Red Banner

A quarterly fanzine for the Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) board game
By the DC Conscripts ASL Club

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Commissar's Call: *FOCUS ON MACHINE GUNS*

In this issue, an authentic infantryman shares with us his training on the application of machine guns to demonstrate how they mimic real life in ASL. And, we have another Indo China scenario that appropriately features machine guns. Those grim reapers are nasty necessities of modern war.

With respect to medium and heavy machine guns, my advice to players is "fire!" Sounds simple, but many players struggle to implement that straightforward command. Why? They fall into the trap of trying to first move their machine gun to the "perfect position." If your key machine guns begin the game in the wrong place, in transport, and/or dismantled then yes, you will have to move them. But, don't fret over that too much. Get them to the best vantage point you can in short order – a turn or two at most – and then "fire!" The defender should take care to set up in the best vantage point available and then bang away. Generally speaking, moving your medium or heavy machine guns means you are not getting the most out of them. Avoid moving them. Firing from a "second best" position is better than wasting another turn moving that thing.

Conscripts' Chatter: *HUMAN WAVE*

If you haven't done so already, go ahead and register for this summer's human wave tournament.

https://humanwaveconscripts.com/registration/

The tournament will take place at the Quality Inn Tysons Corner. It is located at 1587 Spring Hill Road, Vienna, VA, 22182. The hotel offers free shuttle service to within 3 miles. Local amenities include several restaurants from fast food to high end steak houses. There is a Walmart less than a 10-minute walk away.

New Article: *PICK 'EM DEEP!*

By David Garvin

In the world of Advanced Squad Leader, many of the in-game weapons, squads and vehicles do their best to mimic how those things interacted with one another in the battles of the Second World War. In this writing, I will focus on the use of machine guns in Advanced Squad Leader. I will attempt to shine some light on the employment considerations for the use of Machine Guns in the real world, and then show how this can be used (or not) when playing a game of ASL.

First of all, what is a machine-gun? One definition I found online was this: "*A machine gun is a fully automatic mounted or portable firearm designed to fire bullets in rapid succession from an ammunition belt or magazine, typically at a rate of 300 rounds per minute or higher*." Although this definition is broad and can be applied to many automatic weapons, a machine gun for the purposes of this article is one that is designed to provide support fire for infantry maneuver. Some examples include the Browning M2 Heavy Machine Gun (the "Ma Deuce" 50 caliber), the Soviet DP-27 light machine gun and of course the MG 42 German machine gun.

No matter the type of machine gun, there are 8 principals of employment that are taught by the US military. As a young infantryman in the Canadian Army, I was taught principals very similar to these. Later as a junior NCO on my Advanced Small Arms' Instructor Course, these were further reinforced. As taught by the USMC, these principals are:

1. Pairs;
2. Interlocking Fires;
3. Coordination of Fire;
4. Mutual Support;
5. Defilade;
6. Enfilade;
7. Economy; and
8. Protection.

The military loves using mnemonics to help remember lists such as this, and they use "PICMDEEP", or as the title of this article suggests, "Pick 'em deep!" I have no idea what that means, but if it helps me to remember, then so be it.

Now let's look at what each of these means.

Pairs. This simply means to site them virtually side by side, and the USMC recommends no further than 35 meters apart with no intervening terrain. This allows for them to be controlled by one NCO or officer and allows for continuous support in the event that a gun has a stoppage, has to change belts or barrels, etc.

Interlocking Fires. This reinforces the firepower across a unit's frontage with fire coming at a target from 2 opposite directions.

Coordination of Fires. This is essentially to ensure that the correct weapon is used for the right job as well as the number of each. The planning and coordination will also ensure that weapons don't open up too soon.

Mutual Support. This is to ensure that if one MG position is attacked or over run, another MG position can fire in its defense, and vice versa.

Defilade. This mandates for a gun team to fire from behind cover. Sometimes this means that they are dug in and other times it will mean that they will fire from a flank such that the majority of the enemy cannot shoot back at it.

Enfilade. By enfilade, it was beaten into me to remember this verbatim: "To superimpose the long axis of the beaten zone onto the long axis of the target." So, if an enemy squad is in file along a road, then we would aim to have our guns shoot such that the bullets land along the axis of that road, not from the side, as an example.

Economy.   This ensures that we use the weapons when they are needed. If attacked by a single squad, a battalion of machine guns will not open up on them!

