

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The Hunters design evolved into a journey of discovery, as many interesting changes surfaced throughout the entire process. Extensive playtesting cleaned up inconsistencies and we ultimately battened down the hatches with a solid and stress-tested design.

I originally came upon the concept of this game after playing *B-17: Queen of the Skies*. I began to ponder if a similar approach could be applied to the U-Boat War. The key difference (other than the fact that U-Boats don't fly :) was that I wanted the player, as the U-Boat commander, to be confronted with a continuous stream of decisions, as opposed to just having a solitaire game that resembled "Dice Olympics." Additionally, I felt it was important to weave role-playing elements into the game, by presenting players with a narrative to become emotionally vested in wanting to complete a successful tour of duty. Hence the inclusion of the awards, promotions, and crew quality rules that help bring such role-playing aspects to life. We have also included the performance of the top ten rated German U-Boat commanders so you can contrast their historical achievements with your own.



A key design focus was to make the game playable without sacrificing historical accuracy. Easier said than done, but I feel the design has struck a nice balance in this regard. One of the most challenging aspects of the design was preserving the historical feel while refining the design so *The Hunters* can easily be played without compromising the game experience with complex sub-systems and rule mechanics. In summary, the design goal is to allow players to focus on the decision-making aspects of the game rather than becoming hamstrung with overwrought mechanics and procedures.

One of the pleasant surprises that came out of testing was the two-player game. Simply put, we were having a blast! Despite the fact the game is designed primarily as a solitaire game, having both players running a boat while concurrently rolling for the other players' escorts became a competition in and of itself, and works extremely well in practice. For this reason, don't get hung up if you have little interest in solitaire games. I can assure you that this game stands in its own right and shines as a two-player game.

With the aforementioned design focus in mind, certain aspects of the early U-Boat conflict (such as Type II U-Boats) were deferred to keep the overall scope of the game manageable and centered on the two major classes of German U-Boats. We simply can't account for every minute detail of the war without blowing up the scope of the game. For example, a friend wanted me to include the Type IIs that had been disassembled, barged and trucked to the Black Sea, where they were reassembled and put into action against Russian shipping. While it makes for an interesting facet of U-Boat operations, I felt it didn't really "flow" with what I was trying to accomplish with *The Hunters* in faithfully recreating the mainstream action of the war. Trying to account for every single historical event that occurred during the first three years of the war is equally a challenge, but you will find quite a few of these covered with the Random Events.

Some may ask why the game extends only through the first half of 1943. Why not let the U-Boat commanders "go the distance?" There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, the design goal was again to keep the game simple yet challenging and playable. To extend the time frame through 1945 would have added significant overhead in terms of additional rules and charts. Also, the technological changes that occurred resulted in a much different type of U-Boat War. It was an extremely difficult and lethal phase, as U-Boats were being slaughtered by the combination of Allied aircraft, sonar and radar. Conversely, the U-Boats themselves greatly improved with the advent of homing torpedoes, bubble making decoys, schnorkels, and the like. The 1943-1945 period was significantly different, and is therefore better suited with a dedicated treatment in a later game rather than try to jam it all into a single package.

In conclusion, I hope you experience as much fun playing *The Hunters* as we had creating it. Since this game is currently available for preorder from Consim Press (through GMT Games), I hope my words will help incite you to preorder this game so we can get it published quickly. I for one am excited about hosting a tournament at CSW Expo 2012, so I thank you in advance for your interest in this game.

Hals und beinbruch! (*break a leg!*)

Gregory M. Smith
November 2011

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blair, Clay. *Hitler's U-Boat War: The Hunters, 1939-1942*. Modern Library, 2000. Nothing short of amazing, this first of two books is a must-read for any serious U-Boat enthusiast. I cannot recommend Clay Blair highly enough.

Blair, Clay. *Hitler's U-Boat War: The Hunted, 1942-1945*. Modern Library, 2000. Although mostly past the time frame of the game, this second volume of the set still had valuable information.

Wynn, Kenneth. *U-Boat Operations of the Second World War* (Volumes 1 and 2). Naval Institute Press, 1998. Mostly translated war patrol reports, these volumes are an amazing resource for tracking the patrol histories of individual boats.

Jordan, Roger. *The World's Merchant Fleets 1939: The Particulars and Wartime Fates of 6,000 Ships*. Naval Institute Press, 1999. Where -did- all those target listings come from? :) Not exactly light reading, but a good reference.

Miller, David. *U-Boats: The Illustrated History of the Raiders of the Deep*. Brassey's, 2000. Although on the surface it appears to be a "coffee-table book," it is actually a superb all-around reference on everything U-Boat, including daily operations at sea, how encounters were prosecuted, and what patrols were like.