

FIRE IN THE SKY

THE GREAT PACIFIC WAR 1941-1945

FAQ (APR-2022)

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1.0 OVERVIEW OF FITS REPRINT

The PHALANX reprint of Fire in the Sky (mid-2022) is almost exactly the first printing. Most of the changes are simple clarifications and rewording based on players' feedback:

- Examples of clarifications include:
 - what happens when a Task Force leaves port but stays in the same hex
 - which Transport Points are used by all Allied air units with different nationality flags.
- Some corrections relate to scenarios and examples of play to make them clearer and in line with FITS rules (note that damaged US BBs arrive later now)
- We've added a table of contents and an index
- We've made one slight graphic change (a lighter navy blue for US naval and marine units).

There are only two key changes/clarifications which needed a little more explanation:

- Oil point costs for a zero-hex move
- Reinforcement marker damages.

The previous PHALANX FITS rules used two different methods for calculating oil point costs for a zero-hex move (**0x OPs** for operational and **1x OPs** for reaction moves). To make them consistent and in line with the MMP version, we have decided to unify them to one method for the FITS reprint (i.e. **1x OPs** for a zero-hex move). So now Japanese naval units always pay oil points if they form a Task Force, even if they remain in the same hex.

On the other hand, the PHALANX idea of "damaged once" related to replacement markers was well received by FITS players. So we decided to keep it for the FITS reprint, too, and only highlight in the rulebook that it is different from the MMP version.

2.0 LIST OF FITS ELEMENTS

- The FITS Game Box (mid-2022):
 - Game Board (the Map) and Battle Board – no changes
 - Rulebook & Player Aid Card – *slightly improved*
 - Scenario Book – *slightly improved and Scenario 8 added*
 - Expanded Sequence of Play – *a new player aid card introduced (4-pages rulebook summary)*
 - Naval units – *slight colour changes*
 - Land/air units and all other markers/screens – no changes
 - Dice and cubes – no changes.
- The additional FITS files (available online only):
 - FITS FAQ – *a new file added (this one)*
 - Extended Game Turn Track – *new cards to organise reinforcement and returning units during the game*

- Scenario 8 ‘Operation MI’ – a new quick-to-learn scenario (one game turn, using $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Map and fewer units and markers than for full scenarios), ideal for events and tournaments.

3.0 ERRATA AND CLARIFICATIONS

No errata or clarifications needed so far for the mid-2022 PHALANX reprint of Fire in the Sky.

4.0 FITS FAQs

4.1 The Map (with Bases and Home Bases)

4.1.1 What is the difference between a sea hex and a land hex?



A hex may be an all-sea hex (“sea” hex), a sea and land hex (“land” hex), or, in the unique case of the Gangetic Plain, an all-land hex.

Unlike sea hexes, units may remain in land hexes at the end of movement. The type of unit that can remain depends on the hex. Hexes with bases (squares) may hold land, air and naval units, up to the specified Capacity amounts. Hexes without bases (circles) may only hold land units.

4.1.2 What is the purpose of an Occupied Base marker?



An Occupied Base Marker is only a temporary status of a Base during the Combat Phase - i.e. a base that began the turn controlled by the non-phasing player but that now only has land units of the phasing player (irrespective of any non-phasing player air or naval units at anchor remaining in the hex). This rule means that even if you successfully occupy a base containing enemy air units, you do not prevent those air units playing a role (i.e. Air ZOCs or long-range support) in any remaining combat in other hexes this turn. The only way to prevent them playing such a role during the Combat Phase is by eliminating them via Air Strike (11.2.2.4).

Base control changes at the Return to Base Phase (12.2), once all combats are completed. At this point the enemy air units and naval units at anchor are eliminated.

4.1.3 Where do eliminated Australian and New Zealand units re-enter play?

The West Coast USA (i.e. the US Home Base).

4.2 Air Units

4.2.1 Do enemy Air ZOCs cancel each other out?

No (3.3.2).

However, note that a friendly air unit in a hex in an enemy Air ZOC negates the effect of that ZOC on a Supply Line tracing through that hex. Note also that an enemy Air ZOC has no impact on One-hex Deployment movement (7.2).

