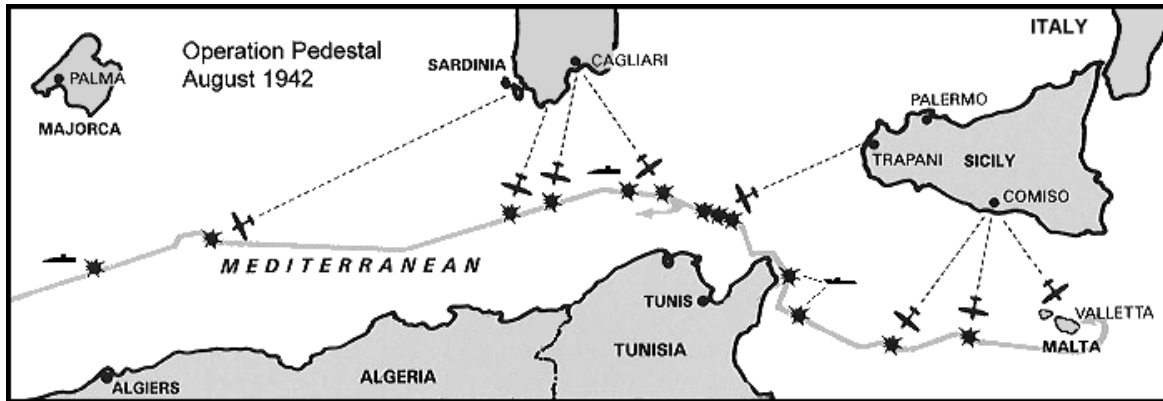


## OPERATION "PEDESTAL" (MALTA CONVOY - AUGUST 1942)

### Introduction

The tiny island of Malta was crucial to the British war effort in the Mediterranean - if it could survive its bombers and submarines would strangle the Afrika Korps supply lines, the battle for the Western Desert would be won and the Suez Canal and the Middle East oilfields would be safe. If it fell...



Operation Pedestal was the name given to the British attempt to force a convoy through the Mediterranean to this besieged island fortress in August 1942. All previous attempts to resupply Malta had been decimated or forced to turn back; the food, ammunition and, in particular, fuel carried by the convoy was vital. The merchant ships were escorted by several cruisers and many destroyers. In addition, Force X, including two battleships and three carriers, provided air cover and protection against the Italian fleet. But Force X could not go all the way and once the convoy was within range of Malta based Spitfires it would turn back to Gibraltar.

The Italian fleet was only one element of the forces ranged against them. They would also be attacked by German U-boats and E-boats and constantly under threat from mines. But most serious of all was the threat of air attack. Several hundred aircraft of the German *Fliegerkorps X* and the Italian *Regia Aeronautica* were based in Sardinia and Sicily. The convoys route passed within only a few minutes flying time of these airfields and it would have to endure three days of near continuous bombing.

Even when (or if) they reached Malta the ships would still not be safe. The precious cargoes would take at least a day to unload and although Valletta harbour was well defended by AA batteries it was a regular target of heavy and determined attacks which had already reduced the port and town to rubble.

### Sequence of Play

The operation consists of 4 game-days each with several missions:-

- Day 1 - 11<sup>th</sup> August - In the Western Mediterranean.
- Day 2 - 12<sup>th</sup> August - Through the Sardinia-Tunisia channel.
- Day 3 - 13<sup>th</sup> August - The Approach to Malta.
- Day 4 - 14<sup>th</sup> August - Unloading in Valletta Harbour.

Each game-day consists of the following phases:-

1. Axis player arranges available aircraft into a "raid deck".
2. Pick Action Card to determine the Axis aircraft for the next mission.
3. Pick Action Cards to determine British air cover.
4. Players secretly select up to 2 options each.
5. Reveal options, play mission and record losses.
6. Repeat items 2-5 until raid deck is exhausted.
7. Receive replacements and check for repairs to damaged aircraft and ships.

