



**Armies of the Empire of
Ethiopia**

**A Bolt Action supplement
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What is in this PDF?

This PDF is an unofficial supplement for the Bolt Action, World War II, table top wargame. It contains background, history, and army lists so you can field an Ethiopian Army in the Bolt Action Game. Inside, you will find details of the organization and equipment used by the Army of the Empire of Ethiopia.

My goal was to create an army supplement that will allow the adventurous gamer to field an Ethiopian army suitable for recreating the battles of Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935 to 1936) and the East Africa Campaign (1940 to 1941).

The Italian Invasion of Abyssinia

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia, also known as the Second Italo Ethiopian War, began on the 3rd of October 1935, and didn't end until May of the following year. The Italian victory over the Empire of Ethiopia (known as Abyssinia at the time) was the crowning achievement of Mussolini's regime. This war also damaged the authority of the League of Nations, who was unable to stop Italy's invasion of the sovereign nation, despite pleas from Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I.

In December 1934, an incident occurred at Walwal which ended with 150 Ethiopians and 2 Italians dead. Tensions between the two countries ran high for several months, and ultimately Italy was able to invade Ethiopia without interference or opposition from the League, because France and Britain wanted to remain in Mussolini's good graces in case armed conflict broke out with Germany.

On September 3rd 1935, Italian forces led by General Emilio De Bono, crossed the Mared River and entered Ethiopia. Initially, the Ethiopian force withdrew in the face of the advancing Italian army, who engaged in the looting of Ethiopian holy sites. De Bono's advance was slow and frustrated Mussolini. In December, De Bono was promoted to Marshal of Italy and then replaced by Pietro Badoglio.

Haile Selassie then launched what is known as the Ethiopian Christmas Offensive. Selassie ordered his Ras (Generals) and the 200,000 men under their command, to attack the Italians in an attempt to split their force in two. The Ethiopian offensive was

initially successful, and they inflicted 3000 casualties, and destroyed a number of L3 tanks in their attack. However, the Ethiopians were unable to destroy the force commanded by Italian Major Criniti, who ordered a bayonet charge after becoming surrounded.

This would be the end of the Ethiopian offensive. Superior Italian numbers, weapons, and equipment proved to be too much for the ill equipped Ethiopian forces to deal with.

An event that occurred on December 26, led to the most controversial and tragic part of the war. Italian pilot Tito Miniti was killed by Ethiopian troops after his plane was shot down. Badoglio then requested to use chemical weapons, which was approved by Mussolini. The gas was a combination of Mustard and Tear gas that was intended to be a blistering agent, and was lethal in 1% of all cases. One of the first uses of the gas occurred when the Italian Air Force bombed a Red Cross field hospital.

After the Christmas Offensive ended, the Italians went on the attack. The Italians quickly racked up a series of major victories in Northern Ethiopia at the First and Second Battles of Tembien, and the Battle of Amba Aradam. Meanwhile in the south of the country, Italians defeated the Ethiopians at the Battle of Ogaden and Genale Doria.

By April, Ethiopian resistance no longer existed, and Badoglio launched his "March of the Iron Will" to Addis Ababa. Emperor Selassie fled the country by rail, along with the Imperial Treasure, and boarded a ship to Britain. After fleeing Ethiopia, Selassie went before the League of Nations and was heckled by Italian journalists during his speech. Afterward, he would famously warn that "It is us today. It will be you tomorrow."

Timeline of the Conflict

1928 – The Italo-Ethiopia treaty is signed defining the border between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia.

1930 – Italy builds a fort at Walwal, 150km inside of Ethiopian, and garrisons the fort with Somali Askari.

November 1934- Ethiopian troops and the Anglo-Ethiopian commission confront the Walwal garrison and demand they leave. After the Italians refuse, the British members of the commission withdraw, but the Ethiopian troops remain.

December 1934 – Violence breaks out between the opposing forces at Walwal. The Ethiopians lose about 110 men, while the Italians lose 50 men, including 2 Italians.

28 March, 1935 – General Emilio De Bono is named Commander in Chief of all Italian forces in East Africa.

April 1935 – Italians began a military buildup in East Africa, adding 700,000 new troops to bolster that 600,000 already in the region. This includes Italian Regular and the fascist Blackshirt divisions.

4 September 1935 – the League of Nations exonerates both sides in the Walwal incident. Not wanting to upset Italy in the hopes that Mussolini will back them against Germany, Britain, and France, it does nothing to discourage further Italian military buildup.

3 October 1935- De Bono and his army invade Ethiopia without a declaration of war. Haile Selassie declares war on Italy in response to the invasion.

5 October 1935- Haile Selassie orders his Generals to withdraw from the border.

7 October 1935 – The League of Nations declares Italy the aggressor.

11 October 1935 – Haile Selassie's son-in-law and 1,200 troops surrender to Italian forces at Adagamos. Italy uses this as propaganda.

14 October 1935– De Bono issues a proclamation abolishing slavery in Ethiopia. This has little effect on the campaign, but is used as propaganda.

15 October 1935- De Bonos forces capture Axum, without a fight. Italian troops loot the holy city.

November 1935- The League of Nation begins sectioning Italy. Britain and France refuse to comply, citing the fact that the sections will not effect the US because they are not members of the League.

8 November 1935 – Italian troops capture Makale and are welcomed by the locals.

16 November 1935- De Bono is promoted to Marshal of Italy. However, his advance had made no meaningful progress, displeasing Mussolini.

13 December, 1935 – The British and French purpose the Hoare-Laval Pact, but abandon the proposal after it is leaked that the Pact would sell out the Ethiopians to the Italians, by giving Italy large amounts of Ethiopian territory and economic control of the south of the country.

15 December 1935 – The Battle of Dembeguina Pass begins. An Italian force of 1,000 men, led by Major Criniti, is cut off. An Italian relief column is turned back after being ambushed, but Criniti and half his troops break out on their own. Italian forces are pushed back 12 miles.

17 December 1935 – De Bono is notified his mission is accomplished and is replaced by Marshal Pietro Badoglio. Haile Selassie launches his Christmas Offensive to test the new commander. The campaign results in more than 3,000 Italian casualties, the capture of 4,700 Italian prisoners, and the destruction of 2nd "28 October" Blackshirt Division.

18 December 1935- Italians participate in "Harvest Gold", during which people pledged money and themselves to Mussolini's regime. This includes donating their wedding rings.

26 December 1935- Badoglio requests and receives permission to use chemical weapons after a downed Italian pilot, Tito Minniti, is allegedly killed by Ethiopia forces. The Italian Air Force attacks a Red Cross Hospital with chemical weapons.

30 December 1935 – Haile Selassie files a formal complaint to the League of Nations regarding the use of chemical weapons.

20-24 January, 1936- The First Battle of Tembien occurs. There is no clear winner.

10-19 February 1935- The Battle of Amba Aradam occurs. The Italians destroy the army of Ras Mulugeta.

27-29 February 1936 - The Second Battle of Tembien occurs. The Italians destroy the armies of Ras Kassa and Ras Seyoum.

March 1935 – The Battle of Shire occurs. The army of Ras Imru is destroyed.

31 March 1936- The Battle of Maychew occurs. An army lead by Haile Selassie is defeated.

14 April, 1936-The Battle of Ogaden occurs and the army of Ras Nasibu is defeated.

26 April 1936- Badoglio starts his March of Iron Will from Dessie to Addis Ababa. They encounter no resistance.

2 May 1936- Haile Selassie boards a train and prepares to flee the country. Italian forces ask Mussolini for permission to bomb Haile Selassie's train, but Mussolini refuses.