4.2.2 What is the difference between an air unit and an Air Point?



An air unit represents both combat aircraft and their logistical support. An air unit is ‘active’ when it is positioned at a friendly-controlled base (i.e. it may be used for combat or to interdict enemy movement via its Air ZOC), or ‘inactive’ while transporting by sea or disembarking into an occupied base.



Air Points represent air power during the course of a specific battle. The number of Air Points a side has in a battle is initially determined (at the start of the combat) by the Air Strength of the involved carrier naval units and air units. The number of Air Points may decrease over the course of the combat due to losses from air-to-air and anti-aircraft fire, or simply after using them for Air Strikes.

4.2.3 Since reducing Air Points has no effect on the actual air unit, how can air units be destroyed?

There are four ways for an air unit to be destroyed: 1) by Air Strikes on their base, 2) they are sunk while transported by sea as a part of Task Force (TF), 3) by enemy occupation of their base without friendly land units present, and 4) by being voluntarily disbanded.

4.3 Land Units

4.3.1 Does a land unit that undertakes a One-hex deployment to an enemy occupied hex engage in combat, and if so when?

Yes. Combat occurs in the Combat Phase (after all Operational movement and any non-phasing player Reactions). The phasing player decides the order of Battles if multiple hexes contain opposing units.

4.3.2 Can a land unit perform an amphibious landing if the attacking player fails to establish Sea Control?

No. As per rule 11.2.5.1: “Any land units and replacement markers in the Bombardment Task Force boxes may now move into their friendly Land at Base box if the player has Sea Control.

4.4 Naval Units and Task Forces

4.4.1 What is the difference between the Operational and Deployment side for Naval units?



The Deployment side has a prominent anchor symbol left of the unit's name.



The Operational side has the national flag. The stats for a unit are the same on both sides. The purpose of the two sides is to provide players with an aide-mémoire during Operational Movement, Reaction, Combat and Return to Base Phases, as the treatment of naval units is different in these two situations depending on if the unit is 'in port' (on the Deployment side) or in a Task Force (on the Operational side).

Naval units are by default in port (Deployment side face-up). If at any point they form a Task Force they flip to the Operational side. Forming a Task Force is a requirement if they want to 1) undertake Operational movement as the phasing player or 2) make a Reaction as the non-phasing player.

This is important as:

- **[A]** During combat, naval units on their Deployment side in the Battle hex (i.e. naval units on the non-phasing player side that have not formed a Task Force to react) are placed in the Ships at Anchor box on the Battle Board (11.2.1). These units do not contribute to the Battle, but may be the target of an Air Strike (11.2.4).
- **[B]** In the Return to Base Phase, all Naval units on their Operational side (i.e. any naval unit that undertook Operational movement or a Reaction) must return to base (12.1).

4.4.2 What is a Task Force and how many units does it comprise?

A Task Force is a group of one or more units that undertake Operational movement or Reaction. Whenever a unit undertakes Operational movement (the phasing player) or Reaction (the non-phasing player) it does so as part of a Task Force, following the rules set out in 8.1 and 9.0, respectively. In both situations, any naval units involved flip from their Deployment side to their Operational side.

A Task Force undertaking Operational movement comprises a minimum of one unit, and a maximum of four naval units and one air or one land unit. This means that a single air or land unit moving alone during the Operational phase is still considered to be a Task Force. A Task Force that is Reacting can contain up to four naval units. Because only naval units can React, a Reacting Task Force may never contain air or land units. A Task Force that is Reacting may remain in

the same hex as it began. The reason for Reacting within the same hex is that it means that any naval units already in the hex can flip to their Operational side, and so engage in combat as part of the Carrier or Bombardment Task Forces.

Units in the same hex can form multiple Task Forces as part of Operational movement or Reaction. The units should be separated and stacked into the relevant Task Forces as part of the movement or Reaction.

