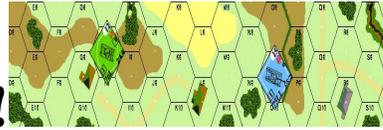


POINT BLANK!



September / October 2010 Volume 4, Issue 1
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<p>Silicon Valley ASL Club publishes Point Blank as a non-profit magazine. The editor is Jon Halfin. Please submit any articles or comments to the Editor at witchbottles@gmail.com. All submissions become subject to the rules of this publication upon inclusion. Articles are accepted in any electronic format. Please include artwork maps or variant counters in a separate .gif, .jpg or .bmp file.</p>	

An Independent Journal of ASL ® Thoughts and Ideas

Published free of charge by the Silicon Valley ASL Club

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Prep Fires

Your Editor, Jon Halfin

Welcome Back to the first returning issue of Point Blank! After a too long hiatus, your editor, i.e. me, has returned to the fold of Bay Area ASL. My retirement from Uncle Sam's Misguided Children is complete, and I have relocated to my new house and job, and life has finally stabilized for this veteran.

One of the first items I will be addressing is the distribution formats for this newsletter, in an effort to finally correct the major problem I had before, i.e. , a lack of capability to present my efforts to the ASL public in a useful and more standardized format. To that end, I will commit to attempting to publish Point Blank! in pdf format as soon as possible. I will be standardizing the access to Point Blank! to the file menu at the Silicon Valley ASL Club web site. You can access the site at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SVASL>. Joining the group is free, and any member has download access to the files section.

I will also work with the forum staff at Game Squad Forums ASL area to allow posting the files for download there.

As before, the main focus of the articles of this publication is to explore the units and battles behind our cardboard heroes, in the hopes that some of these "forgotten battles" may yet see coverage in the ASL design arena, and to highlight any ASL related material that may affect our Club members in the Bay Area. This does not by any means define that we will not publish variants or tactical or strategic tips for ASL play.

I have included some gleaned tips from many landings on the beaches of ASL that I have attempted to defend in order to show that not all is lost in a good defense of a beach area.

I follow this with some historical data on the battle of Anguar, in the Palaus. A forgotten Battle that would be nice to see in ASL.

Last, to the Desperation Morale review of this publication, I say, to each his own, and I hope you continue to provide your good resources on your web site for ASL players everywhere. I hope you may find the new and improved version of my effort to give something back to the ASL community in a better light than before.



Bounding Fire

The recent shipping by MMP of the GG to BR:T means a whole new slew of ASL opponents may soon be taking on the bloody beach assaults in ASL. I for one look forward to some hard fought games in the wet sand.

Turning the Tide scenario pack came out in May, as did Journal #8, and we at the SVASL Club are proud to see Journal #7 holding our own Chris Olden's gem "Extra Curricular Activity". I would like to make our SVASL members aware that although we currently have the play-test version of this scenario for download at the group page, I am waiting for Curt and Perry and Brian to respond to the query I sent that we may need to stop distribution of this version now that the scenario has seen print in an MMP product.

Journal #8 came out with a number of very enjoyable scenarios. We present an analysis of one of Mr. Vitry's best works in our opinion: J115.

For those of us who use the VASL product, the upgrade to the 5.9.1 or 5.9.2 versions of VASL has now been made mandatory as of the end of July by the moving and new web site for the VASSAL engine it runs on. If you do not yet have the 5.9.x versions, see the Game Squad Forum threads for the links to the fixes. The nice part in all of this is all those extensions for ASL products made before 3-1-2010 are now obsolete and can be deleted.



J115, an AAR from Journal #8:

German: Jon Halfin: Russian: Chandler Braswell

Russian Comments:

Pre game:

I enjoyed reading Journal 8 and was pleased when I saw an ad on Game Squad for an opponent specifying a game from this Journal. It looked like a good place to practice using/defending against overruns. I choose the Russians to try the defending side.