Protection. Machine gun crews are quite vulnerable. They are high priority targets and the enemy will do what they can to destroy them. They need to be physically protected by earth works (dug in) and by infantry to help protect them from close assault.

Of course this is all well and good, but how does this translate into Advanced Squad Leader? Quite easily, I might say. Allow me to illustrate:

Pairs. Match up your MGs such that you maximize their effect. By this, you are paying attention to the IFT (NB: if you use the IIFT, this may not apply). Consider the German MGs. Their firepower ratings are 3, 5 and 7. By pairing 2 LMGs, you get an IFT column of 6 with none left over. Pairing an MMG with an HMG gives you 12 factors with none left over. Pairing a soviet MMG (4) with an HMG (6) gives you 8 with 2 left over. A more natural pairing may be an LMG (2) with an MMG, giving you 6 factors with none left over. More on this later.

Interlocking Fires. When setting up your defense as an example, you will come up with certain "killing zones" where you will wish to conduct your main defensive battle. At least you should! Anyway, where possible, have your machine guns set up such that this killing zone can be hit from two directions. If you can boresight, all the better! That way you can check LOS pre-game and maybe have a line of sight that isn't quite obvious: nothing like hitting a guy when he thinks he's safe!

Coordination of Fires. By planning your battle before the game, you ought to set up such that your weapons are in range of the target. If your MMG has a range of 10, it makes no sense to have its primary target area 12 hexes away, for example. Also, if a 4-6-7 can shoot and get the effect desired, don't unmask your machine gun nest if you don't have to!

Mutual Support. If MG nest "A" is about to go into close combat, then MG nest "B" and maybe even "C" ought to be able to set up a firelane in front of "A" to help them out.

<u>Defilade</u>. It's hard to get the kind of defilade that the USMC teaches; ASL doesn't quite go into that detail. Having said that, if you are able to set up behind a hill or treeline and you fire off to a flank such that the majority of the attacking force cannot fire back at you, you are in defilade and will likely survive any return fire.

<u>Enfilade</u>. This was actually easier to achieve in the old Squad Leader game with its rules on penetration fire. But in ASL it can still be achieved and is done so with the Fire Lane, especially against a human wave! Another way that this can be achieved is to set up anticipating where the enemy will likely be. Once you fire from trees or a building, for example, your covered arc is set. If there aren't multiple targets in that arc, you aren't set up in proper enfilade. As a personal note, fire lanes is the main reason why I always have my MGs set up on the ground level of buildings.

<u>Economy</u>. This is similar in ASL terms to Coordination. Essentially we won't open up with our kill stack to take out a double-timing half squad; we leave that up to the infantry squads to deal with.

<u>Protection</u>. Dig in your MG teams where possible. Put them in buildings, fortified if allowed by SSR. Also use infantry squads (concealed where possible) as a ring of armed body guards around your teams.

So, there you go, but now back to putting this all into practice. As promised, I'll go back to pairs. When defending as German and where possible, I will site my MGs in the same hex with a leader, ideally one that has same or lower morale level as the squads; no sense in having to roll for a LLTC/LLMC! By siting with a leader I will guarantee that I don't cower and I will also allow my MGs to fire beyond 16 hexes (A 9.4 MANDATORY FIRE DIRECTION).

I will pair my German MGs as such: LMG with MMG or MMG with HMG. This chart will illustrate the firepower of these pairings at varying ranges:

Range	0	1	2-8	9-12	13-16	17-24	24-32
LMG/MMG	24	16	8	6	4	1	0
MMG/HMG	36	24	12	12	8	2	1

Although the firepower of these MGs nests are fearsome at ranges 0 and 1, their key killing potential can be found at longer ranges, especially when considered vis-à-vis an advancing enemy's fire power. To illustrate, consider attacking Soviets. Assume that the German defender has done his job and has a killing zone set up at 10 hexes from 2 MG nests; one with an LMG/MMG pair and the other a MMG/HMG pair. The IFT attacks would be 6 and 12 respectively (with both shots with great potential to have a positive effect for the German); however, the Soviets would be unable to fire back with 1st line troops (4-4-7) and only meagre fire with Elite troops (4-5-8). This of course assumes that the Soviets survived the potential IFT 12 DRM -6 shot (as directed by the 9-2 leader as the enemy blundered with non-assault movement into a boresighted hex out in the open…) Not even considered yet is the possibility for the German MGs to maintain Rate of Fire…

So, given the enemy's potential to fire and given your own firepower, it is best to plan for your killing zone to be within your normal range but beyond that of the enemy.

