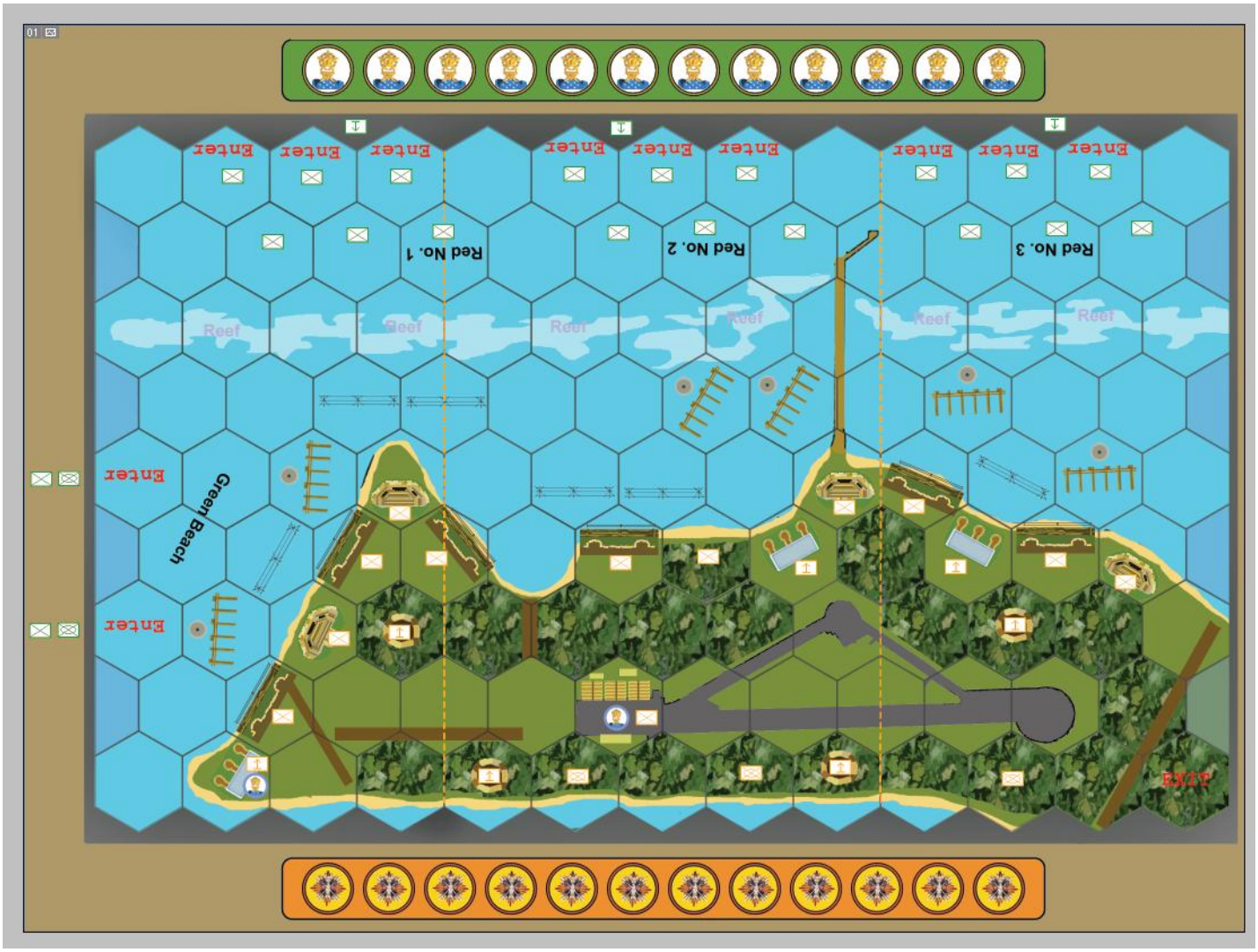
Betio Island – Tarawa Atoll November 20-23, 1943

The Japanese had months to prepare for the coming battle. Betio was the most heavily defended island at the time and the fortifications were stronger than anticipated by the novice US battle planners. Having plenty of recon photos and intel the US still proceeded with the invasion. The main assault came from the north side of the island in the lagoon on the morning on November 23, 1943. The Tarawa atoll is ringed by a great barrier reef that stymied the US invasion as many LVTs/AMTRACKs got stuck due to poor timing of the tidal action. There were roughly 4,800 defenders prepared to take on 35,000 US marines and soldiers. After four days of vicious fighting only 150 of the Japanese forces survived, most of which were Korean laborers. The US suffered approximately 1,000 dead and 2,300 wounded.

