

# Flotilla: American Civil War Ironclads

Nashcon 2011: Easy-play Lite Version

© March 10, 2011 By David Raybin <sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

These convention rules contemplate ship-to-ship combat of perhaps a dozen 15mm vessels per side. Any “land” combat is limited: a shore party attacking a gun emplacement. All dice are six-siders. Measurement is in inches. There are three types of ships: Wooden, Protected, and Ironclad. There are three flavors of artillery: Light, “Normal,” and Heavy. The rules are designed to allow the charts to do the work so the players can throw dice, sink ships and have fun.

*Charts follow rules*

## Designer Notes.

Bob Duncan’s *Gunboat Diplomacy* has been around for years and has always resulted in wonderful games. Being designed for the later steam and coal era the vessels bristle with serious shell-firing artillery. This is heart-stopping wargaming at its best.

My first attempt at a variation of Bob’s rules was the ever-popular *Barnacle Bill; A Pirate’s Life for Me*. That produced the artillery rules which allowed folks to fire at will. The next step was to move two hundred years forward and have some ship duels on the rivers of the American Civil War. These rules are the result.



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<sup>1</sup> These rules are a variation of Bob Duncan’s *Gunboat Diplomacy* which are copyright Bob Duncan, 2010. Permission to adapt his rules was given to me by Mr. Duncan but have a care about doing so yourself or else he’ll turn his Barrister upon you.

*Environment*

1. Determine, visibility, weather or special events.
2. Roll for Initiative. Winner determines which side is Side A (moves first) this turn.

*Movement*

3. Move all Side A's ships and land based troops. Side A's ships and land based guns and troops may fire (but only once per turn) at any target at any time during the move. Side B's ships and land based guns and troops may fire at any target at any time. Attempt Grappling Actions for Side A's ships during movement
4. Move all Side B's ships and land based troops. Side B's ships and land based guns and troops may fire (but only once per turn) at any target at any time during the move *if* they have not fired in an earlier phase. Side A's ships and land based guns and troops may fire at any target at any time *if* they have not fired in an earlier phase. Attempt Grappling Actions for Side B's ships during movement.
5. Land any landing party on land or return them back on the ship from land.

*Combat*

6. Resolve all Land Combat and all Boarding Actions

*Administrative*

7. Inflict continuing damage phase.
8. Attempt repair of "future" continuing damage and attempt to extinguish a catastrophic fire.
9. All guns are reloaded and are ready to fire next turn except for guns which are not crewed or are incapable of being fired next turn because of fire aboard ship or attempt to repair catastrophic damage.
10. End of turn administrative actions if any, such as removing sunken ships etc.
11. Mark Passage of Turn

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Visibility, weather or special events.**

Smoke and time of day may impact visibility and, in turn, accuracy of fire. Each turn the Game Master will ascertain the impact of these factors for the rest of the turn.

**Initiative**

When determining initiative each side casts a die. High die, plus or minus modifiers, determines initiative which means the winner determines who goes first. Modifiers are additive: +1 won initiative last turn, +1 sunk more enemy boats last turn, +1 one's flag ship has the advantage of the current over the other side's flag ship, -1 one of your captains suffered an adverse moral result last turn. (It is certainly possible for neither ship to have the advantage of the current.) If a side captured a fort or sunk an ironclad last turn it automatically wins initiative this turn. Ties roll again.

## MOVEMENT

### Land Movement

The dry land in this game is river front property, rocks, swamps and hills and thus movement is very limited. Movement is 1D6 per unit. If you *charge* it is 2D6 unless you are mounted in which case it is 3D6. There are no movement modifiers.

### Extra Power

The Captain can call out to the ship's engineer for "more power" and, if successful, can carry the ship beyond its current, maximum speed as much as 18 additional inches this turn. You roll one die and

- a one (1) results in a boiler explosion causing 6 damage hits and 3 continuing damage points which also results in your ship coming to a stop for four turns.
- a two (2) results in the steam lines springing a leak resulting in your ship coming to a stop for two turns.
- a three (3) results in the engineer refusing to garner the required power and calling out to the captain: "*Cap'n, she's kint tak any moore; she's 'gonna bluw.*" The Captain can order more power anyway: Throw three dice: a 11 or under results in total destruction. A 12 or more: move that many inches indicated by the 3 dice (in addition to the current maximum) and gain an additional temporary 90 degree turn ability at any point in the turn.
- A four, five, or six is a success. The number (4,5, or 6) is the increased movement possibility (in addition to the current maximum) in inches.