If you're fighting first line Russians, then that magic zone is from 5 to 8 hexes so that any advance-phase firing 447 would return fire at a paltry 1 FP per squad. Fighting first line Americans means that magic zone is from 7 to 8 hexes to face an FP of 2 per squad.

Practical Example: ASL A "The Guards Counterattack"
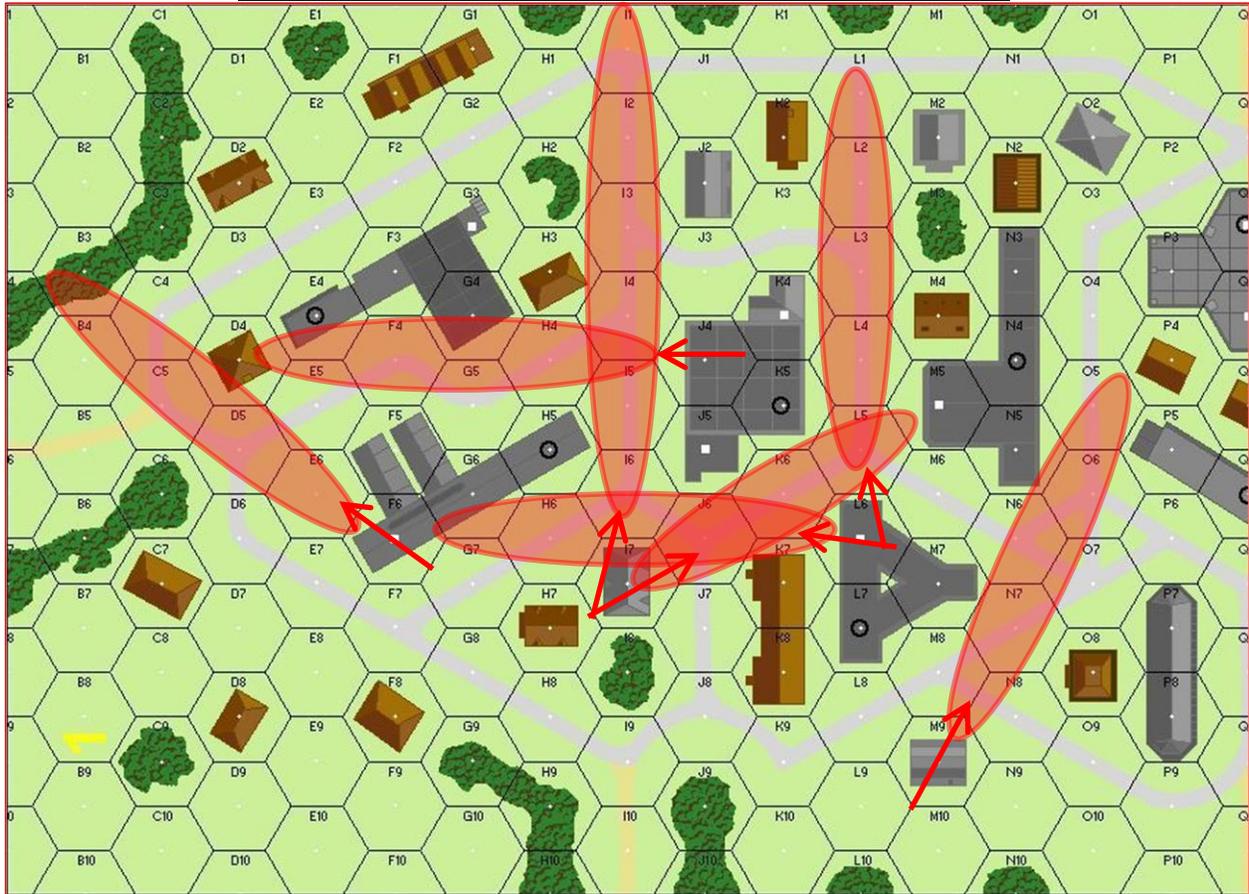
Initial Killing Zones of the German MGs

This map ought to be familiar to anyone who has ever played Squad Leader or Advanced Squad Leader. The main threat is on the left in building G4 where the 12 squads will be attacking. We can't be at long range from the Russians in this without difficulty and defilade is hard to find. So what? Well, we do our best, especially since the German Machine Guns (with awesome leadership) are the German player's best assets.