5 May 1936 – Badoglio enters Addis Ababa and the war officially ends.

1 June 1936 – The Italians merge their East African Colonies into the state of Africa Orientale Italiana (Italian East Africa).

5 June 1936 – Mussolini issues an order to kill all rebel prisoners.

11 June 1936 - Badoglio is replaced by Marshal Rodolfo Graziani as Governor General of the colony.

30 June 1936 – Haile Selassie speaks to the League of Nations. Selassie is heckled by Italian Reporters and later declares "It is us today. It will be you tomorrow."

July 1936- Ethiopian forces that were still intact launch an attack on Addis Ababa. Many of the commanding officers are captured, including Ethiopian royalty. Many are later executed for being rebels.

8 July 1936- Mussolini issues an order to occupying forces to conduct a campaign of political terror and extermination of rebels.

15 July 1936 – The League of Nations lifts sanctions against Italy.

18 November 1936 – Japan officially recognizes the Italian Empire. Italy recognizes Japan's occupation of Manchuria.

19 December 1936- The last commander of Ethiopian troops, Ras Imru, surrenders. Italy declares Ethiopia pacified. This brings an end to the Black Lions resistance movement.

19 February 1937- An assassination attempt on Graziani fails. 30,000 are executed in retaliation. This includes a large number of the young, educated Ethiopian population.

24 February 1937 – Rebel leader Ras Desta Damtew is captured and executed.

11 December 1937 – The League of Nations condemns Italy, so Mussolini withdraws Italy from the League.

21 December 1937 – Due to his inability to pacify Ethiopia, Graziani is replaced by the Amedeo, 3rd Duke of Aosta. He immediately begins large scale building projects which include new roads, hospitals, and schools. He also abolishes slavery and enacts racial separation laws. Aosta establishes a system of favoritism toward non-Christians to isolate the traditional rulers.

1938 – Revolts break out in Gojjam, but by 1939 these are mostly suppressed. Most guerrilla activity is kept to an acceptable level.

10 June 1940 – Italy enters World War II on the side of Germany.

18 January 1941 – Emperor Selassie re-enters Ethiopia to join Free Ethiopian forces and their new British allies on ridding the country of the Italians.

5 May 1941 – Emperor Selassie and Free Ethiopia troops march into Addis Ababa. After their defeat, the Italians start a guerrilla campaign of their own which lasts well into 1943.

10 February 1947 – Italy formally recognizes Ethiopia's independence.

Cost of War

Ethiopia claimed that Italian forces destroyed 2,000 churches, 525,000 houses, and millions of livestock during the war and subsequent occupation of the country. An estimated 760,300 people lost their lives, of which only 275,000 were combatants. Italy claimed those estimates were inflated and the true number could not be more than half that. Italy suffered 20,000 killed and another 190,000 wounded during the war and occupation.

Tribal Weapons

If troops are equipped with bows, spears, or hand weapons use the following stats.

Spears and hand weapons:

Many Ethiopian troops were equipped with spears and hand weapons. While these weapons were unable to strike the Italian forces at range, they were still deadly up close. A figure armed with a spear or hand weapon can attack in an assault.

Bows:

Not every soldier in the Ethiopian army was equipped with a rifle. Many brought bows into battle. While bows don't have the range of rifles, it can still be terrifying to come under attack from these missile weapons.

Weapon	Range	ROF	Pen	Notes
Bow	12"	1	-	none

Reinforced Platoon

1 Metoaleqa – Normal or Senior
2 Infantry Sections

Plus:

0-3 Infantry Squads
0-1 Shambel or Shaleqa
0-1 Red Cross Volunteer
0-1 Machine Gun Team
0-1 Mortar Team
0-1 Tribal Marksmen
0-1 Field Artillery or Anti Aircraft Gun
0-1 Armored Car or Tank
0-1 Transport vehicles or tow per infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforce Platoon

Army Special Rules Communications Break Down:

While the Italians were equipped with modern communication equipment, the Ethiopian Army was made up of a mixture of diverse ethnic groups, and lacked the wide spread use of modern communication tools. This often resulted in miscommunication at every level.

In the first turn of the game, if the first Order Die drawn from the cup is one of yours, the enemy can decide that the dice is put back into the cup and a new Order Die is drawn instead.

Fieldcraft

The Ethiopian forces were fighting for their country on their land. The men who made up their armed forces were intimately familiar with the terrain they were fighting on.

During set up, any Ethiopian unit starting the game Hidden may start the game in Ambush. If you decide to do so, set one of your Order Dice in place next to them, as if you had ordered them to Ambush. In addition, in the first turn of the game, all Ethiopian infantry units treat all Rough Ground and Obstacles as Open Ground for the purposes of movement.

Infiltration

With their knowledge of the countryside and terrain, Ethiopians were able to attack some Italian formations when they least expected it.

When Outflanking, as described on page 119 of the Bolt Action rulebook, Ethiopian units ignore the -1 modifier to the Order test for coming onto the table.

An Army of Levies

The Governors of Ethiopia's provinces were in charge of a vast number of levies. These levies formed the bulk of the Ethiopian army and were often untrained and armed with little more than spears and bows.

Ethiopian Armies receive one free Levy squad in their army. This squad is in addition to units chosen from whatever selector is used.

Camels

Many Ethiopian Cavalry troopers rode camels into battle instead of horses. Camels have been used for thousands of years as mounts for armed forces. Camels are famous for their smell and the effect it has on horses.

Units riding horses must pass a -2 moral test to assault a unit riding camels. This modifier is in addition to any pins currently on the unit.



Infantry

Headquarters

Officer

The Ethiopian military was organized based on a numerical system of decimals. A Metoaleqa was a commander of 100, a Shambel was a commander of 250, and a Shaleqa was a commander of 1000. Most of the Ethiopian forces were commanded by the provincial governors. The officers under their command ranged from tactical geniuses to inept.

Cost: Metoaleqa (2nd Lieutenant) 35 points (inexperienced) 50 points (regular) 65 points (veteran) Senior Metoaleqa (1st Lieutenant) 60 points (inexperienced) 75 points (regular) 90 points (veteran)

Shambel (Captain) 95 points (inexperienced) 110 points (regular) 125 points (veteran)

Shaleqa (Major) 135 points (inexperienced) 150 points (regular) 165 points (veteran)

Team: Officer and up to two further men

Weapon: Spear, hand weapon, pistol, or rifle as depicted

Option:

- The officer may be accompanied by up to 2 further men at a cost of +7pts per man (inexperienced), +10 points per man (regular), or +13 points per man (veteran)
- Mount the officer and his staff on horse back for +3 points, if they do this their rifles are considered carbines
- Upgrade the horse to a camel for +2 point

Special Rules:

- Camels if taken
- Cavalry if taken
- Carbines if taken

Red Cross Volunteer

The Red Cross ran multiple field hospitals in Ethiopia at the time of the invasion. The volunteers were not immune from casualties. On several occasions the Italian air force attacked field hospitals run by the Red Cross. The Red Cross was also the first to present evidence that the Italians had used gas on civilians during the conflict.

Organization: 1 Volunteer

Weapons: None

Options:

- May add up to 2 unarmed aides

Special Rules:

- Medic
- Unarmed



Infantry Squads and Teams Kebur Zabangna (Imperial Guard)

Well trained and well equipped, the Imperial Guard consisted of the best troops Ethiopia had at the time that hostilities began. The Kebur Zabangna wore greenish khaki, Belgian Army uniforms, which distinguished them from the rest of the Army. These troops were armed with modern, weapons and functioned as both the Emperors body guard and elite infantry.