The links provided at the end are really worth reading as they describe in depth what one will experience in this scenario.

Setup



First side to reach 12 VPs wins.

5 cards – US player
5 cards – Japanese player

- Japanese loose one command card at random if the medal at the airfield is temporarily captured. The other medal represents the ammunition bunker in the southwest corner of the island.
- US gets unlimited reinforcements that must be ordered and enter from any of the red Enter hexes. An ALL UNITS card can bring in reinforcements for the designated section.
- Infantry units can pass under the dock extending north but gain no protection as it is destroyed.
- Gray circles are mines
- Log LC traps are like hedge hogs
- The reef is the pale blue area labeled reef, see rules below.
- Solid green is open terrain, textured green is jungle.
- The brown lines are anti tank ditches. Armor units cannot traverse these.
- The Japanese player gains one VP for each infantry unit he can exit the board
- US player gets both Air Sortie Cards, once used they get shuffled back into the deck. US may use P40 or Corsair and the Zero for the Japanese player.

New terrain and rules:



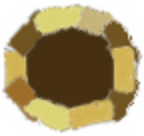
Heavy Machine Gun pit – This type of bunker but can only be occupied by Japanese infantry. The Heavy MG battles out at 4-3-2. The Hvy MG pit can be destroyed by a US infantry unit just like removing wire. If a US unit fails to destroy the Heavy MG pit an IJA unit may re-inhabit and use the MG. Defenders ignore the first 2 flags. The Heavy MG pit does not get removed from play if vacated.



Defensive Sea Wall - Much like a sand bag only the defender ignores the first 2 flags and it does not get removed from play if vacated.



Reinforced Pill box - Houses a single artillery unit. The unit may not move. It takes two grenades on the same roll do destroy the gun. All flags are ignored. Once destroyed IJA units may use like a bunker. US units may destroy the pill box like sealing a cave. No enemy units can be adjacent and US must roll one star.



AAA pit - A circular pit that houses a single AAA unit, the AAA unit and pit are both destroyed on two grenades in same roll. AAA unit must specify if it is in Anti-air mode or ground mode. Place a star next to it when in AAA mode. Ground mode battles at 2-2-2 AAA mode it adds 1 dice to the air check value of a plane within 3 hexes. I will use the same values for AAA armor units, only they will be able to move 2 or battle (designating AAA or ground mode). Place a bombardment crater token on the pit to show it is destroyed.



Reef - The US learned a lot about invading Japanese Islands from Betio, however they had not mastered the art of tide tables and attacked on days that had little to no tidal movement. Therefore LC must stop on the reef, roll one die, if a star is rolled it is stuck and considered a single armor unit for VP reasons. On the next turn an order can be expended to get it off the reef by rolling an armor symbol. IJA can claim the stuck LC/LVT as a defensive position to fire on the marines. This was an actual historical event. However the US can attack the position and only need score a armor to destroy it. Flags have no effect on the LC/LVT regardless of ownership. When soldiers are dropped off on the reef they may only move one hex at a time and may attack with one die. When they become adjacent to a shore hex they battle normally and may retreat one hex until they are pushed back to the reef. Any additional flags are considered hits.



Beach Wire – Treated like normal wire, can be removed



Defensive Pole Obstacle - can be used in the water or on land, treat like a hedgehog.