**Moving and turning.** To turn, you keep the bow in place and move the stern up to the permissible angle of turn. Most larger ships turn up to 45 degrees and more nimble ships can turn 90 degrees at various parts of the move.

**Anchors away.** If a ship is "moving" at zero speed increment it is considered anchored and stays in place.

**Adrift.** If a ship is adrift it moves 1d6 in the direction of the current or tide.

### Non-Sailing Vessels and Swimming

Row boats and other tiny vessels can move 1d6 inches per turn. We allow a man to swim 1D6 but if he throws a 1 he drowns.

**Collisions, Ramming, and Running Aground.** The Game Master will resolve collisions, ramming, and running aground. In general if you are within 4 inches of land you stand a chance of running aground. The larger the ship and the closer you get, the greater chance you will be a permanent tourist attraction. An effective way to get yourself off the shore or reef is to toss guns overboard to lighten your vessel. For each gun you throw over the side you may roll a dice: a 6 is success. Unfortunately – being much larger and heavier – an ironclad must pitch 3 guns for each die they wish to roll. You must determine in advance how many guns you want to pitch at one time per turn to free yourself.

### Spar Torpedo

If armed with a spar torpedo, roll for detonation if spar is within 2 inches of enemy ship. A 1,2, 3, or 4 is a dud. A 5 or 6, roll one die for damage. A 5 or 6 is a hit, roll one die for amount of damage plus an automatic specific damage. Subtract 4 from the specific hit roll that comes up. The spar armed ship rolls one die to see how much hit damage it takes due to force of explosion: a 1 is one point of damage; a 2 is two; 3-6 no effect, UNLESS the attacking ship is a small vessel in which case a 1 or 2 is destruction of ship.

### Torpedoes

In the Civil War mines were called torpedoes: *“damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!”* If they are visible and you hit one: roll two dice:

- A 2 -8 is a dud; remove it.
- A 9 though 12: roll 1 die for damage hits plus an additional automatic specific damage, subtracting 6 from this specific hit roll.

### DAMAGE

#### The Damage Box

As the boat takes “hits” for any reason you start ticking off the boxes, top to bottom, left to right. When you get to the yellow line, the ship loses two speed increments. Further, you check the captain’s morale. In this game there are very few yellow boxes because the ships tend to go to the bottom quickly given the abundant armor and low freeboard. Replace the ship with a hulk marker for three turns.

#### Continuing Damage

The continuing damage can be “fixed” at 1 point per turn **on a roll of 5 or 6**. Actually you don’t remove damage already taken you just reduce the future damage. **If you are attempting to repair the continuing damage the ship may not reload guns which have fired.** Put a marker on the ship to denote this fact. **If there is a fire then no damage can be repaired for the duration of the fire.**

#### Specific Hits

The letters in the damage boxes represent times when you need to roll on the specific hit chart to see where a well-placed round has found its mark. A W stands for ships made only of wood. A P stands for Protected Ship which translates into a vessel with reinforced sides (a touch of armor plate or are “cotton clad”). Finally there are the Ironclad ships denoted by the I on the chart. As you might imagine the I results occur infrequently and thus there are fewer “critical” hits. When a hit is inflicted and a Specific Hit box is ticked off, then also roll on the specific hit chart. There is one exception: a continuing damage point does NOT cause a roll on the specific hit chart. Just pretend the specific hit never happened. If you get more than one specific hit per turn the effects are cumulative.

**SPECIFIC HIT CHART** ROLL three Dice: *If ALL three dice are the same natural number (triples), the vessel may drop one armor class IF it was hit by heavy artillery shell AT 6 inches or less. (wooden class stays wooden).*

*In addition or even if triples not rolled:*

**2 =** waterline hit; 3 continuing damage points (3 crew members killed; 8 guns hit) + catastrophic fire. Entire crew attempts to put out blaze and thus no further activity this turn. Success on a 1 ,2 or 3 with 1D6. May try again next turn at with success requiring a 1 or 2. The third turn is your last try requiring a 1 to survive.

**3 =** waterline; 3 continuing damage points (3 crew members killed; 6 guns hit)

**4 =** waterline; 2 continuing damage points (2 crew members killed; 4 guns hit)

**5 =** waterline; 1 continuing damage points (2 crew member killed; 2 guns hit)

**6 =** rudder hit, lose 1 turning box of owners choice, no turns for 2 turns (2 crew members killed; 2 guns hit)

**7 =** rudder jammed no turns for 2 turns (2 crew members killed; 2 guns hit)

**8=** rudder jammed. On a 1-3, right turns only for 2 turns; on a 4-6 left turns only for 2 turns. (2 crew members killed; 2 guns hit)

**9=** Fire below decks. Cannot repair continuing damage, or grapple for one turn. (2 crew members killed and 2 guns destroyed). Fire out in two turns. Ship's guns may hit only on a six.