**Axis Forces**

Fighters:-	2	Bf 109 F	Bombers:-	2	Ju 87 D
	2	Bf 110 C		4	Ju 88 A
	2	MC 200		2	SM 79

MC 200 and SM 79 can be found in the “Malta under Siege” Module - if this is not available use Bf 109 E and He 111 H respectively.

Due to the target range Axis single-engined aircraft may not be used on 11<sup>th</sup> August.

**British Forces**

Air:	Carrier aircraft:-	6	Hurricane I	Malta aircraft:-	2	Spitfire I
					2	Spitfire V
					2	Hurricane II

Hurricane II are found in the “8th Airforce” or “Malta under Siege” Modules - if these are not available use additional Spitfire I.

Naval:	Convoy:-	1	Tanker	Escort:-	1	Cruiser
		7	Freighter		4	Destroyer

The tanker is treated as a cruiser for damage purposes but has flak values of 1 / 0.

**Axis Mission Aircraft**

At the start of each game-day the Axis player secretly arranges some or all of the remaining undamaged aircraft into a “Raid Deck”. Aircraft must fly in elements of the same type. An element is normally 2 aircraft but if there is only 1 aircraft of any type remaining it is allowed to fly alone. At the beginning of each mission one Action Card is drawn to determine the number of Axis aircraft on that mission. The indicated number of elements (not aircraft) are taken directly from the top of the raid deck. This process is repeated for each mission until the raid deck is exhausted.

Action Card	# of Elements
White Border	1
Red Border	2
Blue Border	3

If the card shows a Spoiled Attack symbol the aircraft selected cannot find their target and return to base. The mission is over and they may not be used again the same day.

If the mission aircraft include only fighters the Axis player may elect to play a dogfight mission or may load some or all of the fighters with bombs and conduct a normal strike mission.

**British Air Cover**

During the first 2 days (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) air cover is provided by carrier-borne Sea Hurricanes of the covering force (Force X). On the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> Force X withdraws and Malta-based Spitfires take over.

At the start of each mission undamaged defending fighters are placed in a “CAP Deck”, arranged in elements (pairs) of the same type. Aircraft which flew in the last mission are placed at the bottom. If necessary, when there is an odd number of any type, a leader may fly alone. Draw 1 Action Card for each element in the deck in turn.

Action Card	Result
Red Border	Airborne on station - available for this mission as normal
White Border	On alert - ready to launch (see below)
Blue Border	Refuelling / rearming or in transit - not available for this mission

A maximum of one element may be airborne and one element on alert for any mission. Repeat Red or White cards are treated as Blue. The British player may launch any aircraft on alert at any time during

the mission but their entry will be delayed 1-3 turns (as per Late Arrival - see below). If carrier based they begin at low or very low altitude.

## Mission Options

### Axis Options

1. Deceptive Course
2. Co-ordinated Attack
3. Co-ordinated Attack
4. Reconnaissance Aircraft
5. Reconnaissance Aircraft
6. Italian Fleet Sorties (11-13<sup>th</sup> Aug only)
7. U-boat Attack (11-13<sup>th</sup> Aug only)
8. Fighter Sweep, Bf 109 F(12-14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)
9. "Experten"
10. Maximum Effort, Bf 110 C (14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)

### British Options

Late Arrival  
 Experienced Air Crews  
 Fighter Direction  
 Deck Alert (11/12<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 Expert Seamanship (11-13<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 New AA Tactics (11-13<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 Scramble! (13/14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 "Beurling" (13/14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 "The Confectioner" (13/14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)  
 Box Barrage (14<sup>th</sup> Aug only)

Notes:

### Co-ordinated Attack

Draw another Action Card to determine the aircraft for the next mission then add them to this one.

### Reconnaissance Aircraft

The Axis player may select the actual ships to be the mission targets, including stragglers.

### Italian Fleet Sorties

Equivalent to Diversionary Raids.