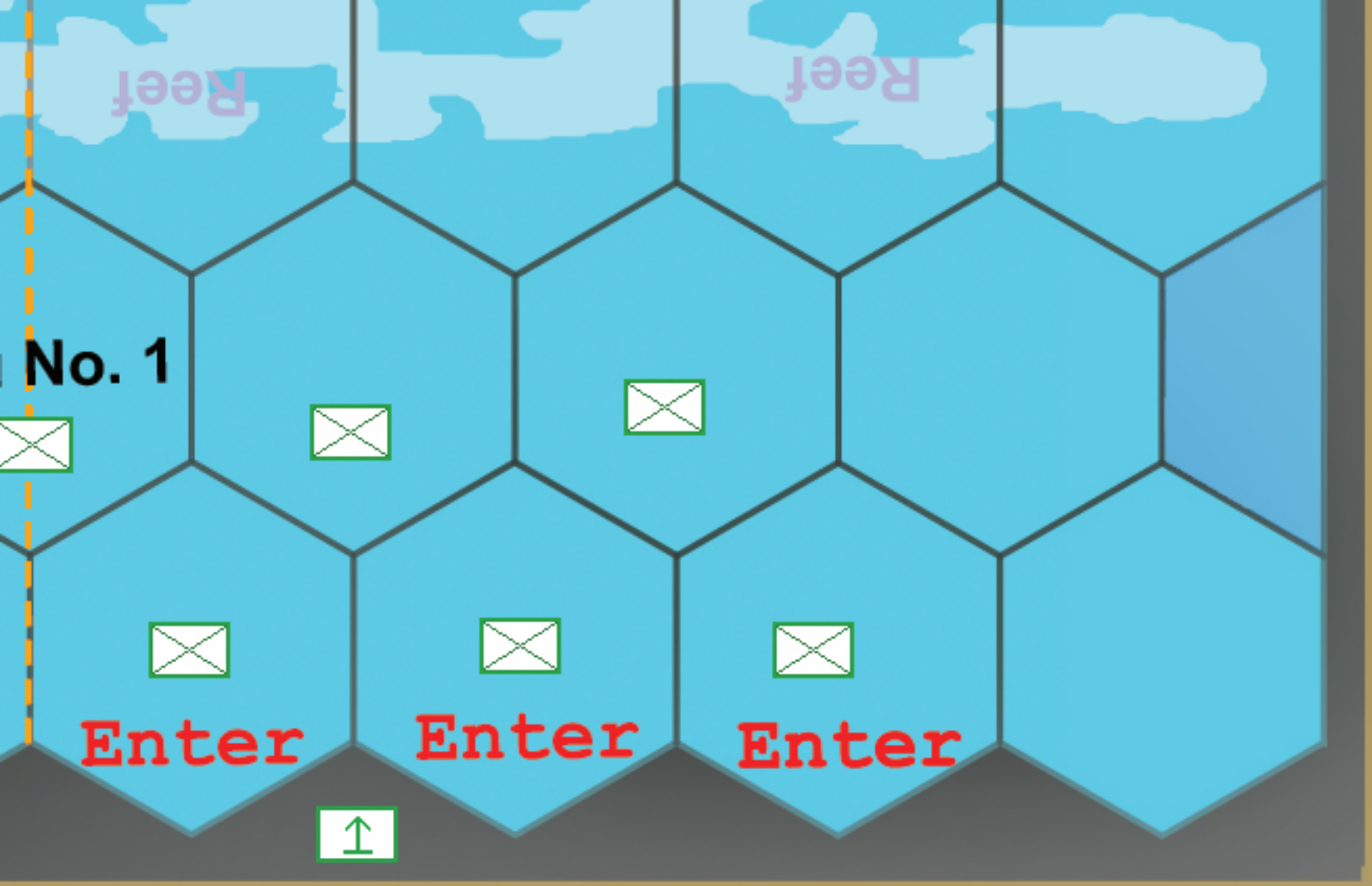
Naval Bombardment - The US gets three cross hair tokens to place in each section. Before the invasion starts the US player rolls three dice for each token. Losses are applied immediately. Leave the cross hairs in place unless the Japanese unit vacates the hex or is forced to retreat. If the US player draws a Bombard Card he may choose to use the Naval Bombardment tokens or artillery units if landed. Naval Bombardments will get the +1 die from the Bombard Card maxing at 4 dice.

