MISSING IN ACTION
• OFFICIAL MISSION •

A MISSION FOR RAIDING FORCES

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MISSING IN ACTION

Since antiquity conquering armies in North Africa were restricted to the coastlines where they could easily acquire supplies, such as food, water, and fuel. Any operations taking place away from the coastline carried great risk with it. Water sources were rare and navigation was always questionable without the use of proper training, special instruments, and detailed maps.

The nature of desert warfare was dangerous to all soldiers, not just aircrews. As the campaigns along the North African coastline bogged down, both sides tried to exploit their enemy's flank, which was inevitably anchored on the edge of the Sahara.

Occasionally attacks and reconnaissance missions probed the deep desert, looking for the opportunity to get around the enemy's flank. If these small patrols failed to respect the dangers posed by the Sahara, they too could easily get lost and fall victim to exposure.

Furthermore, it wasn't just Allied aircraft that were lost in the desert. During the opening months of the war, Italian planes were used to supply their comrades in East Africa from Tripoli. The flights took them over the Sahara from Tripoli, to Kufra, then onto Ethiopia. The journeys were long and dangerous and more than a few flights were lost over the sands of the Sahara.

Furthermore, in 1942, the Germans conducted a serious bombing campaign against the remote Free French-held fortress of Bir Hakiem, losing several Ju 88 light bombers in the process to navigation and anti-aircraft fire.

Land-based missions were at the same risk as their comrades in aircraft. Slight navigational errors could lead a patrol or convoy astray deep into the desert. The rapid retreats by both armies certainly led to these sorts of confusions throughout the campaign in North Africa.

When playing the Missing in Action mission, feel free to make some modifications to fit the story you want to recreate.

For example, you may want to play a hypothetical game that is based around the loss of a German Ju 52 transport plane. When I moved to New Zealand from the US, I lost a few of my plastic model aircraft, which were well and truly crushed and destroyed. Rather than chuck them in the trash, I packed them away for future repairs.

When the idea came to me to write this article, I instantly remembered my destroyed Ju-52 transport plane and dug it out. Though it was a little out of scale to my Flames Of War army (1/72nd versus 1/100th), it serves the purpose well and forms the basis for my own Missing In Action games.

Alternatively, you can ignore aircraft all together. The mission's wreckage could simply be a lost column of broken-down trucks or armoured cars. Out of fuel, the column has sent out search parties to look for help.

Perhaps the mission doesn't involve any wreckage at all. You could use this mission to recreate the rescue mission undertaken by the LRDG to find the scattered remnants of David Sterling's Special Air Service (SAS) after its first and only airborne mission in 1941.

The mission ended in disaster when the SAS men parachuted all across the desert in the middle of the night. Unable to form up and complete their mission, the small groups of men made their way to the rendezvous point with the LRDG. Patrols were organised to find the rest of the missing raiders.

However you set up your mission, you need to get out there and find those men! Friend or foe, no one deserves such a horrible fate as can be found in the wastelands of the Sahara Desert!

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

The Missing In Action mission uses the following special rules in addition to the Aircrew special rules on the next page.

EVACUATE

Once the lost aircrew were located, it became paramount to get them back to base for medical attention and debriefing.

> *Raiding platoons may only evacuate by moving off their own table edge during their Movement step. Platoons may not evacuate in any turn during which they have moved At the Double.*
>
> *Teams that evacuate the table like this do not count as destroyed.*

RESCUE OPERATION

Rescue parties put a lot on the line in order to rescue their comrades. Similarly, the chance to gather intelligence from captured air crew is simply too good to pass up. Both sides will risk all to get their hands on those airmen!

> *Neither force is required to take Company Morale Checks. However, they take Platoon Morale Checks as normal.*

SCATTERED RESERVES

The desert is a large place and that bomber could have crashed anywhere. You will need to spread out to find it and radio in the other patrols when you locate the wreck.

> *The Scattered Reserves special rule operates in the same way as the Reserves special rule found in the Flames Of War rulebook, with the following exceptions.*
>
> *To reflect the way the reserves are scattered, the players' reserves can arrive from almost anywhere. When each platoon arrives from the reserves, the owning player rolls a die to determine which table edge or corner it will arrive (the mission map shows the edge or corner for each die roll). If the reserves arrive from an edge, they may enter anywhere along that edge. If from a corner, they must enter the table within 16"/40cm of the corner.*
>
> *Units containing armoured vehicles will always arrive from reserve after units without armoured vehicles. Units containing tanks will always be the last platoons to arrive from reserve.*

AIRCREW SPECIAL RULES

AIRCREW TEAMS

The survivors of the crash have endured a pretty serious ordeal and are focused only on survival and nothing else.

Aircrew teams cannot move except when using the Survival Instinct or Rescued! special rules. They are unarmed and can never launch an Assault. They cannot be shot at, be assaulted, or in any other way harmed.

THE PILOT

The pilot will stay with the plane in case a rescue party discovers the wreck while the others go look for help.

The Pilot is an Aircrew team. He is deployed at the centre of the wreck and can never move except when using the Rescued! special rule. If he leaves the rescuing platoon for any reason, he makes his way back to the wreck and is immediately replaced in the centre of the wreck.

RESCUED!

A desperate man marooned in the desert will accept any help offered to him.

If any players' team ends its movement step adjacent to an Aircrew team, the Aircrew team automatically joins that rescuing team's platoon. This means that the Aircrew team becomes part of the platoon that rescued it and moves as an Infantry team.

