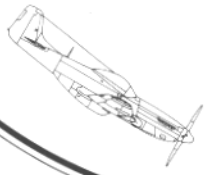
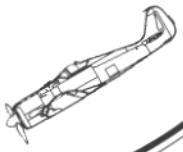
Observations on *Eighth Air Force*

Rule Clarifications and Recommendations



By Chris Janiec



Having played and enjoyed *DOWN IN FLAMES (DiF)* ever since buying *The Rise of the Luftwaffe (RotL)* on my first trip back to the States from Iceland in 1993, I looked forward with great anticipation to the release of Volume II in the series, *Eighth Air Force (8AF). I* was not disappointed, as the new concepts and refinements introduced greatly enhance the realism and variation in the game without detracting from its playability and fun. Repeated playing and experimenting with house rules has revealed a few areas where the *8AF* rules can be clarified or enhanced, however.

This article began as a series of questions and recommendations sent to GMT. It has evolved into the form you see it here, where my interpretations and recommendations are presented for public playtesting and appraisal. Notes on the bases for these interpretations are included in italics. Any and all comments are welcome to me c/o *C3i*.

Rules

2.1 CORRECTION: *DiF* includes six general types of aircraft (including Transports), not five.

5.1 and 5.4 CLARIFICATION: Although mentioned here, Patrol aircraft aren't Fighters (see 2.1).

5.3.1 Experimental ADDITION: You can never hold more Full Throttle counters than a jet's Speed Rating. *lust as Performance limits the number of cards held, the Speed Rating should limit the number of Full Throttle counters held to represent the upper limit of a jet's airspeedlenergy.*

7.2.2 CLARIFICATION: Any aircraft following a Leader climbing with a Vertical Roll discards two cards total, one to follow and one for the altitude gain. *This rule should not be misconstrued as stating that Leaders must discard an additional card to follow a Vertical Roll. The only real difference from following during the Adjust Altitude step is that Tailing Leaders must discard one card to follow, just like Advantaged Leaders.*

7.4 Strongly-Recommended CHANGE: Rocket aircraft draw cards equal to their Horsepower Rating at all altitudes. *Because rockets carry their own oxidizer, they develop thrust independently of atmospheric pressure. In fact, they actually accelerate less at low altitudes due to increased drag from the thicker atmosphere, but this effect is insignificant at* DiF's *scale.*

13.5 CORRECTION: Two aircraft in *8AF* had their Point Values listed incorrectly, and should be:

- Bf.109 G 8/6 not 9/6
- M.S.406 5/4 not 5/3

A number of aircraft have had their point ratings adjusted in 8AF *from* RotL:

Bf.110 C	*5/4 not 5/3*
Hurricane 1	*5/4 not 5/3*
P-40	*5/4 not 5/3*
1-16	*3/2 not 4/3*
Spitfire V	*8/5 not 8/6*

The M.S.406 was still 5/3 when it has exactly the same ratings as the Hurricane I (and P-40 C, except for bombing); it should be rated equally. Similarly, the Bf.109 G should not be worth 9/6 when the equally-rated Bf.109 F is still 8/6. Editor's Note: A future article will recommend a change to the Bf 109 G, bringing it in line with its original Point Value.

17.1.3d Strongly-Recommended ADDITION: Unlike Fighter Wingmen, which attack with no Burst Rating, Light Bomber Wingmen attack using their Leader's Burst Rating plus one (e.g., a Ju.87 B Wingman can only fire 1 Burst per turn).