I looked over the German OOB and incorrectly assumed they would line up and smash the X6 house and then swing to the right and take the group of buildings. I set up a trench line leading from the right set of buildings back to a commissar in the M9 woods to rally guys and get them back into the battle quickly. My AT gun was placed in P8 with a P7/Q8 covered arc. The MMG was with a crew in O8 and the HMG was in the stone building, K7 with the 9-1 leader. Since I figured they would hit X6 and move on, a 4-5-8 was HIP in AA8 to sneak in and retake it in the last turn. CC3 and K3 contained dummy stacks to be overrun while CC5 and K4 contained

real units to try to punish the overrunners. My bore-sights were along the T2, V2, R2 area to cover that gap in the woods and punish a fire base against X6. I have had a habit of opening fire to early and throwing away my concealment so this game I vowed to wait to see the "whites of their eyes."

From reading the overrun article in Journal 8, I came away with the impression to always wait until after the overrun to attack. I guess I should have remembered there is NEVER an always in ASL and looked more closely at shooting early. In one case it saved me because I retained concealment but on two others the 16+2 shot might have stopped overrun cold. I have to admit that I did not see how the Russians could get 24 CVP's so I concentrated exclusively on retaining the buildings.

Game Play:

I was shocked to see the Germans line up heavy on the right. The brave squad in C3 probably saved the game by whacking a half track crew/passengers and soaking up CMG from the tank until it malfunctioned. Had to have something to make up for my gun being out of position and in woods so the turning hex side modifier was doubled. Also, O8 proved to be a bad location since the Orchard in N7 would hurt a fire lane to the bulk of the Germans.

As the Germans entered the open I decided to open up with O8 and lost the crew without doing much damage. I also lost a squad out of the L8 trench system trying to remain the MMG. My Russians hunkered down for the big charge. I tried to place as much resist in J6, K6, L6 as I could to limit the advances in to K7. My defense met with mixed success as a hero popped up in I8. As the right side swirled in to one big melee, my 10-0 commissar charged in to help out/shoot some reactionaries.

When my turn 4 rolled around I had a

decision to make about the reinforcements. The melee was still swirling on the right side but I decided the throw everything in to holding X6 since I had a slight edge in squads there, my HIP was there to help out as well and my ATG would hinder any reinforcing attempts. I moved the 8-0, a squad and LMG into T9 to further block reinforcement and ran two squads down the Y10 road. A squad and leader were in O8 after another squad hauled off my MMG so was hesitant to reveal my AT gun even when I had rear/side shots on two half tracks and the armored car. This late in the game I was hoping his being hidden was a bigger deterrent than his shots even though a 50% rate of fire chance was tempting.

The squad in O8 entered P8 and revealed my gun but my squads around X6 were able to stop any German attempts to reinforce the melee in X6. Unfortunately all my squads pinned/broke before I could reinforce the melee and my shot into the melee only pinned my own guy. Luckily we both rolled high on the final CC phase and I maintained control of the X6 building.

Post - Game:

Cannot ask for much closer than coming down to the last possible die roll. Might have been less close if the ATG had fired and went on a RoF tear but also revealing it would give the Germans much more freedom in Armour movement. I might have been better served to build a trench arc in front of K7 since the commissar never rallied anyone back in the M9 woods. A really fun scenario played against a quality opponent. It seems well balanced and I would gladly play again as either side.

German Comments:

Pre-Game:

I recently played this outstanding little gem of a scenario with an E-mail opponent, Chandler Braswell. With his agreement, we are providing

a joint debrief on the twists and turns of one of Xavier's newest designs.

Having recently acquired my Journal #8 in May, I advertised for an opponent for a scenario from this Journal and Chandler offered a choice of 2 scenarios from it. I chose J115 and Chandler chose sides, this allowed for maximum ease of beginning a game for us.

After a quick review of the forces and terrain, I came to the conclusion that the Russians had 2 ways to win, but the Germans only . This put me at a disadvantage from the outset, and would necessitate aggressive play. Looking at the terrain, the distance to be covered was minor, but the open ground with not a stitch of cover and a known hidden ATG as well as 3 MGs with fire lane capability meant my decision was again, a need for bold, aggressive play with the AFV's to block up LOS's with hindrances, smoke, or both. Lastly, reviewing the scant time allowed to cross the board only reinforced my belief that a tight timetable of advance was necessary to allow a win.

Now a closer look was needed at the Russian VC's Hold at least 1 building or cause >24CVP's. With thin skinned HT and a lightly armored AC for AFV's, not counting the sole PzKpfVIII, and a big threat from an ATG not to mention some elite Russian inf, and even their MMG and HMGs had the capability of knocking off the light armor, I decided the key was to use the HT as expendable. Since they began with 4-6-8 squads mounted, this meant 2 CVP per ht was already written off, as well as 2 CVP per 468, for a total of 12 CVP considered lost at the outset. Setting this in my mind allowed me to accept the risks of OVRing with loaded HT in woods locations vs concealed units.

