HIT 'EM HIGH:
Allied Strategy in LUFTWAFFE
By Ralph Marshall

Avalon Hill's version of the Allied air offensive in Europe is a truly fascinating strategic game that has been widely overlooked by most gainers. This article will detail a few suggestions for the Allied strategic effort. (I here assume that the Advanced Game rules and Order of Battle are in effect, and no other special rules or units are being employed.)

There are two areas of strategic concern in *LUFTWAFFE*. The Allied player must destroy all of the cities on the board to duplicate the actual results of the American bombing, and so win the game. This means that some long-range planning is imperative before even the first quarter is begun. If the German player is able to successfully defend just one city, no matter what the rest of his position at the end of the game, he has won and the Allied effort has been misdirected. (While this may seem a little artificial, and provisions might be made for marginal, tactical, and decisive victories such as found in a variety of other AH games, it is not the purpose of this article to propose "variant" rules.) The next major area of concern is that of replacement factors. Since these are not calculated in the same manner for both sides some work might reveal a way for the Allies to gain the upper hand in this area. The above two topics, along with some hints on planning missions, will be the main areas of discussion herein.

Since the Allied player must bomb all of the cities to win, it makes a great deal of sense to have at least a rough plan for how the action will be conducted before play begins. It can be immensely frustrating to have bombed all but ten of the targets, only to realize that due to a lack of replacement factors there are only five heavy bomber counters left for the last turn of the game. Since it is possible to lose the entire air force in one bad quarter, some advance planning can help to minimize the problem.

There are 43 aircraft factories and 36 factories of other types that must be hit by the end of the game. To do this successfully requires having a planned number of cities hit each quarter. Having such a number not only assures that the Allied player won't lose sight of the final goal, but also provides him with some indication of how things are going at any given time during the game. Since the Allied air force comes in piecemeal, rather than all at the beginning, it is obvious that more cities must be bombed in the latter stages of the game than at the beginning. The Allied player can expect to be able to fly a maximum of about 185 sorties over the course of the game, assuming that he does not run out of replacement factors. Thus the Allied player must have a minimum success rate of about 43 percent, assuming that all planes fly every mission possible. These assumptions are for a best-case situation and are a little unrealistic. The Allied player is going to eventually run out of replacement factors, cutting down the total number of missions

that can be flown, and there will be some quarters where a lucky German roll will wipe out an entire stack of bombers before they can complete the mission. (I've seen it happen too many times to be discounted). All of these factors, plus the fact that occasionally flying less than the maximum number of missions can force the German to guard against planes that never materialize, mean that the planned success rate must be closer to 70 percent.

Armed with the above information, the Allied player can begin to make plans for conducting each quarter. While it is not realistic or necessary to plot out the entire game before starting play, it is helpful to decide how many missions need to be conducted in each quarter. The table below has been compiled with that goal in mind.

Quarter	Planes Available	Successful Missions
1	3	*
2	5	*
3	7	4-5
4	10	6-8
5	17	10-14
6	24	15-19
7	29	18-23
8-10	??	About 5 per quarter
* Depends on whether the quarter is played; see text.		

If the game progresses as predicted by the above table, the Allied player will have won by the end of the seventh quarter. Since it's rarely that easy, we must examine what is more likely to happen.

The Allied player has 124 bomber replacement points available to him, which will allow him to rebuild his entire bomber force for the first seven quarters (hence the "?" for turns 8-10). Since all losses after that point are permanent, it is critical that the German Luftwaffe have been reduced as much as possible when the replacement points run out. If only one city is left and the German has nothing but Ju88's, the chances of victory look very good; but if no bombers remain, the allies have still lost.

It is necessary for the Allied player to hit as many cities as possible in the early stages, when the air force can recover from expensive missions, and have some plan for hitting the few stray cities that remain in the last three quarters. If he can bomb roughly the number of cities outlined on the chart for the first seven quarters, and attempt to conserve as much fighter strength as possible, the last three quarters should be enough to hit the remaining cities with ease and with little opposition.

Now for some suggestions on how to accomplish the above success rate. The single most important part of each quarter, from the Allied point of view, is initial set-up. Since it is so critical, it is essential that it be done in the most efficient manner possible. The best way to lay out the missions for each quarter is to get the German player to leave the room, and place the

bomber counters on the cities you plan to hit. This not only is easier than trying to figure out which squadron numbers go to which cities by looking at the list on the target sheet, but it also allows you to count hexes without trying to hide it from your opponent. In this manner, you can be sure that all of the cities are close enough together that the stack will be able to stay together for as long as possible, and you can ensure that no cities are overlooked. (Be aware, the target sheet has dots on a lot of airfields that don't need to be bombed, thus making it useless for determining what cities have yet to be hit.)

One of the most important advantages to the above methods is that it allows you to count hexes and plan the timing of the missions. If you send stacks in individually, the German is able to concentrate his entire force on each stack, rather than being forced to split up his units. As an example, if one plans to have sneak raiders appear at the same time that another stack from England is in the area, they will stand a much greater chance of surviving, especially if there are some fighters with the main stack. It also has shock advantages, as the German is faced with having to defend against a whole slew of attacks, and usually doesn't quite have enough units, often leading to quick decisions, and thus mistakes.