An Aircrew team may mount any of the platoon's vehicles as a passenger instead of moving. Once mounted it moves with the vehicle. If the vehicle is Destroyed, the Aircrew team automatically survives and dismounts.

If the rescuing platoon is Destroyed, the Aircrew team automatically survives and may only move using the Survival Instinct special rule.

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

When you are stuck in the desert facing certain death, you will jump at any chance to be rescued, even if it's by your enemies!

Aircrew teams are not a part of any player's army and as such not controlled by any one player. Instead, at the beginning of each player's Starting Step, both players roll a die for each Aircrew team on the table to see which player moves the team.

The player with the lowest result consults the Aircrew Movement Table below and must move the Aircrew team the entire length in any direction they choose.

In the event of a tie, that Aircrew team does not move this turn. However, if both players roll a 1, the Aircrew team is Destroyed due to exposure and removed from the table.

An Aircrew team that voluntarily moves off of the table wanders off into the desert never to be heard from again and is counted as Destroyed.

AIRCREW TEAM MOVEMENT

Lowest Result	Movement
1-2	2"/5cm
3-4	4"/10cm
5-6	6"/15cm

MODELLING THE AIRCREW AND PLANE WRECK

This mission uses five aircrew teams to represent the lost crew in the desert. These should be two figures on a small base. Exactly what figures you use is completely up to you.

One excellent source for lost aircrew figures are artillery crews from the various nations found in the *Flames Of War* Special Order Catalogue. But really any figures without weapons work well for this purpose. Some aircrews, such as those of US bombers, wore the standard M1 helmet to guard against flak shrapnel, so those figures are perfectly acceptable as well.

One way to distinguish aircrews from ground troops is by their bomber jackets, usually made from brown (for the Allies and Italian crews) or black (for German crews) leather. These can be painted in either German Camo Medium Brown (VP826) or Black (VP950), using Vallejo colours.

Another great source of figures for aircrew teams are spare bailed-out crew or battle-worn figures, which include a number of wounded troops who look like they've seen better days!

Remember, you can also play this mission as if you are trying to rescue a lost truck convoy, so feel free to use any figures for the lost column. Furthermore, they don't even have to match your force's nation.

The other main feature of the mission is the plane wreck. For my crashed plane I used an old broken Ju 52 plastic model. The kit is 1/72nd scale, but seems to work just fine for Flames Of War.

Using some photos of plane crashes, I reconstructed the wreck as best I could and scattered debris behind the main portion of the aircraft. It was strangely satisfying smashing up the model and scattering its pieces across the 12" (30cm) x 12" (30cm) square terrain tile!

Remember that your wreck does not have to be a plane at all. Feel free to make a terrain piece that fits the story you are trying to tell with the mission.

MISSING IN ACTION MISSION

A large bomber was spotted overhead with its engines feathered and gliding over the crests of the sand dunes. Whether friend or foe, the survivors don't deserve death by exposure.

The Missing In Action mission uses the **Aircrew, Evacuate, Rescue Operation,** and **Scattered Reserves** special rules.

Your Orders

Attacker

As the bomber flew overhead you notice that its markings make it out to be an enemy plane. Your patrol must go and secure the crew as Prisoners of War, a fate far less harsh than dying of thirst in the wastes of the Sahara.

Defender

Your patrol witnessed the bomber disappear over the crests of the sand dunes. A radio report from headquarters verifies that it is a friendly plane and orders your to mount a rescue attempt. You must move quickly, however, as active enemy patrols in the area will certainly be trying to get there first.

Preparing for Battle

1. Set up the table as shown, with a wreck in the very centre. Place the Pilot Aircrew team at point (A), and one Aircrew team at each point marked (X).

2. Both players roll a die. The player with the higher score is the attacker and chooses which short table edge they will deploy in. This is also the same table edge they must escape from. The defender must then choose the opposite short table edge that they must escape from.

3. The defending player deploys one platoon anywhere within 6"/15cm of point (A). The remainder of their force is held in Scattered Reserve.

4. The attacking player deploys one platoon within their deployment area. The remainder of their force is held in Scattered Reserve.

5. Both players now place their Independent teams in their deployment areas starting with the defender.

Beginning the Battle

1. Neither player may make Reconnaissance Deployment moves as they have been travelling as fast as possible to reach their current positions.

2. The defending player has the first turn.

3. All teams count as having been moving in their previous turn during the defender's first turn, so cannot be Gone to Ground and infantry in the open are not Concealed.

Ending the Battle

The battle ends when the last Aircrew team remaining on the table has either escaped with a platoon or has been Destroyed.

ATTACKER DEPLOYS HERE AND MUST ESCAPE ACROSS THIS TABLE EDGE

30"/75cm

6"/15cm

DEFENDER DEPLOYS HERE

DEFENDER MUST ESCAPE ACROSS THIS TABLE EDGE

Deciding Who Won

The attacking player wins if they rescue more Aircrew teams than the defender. The lost aircrew men have been rounded up and interned as Prisoners of War.

The defending player wins if they rescue more Aircrew teams than the attacker. They have successfully located the survivors and returned them to safety.

Use the table found below to look up the extent of your success and your victory points based on the number of Aircrew teams the winning side rescued.

VICTORY POINTS			
Aircrew Rescued	Result	Winner's Points	Loser's Points
5 teams	Stunning victory	6	1
4 teams	Major victory	5	2
3 teams	Minor victory	4	3
2 teams	Minor defeat	3	4
1 team	Major defeat	2	5
No teams	Stunning defeat	1	6