Game play:

I decided on a pace of enter the woods on turn 1, OVR outposts on Turn , fling the armor against the far side main buildings on Turn 3, Capture the main complex on Turn 4, and swing to take the last bldg on the flank in turn 5.

All proceeded well, with only minor losses to the OVR's. It appears my opponent decided to follow general mantra from the OVR article in Journal 8 and hold fire til the OVR was complete, much to his detriment, as the OVRs did cause some Russian losses, and his shots back were missed even though 8+2s or 12+2's, the 8ML HTs laughed off the DFF / SFF shots, with only one crew stunning.

With my throwing the armor across to rush the bldg / trench complex on the far side, and lock the Russkies into VBM freezes, I drew many shots from my opponent again with 8+2s and 6+2s brushed off by the 8ML AFV crews. A good ROF run on the PzIII resulted in a nasty MG nest K.O.d, but more importantly, the fire at the AFV's meant no FL's laid to block the inf, which rushed forward, DC's in hand, to blow into and then charge into CC to lock up every Russian unit in the main bldg complex.

I actually took all but the 1 building on my flank and all Russian

MG nests but 1 on Turn 3. This had me ahead of my time line a bit, so I used it to consolidate my hold on the main area. My mistake #1 in retrospect. Turn 4, I sent the armor willy nilly to charge the last nest of Russians and into their reinforcements also, and lock them down. This time their shots fared no better than before with NMCs and MCs bouncing off my 8ML CE crews. I had decided that since the ATG

didn't fire at anyone so far, he didn't have a good LOS to my right flank side of the board, so my armor could maneuver freely there. My mistake #2, but thankfully, my opponent held his fire and missed a great opportunity to bag 2 HT and the AC with rear and side shots from a 3 ROF hidden ATG. Still, a very bad assumption that could have cost me a win on CVPs.

The last turn had my units that could reach the last bldg / MG nest there for a showdown CC, the Russky pinned in AFPh, and then the rolls, a 1:1 no DRMs for me made a 7, and a 1:2 no DRMs from him for a meant he won. BTW, while moving to reinforce the last bldg assault on Turn 4, I stepped into a CC with the ATG crew in APh4a. This resulted in a melee to Turn 5a, and my 5a CC roll was a 1,1! Good roll in the wrong hex! As you can see, this lack of units able to reach the far side bldg meant that consolidating in Turn 3 meant a loss in turn

Post - Game:

All in all, I rate this scen a close match. The Germans have to decide to either Schwerepunkt and then turn, or split from the outset to try for a win. The armor must be used aggressively to draw out Russian defenses so the landsers can cross the OG. The Russians have a defense area split in half by OG. They need to decide which VC they are going to go for and hold to it, as we found out Russians can't really shift from flank to flank once the German ht's get into the Russian side of the board. The rushing horde of light armor makes for a lot of possibilities and we actually saw a crew bail out after a immobilize TC and promptly disrupt on the DFF's and then surrender, only to have the guarding unit elim'd in the next turns CCPh and the prisoners freed to re-crew their immobilized ht. I

commend my opponent, Chandler only made one tactical error I could see, and I made 2.

I strongly recommend this as a game for a small playing with lots of strategy and tactics. Mr Vitry has lived up to all expectations I had of his efforts with this scenario.



BLOODY ANGUAR:

(Actual photo from Anguar on D Day 15 Sept, 1944, courtesy of the NARA)

The Palau Island group is a 45-mile long archipelago of some 200 islands, And is roughly 550 miles east of the southern Philippines and some 800 miles south by east from the Marianas in the Central Pacific. It was viewed by Gen Douglas MacArthur as a threat to continued advances against the Japanese Empire, specifically as a flanking threat to the planned return to the Phillipines and the recently pushed forward landings at Leyte. By late summer 1944, the U.S. was drawing closer to Japan, having liberated most of the island groups of the Southwest and Central Pacific in what was called the Pacific Theater of Operations.