Cost: Veteran Infantry 65 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men armed with rifles for plus 13 point per man
- The entire squad may be upgraded to tough fighter for +1 point per man
- The entire squad may be upgraded to fanatics for +3 points per man

Special Rules:

- Tough Fighter if taken
- Fanatics if taken

Guard Squad

During the invasion of Ethiopia some Army Groups had a limited number of elite army troops at their disposal. These troops were well equipped and trained.

Cost: Regular Infantry 50 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men armed with rifles for + 10 points per man
- The entire squad may be upgraded to tough fighter for +1 point per man

Special Rules:

- Tough Fighter if taken

Regulars Squad

Regular army troops were not equipped as well as guard units. Large in number, they often relied on outdated fire arms or tribal weapons to fight the enemy.

Cost: Regular Infantry 50 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 7 additional men armed with spears or hand weapons for +7 points per man
- Any man can be equipped with rifles for +3 point each
- Any man can be equipped with bows for +2 point each



Tribesmen

Tough tribesmen formed a significant portion of Ethiopian's military. These local tribesmen where poorly armed, but courageous in battle.

Cost: Regular Infantry 50 Points

Composition: 1 **Tribal Leader** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Spears of hand weapons

Options:

- Add up to 10 additional men armed with spears or hand weapons for +4 points per man
- Any man may be equipped with a bow for +2 point per man
- Up to 5 men may be equipped with rifles for +3 point per man

Special Rules:

- Tough Fighter
- Fanatics
- Mixed Quality

Tribal Cavalry

Mounted on horse or camel, some tribesmen rode into battle instead of walking. These men could be counted on to scout out enemy positions or rapidly attack vulnerable positions.

Cost: Regular Infantry 60 Points

Composition: 1 **Tribal Leader** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Spears of hand weapons

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men armed with spears or hand weapons for +12 points per man
- Up to five men may be give carbines for +3 points
- Upgrade all horses to camels for +1 point

Special Rules:

- Cavalry
- Fanatics
- Mixed Quality
- Carbines if taken
- Camels if taken

Regular Cavalry

The Ethiopian Army had traditional cavalry units. These men supported the main force from horse back and could be moved quickly to vulnerable parts of the line.

Cost: Regular Infantry 60 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Carbines

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men armed with carbines for +12 points per man
- Upgrade all horses to camels for +1 point

Special Rules:

- Cavalry
- Carbines
- Camels if taken

Provincial Squad

The majority of men who fought in the Ethiopian army were conscripts from the provinces. These men often carried bows, spears or hand weapons into battle. Only a few were lucky enough to carry a rifle.

Cost: Inexperienced Infantry 35 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Spears of hand weapons

Options:

- Add up to 10 additional men armed with spears or hand weapons for +4 points per man
- Any man may be equipped with a bow for +2 point per man
- Up to 5 men may be equipped with rifles for +3 point per man

Special Rules:

- Green



Levy Squad

Levies were the raw conscripts who filled out the ranks of the Ethiopian Army. Why unreliable, these men often showed courage in the face of overwhelming odds.

Cost: Inexperienced Infantry 20 Points

Composition: 1 **Amsa Aleqa** (NCO) plus 4 Men

Weapons: Spears of hand weapons

Options:

- Add up to 10 additional men armed with spears or hand weapons for +4 points per man
- Any man may be equipped with a bow for +2 point per man

Special Rules:

- Shirkers

Tribal Marksman

A good marksman can pick off unsuspecting soldiers or their officers without giving away their position.

Cost: 40pts (regular), 50 pts (veteran)

Composition: 1 marksman

Weapons: Rifle

Special Rules:

- Sniper



Medium Machine Gun

The Ethiopians had a decent number of Medium Machine guns at their disposal. These were mostly Vickers model machineguns.

Cost: Inexperienced 35 Points, Regular 50 Points

Composition: 3 Men

Weapons: Medium Machine Gun

Special Rules:

Team
Fixed

Medium Mortar

Some units in the Ethiopian army were supported by mortars which are capable of laying down accurate and quick artillery support.

Cost: Inexperienced 35 Points, Regular 50 Points

Composition: 3 Men

Weapons: Medium Mortar

Special Rules:

- Team Weapon
- Fixed
- Indirect Fire
- HE(D6)

Artillery Field Artillery Light AA

The Ethiopian Army was lucky enough to have a few 20mm Oerlikon anti aircraft guns. However their numbers were limited with only about 100 guns available at the time hostilities began.

Cost: Inexperienced 40 Points, Regular 50 Points

Composition: 3 Men

Weapons: Light Auto Cannon

Special Rules:

- Team Weapon
- Fixed
- Flak
- Gunshield



Light Artillery

The Ethiopian army only had about 200 pieces of artillery when the war with Italy began. Most of these pieces were considered antiques and came in variety of shapes and sizes.

Cost: Inexperienced 40 Points, Regular 50 Points

Composition: 3 Men

Weapons: Light Howitzer

Special Rules:

- Team Weapon
- Gunshield
- Fixed
- Indirect Fire
- HE(D6)

Medium Artillery

The Ethiopian army fielded outdated and old artillery pieces. Many of which were surplus, World War One era pieces. One of the primary pieces used was the 75mm Schneider.

Cost: Inexperienced 60 Points, Regular 75 Points

Composition: 4 Men

Weapons: Medium Howitzer

Special Rules:

- Team Weapon
- Gunshield
- Fixed
- Indirect Fire
- HE(2D6)



Heavy Artillery

With an artillery corp made up of mostly surplus and out of date guns from World War One, the Ethiopians found themselves out gun on most fronts.

Cost: Inexperienced 92 Points, Regular 115 Points

Composition: 5 Men

Weapons: Heavy Howitzer

Special Rules:

- Team Weapon
- Gunshield
- Fixed
- Indirect Fire
- HE(3D6)

Vehicles

Tanks

Fiat 3000A

The Fiat 3000A was developed during the First World War. This tank was primarily used by the Italians in Libya and Spain, but also saw limited action in Albania and Sicily. The Ethiopian army had a small number of these tanks at their disposal.

Cost: Inexperienced 40 points

Damage: 7+ Armor (Armored Car)

Weapons: 2 Turret Mounted MMG

Options:

- Upgrade to the Fiat 3000B by replacing the 2 turret mounted LMGs to a Turret Mount Light Anti Tank Gun for +305 points

Special Rules:

- 1-man turret
- Slow

Armored Cars

Ford Armored Car

With little in the way of armor to support their men, the Ethiopian Army also had access to a small number of armored cars that mounted machineguns.

Cost: Inexperienced 56 Points

Damage: 7+ Armor (Armored Car)

Weapons: Turret mounted MMG

Transport Truck

Trucks were used to transport a limit number of troops and equipment during the campaign. Those not lucky enough to hitch a ride on a truck had to walk.

Cost: Inexperienced 31 points, Regular 39 Points

Damage: 6+ Armor (Soft Skin)

Weapons: none

Transport: Up to Twelve Men

Tow: Light or Medium Howitzer, Light AA Gun

Pack Animals

Camels, donkeys, and horse did most of the work hauling equipment for the Ethiopian army.

Cost: Inexperienced 15 points, Regular 19 Points

Damage: Inexperiences 3+, Regular 4+

Tow: Light or Medium Howitzer, Light AA Gun



Theatre Selectors



1935-1936 Second Italo Ethiopian War

Italian Military planners estimated that the Ethiopian army had 350,000 and 750,000 men under its command. Only one quarter of the Army of the Empire of Ethiopia was trained. There were approximately 400,000 rifles available, but many of these predated 1900. Ethiopia had fewer than 250 pieces of artillery or anti-aircraft guns, and only had a small number of armored cars and tanks. The Ethiopian Air Force was in even worse shape. It consisted of 13 planes, mostly transports, and 4 pilots who were commanded by Andre Maillet, a French pilot.

