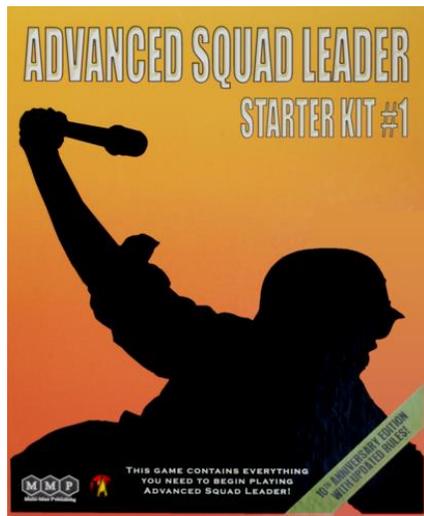# Tactical Wargame Demo: Advanced Squad Leader Starter Kit #1 (ASLSK#1) –Tenth Anniversary Edition

Designed by Ken Dunn, produced by Multiman Publishing (MMP) in 2004, reprinted in 2014. MSRP: $25.00, but often less at online discount wargame stores (e.g., NWS Wargaming Store -- $18.99).

The scenario, ASL 1 "Retaking Vierville," represents a mad-scrambling series of sharp encounter firefights between a reinforced company of the 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division against a polyglot force of German platoons from the 1058 Grenadier Regiment, the 919th Grenadier Regiment, and 6th Fallschirmjager Regiment for control of the center of town. Protection of the U.S. forces recently landed at Utah Beach is at stake!

From Wargame Wiki:
http://wargame.wikia.com/wiki/Advanced_Squad_Leader_Starter_Kit_Number_1:

Evaluation as Warfighting Model:

Fog of War: *Low*. As is typical with most wargames, players can see each other's units and have a perfect "bird's eye" view of the battlefield. That said, players can't check whether a line of sight/line of fire is unobstructed until they commit to a shot. In the full ASL system, there are provisions for concealment, dummies, and hidden units. If players have two sets of the game and an umpire, playing "double-blind" with a separating screen between the players/boards (think of the game *Battleship*) will be enough to boost this element at a small cost in playing time.

Friction: *Moderate*. One of the attractions of this system is how often things go awry. Machine guns jam or run out of ammo--trying to fix this sometimes malfunctions the weapon for good. Infantry trying to rally sometimes quit the field; at other times they go "berserk" and mindlessly charge the closest enemy unit. Squads dramatically failing morale checks go down in quality. Players are never sure how many shots their high rate of fire weapons will get off at any one time. The game system layers on weapons and capabilities, each with a small probability of succeeding in spectacular ways (and in failing in equally dramatic fashion). What this means is that while any one thing has a small chance of going wrong, the combinations and permutations typically result in something amiss each and every turn. There are also instances of amazing coincidence and luck that hearten players beaten down by the friction in the game. This design approach contributes to the strong narrative elements in the game.

Fluidity: *Moderate*. While players do move in an "I-Go/U-Go" manner, a number of the phases within a player turn are integrated or otherwise interactive, so the fluidity factor is something to consider.

Evaluation as Warfighting Model (continued):

Combat Power:

•**Physical**: *Moderate*. There is a reasonable differentiation between technical quality of weapons between nationalities, as well as squad firepower capabilities.

•**Mental**: *Moderate*. This is done very abstractly through leadership modifiers and squad Experience Level Rating to indicate tactical proficiency. OODA Loop/Decision Cycle modeling shows how better led forces will execute slightly faster, gaining growing advantages in combat over time.

•**Moral**: *Moderate*. The design primarily relies on Morale Levels for both leaders and squads; leadership modifiers affect morale when receiving fire and when trying to rally.

Disorder: *Moderate*. Friction is the biggest contributor to this--battles become quite messy very quickly.

Complexity: *Moderate*. The game is not as easy to learn as other WW2 ground tactical game systems, but the narrative power and excitement makes it worth it. Mastery is seemingly always elusive, but players feel like they can always do better in their next game; complexity of play does not put them off.

After Action Report Questions to the Players:

1) How did you see the situation given the mission for your side? What was it about the enemy and environment that you thought gave you reason to think you could win? What was it that you considered major obstacles to accomplishing your mission?

2) What was your plan at the beginning of the scenario? What went wrong and how did this change your initial estimate? How did you adapt to the situation and what were your reasons for this?

3) What surprised you? What would you do differently if you got to re-fight this situation again? What did you learn from this experience?

4) Do you think there is any value to wargaming small-unit actions like this? Why/why not?

5) Is there any aspect of maneuver warfare you think wargames such as this might help teach? Why or why don't you think so?

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