The Palaus were to be neutralized as a threat by a 3 prong assault on the archipelago. Task force 58 would gut the IJN aircraft and runways in Babelthuap atoll, the 1st Marine Division would assault Peleliu Island and Ngesebus Island, seizing the airfields for USAAF use, and the 81st, Wildcat Division would seize Anguar to the south of the cluster of islands to provide a sheltered anchorage for mustering landing ships for Leyte.

Five miles south of Peleliu lies the island of Anguar, which was to be assaulted by U.S. army troops of the 81st Infantry Division. The operation on Anguar was expected to take between 48 and 96 hours to accomplish, using just one of the Regimental Combat Teams on board, after which troops of the "Wildcat" Division would first be sent to Peleliu to relieve the ranks of the 1st Marine Regiment, then would complete the seizure and garrison of the island prior to November 1st 1944. The Division's 321st RCT would act as the Amphibious Groups Floating Reserve force for the entire operation.

The Commanders

For Operation Stalemate II, the seizure of the Palau Archipelago, the commanders and forces were assigned as follows:

Vice Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson commanded the Third Amphibious Force.

Major General Roy S. Geiger commanded the III Amphibious Corps comprised of ground troops from the 1st Marine Division (Peleliu) and the Army's 81st Infantry Division (Anguar).

Commanding the 81st Infantry Division was Major General Paul J. Mueller.

Under Mueller the regimental commanders for the division were as follows:

The 321st Regiment Combat Team (RCT) -- Colonel Robert F. Dark

The 322nd RCT -- Colonel Benjamin W. Venable

The 323rd RCT -- Colonel Arthur P. Watson

Division Artillery -- Colonel James T. Loome

Division Engineers -- Colonel Charles R. Damon, and

Division Transportation --s Lt. Colonel Newell E. Watts

81st Infantry Division

Also known as the Wildcats, from the shoulder-patch likeness of its division mascot, the U.S. Army's 81st Infantry Division was assigned to seize Anguar, a small atoll just a few miles south of Peleliu and to reinforce the Marines when and if General Roy Geiger thought they were needed. Unlike the 1st Marine Division, the 81st had never been in combat, although it had undergone extensive training in Hawaii and on Guadalcanal before shipping out for the Palaus in early September 1944.

Though as yet untested, the Wildcats would make a good accounting of themselves, fighting the troops of the Kure SNLF on Anguar, and then side by side with the Marines in the coral badlands of Peleliu.

Japanese Command

Specific orders for implementing the new defense strategy were published over the name of Japanese Lt. Gen. Sadai Inoue, who was ordered by Premier Tojo to take his 14th Infantry Division to the Palaus for defense against an invasion by MacArthur. He arrived in April 1944 to assume command of all ground forces, and a classical army/navy rift occurred, which compromised Col. Nakagawa's ability to prepare for defense. To resolve this interservice rivalry, Lt. Gen. Inoue dispatched Maj. Gen. Kenjiro Murai to give the army sufficient rank with that of the local naval commander while placing the operational mission firmly in Nakagawa's hands. Col Nakagawa tasked the 455 man detachment from the Kure SNLF under orders from the IJN HQ in Babelthup to defend Anguar and Ngesebus airfields with the sole responsibility for defending the strip on Anguar. As the island had but one approachable beach that was suitable for an invasion force, and little beyond the airstrip facilities except coral outcroppings, Col Nakagawa felt

confident in entrusting the SNLF troops under Commander Satai to repulsing any invader. A simple task for the elite of the IJN.

Commander Satai had received levied workers from Peleliu for 5 weeks in June of 1944, and had managed to construct a double ring of log bunkers around Blue Beach and the pier, and a triangular redoubt of log bunkers between the revetments at the west end of the runway. These defenses would prove tough for untried troops.

The Battle:

The Wildcats committed the entire 323rd RCT to seizing Anguar. Due to a severe lack in amphibious transport lift capability as the Marines in Peleliu had the priority that September morning, the assault waves were rump battalion sized, a formation used for attaching additional strength to US Army units, wherein the heavy weapons company and integral mortar battery was detached from each battalion and reassigned to Regimental control for an operation. This meant the landing battalions would be without .50 caliber MGs, or mortars, or bazookas, until the regimental HQ arrived with the HW units in the 5th wave. The Assault battalions would have 3 companies with no heavy firepower for the first 1-2 hours of the operation. As Blue Beach was the only area the LCVP's could access through the high reef around the island, only one battalion at a time plus the Bn HQ pltn would comprise each wave in.