Despite these odds and their ultimate defeat, the Ethiopian forces had some limited success during the Christmas Offensive when they overwhelmed some Italian formations and knocked out several tanks.

Second Italo Ethiopian War Reinforced Platoon

- 1 Metoaleqa – Normal or Senior
- 2 Provisional or Levy Squads

Plus:

Headquarters

- 0-1 Shambel or Shaleqa
- 0-1 Red Cross Volunteer

Infantry

- 0-3 Infantry Squads
- 0-1 Machine Gun Team
- 0-1 Mortar Team
- 0-1 Tribal Marksmen

Artillery

- 0-1 Field Artillery or Anti-Aircraft Gun

Armored Car or Tank

- 0-1 Armored Car or Tank

Transports and Tows

- 0-1 Transport vehicles or tow per infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforce Platoon

1940-1941 The East Africa Campaign

After the defeat of the Ethiopian Army and exile of Haile Selassie in 1936, Ethiopia became an occupied country. More than 150,000 Italian troops, led by the Duke of Aosta, were left to occupy the country and maintain order. Italy's occupation of Ethiopia would eventually become recognized by both France and Britain as legitimate.

During the occupation and strong guerrilla movement, led by Abebe Aregai, the former police chief of Addis Ababa caused headaches for the occupying force. This would often result in reprisals by Italian forces, routinely using mustard gas in reprisal attacks.

When Italy entered the War in 1940, they attacked British colonies and forces in East Africa. Initially, the Italians were successful and delivered several defeats to the British. However these early successes were short lived, and by the end of 1941 Ethiopia had been liberated by a coalition of forces that included Free Ethiopian troops.

The East Africa Campaign Reinforced Platoon

- 1 Metoaleqa – Normal or Senior
- 2 Provisional or Levy Squads

Plus:

Headquarters

- 0-1 Shambel or Shaleqa
- 0-1 Forward Artillery Observed (British)
- 0-1 Red Cross Volunteer

Infantry

- 0-3 Provisional squad, Tribesmen squad, Levy squad, Regular squad, Tribal Cavalry squad, British Regular Infantry Sections (Early War)
- 0-1 Machine Gun Team
- 0-1 Mortar Team
- 0-1 Tribal Marksmen

Artillery

- 0-1 Field Artillery or Anti-Aircraft Gun

Tanks

- 0-1 Light Tank Mk VIB, Infantry Tank Mk II Matilda II (British)

Transports and Tows

- 0-1 Transport vehicles or tow per infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforce Platoon

Christmas Offensive Campaign



The Christmas Offensive

Introduction

While the Italian Army decisively defeated the Ethiopians in most major battles of the war, the Ethiopians saw limited success during Haile Selassie's Christmas Offensive. The goal of the offensive was to split the Italian forces, isolate and destroy the Italian left flank, and invade Italian Eritrea. Selassie ordered four of his Generals, known as Ras, to lead 190,000 men in the attack.

The greatest success of the campaign was when an Ethiopian force encountered and surrounded Italian Major Criniti's force of colonial troops and L3 tanks at the Battle of Dembequina Pass. Several of Criniti's unit were overrun and slaughtered, including his tanks. The Italians organized a relief effort, but the Ethiopians ambushed the Italians, destroying their tanks, after rolling boulders down on top of them.

This set back did not deter Major Criniti, who organized a successful breakout. Criniti lost about half of the men under his command. By the end of the Christmas Offensive, the Italians had been driven back 12 miles and lost approximately 3,000 men.

What is this Campaign?

The Christmas Offensive Campaign is a series of historical based scenarios, which will take you and your friends through some of the fighting of the Christmas Offensive, culminating in Major Criniti's breakout.

This campaign will require you and/or your friends to own appropriate terrain, Italian and Ethiopian miniature armies, the Bolt Action rule book, the Armies of Italy and Axis supplement, as well as dice, measuring tools, and other necessary gaming aides.

Mission Key

The missions are broken into several parts to help guide you through the campaign. Each mission is broken into several parts, each part giving you historical background to the historical campaign or direction on how to re-create the battle.

Background will provide you with general information about the battle and the conditions the men fought under. This synopsis should provide you with the setting leading up to the battle.

Objectives will provide you with the mission goals for both the Ethiopian and Italian forces.

Forces will give you a break down of what forces should be or could be used for recreating the battle.

Mission Special Rules will list and special rules that are in effect for the scenario.

Variable Rules are intended to give flavor to each game. Will your troops be delayed, will extra reserves arrive in the nick of time, will your troops eat some bad calzones before the battle and become stricken with exploding bowels? You'll have to roll to see. Note: You do not have to use the variable rules if you and your opponent do not want to.

Historical Outcome will provide you with a brief summary of how the battle historically went. Will your battle end the same way or will you change history?

Additionally you will find a new Reinforced Platoon for the Italians, which should be used when building Italian armies.

1935-Christmas Offensive

The Italian Army in Ethiopia was not much different than the army that would face the British in the North Africa. There were a few notable differences, mostly in equipment and tanks. Most of the Italian tanks were the lightly armed and armored L3s, which were supported by older model armored cars.

The Italian infantry force was mostly made up of Colonial troops from Somaliland, Libya, Yemen and Eritrea. However these troops were supported by regular army troops from Italy, which included both Alpini and Blackshirt divisions.

Christmas Offensive Reinforced Platoon

- 1 Lieutenant – First or Second
- 2 Infantry Sections – Regular, Inexperienced, Alpini, Blackshirt, or Colonial sections

plus

Headquarters

- 0-2 Major or Captain
- 0-1 Forward Observed
- 0-1 Medic

Infantry

- 0-4 Regular, Inexperienced, Alpini, Blackshirt, or Colonial sections
- 0-1 Machine Gun Team
- 0-1 Mortar Team
- 0-1 Sniper Team
- 0-1 Anti-Tank Rifle Team

Artillery

- 0-1 Light, Medium or Heavy Artillery or Breda 20mm Anti-Aircraft Gun

Tanks

- 0-1 L3

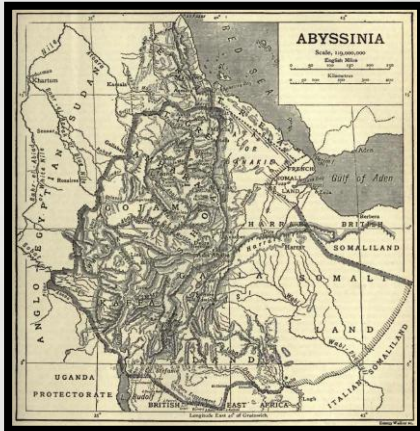
Transports and Tows

- 0-1 Transport vehicles or tow per infantry and artillery unit in the Reinforce Platoon

Terrain

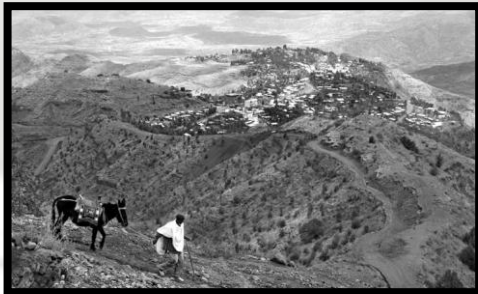
Geography

Ethiopia is located in the African Horn, just west of Somalia. The geography of Ethiopia includes a highland complex of mountains and plateaus divided by what is known as Great Rift Valley which runs southwest to northeast. The Great Rift Valley is surrounded by lowlands, steppes, and semi desert.