17.1.5d Strongly-Recommended ADDITION: Reduce the Offensive Rating of loaded Light Bomber Wingmen by one. *Light Bomber Wingmen are too potent offensively, and with new rule 17.1.5 penalties replacing those in* RotL, *they are in some respects more effective now when loaded. Consider that in* 8AF, *a Swordfish I Wingman with (or without) a torpedo is exactly as effective as a Hurricane I Wingman when attacking a German Wingman. This is crazy! The two changes recommended here redress this imbalance while remaining within the spirit of the rules.*

17.1.4 CLARIFICATION: Light and Medium Bombers with the word "Torpedo" on their card are Torpedo Bombers.

17.2.8 CLARIFICATION: Damaged Bombers fall out of Formation immediately upon becoming Damaged. *Other interpretations are plausible, since the* 8AF *rule as written does not specify when a Damaged aircraft falls out of Formation-at the end of all firing by the aircraft which Damaged them, at the end of the Player-Turn when they are Damaged, or at the end of the Game-Turn when they are Damaged. We used the end of the Player-Turn, i.e., after the Leader's card play, even if the Wingman scored the Damaging hits, but Dan used "immediately" in the* C3i #6 *After Action Report. This is consistent with rule 5.2.1.*

19.3.6 CHANGE: The Evasive Action Skill definition should read, "If the aircraft is damaged or flying a Night mission, the aircraft's Evasive Action reduces enemy Leader Bursts by one (-1) and Wingman Offensive card draws by one (-1) when they shoot at the Evasive aircraft." *The Evasive*

Action (EA) rating for Heavy Bomber crews doesn't make sense when they're in Formation, where the whole idea was to remain in the box formation for mutual fire support. It definitely should apply to RAF night missions, since many pilots saved themselves from German night fighters with the "corkscrew" maneuver they were taught-but none of the British experienced crews in SAF *have this particular attribute!*

21.2 Recommended ADDITION: Allied Medium Bombers at Very Low Altitude may use Level, not Saturation Bombing, against Naval Targets and Freighters from 1943 onward. *This reflects the use of skip bombing tactics, which were so effective at the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March 1943.*

21.4.1 CLARIFICATION: Torpedo Bombing may only be used against Naval Targets and Freighters. *Freighters are Logistical rather than Naval Targets.*

21.6.1 CLARIFICATION: "...any Fighter or Light Bomber with a Burst Rating at Very Low Altitude may Strafe..." *The rule as written in* 8AF *includes the Mosquito B.IV, which has* ***no*** *machine guns or cannon and should not be able to strafe. This clarification will account for future stalwarts with no forward firing armament such as the Boulton-Paul Defiant, Fairey Barracuda and Nakajima B5N1 Kate.*

21.6.3 Experimental ADDITION: Fighters with "+" Burst Ratings draw extra Strafing cards equal to their + Ratings. *Although Fighters with Heavy Cannon are no more likely to hit a target when strafing, they will cause more damage to most target classes if they hit them. This rule is in the spirit of rule 18.7 on Anti-Tank Guns, but its impact on play balance has not been assessed.*

23.1 CLARIFICATION: The third bullet under "Perform Campaign Missions" should read, "Secretly select Target-Bound, Over-Target, Home-Bound and Aircraft Resource Options". *The Campaign Summary has players "Secretly select, then reveal Target-Bound, Over-Target, Home Bound and Aircraft Resource Options." This contradicts rule 23.5.6, which states, "These options are declared as they come into play," with an example following. We use 23.5.6-it is more suspenseful, realistic and fun. This is also what Dan appears to advocate in the* C3i #6 *After Action Report.*

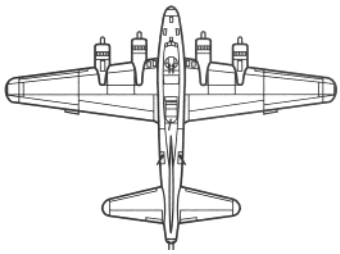
23.1 CLARIFICATION AND ADDITION: The fifth bullet simply states "Conduct Mission" without clarifying a number of sequence of play issues that don't arise in the Basic Game. Add these bullets:

- Select and reveal Bomber starting Altitude (if necessary). *Historically, the defenders would almost always have adequate time and information to scramble their interceptors to any altitude desired before attacking the bombers, so we say the Bombers always pick their Altitude first, then Fighters.*
- Each game-turn, reveal any applicable Options, adding arriving Fighters after other Fighters already present have completed their player-turns. As each Element arrives (alternating between Escorts and Interceptors, Escorts first), select its Altitude, add it to the player order, and complete its player turn. *The* 8AF *rules do not address where in the sequence these events occur. These are our house rules, which appear to jibe with what Dan does in the* C3i *#6 After Action Report. Other interpretations are possible.*
- If no Interceptors are present at the end of a game-turn, all remaining Escort Leaders discard their hands. Escort Leaders present without hands when Interceptors arrive immediately draw new full hands before the Interceptor player-turn(s). *The* 8AF *rules don't forbid Escorts discarding and drawing cards normally when no Interceptors are present, but it doesn't "feel" right, and the P-47 D's and Mustangs can end up with some awesome hands by the time the poor Germans arrive with their random draws. Dan's solution in the* C3i #6 *After Action Report is a good one, codified here.*

23.5.4 CHANGE: Delete this section. *It is redundant with 23.5.6.*

23.5.5 CHANGE: Delete this section. *It is redundant with 23.5.3 and out of sequence.*

23.5.6 CLARIFICATION: If an Aircraft Resource includes two elements (e.g., German #5 in Daylight 1942 Campaign), both need not arrive



on the same turn. *Dan doesn't play it this way in the* C3i #6 *After Action Report, and neither do we.*

23.6.1 ADDITION: Medium and Heavy Bombers may only Disengage from a Mission during the Target Bound Phase.

24.2.4 Recommended CHANGE: All Fighters are considered to have a Speed of six (6) for this purpose. All Light Bombers are considered to have a Speed equal to their Performance Rating. *Crediting Light Bombers with a Speed of 6 for purposes of figuring Target-Bound Turns is high, presuming Bomber Speed is based upon cruising speed. Stukas were withdrawn from the Battle of Britain, for example, because they were too slow. I recommend using Light Bomber Performance Ratings as roughly equivalent to Speed Ratings, even though the former are adjusted to account for maneuverability, simply because we have nothing else readily available with which to work and it seems to work out about right in play.*

25.2 ADDITION: In Campaign Missions, Interceptor Wingmen may attack during the first player-turn (i.e., the rule 3.1 restriction on Wingman attacks does not apply). *Since this is strictly a play-balance mechanism, I believe it is unnecessary,*
and this is how Dan plays turn 1 in the C3i *#6 After Action Report.*

26.4 CHANGE: If a Bombing or Strafing Leader is Advantaged or Tailing at the beginning of his player turn during the Bomb Turn, his Position is lost, and the Aircraft become Neutral. *It is just as tough to stay on another fighter's tail when you are bombing as when you're strafing!*

27.3.3 CORRECTION: The Example is incorrect. Fighters joining on Homeward-Bound Turn 2 of nine should still have eight turns to fly, not seven, and expend eight Fuel. The stated rule and the Extended Fuel example are correct.

29.0-29.1 CLARIFICATION: Ju.88's which bombed adjust from Low back to Medium or Very Low back to Low Altitude.

31.0 CORRECTION: The Example omits the VPs for the three Ju.87's which had gone Over Target and Returned Undamaged for an additional nine victory points (total of 22, not 13).

34.1.4 Experimental ADDITION: (Optional Rule) Players may include Pilots and Crews in Operations. *This may have a significant impact upon play balance, and has not been adequately tested.*

35.1 CLARIFICATIONS: There are serious gaps in the information needed to play the Schweinfurt operation:

- German Wingmen may attack the bombers on the first player-turn of a Segment, and are NOT restricted from doing so by rule 3.1. *I believe you should be able to attack.*
- The Blue-border German Element in the Target-Bound Segment is 2 Fw.190 A's, 1 Ju.88 C.
- Damaged, Target-Bound bombers may attempt to Disengage (see rule 23.6). *Since the term "Abort" is no longer used, substitute the* 8AF *term "Disengage." As in the campaigns, this means no other bombers (Target-Bound undamaged or any Home-Bound bombers) may Disengage.*
- If playing both the August and October scenarios, August casualties have no effect on October aircraft availability. *The October Mission is a stand-alone scenario rather than the second half of a two-mission operation. Do not play both and use the cumulative results to determine the Victory Level.*
- During an October Mission, the extra Bf.109 G Element appears during the Target-Bound Segment; the rulebook is incorrect. *The rulebook allows this Element to appear "at the start of any one segment," which I prefer, but since this contradiction was not changed on the corrected Operation Sheet in* C3i #6, *I assume the sheet is accurate.*