Green Beach - Cannot be assaulted until one unit has landed on two of the Red Beaches... The US units can be repelled but they must make it onto a land hex to count.

Design Notes:

I drew heavily on several articles for the Betio Island scenario.

These links put a pretty good face on the battle.
http://history.sandiego.edu/gen/ww2Timeline/Betio.html
http://www.lonesentry.com/articles/jp-betio-island/index.html
http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ACTC/actc-18.html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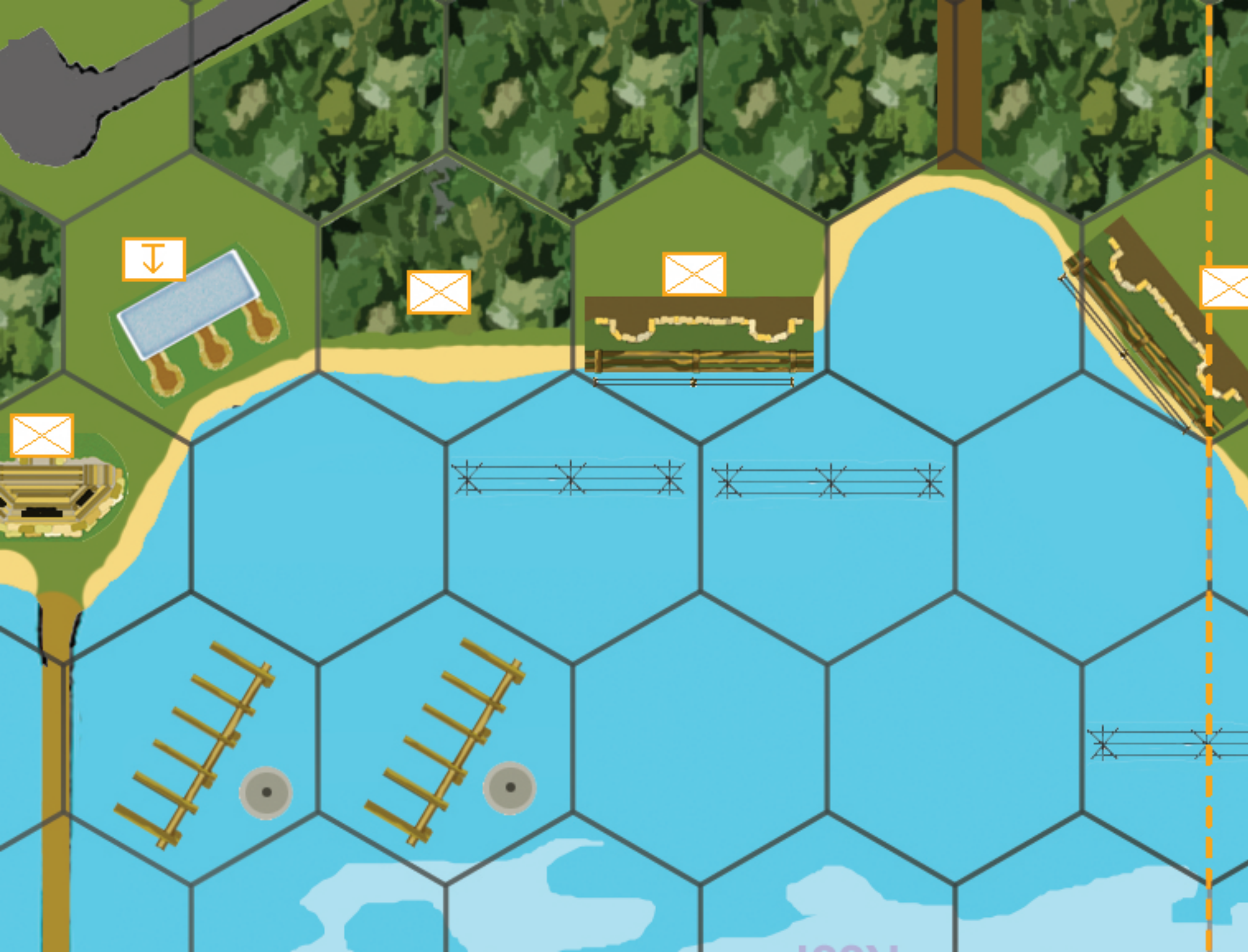