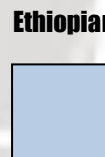
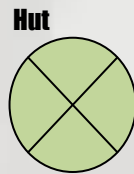
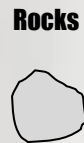
Flora and vegetation

In the lowlands vegetation is dense, while the plateaus are relatively bare; with trees and vegetation thinly scattered over it. The ravines and hillside can often be thick with woods.



The terrain in this campaign is more consistent with arid topography with scattered trees and vegetation. Each mission is accompanied by a map, which indicates deployment zones as well as the placement of terrain. It is important to note that terrain placement is a merely a recommendation. Players are encouraged to use the maps as a guide. Feel free to alter terrain placement or add to your own map.

Terrain Key



Mission: Walwal Incident

Background: While not technically part of the Christmas Offensive, the Walwal Incident was the only major combat that occurred prior to start of the offensive. Additionally, the incident directly contributed to Mussolini's justification for invasion.

The Walwal Incident (also known as the Abyssinia Crisis) began on November 22, 1934 when a force of Ethiopian militia confronted an Italian colonial garrison and demanded that they leave. The Italian garrison, which was built in 1930, was approximately 150km inside Ethiopia, and had become a point of tension between the two nations. For the next several weeks, tensions continued to rise, until a skirmish broke out between the Ethiopians and the Italian force.

Objectives: The objective is for the Ethiopian troops to destroy the Italian garrison by the end of the game. The Italian objective is to stop their garrison from being overrun.

At the end of the game, the side that destroys the most number of enemy units wins.

Forces: Both sides have 500 points to build their army and must use their nation's 1935 theatre selector.

The Italian player is limited to taking regular, inexperienced, and colonial infantry selections.

The Ethiopian player is limited to taking provisional, levies or regular squads for their infantry selections. The Ethiopians cannot use any vehicles in this mission.

The Italian player is the defender and starts the game with half their units (rounding down) deployed anywhere on their half of the board. The remaining Italian troops make up a relief force and are placed in reserves or out flank.

The Ethiopian player is the attacker. The Ethiopians deploy second and can deploy any or all of their troops on the board, but they must be further than 18" from any Italian units. Any troops not deployed on the board are placed in reserves or out flank.

Mission Special Rules: None

Variable Rules (Optional):

Italian:

1-2: Bad Calzone – The commanders of your force had bad calzones the night before and are distracted by gut wrenching indigestion. Your officer's moral bonus is reduced by 1 for the game.

3-4: No event

5-6: Ze Plane – The Italian Air Force has dispatched pilots to your aid. If you took a Forward Air Controlled you get a second air attack. If you did not one of your officer's can call for an air strike using the Forward Observe rules.

Ethiopian:

1-2: The army is here – You may replace one of your infantry squads with a guards unit of the same strength.

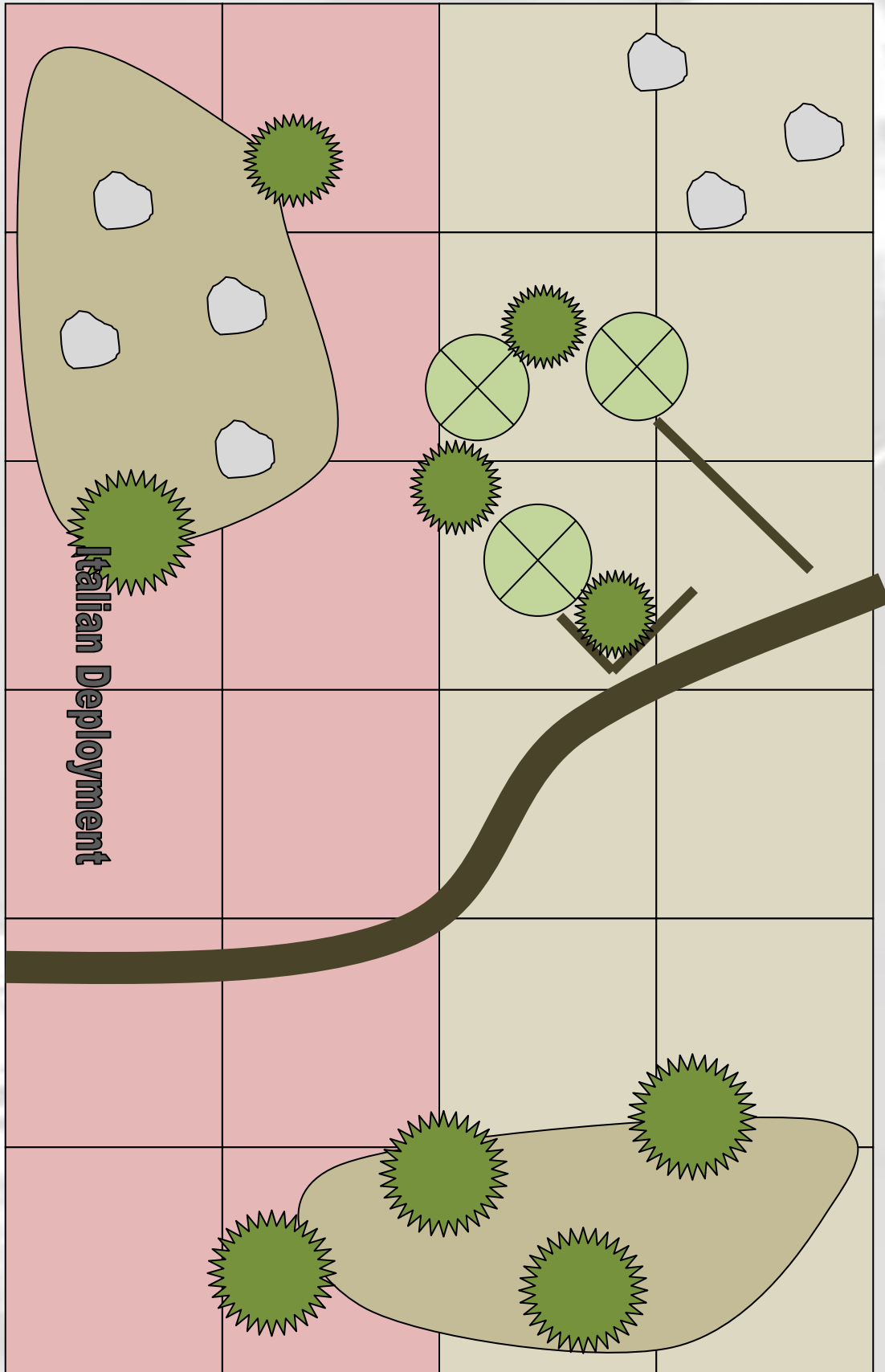
3-4: Not Event

5-6: Bad Rice – The commanders of your force had bad rice the night before and they are distracted by gut wrenching indigestion. Your officer's moral bonus is reduced by 1 for the game.

Historical Outcome

No one is sure how the battle started, but what is certain is that the incident was fast a bloody. The Ethiopians lost about 110 men, while the Italians lost 50.

Walwal Incident



Major Criniti's Attack

Background: On December 15, 1935 Ethiopian troops crossed the Tekeze River. Ahead of them was an outpost of 1,000 Eritrean troops commanded by Major Criniti. Criniti ordered his troops to fall back to the Dembeguina Pass. To Criniti's surprise, the pass was already held by 2,000 Ethiopian troops. With few options available to him, Criniti, who was on horseback, ordered his tanks to spearhead the attack on the Ethiopian positions.

Objectives: The objective is for the Italian troops to exit the Ethiopian board edge.

If the Italians get more units off the board than are destroyed, they win the game.

Forces:

Major Criniti (Veteran Major) and his staff team (two men) lead the Italian force. Major Criniti counts as the required officer for the platoon. In addition to Major Criniti the Italian player has 500 of troops at his command. The Italian player may only take Lieutenants as additional officers.