**10=** 4 gun hits and roll 1 die for crew casualties.

**11=** 2 guns hit and roll 1 die for crew casualties.

**12 =**4 guns hit and roll 1 die for crew casualties.

**13 =** Fire above deck. Cannot repair continuing damage, or grapple for two turns. (6 crew members killed and 4 guns destroyed). Fire out in two turns. Ship's guns may hit only on a six.

**14=** Engine Damaged Cannot increase or decrease speed [or rotate turret] for two turns. ( 2 crew members killed;2 guns hit)

**15=** Engine Damaged Cannot increase or decrease speed [or rotate turret] for three turns. (3 crew members killed; 3 guns hit).

**16 =** Engine Damaged; lose 2 speed increment [and cannot rotate turrets until roll a 5-6 ] (4 crew members killed;4 guns hit)

**17 =** Engine Damaged; lose 3 speed increments [and cannot rotate turrets until roll a 5-6 ] (6 crew members killed; 4 guns hit)

**18 =** Engine Damaged; lose 4 speed increments [ and cannot rotate turrets until roll a 6 ] (8 crew members killed;6 guns hit;)

**19 =** Engine Damaged; lose 5 speed increments [cannot ever rotate turrets again](12 crew members killed; 8 guns hit) plus catastrophic fire. See #2

## FIRING

### Battery firing aboard ships

Assuming your guns are loaded, fire is so many “fire dice” per battery which is a function of the number of the guns and crew quality (deduced by a formula known only to Bob Duncan). It is NOT a function of the model guns on the boat. Larger ships have two main batteries – one on each side. Smaller batteries may be present in the bow and stern.

### Battery firing aboard ships

The angle of fire is always 45 degrees ( 22 ½ per side of the gun). A few ships have revolving turrets. Needless to say there is no angle of fire problem for turrets unless the turret loses the ability to turn.

Each battery must fire on a single target; a single battery may not split fire.

A ship may have several batteries but not all are manned. No more than two batteries may fire per turn and must do so at the same time. **If more than two batteries fire then the ship must spend the next turn reloading and may not fire any batteries.**

To fire, cast your fire dice dictated by the number of “guns”: **only four, five or sixes count** as a hit.

- Normal Ship’s Guns have a range of 36 inches. Short range (12 inches) is a full hit. Medium range (24 inches) is half hits, **rounded up**. Long range (36 inches) is One-third hits, *rounded up*.
- Light Guns have a range of 12 inches with no range modifiers; they hit with full capacity for the entire range of shot. *However, light guns have no effect on an Ironclad since they cannot penetrate the armor.*
- Heavy guns have a range of 48 inches. Short range (16 inches) is a full hit. Medium range (32inches) is half hits, **rounded up**. Long range (48 inches) is One-third hits, *rounded up*. **WHEN** rolling on specific hit chart ***If ALL three dice are the same natural number (triples), the vessel may drop one armor class IF it was hit by heavy artillery shell AT 6 inches or less. (wooden class stays wooden).***

Certain situations call for a hit on only a **five or six**.

If the game master announces “reduced visibility” from smoke.

Certain situations call for a hit on only a **six**.

If there is a fog or dawn or dusk,

If the game master announces “excessive smoke” (from the guns, not cigarettes)

If the target is 6 inches or less in length,

If the target is entrenched land based artillery,

If the firing ship is fighting a fire,

If the firing ship is in the yellow damage zone,

If the firing ship has no men left below decks.

**IF the target SHIP is not moving add +1 to the “to hit roll.”**

Recall that damage is inflicted by the hits in the damage box. One box for each hit. Roll on the specific hit box when you come to the appropriate letter.

### **Aimed fire.**

Let's assume you want to try to use "aimed fire" and shoot high and try to blow off an observation port from your opponent's ship. Or you want to fire low and attempt to put a nice hole in your enemy's hull. All you do is announce "aimed fire" and throw a die: a 1 – 4 results in a total miss. *Damn*. A 5 or 6 means the shots went where intended. *Hot Damn*. If your victim is so unfortunate as to draw a specific hit result on this volley then the poor devil subtracts 4 pips from the specific hit roll if you were firing low. This increases the odds of the dreaded continuing damage hole in one. He adds 4 pips if you were firing high thus increasing the odds of him suffering some horrid damage in the upper portions of the ship.