4.4.3 What is the difference between the Carrier and Bombardment Task Force?



Every Task Force (TF) is always one of two types: a Carrier or Bombardment. Every TF which contains any CV or CVL

is automatically a Carrier TF. All others are Bombardment TFs. The decision on which Naval units will be added to the TFs is made as part of the Task Force creation (i.e. Operational or Reaction Phase). It is not possible to voluntarily change a type or composition of TF once it has been formed. However, two exceptions exist. First, a type of TF may be automatically changed after the Submarine Attack Segment (11.1). (For example if following a successful submarine attack a lone CV/CVL has been damaged or sunk, this will automatically change the type of TF from Carrier to Bombardment.) Second, during Surface Combat, individual naval units from Bombardment TFs may be sent to fight for Sea Control (11.2.3).

Carrier Task Force



Because Carrier Task Forces were generally many miles away from the 'actual' combat (think Midway),

only naval units in the Carrier TF with Air Strength are able to attack enemy units. Likewise, units in the Carrier TF can only be targeted by enemy air strikes and submarine attacks. However, to protect your precious carriers you may also want to include Destroyers (DD) in such a Task Force as they can provide effective screening against submarine attacks (11.1.2), and/or other naval units to provide anti-aircraft support against air strikes (11.2.2.4[A]).

Adding a land unit, reinforcement marker or air unit to the Carrier Task Force may not be sensible as they will serve no purpose during a Battle (they are unable to land unless they are in a Bombardment TF).

Bombardment Task Force



As opposed to the Carrier TF, historically naval units from the Bombardment

TFs were used for close combat. In the game, naval

units will either be used for surface combat purposes to establish Sea Control, or for land bombardment to support land units undertaking land combat - but not both. Establishing Sea Control through successful surface combat is required to undertake an amphibious landing (land units and replacement markers) and disembark air units. So having the right content of Bombardment Task Forces to achieve this is critical.

4.4.4 Since carrier units do not participate in surface combat, how may they be damaged or sunk?

There are four ways for a carrier unit to be damaged or sunk: 1) by a submarine attack, 2) by Air Strikes when in the Carrier TF Box or when at anchor, 3) by enemy occupation without friendly land units in the base, and 4) by being voluntarily disbanded.

4.4.5 Can a unit React into the same hex in which it starts?

Yes. To do so, form one or more Task Forces of Reacting naval units and flip them to their Operational side. Note that doing this will mean that they return to their Home Base in the Return to Base Phase. It is an example of a zero-hex move, but note it still costs Oil Points for Japanese units.

4.4.6 Why would I react to a hex with an enemy unit that wasn't attacking me?

A reacting Task Force must end its movement in a hex with an enemy unit of any type (9.0). This does not need to be a hex that the phasing player has moved units to to attack this turn. The reason a player may want to do this is to avoid naval units from being damaged (for example by moving it to a space where the opposing units are unable/unlikely to be able to damage it).

4.5 Battles

4.5.1 Can combat ever occur in an all sea hex?

No. Combat only occurs when units from the opposing sides are in the same hex. There is no concept of 'intercepting during movement' in Fire in the Sky, so you can only attack stationary units on land or at a Base (notwithstanding the non-phasing player may subsequently React to bring in additional units).

4.5.2 During the Combat Phase is there always combat in hexes with units from both sides present?

Yes. Although in some instances units will not be able to attack each other, so practically the Battle can be skipped. For example, if the Phasing player only has reduced strength (bracketed) land units for a land combat, or if a Task Force of the non-phasing player has reacted into a hex only containing land units of the opponent.

4.5.3 How can I better grasp the steps of the combat phase?

The sequence can look a bit intimidating, but if you think of each step as chronologically coherent to how combat in the Pacific Theatre generally occurred, it starts to become clearer.

If combat only involves land units, players skip directly to the Land Combat stage, starting with checking for supply. Otherwise, during Operational movement or Reaction the involved Task Forces will have been formed.

Some things to think about when forming your TFs:

- Naval units from the Carrier TF Box with Air Strength may air-attack any enemy TFs or an enemy Base (air units at base / naval units at anchor / support ground combat)
- Naval units from the Bombardment TF Box may be used for Sea Control with a possible surface combat, or to support ground combat through bombardment.
- Land units and replacement markers from the Bombardment TF Box may perform amphibious assault into a base and fight.
- Air units from the Bombardment TF Box may disembark into a base if it is controlled or has an occupied base marker.