PAIRS: J4 is a great position. It is exposed to the MMG in J2; however, the +2 TEM you'll get (IFT 8, DRM +3 for stone building, -1 leader) means that you have a better than half chance of coming out unscathed. A squad here with 2 x LMGs will be able to fire across to D4, putting down a fire lane in the event of a human wave. The second LMG can be used for other targets, or even to put a second fire lane down (A 9.22). Another position is L6. The MMG and LMG in there can put down a fearsome potential fire lane up the road towards L0. Both J4 and L6 can be led by an 8-0 and 8-1 leader respectively to guarantee against cowering.

INTERLOCKING ARCS: This is not always achievable, but in this case, the stack in I7 can fire up towards I1 as well as M5. This interlocks with both J4 and L6. Imagine a hapless squad in I5. It can be shot at from both J4 and I7; its prospects for survival would be grim.

COORDINATION: Have a plan. If an enemy assault moves into M6: who will shoot at it? Will you fire the MMG point blank to get the IFT 12 DRM -2 shot? (-1 FFMO, -1 Leader DRM). Or will you have a 467 open up? Know what you will do before it happens.

MUTUAL SUPPORT: I7 can fire to support J4; L6 can fire to support I7. The HMG in M9 needs to be moved up, probably to K7 to support both I7 and L6.

DEFILADE: Crafty readers will note that I have yet to talk of building F5 and its LMGs. Though hex F5 would provide fearsome fire into the streets over in front of J4, it would be rather exposed to some fearsome fire itself. Hex F6 is a much better spot. It would start the game concealed (A 12.12) and is in defilade to the majority of the Soviet horde. This MG nest's role would be to provide fire over to the left flank. It is rather exposed here in that there are no supporting machine guns, so in some games I have withdrawn from this building and moved back to F8 or even D8, covering the front of I7.

ENFILADE: The MGs in J4, I7 and L6 would jeopardize any Soviet efforts to cross the streets in front of them. J4 is especially well-suited to lay down a fire line to deter any Soviet attempts to conduct a human wave.

ECONOMY: Any machine gun in this scenario ought to fire only if needed. Fire lanes are mandated to be not part of a fire group, but in other cases (ie: firing on that one, juicy stack moving in the open), know the odds and use the least amount of fire power in order to achieve the result. For example, an IFT 6 DRM -3 shot (HMG lead by a -1 leader) has a 42% chance of a K/2 result or better, and a 83% chance of a 1 MC result or better. If this is sufficient, then don't fire the squad inherent as well (IFT 8 DRM -3), (Same chance of a K/2 or better result, 92% chance of a 1 MC or better).

PROTECTION: I haven't talked yet of the venerable 467s. What do they do? Well, they protect the MG teams. Consider F6. You may wish to put a half squad in F5 as bait (if he's shot at, those who shoot aren't moving!). Also, with a squad in H5, it can not only draw fire away from J4, but can also put more fire into the streets, especially if using spray fire to lay down some fearsome residual. H7 on the other side of the map can help protect the MG nest in L6. Over in the K5 building, a squad up in a higher level in K4 or even J4 would help protect the MG nest below it.

Conclusion

These characteristics are only guides. It will not be possible to have every gun satisfy every one of them. But as demonstrated, many if not most of them can be when taken as a whole. Each MG is part of an overall plan, and as such, must fit into the larger plan of battle. So, with that, good luck and happy shooting!

ROAD RAGE v3

ASL Scenario: Indo China 2

Dong-Que, French Indo-China, 28 July, 1953: Operation Camargue involved 30 French battalions sweeping "The Street Without Joy," Road Number 1 between Quang-Tri and Hue, in order to clean out the 95th Vietminh Regiment which had been ambushing French supply convoys for years. The target area stretched 20 miles, but was never wider than 300 yards! After traversing four miles, Group-ment B composed of the 6th Moroccan Spahis, 1st Battalion Moroccan Rifles, and the 69th African Artillery Regiment came upon the hamlet of Dong-Que.

M 24 Chaffee VERDUN en Indochine

Victory Conditions: The French win by inflicting at least 9 CVP more than the lose.

Turn Record: Vietminh Set Up First, French Move First

Board Configuration

Overlays: place #3 on 35T2/T1, place RP5 on 35R3/S3, place #1 on 35N8/N9.

