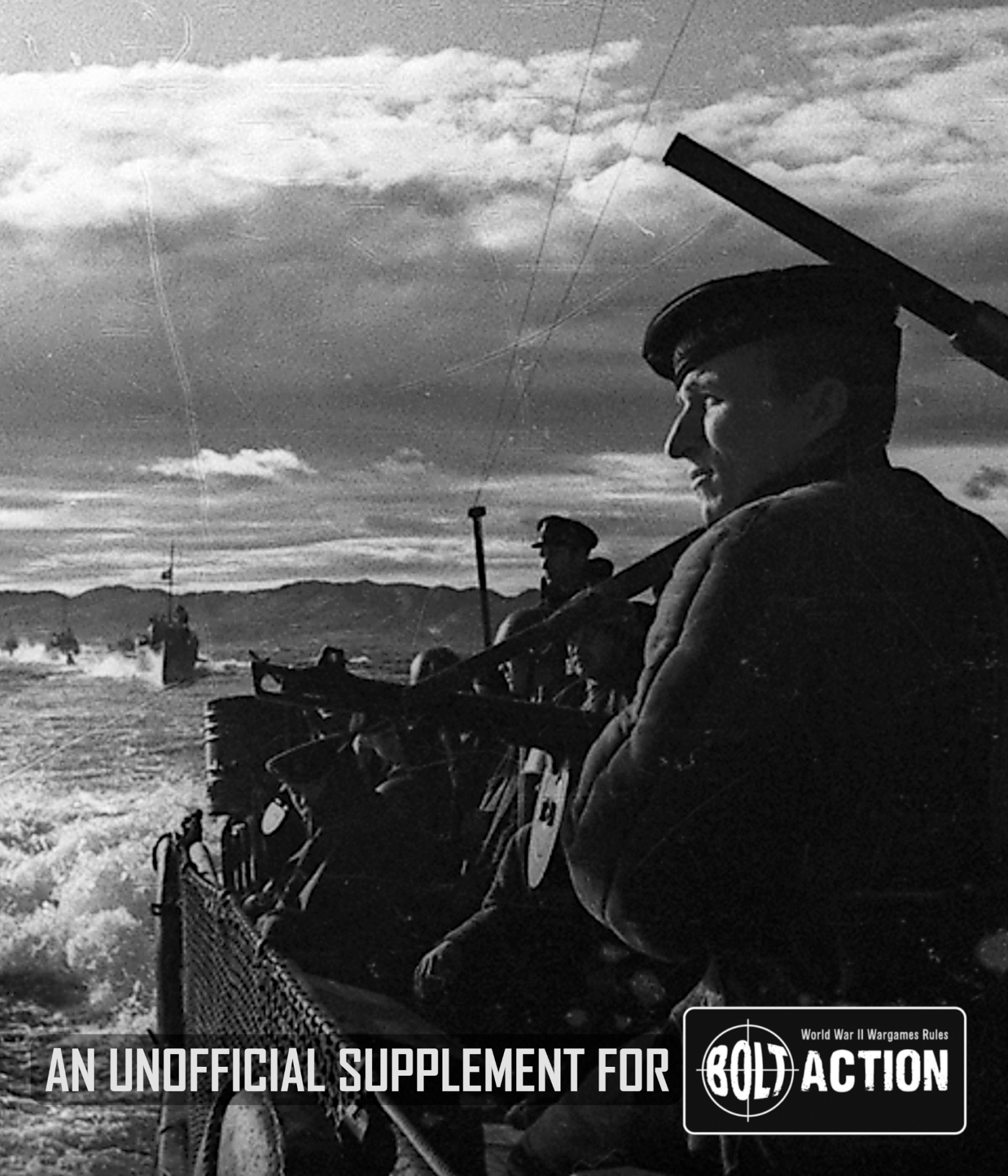


BLACK DEATH

SOVIET NAVAL INFANTRY (1941-'43)



AN UNOFFICIAL SUPPLEMENT FOR



INTRODUCTION

This army list and its unit profiles represent the “Black Death” - the Naval Infantry of the USSR from the start of Operation Barbarossa until some time shortly after the battle of Stalingrad and the amphibious landings they conducted at Novorossiysk in the early months of 1943.

These men were not marines in the sense that the Western Allies would have understood the term and were instead the surplus crews of Soviet ships pressed into service on land. They were given no specialist training in assaulting enemy positions from the sea, although they did develop these skills out of necessity and through bitter experience, and for the first months of the war they were given almost no combat training at all.

Nonetheless, through their determination under fire, their aggression on the offensive, and the unusually high numbers of semi-automatic rifles and submachine guns that were issued to them, they gained a reputation amongst Axis forces as a formidable and unnerving enemy to face.