The Wildcats had adopted the idea of a Joint Assault Company, or JASCO, from the Marines, and the 1st company of each battalion was equipped with a FT Team and demolition crew,

The assault waves went left their line of departure at 12:45pm on the 15th of September. It would take the 323rd RCT 11 days of bloody fighting to dig the SNLF troops out of the network of palm bunkers they had built around Blue Beach, and the airstrip. The remainder of the exhausted 323rd troops were

withdrawn, and the 322nd was detailed to land 2 battalions for security and mopping up. The Wildcat Division was now a veteran unit.



Stop the Landing Force!:

Some Tactical tips on how to hit invaders on the beach in ASL.

The Imperial War Cabinet has seen fit to give you the honor of leading Japanese troops to a stunning victory over the landing American dogs coming to invade our sovereign territory on the island. You will of course do your duty to your emperor.

There are some definite rules to inflicting casualties, however, and if you don't follow these, your OoB will die right there in their defenses.

Let's start with the basics. LC, or more often in Marine vs Japanese scenarios, LVTs.

The Basic concept to remember is that the inbound LC / LVTs must be loaded to at least 2/3rd of their capacity, except by SSR where it may be lowered to 1/2 their capacity. This means every kill in the water means multiple effects on the units in and weapons in the LC/ LVT. So by far, the best and easiest way to inflict casualties is in the water, not on dry land. Even wading troops will suffer the hazardous movement -2 DRMs. What you will need to accomplish in the setup is a good field of fire into the water hexes for any ROF capable MGs or Guns you are given. IFP is for later in the game, it's those ROF weapons that will determine if you have a chance to win or not. Always look for overlapping, a nice overlap technique will have MG / IFE then HE/

AP capable, then MG / IFE again, and so on along the American Entry Area.

These weapons must have adequate TEM to stay in operation til they malfunction, which will happen soon after opening fire with Japanese mechanical reliability being what it is. This means, Trenches, Pillboxes / Bunkers, Caves, always at least +2 tem, one way or the other. Any pillbox should be bunkerized with a trench counter whenever possible to allow for non FFMO reinforcement.

Japanese leaders need to be with the weapons capable of the most damage, i.e. high ROF and decent TK #s, like the 37L ATGs or the 12.7 AA guns, to direct fire, if they have minus modifiers. All other Japanese leaders need to form a rear area rally point to catch any retreating HS or Crews, rally them and lead them back to the fight. Japanese leaders have a very disturbing tendency of disappearing once play starts anyway.

Fortifications:

Tetraherons act as wire in OG boards, they channel the attack, they do not cause casualties on their own. No one purposely risks loaded LC on these over and over just to land behind them, although doing so as an assaulting player may catch an unwary IJA player by surprise. Make sure to back them up with a few protective fires or additional fortifications.

Wire is wonderful item in a beach hex. The more in beaches, the merrier, just remember to cover it with firepower to prevent easy clearing.

Pillboxes are for MGs. Trenches are for heavy guns. Caves are for infantry. There are exceptions, but these general rules will allow maximum protection and field of fire for your weapons.

Mines and / or panji belong in every pillbox hex. Why allow an attacker a freebie entry into TPBF / CC range?

Also station IFP behind your pillboxes in foxholes or jungle to blast any creepers off the top of your pillboxes.

Japanese armor belongs in a reserve force, mobile firepower to hit the marines once they first get a foothold in a hinterland area. Hit them hard with the armor, early in a scenario, before they can build up to exploit a hole in the defense. The IJA tanks are little good in a stand up fight. They need to get their licks in where they can, before decent anti - armor capability exists.

Any OBA belongs in a beach / hinterland border hex. Again using HE to blast em where any MC failure results in a CR and not breaking.

Partial Seawall Beaches:

This one's a no brainer... the scen has 1 or more turns to win, 1/2 or 1/3d of the beach has some type of seawall, why land where it isn't? I thought the enemy would be like to avoid the NTCs to get over it (BTW, a 63.8% of passing, marines are 9ML on beach), and handed over free benefits of the +2 wall TEM because of it.