The Italian player may only take Colonial Infantry for their infantry sections.

The Ethiopian player has 500 points to build their army.

The Ethiopians cannot use any tanks or armored cars in this mission.

The Italian player is the attacker and all his troops start the game off the board. These troops can either be deployed in the first wave or in outflank.

The Ethiopian player is the defender. At least half of the Ethiopian troops must start the game on the board in the Ethiopian deployment zone. The rest of the troops can be deployed in reserve, but not out flank. Any troops deployed on the board may begin the game hidden.

Mission Special Rules: None

Variable Rules (Optional):

Italian:

1-2: This Damn Heat – Any Italian troops deployed in outflank suffer -1 moral check when coming on from reserve.

3-4: No event

5-6: Tanks lead the way – The Italian force gets an extra L3 tank.

Ethiopian:

1-2: The Army is Here – You may replace one of your infantry squads with a guards unit of the same strength.

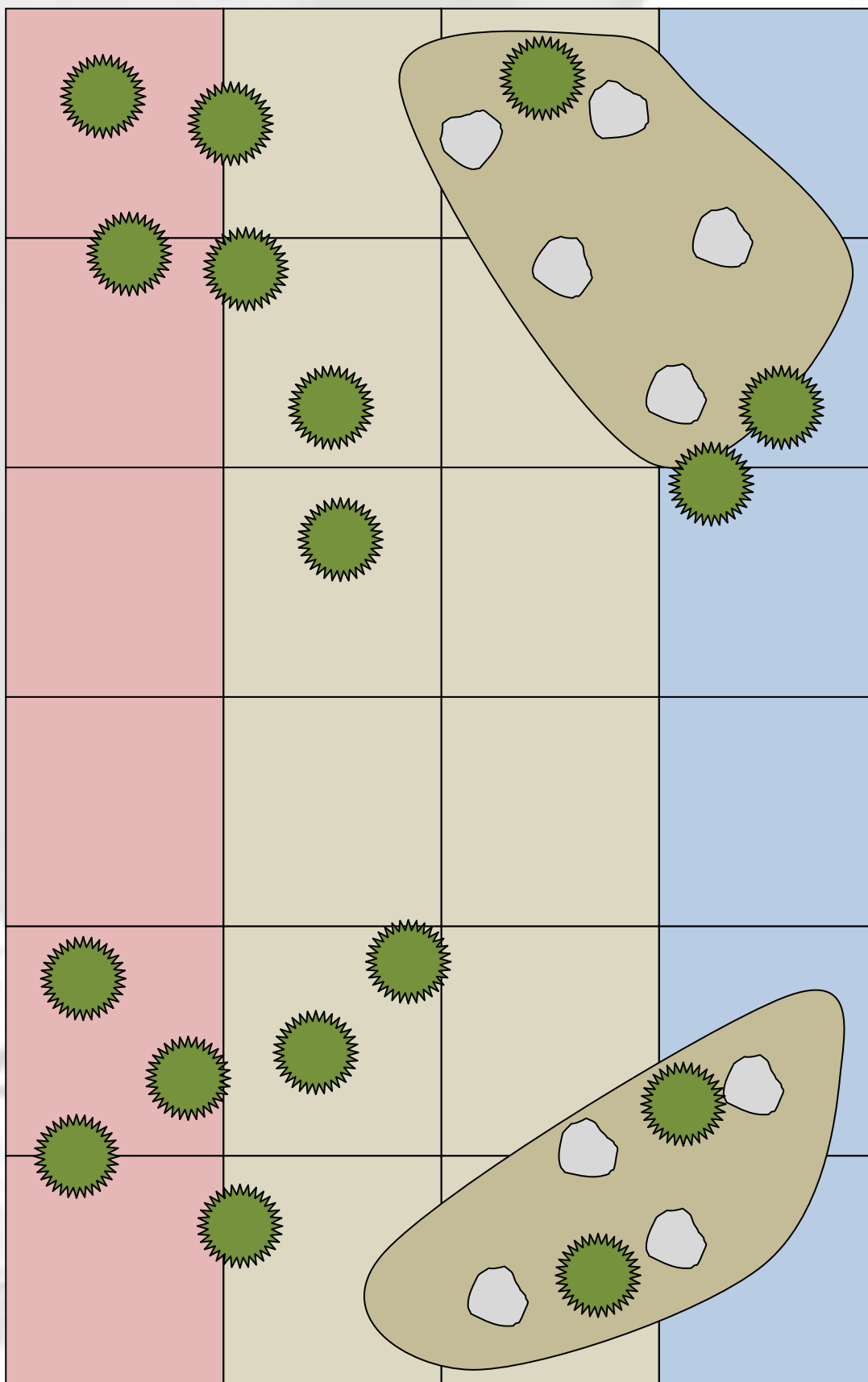
3-4: Not Event

5-6: Poor Training – The Ethiopia troops are poorly trained and give away their position. Inexperienced Ethiopian troops do not start the game hidden.

Historical Outcome

The Italian attack faltered after Major Criniti was wounded and two of his Italian officers were killed. Criniti's Eritrean troops fell back and rallied around his tanks in preparation for the Ethiopian counter attack.

Major Criniti's Attack



Outnumbered and Trapped

Background: After attempting to break through the Ethiopians, Major Criniti and his men rallied around their tanks. It was at this point that the Ethiopians that had crossed the Tekeze River caught up with him. His men then came under fire from all directions.

Objectives: The objective is for the Ethiopian force to destroy the Italian force.

Forces:

Major Criniti (Veteran Major) and his staff team (two men) lead the Italian force. Major Criniti counts as the required officer for the platoon. In addition to Major Criniti the Italian player has 500 of troops at his command. The Italian player may only take Lieutenants as additional officers.

The Italian player may only take Colonial Infantry for their infantry sections.

The Ethiopian player has 600 points to build their army.

The Ethiopians cannot use any tanks or armored cars in this mission.

The Italian player is the defender and all his troops start the game on the board in the Italian deployment area. Italian troops can start the board hidden.

The Ethiopian player is the attacker. All their troops start off the board. Half the force forms the first wave and must be brought on during the first turn. The rest of the Ethiopian troops are placed in reserve. Ethiopian troops may enter the board from any board edge.

Mission Special Rules: None

Variable Rules (Optional):

Italian:

1-2: Broke Down – Italian tanks have broken down in the heat. All Italian tanks or armored cars start the game immobilized.

3-4: No event

5-6: Tanks lead the way – The Italian force gets an extra L3 tank.

Ethiopian:

1-2: The Army is Here – You may replace one of your infantry squads with a guards unit of the same strength.