Another tactic that can increase the number of units that not only complete missions but return to base is that of shuttle flights between England and Italy. While this is not possible until 1943, it does have some very real advantages. Since individual counters do not have to turn back as soon as they have reached their target, the stack can retain its defensive firepower, and units can't be jumped individually as they struggle back home. Since each factor that is saved is one that is available later in the game, when they will be needed, this is an important strategic consideration.

As an example of the above tactic, consider the following mission from Italy: starting three or four hexes above the bottom edge, and traveling Innsbruck-Munich-Stuttgart-Karlsruhe-Mannheim-Wiesbaden-Bonn-Duren-England. Nine cities are hit, exactly the right size for a stack of B17s on turn 7 or later, or for B24s on turn 6. If you want to try it earlier, simply skip some of the targets. While it may seem that the route followed is not the shortest route for some of the bombers, careful counting will reveal that it is. The shortest route from Italy to Innsbruck and then England is 33 hexes, or 11 turns. The route described above is 3 5 hexes long, and thus still takes 11 turns, as required by the rules. There are several other variations to this tactic, such as sneak raiders (which could also link up with a stack of planes on the way back for protection) and shuttles to Russia. If the German player is waiting for you to break up so that he can inflict casualties, he will be unpleasantly surprised.

The next important tactic to ensure both completion of missions and recovering as many units as possible is that of sending fighters along with the bombers. Starting a stack of B24s, some B26s and B25s and all of the available P47s in Italy is a very successful tactic. The fighters fly one turn behind the bombers, with tanks, and as soon as the enemy fighters come up, they drop the tanks and attack. Ten factors of P47 have an incredible firepower and, if no jets are available for protection, the entire enemy force committed to the Italian front can be eliminated in one or two turns. This forces the Germans to either allow the bombers to complete their missions untouched, or reduce the forces on the other fronts. Since the P47s only have three turns after dropping tanks, they will probably be forced to fly back to Italy after combat, but they will have served their purpose.

Since the German's replacement factors are limited by the number of aircraft factories available, it is obviously essential that these be the first targets. If enough casualties can be inflicted early in the game to deplete the German's reserve of replacements, he will be hard pressed to field a viable defense force in the latter stages of the game. The other area that is vulnerable is the rail system. If a concentrated effort is made to attack the rail cities (especially the concentrated centers at the bottom of the board), the German will be denied a large number of rail fighters that arrive in the later stages of the game.

Once both players have run out of replacement factors, the game becomes much more closely run. It is essential to the German that he eliminate as many bombers as possible, and for the Allied to kill as many German units as possible. An interesting way for the Allies to come ahead in this exchange is to play one quarter without sending any bombers out. He usually has some fighter points remaining, and can afford to trade planes with the Germans. If the Germans wait for the bombers, strafing can be employed, and if they come up, the allies can afford to trade losses, while the German can't. In addition, the first time that you pull this ploy, your opponent probably won't be expecting it, which should lead to confusion, when he wonders where the bombers are. If this tactic doesn't have unexpectedly disastrous results for the Allies, the next quarter should arrive with the Germans having no appreciable fighter forces, with the exception of the new arrivals. And if it fails completely, remember that, luckily for you, it's only a game!

Now for two areas that are more of an art than a science. Shuttles to Russia are a double-edge sword. If you succeed, the German suddenly has one more area to worry about defending, splitting his forces even more. However, if it fails, the German knows that he is safe for the rest of the year, and needn't station any units there. Thus, these shuttles should only be attempted if you feel that there is a reasonable chance for success. The rules are rather ambiguous, and do not state whether bombers must reach Russia for the mission to be successful, or just an encounter. If you decide that anything counts, it makes sense to send something like a P38 up on a solo mission on a turn when you have bombers slated to shuttle. If it makes it you'll not only have left your options open for the next quarter, but you'll have a fighter that can operate out of Russia, to aid sneak raiders. You are likely to make it, since the German can't spare the fighters if you have another large stack of bombers going to Russia; if he does, your bombers stand more chance of getting through.

The other area is the decision to play the first two quarters. Arguments can be made for both choices, and success is mostly a matter of luck. If the German hasn't unduly defended Gydnia, the sneak raider shuttle to Russia makes for a good opening move, but it is likely to ruin Allied shuttle opportunities for the rest of the year if he shoots it down. If the German player anticipates this move, and defends against it, the Allied player stands a good chance of making a successful raid against Amsterdam or Aachen. The other solution is simply to skip the first two turns, and wait until you have an appreciable air force built up to attack. Most of the decision depends on the personality of your opponent, and how lucky you feel.

All in all, *LUFTWAFFE* makes an excellent game full of crucial decisions; too, it can be played in quarters and thus doesn't require that you devote an entire weekend to one game, but still is long enough to make strategic planning critical to Victory. Hopefully the above suggestions will enable *LUFTWAFFE* fans to review their plans for Allied success, and employ some new strategies to "hit 'em high".