N

35
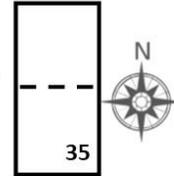
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Order of Battle:
French, set up on any hexes of road 35oT5 to 35oY1. ELR 3, SAN 3
 Lead elements of 6th Moroccan Spahis, no more than one tank per hex.
  3 x M-24 Light Tank (U.S.)
 Lead elements of 1st Battalion Moroccan Rifles, no more than one MMC per hex.
  1 x 8-1, 1 x 8-0, 8 x 6-6-7, 2 x MMG, 1 x Radio (U.S.)
Vietminh, 3rd Company, 310th Battalion, 95th Regiment. ELR 3, SAN 5
 Set up HIP in any hexes on or between rows 35P and 35oL.
  1 x 9-0, 1 x 7-0, ? x 4-4-7, ? x Bazooka '45, 3 x LMG, 1 x DC, 10 x 1S Foxhole
? The Vietminh player must select some combination of 9-11 squads and 1-3 bazookas such that the sum of squads and bazookas does NOT exceed 12.

Special Rules:
1. Use PTO terrain (G.1) including light jungle (G2), but all roads EXIST as depicted. Paddies are in season. EC are dry with no wind at start.
2. Use American units and SW (with all applicable rules) to represent the Moroccans. French forces (the Moroccans) cannot conduct any fire attacks, including FFE, until at least one Vietminh unit has lost HIP status. They have one module of 105mm OBA, HE only, with 8 black ad 2 red chits.
3. Use Chinese GMD (G18.2) counters to represent the Vietminh, but treat them as Red Chinese (G18.3) for all purposes except no captured use penalties for their at-start weapons. Use a Russian Commissar coun-ter, with all applicable Commissar rules, for the 9-0. All Vietminh are stealthy (A11.7). They can set up two tunnels (B8.6) anywhere on board 35.
4. Starting on turn 4, Vietminh units can exit the south board edge without counting as eliminated for French CVP; that is they do NOT add to the French CVP total for victory purposes.

Aftermath: In the lead M-24, Major Derrieu halted the column and sent sappers forward. Seconds later rifle fire erupted and two Viet bazooka's fired wide. Moroccan infantry crept forward as their battalion CO hud-dled behind a burial mound to radio for fire support. Within minutes French shells rained down and detonated an ammo dump. Then Derrieu sent his tanks forward. Civilians feigning confusion muddled about to impede the French. The Vietminh tried to slip away, but ran into the machine gun fire of Moroccans who had flanked the village. So, 3rd Company was no more, but it had delayed French forces by two hours enabling the rest of the 95th Vietminh Regiment to escape and return next spring.

After Action Report: RP 139 MAULED AT MERDORP

John's Germans faced Paul's French in this recreation of a classic May 1940 Gembloux Gap situation.

The big picture looks like familiar. German infantry and armor converge on a rural village, containing 10 victory objective buildings, defended by a French infantry-armor force with one 75 mm artillery piece in support. The French defense includes an understrength infantry company holding the village, a 75mm artillery piece off to the west, and five tanks, three Somuas and two Hotchkiss, to place anywhere in or near the village. The German attack includes an infantry company and two halftracks closing from the north about 200 yards away and eight tanks: four 37mm Panzer III's, three 75mm Panzer IVs, and a single machinegun-armed Panzer I, all closing from the west, about 600 yards away.

Paul's defense was a series of concealed stacks, some ½ inch others 5/8 inch, all across his front. Of note, I could see the stack in the village high point (76H8) was four deep – probably his 9-1 with squad and medium machine gun. That was a mixed blessing. By occupying that high point, he could see down on my advance picking the targets of his choice, but he would lose the opportunity to draw a fire lane across my axis of advance.

Here it's worth pausing to describe the role of terrain in this scenario. The Germans are approaching from the north across a four hex-wide swath of open ground/plowed fields, but for a four-hex orchard cluster. That cluster provides some cover from higher fire and negates FFMO. On the southern end, it yields to open ground shielded from the village by a one hex-wide tree line. On the other side of that tree line runs a road – an ideal kill zone for the French defenders. Beyond that road, one finally reaches the victory objective buildings.