Remember, once the marines are ashore, the 768's can self deploy in their RPh w/out a ldr. Fanatic means no cwr, so no ldr is even req'd for these units to fire. Also, get those SWs before they get assembled. Draggin around useless 2PP and 3PP dm SW's is a sure way to force a marine player to lose them for good.

As soon as the guys get out of the boats, get those pesky -1 DRM for the FTs ASAP. Dropped FTs on 1st hex hinterland can be recovered. Extra losses due to that -1 DRM can't, neither can that FT in an ocean hex.

Defending the beach at close range is stupid, stupid, stupid, unless you have no other choice, such as in BR: T. Guns should go in trenches, not PBs. PB's give a gun crew absolutely 0 protection during a CC. A trench in the first jungle hex w/

LOS to the beaches give them ambush possibilities, at least, and a LOT more protection. (+4 OBA, -1 Airburst, is still +3 TEM for them vs NOBA HE or ATT HE shots.)

Fire guns less than 70 mm first, save the heavies till his 1st or second round of planes are recalled, then open up on the follow up LC/LVTs/Tanks for kills. With a 90mm or higher, a burn is pretty much a sure thing w/ a hit. Let him expend the air support on the small guys, 50 MTs, 70* guns, etc.

Use Wire/RB/tetras/AP and AT mines to channel the guys coming ashore into kills zones for PBs and caves with MG teams in them. Remember to set them where the MGs can get Fire Lanes to stop him from coming at you when you do fire. Use tunnels and Complexes to reinforce and protect these PB's from CC. Try to find ways of positioning a MMG or HMG to get a FL down a series of beach hexes. This will cause the American player fits for the entire game.

Once they reach the beach, Let him unload, then hit him. It can be tempting to go for MG kills vs LVT's, but I advise against this unless it is BR: T. The MGs are much better at whacking the marine sqds as they try to move off the LC / LVTs, and the RFP will keep most of them there where they really can't do much to help win the scenario. Save the TH heroes for any tanks that make it ashore, or as DC heroes vs marine FT or -2 or better ldr hexes. Killing those FT's is #1 priority after they've unloaded. Same w/ the leaders. Too many marine SMC casualties and he'll be unable to continue the adv, as one after the other sqd breaks going inland.

A corollary here is go for the break result in shooting at the marines, rather than the high FP kills. Fanatic means CRs not broken units and he's stalled on the beach.

Keep a reserve of sqds in the Complexes, or HIP in? concealment terrain FH's/Trenches to feed into the PBs and

caves, and prevent him from gaining control of them. As long as you got them, he won't be able to organize a well-coordinated advance toward the objective.

Last, never surrender. It's just not very Samurai of you to do so. If he goes for a CC capture attempt and succeeds, try Hara Kiri. Otherwise stay with it. One thing I've learned about japs in scenarios of ASL is all it takes is one SR'd sqd to win most of the time, in the last Player Turn of the game.

Hope this helps those souls willing to tackle Chptr G, and stop a Run for the Beach!



Defensive Fires:

Letters to the Editor

As previously in this newsletter, we will publish correspondence from our readers here.

Opponents wanted:

Seeking VASL PBEM opponents for just about anything. I prefer IFT. Please e-mail me at witchbottles@gmail.com if you are interested.

1st Ever ASL Trivia Contest!

OK, for all of you "Expert" ASL player, here is the ASL Trivia Challenge #1. You will be playing for bragging rights and your name published in the next Point

Blank! as the winner. All entries must have the question #, followed by the answer, as a minimum. The answers must also be clearly labeled with your name as you may wish to see it published, and the Point Blank! issue #. Here we go:

From PB HASL module

1. Who was the first casualty of small arms fire on D-Day, June 6th, 1944?
2. What other records of firsts does this man hold? There are 3 others.

From GT CG

3. Who was the officer in charge of 2nd platoon, 1st Marine Parachute Bn?
4. What small arm were the Para Marines armed with that had a severe tendency to jam in high humidity, giving it a bad reputation as an infantry weapon, and resulted in it's removal from line units in 1943?

From OWT

5. What TO&E weapon of the Raider Bn infantry support weapons was left behind on the ships as not necessary to unload? Several weapon types never made it to shore, but only one of them was a TO&E authorized weapon.
6. What was the first aircraft of a belligerent power in WW2 to land on Guadalcanal?

All entries are final. All answers can be found in historical research of the ASL modules cited.

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