35.3 CLARIFICATION: The base duration of the Ground Attack Mission is "9 Target-Bound and 8 Home-Bound" turns as per the rulebook; the campaign sheet is incorrect. *I believe the rulebook ranges are correct or the Stuka missions become entirely too short. If using my recommended change to rule 24.2.4, though, the campaign sheet base durations of 8 Target-Bound and 7 Home-Bound turns work fine.*

Bombing Display

Flak Recommended CHANGE: Flak against both Saturation and Torpedo Bombing should be "+1 Target" at Low Altitude and "+1 Target & Area" at Very Low Altitude. *Flak at Low/Very Low Altitudes should be more effective against big Saturation Bombers and slow Torpedo Bombers than against Dive and Level Bombers. Although angular motion is greater for Saturation Bombers, light flak has afield day.*

Night Mission Bombing Table Recommended CHANGE: Change the "Direct" result from a Hit to a Miss. *Given the notorious inaccuracy of night bombing, the* 8AF *table seems rather generous, as it only reduces average bombing results by 38.5 per cent (from 1.3625 DPlcard using a 1-3-5 Damage Point scale to 0.8375 DP/card). If his comments in the* C3i #6 *Designer's Notes are an indication, Dan seems to agree. Including this change further reduces the average result to 0.625 DPI card (45.9 per cent) without introducing any complication.*

Malta Campaign

Hurricane II Aircraft Cards CORRECTION: The Hurricane II's in the Malta Campaign published in *C3i #3* with Horsepower and Wingman Defensive Ratings of 3 are incorrect. The Hurricane II's in *8AF* have Horsepower and Wingman Defensive Ratings of 2 and are correct. *The Hurricane II in the Malta variant was grossly overrated.*

Campaign Sheets

Daylight 1942, Fuel Endurance Chart CORRECTION: Delete the Bf.110 C. *None are available.*

Daylight 1942, United States Aircraft Resource #6 Recommended CHANGE: Substitute Skalski for Douglas Bader. *Bader was shot down and captured 9 August 1941.*

Daylight 1944, German **Resource** #7 Recommended CHANGE: Substitute Galland for Hartmann. *Since Erich Hartmann never got closer to the Eighth Air Force than Romania in 1944, he shouldn't be part of this campaign. Though Adolf Galland wasn't actually flying then, either, he more likely could have been.*

Resource Sheet

Bad Assembly Recommended CHANGE: The Intercepting player does not gain the victory points for any Bombers destroyed. *The lost opportunities to gain points and missing support are bad enough for the attacking player. Awarding the intercepting player 20-40 "free" points makes this Resource too powerful.*

Clouds Over Target Recommended ADDITION: Also reduce the number of Target Flak cards drawn by one if a blue-bordered card is drawn. *Clouds should also have an adverse effect on anti-aircraft defenses.*

Fighter Sweep CHANGE: The Sweeping aircraft must then Voluntarily Disengage in the next game-turn. *The phrase "at the end of their first subsequent turn when Neutral, Advantaged or Tailing" is an artifact from* RotL. *This change brings the Resource into agreement with the new* 8AF *Disengagement rules.*

Loose Formations CLARIFICATION: Enemy Formation aircraft draw one less card than normal when under attack (but never less than the Turret Defense of one aircraft). Does not apply to aircraft which are out of formation due to being Damaged or are the sole survivors of a Formation. *Without this clarification, a Damaged aircraft can have better defense than some aircraft still in Formation.*

Missed Target Recommended ADDITION: Reduce the number of Target Flak cards drawn to equal the target's Area Flak. *Like clouds, this Resource should also have an adverse effect on anti-aircraft defenses.*

Tight Formations CLARIFICATION: Does not apply to aircraft which are out of formation due to being Damaged or are the sole survivors of a Formation. *A lone aircraft cannot fly loose or tight formation.*