### U-boat Attack

Convoy escort is considered to be dispersed and flak bonus is reduced.

### "Experten"

Skilled pilot - use either *Beker* counter (Ju 87 - BM,D,G) or *Schnauffer* counter (Bf 110 - H,A,G).

### Maximum Effort

Add an element of Bf 110 C to mission. Axis fighters may start the mission carrying bombs.

### Late Arrival

One Axis fighter element is delayed 1-3 turns (draw an Action Card - White Border = 1, Blue Border = 2, Red Border = 3).

### Fighter Direction

Increase Target-Bound phase by 2 turns. British leaders may discard and pickup any of there initial cards before the mission start. This option is not available if the cruiser is sunk or crippled.

### Deck Alert & Scramble!

One element which is unavailable due to refuelling/rearming may be placed on alert.

### Expert Seamanship

Reduce bombing / torpedo cards by 1 for each aircraft.

### New AA Tactics & Box Barrage

Increase target flak by 1.

**“Beurling”**

Skilled pilot - use *Yeager* counter (Spitfire - A,CV,BU) - ignore the aircraft type on the counter.

**“The Confectioner”**

Skilled pilot - use *Frantisek* counter (Spitfire - A,D,H).

All other options are explained in the normal rules.

**Mission Duration**

All missions have 8 Target-Bound and 7 Home-Bound turns. Ju 87s are considered to have speed 4 for mission duration calculations.

**Axis Target Selection**

The Axis player may choose to attack the escort (warships) or the convoy (merchant ships) but the actual target ship is chosen at random. Each pair of bombers may attack a different target or they may be grouped together.

**Torpedo Bombing**

SM 79 (and He 111) may carry 2 torpedoes instead of bombs (1 if damaged). They are assumed to be carrying torpedoes unless the Axis player states otherwise before the mission. Torpedo bombing must be conducted from low altitude. Draw One Action Card per torpedo. Any hit, direct or vital result scores twice the normal number of damage points.

**Flak and Screening**

If attacked, escort ships use their normal flak values. Convoy ships may receive a bonus to their flak value because they are screened by the escort. The full bonus is +1 to target flak and +1 to area flak. However, to receive the full bonus the total target flak values of the escorts must be greater than the number of merchant ships in the convoy (cruiser has target flak 3, destroyer has 2). If it is not or the escort has been dispersed by a U-boat attack (Axis option 7) the bonus is only +1 to area flak. If the escort target flak values are too low and the escort is dispersed no bonus is received.

**Valletta harbour**

All ships in Valletta harbour have flak values 3 / 1 - there are no screening bonuses. No torpedo attacks may be made on ships in harbour. The ships are stationary so saturation and level bombing results against ships are not reduced as indicated in the rules.

**Stragglers**

Ships which are crippled (damage level 3) cannot keep up with the convoy and become stragglers. Escorts may be detached to screen the stragglers but cannot rejoin the convoy. At the end of each game-day in addition to a repair check pick 1 Action Card for each straggler (and any escort). A Blue Border (White Border for warships and those under their protection) indicates the straggler was lost due to enemy action (U-boats, E-boats or mines). Surviving stragglers are assumed to reach Valletta at the end of the game and do count for victory determination.

**Replacements and Repairs**

For each pair of aircraft in the initial forces the Axis player has available 1 replacement of the same type. These may be used to bring Axis forces back to full strength. The forces may never exceed the original allocation. The British player does not receive any replacements.

Both players check damaged aircraft and ships at the end of each day. Draw 1 Action Card for each.

Action Card	Damaged Aircraft	Damaged Ship	Crippled Ship
Red Border	Repaired	No Change	No Change
Blue Border	Written Off	Undamaged	Sunk
White Border	No Change	Crippled	Damaged

## Victory Points

Normal VP totals are not kept. Victory is determined solely by the number of freighters in Valletta harbour at the end of the game (after the final check for repairs and stragglers). The tanker counts as 4 freighters and the cruiser counts as 1. Halve the value of crippled ships. Round the final total down.