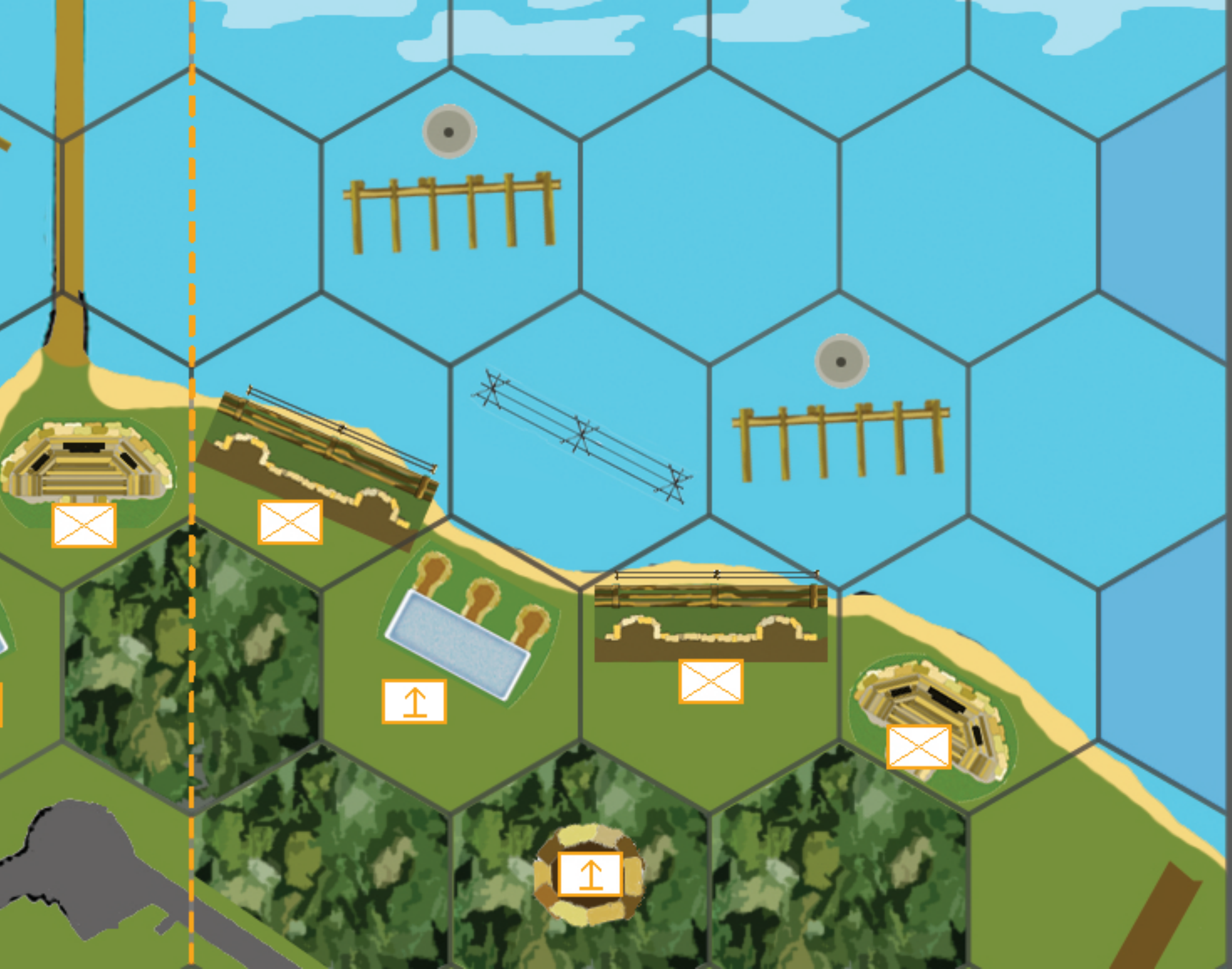


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