On the tabletop this translates to a force well equipped to storm enemy positions even under withering fire, always preferring to fight the enemy up close or even face-to-face, but also one that, even in victory, will almost inevitably suffer an incredibly high number of casualties.

While this list may be used for those Naval Infantry units still carrying out raids and amphibious operations as light infantry later in the war, from mid-1943 onwards most Naval Infantry Brigades (those nominally under the command of the Navy) and all Naval Rifle Brigades (formed from Naval personnel but directly under Red Army command) can be assumed to be trained, armed and organised as regular Red Army platoons.



Naval Infantry disembark from a DB PR.165 landing craft behind enemy lines (Flank March Miniatures)

REINFORCED PLATOON

(Note: All units below in bold have unit profiles included in this army list. For all other units refer to "Armies of the USSR" or, if the unit is a lend-lease vehicle, refer to "Armies of the USA" or "Armies of Great Britain" as appropriate.)

1 Lieutenant - First or Second

2 **Infantry squads: Naval infantry squad, Veteran naval infantry squad, Naval scout squad, Naval Reconnaissance Detachment squad**

0-3 **Infantry squads: Naval infantry squad, Veteran naval infantry squad, Naval scout squad, Naval Reconnaissance Unit squad**

0-1 Captain or Major

0-1 Medic

0-1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air, do not use Massed Batteries special rule)

0-1 Machine gun team: medium or heavy

0-1 Mortar team: light, medium or heavy

0-1 Sniper team

0-1 Flamethrower team

0-3 Anti-tank teams: Anti-tank rifle team, 'Tank Hunters' anti-tank team (may not have panzerfausts)

0-1 Field Artillery or Anti-tank gun: 45mm M1937 anti-tank gun, ZiS-2 anti-tank gun, ZiS-3 divisional gun

0-1 Tank or Self-propelled Artillery from: **B-24BM Floating Battery**, Bronekater, BT-5 or 7, Churchill III or IV, KV-1, M3 Stuart, Matilda II, T-26A or B, T-34, Valentine II or III

0-1 Transport per infantry unit from: **DB pr.165 Landing Boat, Ladoga Tender, Poluglisser Speedboat**



Still from the documentary film "The Battle of Sevastopol" (History of Russia in Photos)

ARMY SPECIAL RULES

The Black Death

The Naval Infantry's reputation for engaging in fierce hand-to-hand fighting preceded it. The thought of closing with them was enough to give many of their enemies second-thoughts and the sight of these black-clad devils surging forwards wielding knives and sharpened entrenching tools often sowed panic in the Axis ranks.

Before an enemy unit declares an assault or before an enemy unit reacts to an assault it must take a pin marker.

Reckless Fighters

The Naval Infantry was a fighting force driven by elan. They were fiercely proud of their distinctive black uniforms and, as former sailors, many of them chose to wear their beskozirka hats instead of a standard-issued army helmet. Under fire, their morale was high but their tactics and understanding of the use of cover were often lacking. All this did very little for a fresh Naval Infantryman's survivability.

Inexperienced and regular infantry and artillery units cannot be given Down orders.

The Great Patriotic War

An unusually high proportion of Naval Infantrymen were communist party members (as high as one-in-two, compared with one-in-nine across the armed-forces as a whole). They were fighting for an idealised socialist future and faced grim prospects should the Nazis succeed in their aim of conquering the USSR.

Whenever an infantry or artillery unit fails a morale check and would otherwise be destroyed as a consequence, take the test again and apply the second result.



Naval Infantry sniper takes aim from a rocky trench outside Sevastopol (Flank March Miniatures)

INFANTRY

HEADQUARTERS UNITS

OFFICER

The officers commanding the Naval Infantry were no more prepared for fighting a war on land than their men. But, like their men, they developed into effective leaders through bloody experience, suffering a terrible casualty rate in the process. Some platoon commanders also had the role of being their unit's political officer or commissar. Out of combat, these men were tasked with giving political lectures but before battle they also had a role in carefully allocating party members to squads who were responsible for ensuring the steadfastness of the men around them. In combat and particularly during assaults, naval commissars led their men by example from the front.

(Note: Officer ranks in the Naval Infantry were, helpfully, very similar to those used in Bolt Action- starting at Lieutenant, Senior Lieutenant, Captain and then Major.)

Cost: Second Lieutenant 35 pts (Inexperienced), 50 pts (Regular), 65 pts (Veteran)

First Lieutenant 60 pts (Inexperienced), 75 pts (Regular), 90 pts (Veteran)

Captain 95 pts (Inexperienced), 110 pts (Regular), 125 pts (Veteran)

Major 135 pts (Inexperienced), 150 pts (Regular), 165 pts (Veteran)

Team: 1 officer and up to 2 further men

Weapons: Pistol, submachine gun, or rifle as depicted on the models

Options:

- The officer may be accompanied by up to 2 men at a cost of +7 pts per man (Inexperienced), +10 pts per man (Regular) or +13 pts per man (Veteran)
- An officer may be a Naval Commissar for +20 pts

Special Rules:

- Naval Commissar (if option is taken): When "You Men, Snap to Action!" is used, an extra order can be given so long as every unit (including the commissar) is given a Run order and declares an assault. Each unit given an order may remove one pin marker before making its order test.