## Air Group Performance

Freighters	Axis	British
0 or less	Extraordinary	Appalling
1,2	Outstanding	Miserable
3,4	Good	Poor
5,6,7	Historical	Historical
8,9	Poor	Good
10,11	Miserable	Outstanding
12 or more	Appalling	Extraordinary

## Variants

1. Omit the first game-day (11<sup>th</sup>), reduce the number of freighters by 1 and delete options 1 & 2.
2. Omit the last game-day (14<sup>th</sup>), subtract 2 from the final freighter total and delete options 9 & 10.
3. Add Force X (1 Battleship, 1 Carrier, 1 Cruiser & 5 Destroyers) to the British order of battle on 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. The Axis player may choose to attack this instead of the convoy. Losses from this force are subtracted from the total number of freighters reaching Valletta. The battleship and carrier are each worth 2 freighters and the cruiser 1. Crippled ships count half these values. The carrier is treated as a cruiser for damage and flak purposes. In addition each level of damage on the carrier reduces the maximum number of carrier-based fighters by 1 element.

## Operation Pedestal Example

### Day 1 - 11<sup>th</sup> August

Because of the range to the target the Axis player may not use any Bf 109s, MC 200s or Ju 87s on this day. The available aircraft are arranged as follows:-

2	Ju 88 A	(1st element)
2	Ju 88 A	(2nd element)
2	Bf 110 C	(3rd element)
2	SM 79	(4th element)

An Action Card with a white border is draw so the number of elements in the first mission is 1 - that is 2 Ju 88s. However, it also shows a spoiled attack symbol and so the aircraft cannot find their targets, the mission is cancelled and they return to base. They may not be used again until tomorrow.

For the second mission an Action Card with a red border is draw so the number of elements is 2. Now the top 2 elements are 2 Ju 88 & 2 Bf 110.

There are 3 elements of Hurricanes eligible for air cover - they draw 2 red cards and 1 blue. The second red is treated as blue so 1 element is airborne and the others are unavailable.

The players now select options: Axis #2 (Co-ordinated attack), British #1 (Late Arrival) & #2 (Experienced Aircrews). The co-ordinated attack means the aircraft from the next mission are added to this one. A red card is drawn indicating 3 elements. Actually there is only one element left (2 SM 79s) so these join the mission. The British player draws a red card for the Late Arrival so the Bf 110s are delayed 3 turns.

The Axis player decides to attack the merchant ships and split the attack onto 2 different targets. These are determined by die roll to be 2 freighters. These ships receive a flak bonus since they are screened by the cruiser and destroyers. The full mission details are:-

Axis Forces:-

2	Ju 88 A (attacking freighter #1 - flak = 2 / 1)
2	SM 79 (attacking freighter #2 - flak = 2 / 1)
2	Bf 110 C (delayed 3 turns)

British Forces:-

2	Hurricane I (with experienced crews)
---	--------------------------------------

Mission Turns:-

3	Target-bound (8 - SM 79 speed of 5)
3	Over-target
2	Home-bound (7 - SM 79 speed of 5)

The final outcome is 2 Ju 88 destroyed, 2 Hurricanes damaged, 1 freighter sunk and 1 damaged. Because there are no Axis aircraft left in the raid deck this mission is the only one on Day 1.

There are no stragglers so the players end the day by checking for replacements and repairs. The Axis player is allowed 2 Ju 88s as replacements (half the original number). Any further losses to the Ju 88s cannot be replaced. The British player draws action cards for the damaged Hurricanes (a red meaning repaired and a blue meaning written off) and the damaged freighter (a red meaning no change).

For Day 2 the Axis forces are back to full strength (and can also use their single engined aircraft) while the British have 2 complete elements of Hurricanes and 1 lone leader. They have also lost 1 freighter and another is damaged.