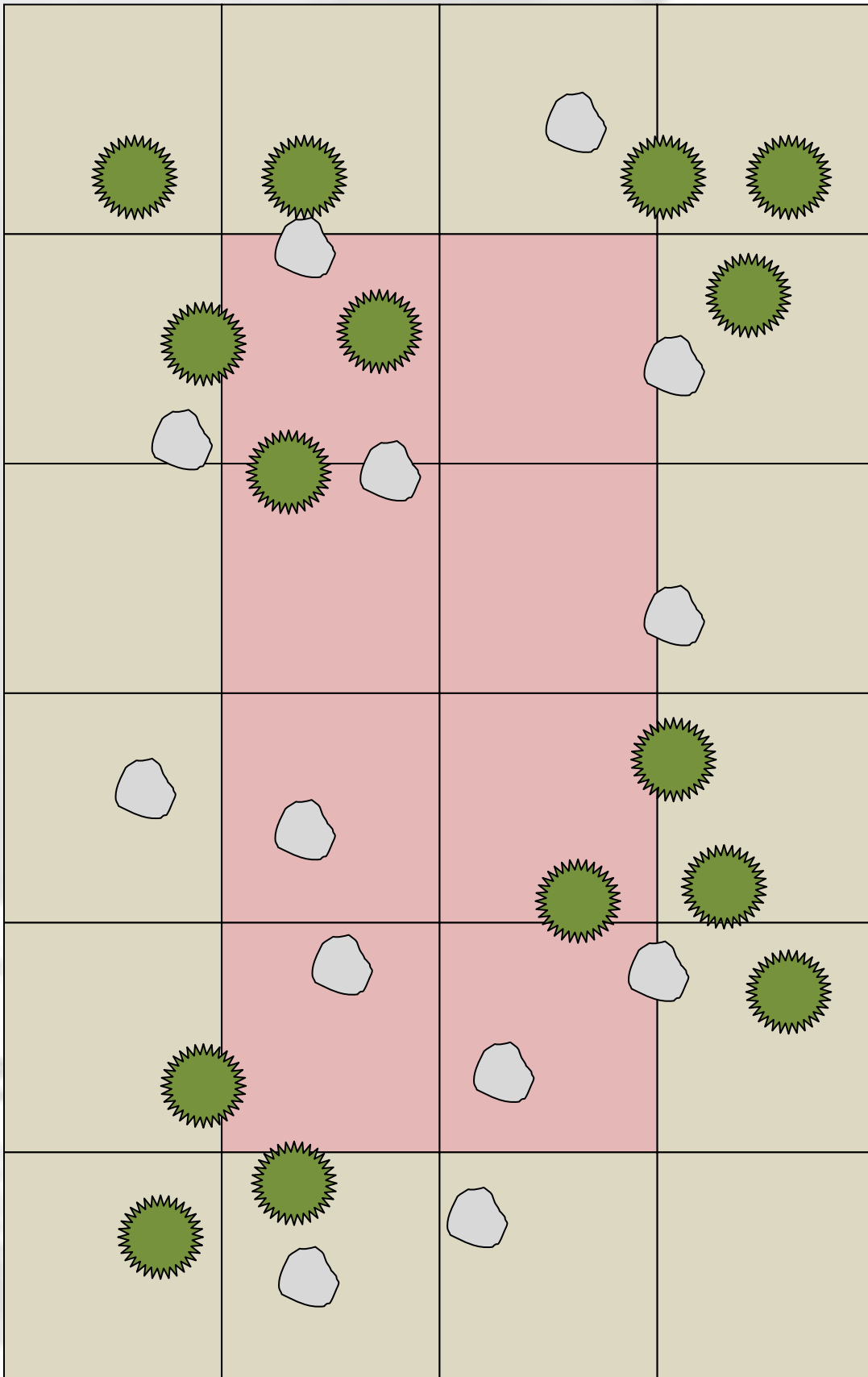
3-4: Not Event

5-6: Poor Training – The Ethiopia troops are poorly trained and give away their position. Inexperienced Ethiopian troops do not start the game hidden.

Historical Outcome

The Ethiopian troops were able to overrun many of the Italian position and slaughter the Eritrean infantry. This left the Italian tanks unprotected and the Ethiopians were able to knock them out and kill their crew.

Outnumbered and Trapped



They Came from Above

As Major Criniti watched his troops get slaughtered, he radioed for more tanks and men. The Italians sent a relief column, which included ten additional tanks. As they approached Criniti's position, they were ambushed by Ethiopian troops.

Objectives: The objective is for the Italian force to reach Major Criniti.

Forces:

The Italia force consists of 500 points of men plus one L3 tank.

The Ethiopian player has 500 points to build their army.

The Ethiopians cannot use any tanks or armored cars in this mission.

The Italian player is the attacker and all his troops start the game on the board in the Italian deployment area.

The Ethiopian player is the defender. All their troops start on the board, hidden and in ambush.

Mission Special Rules: Boulders – Ethiopian troops deployed in rocks can attack any Italian tank by rolling boulders at them. A boulder attack takes 5 men to perform, has a range of 12", ROF of 1, and Pen of +3.

Variable Rules (Optional):

Italian:

1-2: Bad Calzone – The commanders of your force had bad calzons the night before and are distracted by gut wrenching indigestion. Your officers' moral bonus is reduced by 1 for the game.

3-4: No event

5-6: Courage Under Fire – All Italian troops get a +1 to their moral. So Inexperience troops have a moral of 9 and regulars have a moral of 10 and veterans have a moral of 11.

Ethiopian:

1-2: The Army is Here – You may replace one of your infantry squads with a guards unit of the same strength.

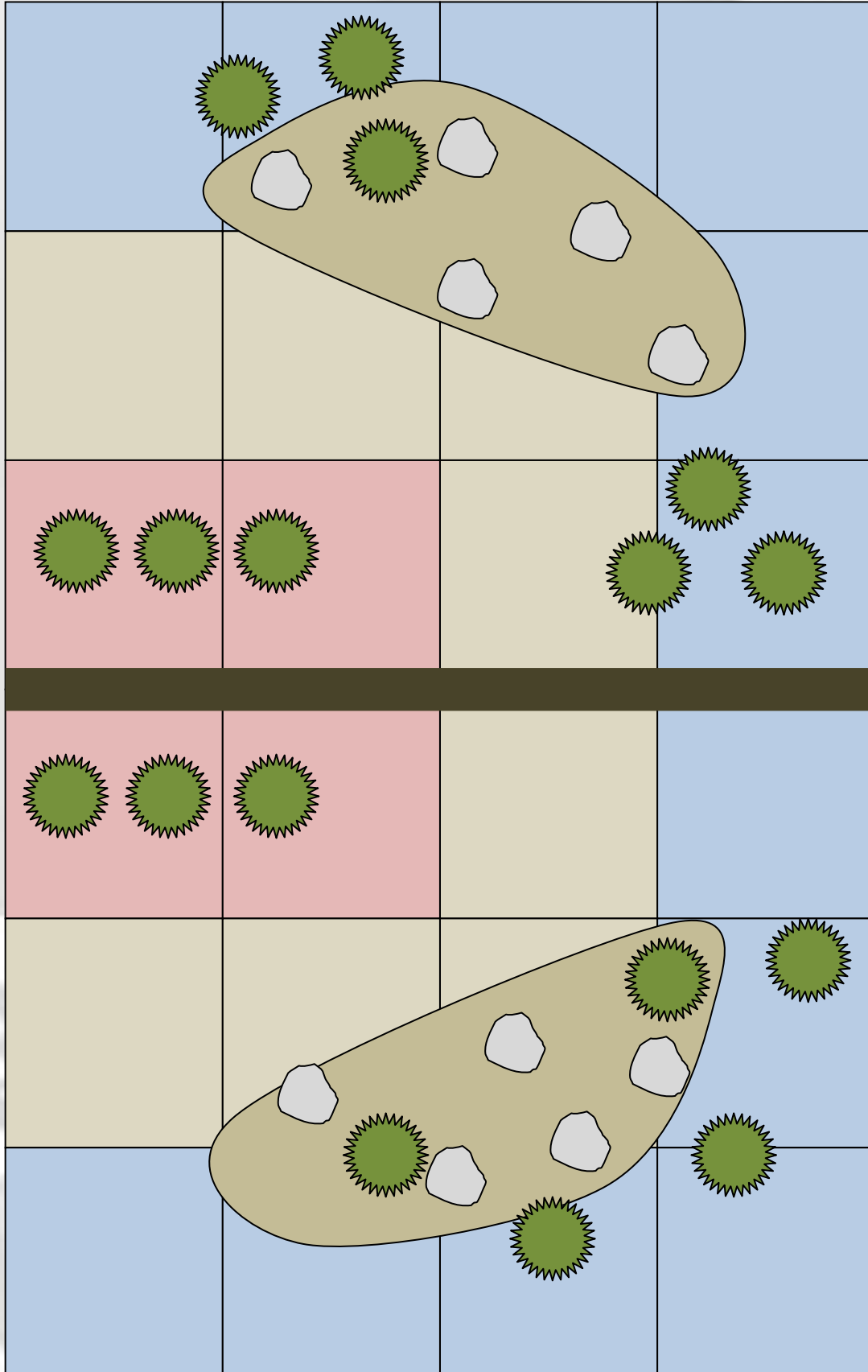
3-4: Not Event

5-6: This Damn Heat – Any Italian troops deployed in outflank suffer -1 moral check when coming on from reserve.

