 is supremely playable, 1 is unplayable.

Length of Game: 6.90

Average of 31 responses: 9 is exactly the correct length, 1 is much too long or short.

Game Challenge: 8.09

Average of 31 responses: 9 is extremely challenging, 1 is no challenge.



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