Following that:

4.5.3.1 Submarines (11.1)



The first step is to determine if submarines attack (represented by submarine points) and do damage as the Task Forces on each side position themselves for combat. Note that submarine attacks can only target Task Forces (Operational side up), not ships at anchor (Deployment side up). Submarines combat first and simultaneously because their attacks represent the constant submarine pressure facing naval units for the duration of their movement up to the point of battle, from their starting port to their final objective.

4.5.3.2 Task Force positioning (11.2.1)

The second step is to position the TFs. Task Forces with carriers (CVs or CVLs), i.e. Carriers TFs, must be placed in the Carrier Task Force Box. All other Task Forces, i.e. Bombardment TFs, must be placed into the Bombardment Task Force Box.



4.5.3.3 Air combat (11.2.2)

This involves both the initial dog-fighting (air-to-air combat) to determine who has control of the skies, and subsequently where remaining Air Strength not lost to the dog-fighting will be targeted.

Air-to-air combat



The step begins by totalling for each side all Air Strength in the combat, from involved land-based air units and carriers. The total for each side is their Air Points.

The success of air-to-air combat is abstracted to the loss of Air Points for the opponent, and consequently their capacity to subsequently use Air Strength to attack naval or land-based units. At the end of air-to-air combat, the victor will have either Air Superiority (more remaining Air Points) or Air Supremacy (opponent has no remaining Air Points). The player with Air Superiority has advantages when it comes to positioning and withdrawing during any subsequent naval surface combat. Air Supremacy grants this and additional modifiers to Air Strikes and Ground Support. If neither side has more Air Points, or both have zero Air Points, Air Superiority is randomly determined.

Air strikes

Following air-to-air combat, any surviving Air Points must be assigned to attack either enemy Task Forces in the opposing Carrier or Bombardment Task Force Boxes, or opposing units at the Base in the hex where the combat is occurring (i.e. air units at base or ships at anchor).

The number of Air Points assigned to such an attack can be reduced through successful anti-aircraft fire (11.2.2.4[A]) by the opponent.

Any remaining Air Points (not lost to anti-aircraft fire) can then either be used for 1) immediate attack rolls on the chosen target (Task Force or air units in the Air at Base box or any naval units in the Ships at Anchor box), or 2) set aside to provide ground support for any subsequent land combat (with the success rolls occurring at that stage (11.2.5.3)). The damage from air strikes is calculated and applied before the next step (Surface Combat), except as noted if the Air Points were instead set aside to provide Ground Support.

4.5.3.4 Naval combat (11.2.3)

This is where the Bombardment Task Forces come into play.



Surface engagement positioning

The player that has achieved Air Superiority/Supremacy in the previous step is now able to 'scout out' the opponent. In game terms this means the player without Air Superiority has to decide first which naval units in their Bombardment TF Box will be thrown into surface naval engagement with the enemy, moving them into the Sea Control Box, and which will be kept back in the Bombardment TF Box for later bombarding of opposing land forces. Once they have decided, the player with Air Superiority/

Supremacy does the same. Note that we say here 'units,' not Task Forces. The Task Forces in the Bombardment TF Box may now be separated for this step. An important consideration to note here is that any units left in the Bombardment TF Box can no longer be attacked. However, if the player loses the Surface Combat (involving units in the Sea Control box), then any units left in the Bombardment TF Box will be removed, returning as reinforcements in their next reinforcement phase, and so unable to undertake land bombardment.

Once the players have determined which units will directly engage with the opponent in surface combat by moving them to the Sea Control Box, the individual units are then paired off against each other, again with the player with Air Superiority/Supremacy going second and so getting the choice of which units to match up with those of the opponent.

Withdrawal

Following this matching up, players - the player without Air Superiority/Supremacy first - decide if they don't like the look of the fight and want to withdraw. Withdrawal is all or nothing; players can't just withdraw some units.