Historical Outcome

The Ethiopian were able to immobilize several of the Italian tanks. After that they easily killed the infantry and set the tanks on fire.

They Came From Above



Criniti's Charge

Background: After the Italian relief force was destroyed, Major Criniti had few options. Surrounded and trapped, he had nowhere to go, so he ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge.

Objectives: The objective is for Major Criniti and his men to break out of the trap.

Forces:

Major Criniti (Veteran Major) and his staff team (two men) lead the Italian force. Major Criniti counts as the required officer for the platoon. In addition to Major Criniti the Italian player has 500 of troops at his command. The Italian player may only take Lieutenants as additional officers.

The Italian player may only take Colonial Infantry for their infantry sections and may not take any vehicles.

The Ethiopian player has 500 points to build their army.

The Ethiopians cannot use any tanks or armored cars in this mission.

The Italian player is the attacker and all his troops start the game on the board in the Italian deployment area.

The Ethiopian player is the defender. Half their troops start on the board in the Ethiopian deployment area. The rest of the Ethiopian troops are placed in reserve, but not out flank.

Mission Special Rules:

Fix Bayonets- Italian troops may use the Banzai special rules found in the Armies of Japan army book.

Variable Rules (Optional):

Italian:

1-2: We're All Gonna Die – Italian moral is low as men prepare for death. Ethiopian troops subtract one from their die roll when they are assaulted by Ethiopian troops.

3-4: No event

5-6: We Got Her Running Sir – The Italian force gets an L3 tank.

Ethiopian:

1-2: The Army is Here – You may replace one of your infantry squads with a guards unit of the same strength.

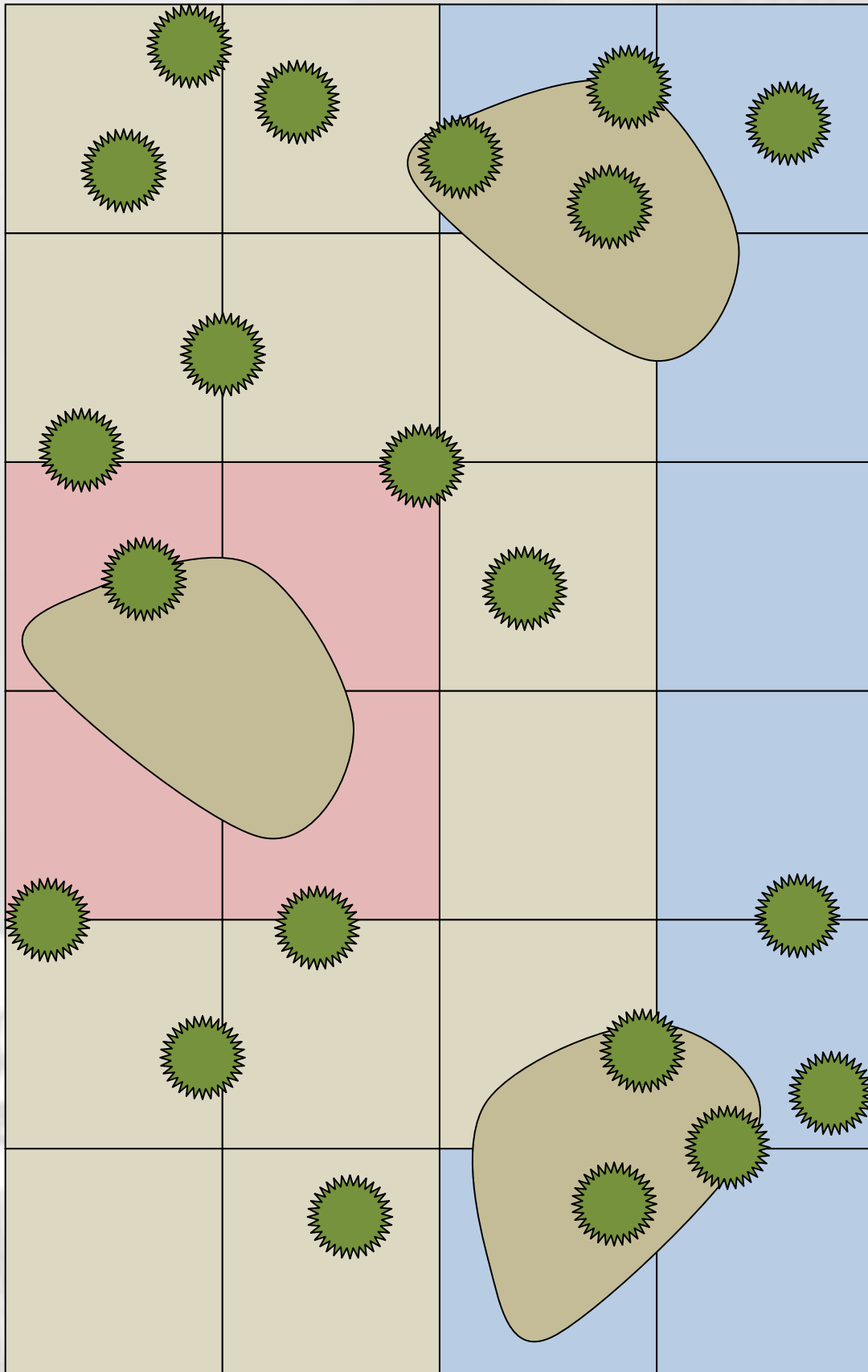
3-4: Not Event

5-6: 5-6: This Damn Heat – Any Italian troops deployed in outflank suffer -1 moral check when coming on from reserve.

Historical Outcome

Major Criniti's men were able to break through the Ethiopian lines and escape. However half of his men were killed in the process. The resulting Ethiopian victory was a set back for the Italians who were driven back 12 miles.

Criniti's Charge



Collecting an Ethiopian Army

There are many options out there for collecting an Ethiopian Army for Bolt Action. There are many 28mm Sudanese Colonial Campaign ranges that have suitable figures to be used for your Ethiopian Army. In addition to these figures there is a variety of equipment options available from many companies. Your heavy machineguns should be Vickers MMGs or captured Italian MMGs.

Askari Miniatures has a decent range of Ethiopian troops. This include Imperial Guard troops and selection of artillery and pack animals (check out the Ambulance Mule)

<http://www.askari-minis.com/>

Perry Miniatures has a great Sudanese Plastic Box set which can be used to create most of your troops, this include mounted troops and officers.

<http://www.perry-miniatures.com/>

Old Glory 25s has a Sudanese campaign range, which can be used for Tribal Troops and Levies.

<http://oldglory25s.com/>

Empress Miniatures has a dedicated Italian Invasion of Abyssinia range. These are beautiful figures.

<http://www.empressminiatures.com/>

Company B has a good selection of armored cars that could be used for your Ethiopian Army. Check out their interwar kits – they even have a Ford Armored Car.

<http://www.companyb.biz/>