Naval officer oversees landing of troops at Kerch (may9.ru)

INFANTRY SQUADS & TEAMS

NAVAL INFANTRY SQUAD

Naval Infantry ranged in quality from untrained ships crews supplied with basic equipment and thrown into the line to battle-tested units on par with most Red Army soldiers and armed with semi-automatic SVT-40 rifles. The Navy also provided its brigades with a large quantity of submachine guns, with some units forming dedicated SMG squads, companies or even battalions that made them formidable shock troops.

Cost: Inexperienced Infantry 35 pts or Regular Infantry 50 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 7 additional soldiers with rifles at +7 pts each (Inexperienced) or +10 pts each (Regular)
- Any soldiers may have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3 pts each
- One soldier may have a LMG for +20 pts. Another soldier becomes the loader
- The entire squad may have anti-tank grenades (Molotov cocktails) for +2 pts per model

Special Rules:

- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)



Infantrymen of the Azov Flotilla advance on the North Caucasus Front with support from an armed train (topwar.ru)

VETERAN NAVAL INFANTRY SQUAD

The Black Death fought from the first days of Operation Barbarossa until the closing days of the war in the heart of the crumbling German Reich. A unit's early deficiencies in training meant little once they had fought room-by-room through the battered apartment blocks of Stalingrad, held back the German Blitzkrieg at Leningrad, and stormed the beaches at Kerch. The men that survived these cataclysmic battles of the Eastern front were among the toughest fighters of the war.

Cost: Veteran Infantry 65 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 7 additional soldiers with rifles at +13 pts each
- Any soldiers may have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3 pts each
- One soldier may have a LMG for +20 pts. Another soldier becomes the loader
- The entire squad may have anti-tank grenades (Molotov cocktails) for +2 pts per model
- Any veteran squad can be *Tough Fighters* for +1 pts per man

Special Rules:

- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)
- *Tough Fighters* (if option is taken)

NAVAL SCOUT SQUAD

Each Naval Infantry battalion fielded a dedicated scout platoon formed from volunteers and tasked with locating and probing enemy positions, determining their strength, carrying out raids to gather intelligence and ultimately joining the rest of the battalion when it carried out an assault. Much as the commandos of the Western allies formed the basis of their post-war special forces, these Naval Infantry Scout platoons developed into the USSR's Naval Spetznaz.

Cost: Regular Infantry 55 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 3 additional soldiers with rifles at +11 pts each
- Any soldiers may have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3 pts each
- The entire squad may have anti-tank grenades (Molotov cocktails) for +2 pts per model

Special Rules:

- Scouts count as Observers/Snipers for Set-Up purposes Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)
- Behind Enemy Lines: When Outflanking, units of Naval Scouts ignore the -1 modifier to the Order test for coming onto the table

NAVAL RECONNAISSANCE DETACHMENT SQUAD

Shortly after the start of Operation Barbarossa the Soviet Navy started forming specialist reconnaissance units. Filled with highly motivated and skilled recruits (including national skiing and wrestling champions as well as radio communication experts) they were given advanced training in camouflage, night-fighting and parachuting which allowed them to operate far behind enemy lines.

Cost: Veteran Infantry 75 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 3 additional soldiers with rifles at +14 pts each
- Any soldiers may have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3 pts each
- The entire squad may have anti-tank grenades (Molotov cocktails) for +2 pts per model
- Any veteran squad can be *Tough Fighters* for +1 pts per man

Special Rules:

- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)
- Tough Fighters (if option is taken)
- NRU squads count as Observers/Snipers for Set-Up purposes
- Behind Enemy Lines: When Outflanking, NRU squads ignore the -1 modifier to the Order test for coming onto the table
- NRU Squads ignore movement penalties for snow and other winter conditions



Naval Reconnaissance unit moves on skis across the snowy wastes of the Arctic Circle (back-in-ussr.com)

VEHICLES

SELF PROPELLED ARTILLERY

B-24BM FLOATING BATTERY

Making their first appearance at Stalingrad, the floating batteries of the Volga flotilla were formed by seating a 100mm naval gun on a deck spanning between two DB pr.165 landing boats. They continued to be built and supported Soviet operations along the rivers of Eastern Europe for the rest of the war until finally, in April 1945, they bombarded German positions on the outskirts of Berlin at the battle of the Seelow Heights.