Most of my German infantry lined up in platoon-sized stacks just north of the orchard with one machine gun-armed halftrack alongside. I placed the 37mm-armed halftrack far to my rear so that it could pounce on any French tanks that circled around the flanks of my infantry to cut off their route paths. My best leader (9-2), 1.5 squads, a medium machine gun, and a light machine gun took up overwatch positions in a wooden house to the rear, hex 69M7.

To begin, my upfront halftrack carried one squad forward as another ran alongside in armored assault. A light machine gun position on Paul's left (my right) broke the running infantry, but the halftrack and passenger reached their objective, the road in 76L9, where the passenger unloaded. This was crucial as I needed cover to cross that road into the village and my halftrack, dead or alive (Paul later killed it), provided that cover. The rest of my infantry then moved one squad at a time through the orchard with smoke grenades into the tree line beside the village road. As expected, Paul's French got several shots at me, most of them four-flat, and broke a few German squads.

But, I did get more good order infantry, albeit exhausted, next to that crucial halftrack parked in the street. My advance fire, and the 9-2 with MMG in overwatch, broke a few French squads before the now dismounted halftrack passengers advanced into close combat among the village buildings at hex 76M9. French troops later killed those Germans in melee. To the west, my tanks drove onboard, mostly commander exposed, firing a few smoke dispensers here and there to guard against the sudden appearance of that still hidden 75mm artillery piece.

Paul's dice did me a favor when he failed four attempts to start French tanks alone, without platoon movement. That armored pincer movement I had feared would envelope my broken infantry and eliminate them for failure to route never materialized.

Turn two was a cliff hanger as our infantry dueled around my toehold in the village. Paul's fire broke both of my 8-1 leaders, two more squads, and ripped one squad in half. But, my troops used that parked halftrack and their smoke grenades to get across that road at 76L9. A German hero – Herr Rambo – emerged in the process. We exchanged fire and darted between buildings 76L7, K9, and H7 jockeying for advantage. My 9-2 and MMG chimed in from the rear to break his highpoint position in 76H8. And, since his tanks were "stuck" my 37mm-armed halftrack darted forward around Paul's right (my left) to get into the village with a half squad on board.

The armor battle also began on turn 2. Paul's hidden 75mm artillery piece in the woods at 69U2 fired at a German tank zooming by but missed. Two other Panzers then circled around its rear to cut down the crew with coaxial machine gun fire. The Somuas and Hotchkiss also took some shots, but missed their moving targets. Then the scene turned grim for the Germans as the Somuas finally made their task checks and moved independently into new positions with good views of the German armor moving in the open. Defensive fire from one Panzer IV did manage to blow out the track of a Somua, stopping it cold.

Then the French position buckled. During their turn three prep fire phase, the Panzer IVs lobbed smoke shells on the Somuas who would have otherwise had excellent fields of fire. So, the other German armor made it into the village where they sparked a machine gun festival at the expense of French infantry. The 37mm-armed halftrack also killed a Hotchkiss with a near point blank (two hexes distant) shot! German infantry fanned out through the buildings to eventually gain six of the 10 victory objectives. A lastminute counter charge by French infantry fizzled in close combat. Somuas stalked Panzers in the streets, but it was too late; the French could not regain enough buildings to win.

Ladder as of 12 March 2018
DC Conscripts ASL Ladder

Name	Rank	Standing
Josef Stalin	Generalíssimus Sovétskogo Soyúza	0
Bill Stoppel	Márshal Bronetankovyh Voysk	1
Stephen Frum	Márshal Inzyenyernikh Voysk	2
John Gorkowski	Márshal Voysk Svyazi	3
Craig Stark	Generál-Armii	4
John Stadick	Generál-Polkóvnik	5
James Montgomery	Generál-Leytenánt	6
Andy Goldin	Generál-Majór	7
Gary Fortenberry	Polkóvnik	8
Paul Washington	Podpolkóvnik	9
Jason Sadler	Majór	10
Jim Mehl	Kapitán	11
Eric Groo	Stárshiy Leytenánt	12
Brian Scully	Leytenánt	13
Jan Spoor	Mládshiy Leytenánt	14
Matthew Chambers	Stárshiy-Práporshchik	15
Douglas Bush	Práporshchik	16
David Garvin	Starshiná	17
Peter Courtney	Stárshiy Serzhánt	18
Scott Bricker	Serzhant	19
Ian Tuten	Mládshiy Serzhánt	20
Jim Bishop	Efréytor	21
Thomas Ryan	Ryadovóy	22