Units withdrawing can be fired upon depending on the movement allowance of the units involved. Once any firing is resolved, the sea combat is over and since they are the only force remaining, the non-withdrawing player claims Sea Control. Withdrawn units return as reinforcements in the next round.

Surface combat

Units in the Sea Control Box fire off against those of the opponent they are paired with. If units from both sides remain at the end of the firing (i.e. units that haven't been damaged or sunk), another combat round begins with the player without Air Superiority/Supremacy again lining up their surviving units, before the other player does the same. Note, this means that both players get another chance to withdraw.

Sea Control

If there are no units in the Sea Control Box from either side at the end of combat, no one has Sea Control. If only one player has units remaining in the Sea Control Box, they have Sea Control. All units in the opposing Bombardment TF Box are removed and return as reinforcements in their next reinforcement phase. Units in the Sea Control Box remain there for the remainder of the combat, but they are not able to undertake land bombardment.

Sea Control is very important! If an attacking player does not have Sea Control they are unable to land (from the Bombardment TF Box) land units, replacement markers, and/or air units. If they do have Sea Control, it is at this point they may choose to land land units or land replacements (but not yet air

units, that only happens at the end during the Administration step).

Once any land units or land replacements have been landed - if any - there is a combat between any land units in the hex, including opposing land units that began the combat phase in the hex.

4.5.3.5 Land combat (11.2.5.5)

A key point to remember about land combat in Fire in the Sky is that *at least one attacking land unit cannot be damaged*. If the phasing player fails to score more hits than the defender, the combat ends with all the units remaining in place, no side taking any damage. Also, remember that a reduced combat strength (bracketed) land unit cannot instigate an attack, so if the phasing player failed to get land replacements landed, and only has reduced land units in the battle hex, there is no combat.

Supply

Before combat resolution, check the supply situation. Units involved in land combat that are out of supply are penalized with a negative modifier in the combat rolls (as per the Combat Table on the player aid). Land units from the side with Sea Control are automatically in supply, regardless of the supply line check; while units from the side without Sea Control are automatically out of supply. If neither side has Sea Control then the supply line rules (3.3.4) come into effect.

Combat resolution

This is a simple roll-off based on:

- [A] the combined combat strength number of attacking and defending land units, plus
- [B] for both sides, any ground support provided by Air Points set aside for Ground Support, and/or the combined Firepower ratings of any naval units remaining in the Bombardment Task Force Box (i.e. not used in the surface combat battle for Sea Control), plus
- [C] for the defending side, automatic hits equal to total air strength of friendly units at the base. (This means that defending air units are very powerful, both in terms of how they contribute to air combat but also this very powerful boost they provide to defending land units as they strafe and bomb attacking land forces).

If the attacking force gets more hits than the defending force, defending land and air units take a step loss, and potentially are eliminated (see 11.3.5). Otherwise, there are no losses on either side.

4.5.3.6 Administration (11.2.6).

Since there is only one round of land combat, it is quite possible that the combat phase will end with little change to the situation in the battle hex. Opposing, non-eliminated, land units will remain in the same hex until the next turn, at which point, unless they are moved out, they will engage in another combat.

If the attacker has established Sea Control and eliminated all defending land units, Air Units in the attacker's Bombardment TF Box can now be landed in the hex.

Any land units remaining in the attacker's Bombardment TF Box at this stage are removed to return as a reinforcement in their next reinforcements phase. Essentially land units can only land via an amphibious landing immediately following the conclusion of surface combat. If they did not undertake an amphibious landing they cannot at the Administrative step of the combat decide to land.

4.5.4 Is ground support limited during land combat?

Yes. As per rule 11.2.5.3: *"This number of ground support hits [from remaining Air Points and Naval Bombardment] cannot exceed a player's total Combat Strength in their respective Land at Base box."*

For example, if you attack with a friendly 2-Strength land unit, then the maximum allowed ground support HITs against your enemy is 2 (it does not matter the enemy strength). That is why it is not possible to hit an enemy land unit at a Base using only own air/naval units.



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