Cost: 80 pts (Inexperienced), 100 pts (Regular), 120 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: Turret mounted medium howitzer, 2 pintle-mounted HMGs with 360 degree arc of fire

Damage Value: 7+

Special Rules:

- **Waterborne:** May only move in areas of deep or shallow water. Waterborne vehicles are treated as tracked vehicles for speed and turning ability.
- **Slow**
- **Open topped**
- **Flak (HMGs only)**
- **The crew can either shoot the howitzer or the HMGs but not both.**
- **Unmaneuverable:** It is always necessary to make an order test when issuing an Advance order, even if the battery is not pinned.
- **Slow...Pitifully Slow:** The battery may not make a double-speed Run move. It can still be given a Run order (thereby avoiding the Unmaneuverable rule) but moves at its basic speed only.



Floating batteries move down the Bug river, Summer 1944 (topwar.ru)

TRANSPORTS

DB PR.165 LANDING BOAT

Designed in 1941 to meet the Navy's sudden need for a dedicated landing craft, the DB pr.165 was the ever present workhorse of Soviet amphibious landing operations throughout the war. It was capable of carrying a full platoon of men or could have a top deck fitted to ferry guns and light vehicles but a number were also fitted with weapons ranging from anti-aircraft guns to rocket launchers allowing them to provide fire support during landings.

Cost: 55 pts (Inexperienced), 65 pts (Regular), 80 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: None

Damage Value: 7+

Transport: Up to 65 men

Options:

- May have a pintle-mounted HMG with 360 degree arc of fire for +25 pts or a pintle-mounted light cannon with 360 degree arc of fire for +35 pts.
- May remove transport capacity and have a Heavy automatic cannon covering left and right arcs for +30 pts or a Katyusha multiple rocket launcher (heavy mortar) covering left and right arcs for +50 pts

Special Rules:

- Waterborne: May only move in areas of deep or shallow water. Waterborne vehicles are treated as tracked vehicles for speed and turning ability.
- Slow
- Open topped
- Flak (HMG and cannons only)
- Multiple launcher (if Katyusha rocket launcher taken)



Heavily laden DB pr.165 boats ferry troops to shore during the Kerch landings (wwii-soldat.narod.ru)

LADOGA TENDER

The Wehrmacht's siege of Leningrad lasted for almost two and a half years. For much of that time Lake Ladoga was the city's only supply route. In winter the Naval Infantry guarded the frozen Road of Life across the lake but in the summer when it thawed provisions were carried by a new class of tenders. These were simple and quick to build but hardy and nimble enough to evade and survive strafing runs from prowling Luftwaffe planes. Their success at Leningrad led to their more general adoption so that Ladoga Tenders were present at almost all Soviet amphibious operations for the rest of the war.

Cost: 45 pts (Inexperienced), 55 pts (Regular), 65 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: none

Damage Value: 7+

Transport: Up to 50 men

Options:

- May have a pintle-mounted HMG with 360-degree arc of fire for + 25 pts

Special Rules:

- **Waterborne:** May only move in areas of deep or shallow water. Waterborne vehicles are treated as tracked vehicles for speed and turning ability.
- Slow
- Open topped
- **Exposed Passengers:** Up to 12 men from a transported unit may fire their weapons with 360-degree arc of fire when their unit is given a Fire order while being transported. They always count as firing on the move. Units being transported may be targeted by enemy fire orders and count as being in soft cover.
- Flak (if weapon option taken)



Ladoga Tender ferries a jeep to shore during the Kerch Landings (waralbum.ru)

POLUGLISSER SPEEDBOAT

As well as manning sea-going ships, the Soviet Navy was responsible for fighting the enemy on the many lakes and rivers of the USSR. Poluglissers (or half-gliders) converted from civilian NKL-27 speedboats by the addition of a Maxim machine gun were ideal for this role. They were often tasked with the insertion of small reconnaissance teams but were, at a push, capable of ferrying entire squads of infantry and even towing tanks on floating pontoons.

Cost: 50 pts (Inexperienced), 60 pts (Regular), 70 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: Pintle-mounted MMG with 360 degree arc of fire

Damage Value: 6+

Transport: Up to 12 men

Special Rules:

- **Waterborne:** May only move in areas of deep or shallow water. Waterborne vehicles are treated as tracked vehicles for speed and turning ability.
- **Exposed Passengers:** Up to 6 men from a transported unit may fire their weapons with 360-degree arc of fire when their unit is given a Fire order while being transported. They always count as firing on the move. Units being transported may be targeted by enemy fire orders and count as being in soft cover.



A Dnieper Flotilla Poluglissler patrols the Spree River in Berlin (forums.airbase.ru)

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Naval Infantry PTRD anti-tank rifle team (Flank March Miniatures)