### **Artillery fire against land based batteries**

Each battery on land has its own roster sheet showing how many guns are present. The land based guns may fire up to a 45 degree angle of fire to either side of the battery (90 degrees total). Since land based batteries are located in forts or other protected areas a land based or ships' gun registers a "hit" on land based artillery only on a 6 which destroys one gun. Divide hits by 2 or 3 depending on range. Once all the guns are destroyed any further hits are against troops in the fort as per the following rule. If all men are killed the fort is considered destroyed and is removed.

### **Artillery fire against land based troops**

In addition to firing on ships and land based artillery, guns on land or on ships may choose to fire at enemy troops on the land. If the troops are in cover, such as a house or field fortification then only a 6 will hit (round hits to half at long range for Normal artillery): otherwise a hit on a 5 or 6. If there is a hit then roll a dice for casualties: the number of pips is the number of dead. For every six casualties roll another die; a 1 is a leader kill instead of a man. (*while it is hard to hit much with static guns; if infantry come close to cannons they can lay waste to the men.*)

### **Reloading artillery**

Once artillery fires during a turn a piece of cotton is placed near the guns to show they have fired that turn. Guns can only fire once per turn.

In the reloading phase the guns may be reloaded and you pull off the cotton.

**If more than two batteries fire then the ship must spend the next turn reloading and may not fire any batteries.**

If there is a catastrophic fire aboard the ship no guns can be reloaded.

ALL Land based artillery is reloaded each turn even if there are multiple batteries.

### **Mortars**

Mortars can only fire on land targets or docked ships. Range of 48 inches. No modification for range. Hits on a 6 with no modifiers.

**Captain's Morale** Test on any © result, Use current morale value with modifiers. Throw 3D6. If equal OR less than current morale value the captain (and crew) passes. If the roll is OVER the current morale number then use the following result depending on the excess number thrown:

+1, passes but reduce moral value by 1.

+2, , Reduce moral value by 2. May not advance any closer to enemy. Roll again next turn to see if captain regains his nerve.

+3, +4 Reduce moral value by 3. Retire behind main body ( no firing while retiring) may then resume normal operations but with reduced moral.

+5 or 6 Surrender if within 24 inches of enemy. If not reduce morale by 3 and retire behind main body or port ( no firing) and stay there. May fire at that point but may not advance on enemy.

+7 or more. Captain and Crew Abandon ship which is adrift.

**Captain's Morale Modifiers** Apply the following to the Captain's current morale:

Anchored -1, port or starboard battery destroyed -1 ,When half crew is killed -1

Fire on ship -2. Ship in Yellow Line -2

More than 2 batteries destroyed -3 When three-fourth of crew is killed -3

Catastrophic Fire Raging -5

**PLUS 1** if your ship has sunk an enemy ship. **PLUS 2** if within 24 inches of flag ship. Modifiers ARE cumulative.

### **Boarding Actions**

Ships may attempt a boarding action but not against ironclads which are "buttoned up." Once Ships are grappled they come to a rather sudden stop. The attacker may now attempt a boarding action to take over the enemy ship. Melee in a boarding action is resolved using a quick, abstract action. Once there is a successful grapple then the melee is resolved in the combat phase. For each ship: add number of crew plus the captain's moral plus number of remaining guns on ship times a die roll. High number wins. Roll two dice for winners' casualties. Losers' crew is captured, wounded and killed and is effectively out of the game. The winner captures the ship and must crew the vessel with at least 10 men.

### **Melee Combat on Land**

When advancing against an enemy force for hand-to-hand melee combat the unit may attempt to charge which gains the benefit of an additional movement bonus but requires the unit to test for morale to see if it will connect: the all-out charge instead of slithering about taking shots at your foe.

To Charge the unit first throws for its morale to see if it will attempt to attack. Disciplined troop will attack on anything but a 1. Rabble and townsfolk will attack on anything but a 1, 2 or 3. If there is no leader then subtract 2 from the die roll.

Charging gives you an extra die for movement

The combat is resolved by adding the number of men as follows (no rounding allowed):

One leader equals 3 dice

Two men equal 1 die

If a man is mounted he equals 2 dice.

If men are defending a fortification or trench then 1 man equals 1 dice.

If men are defending uphill or in light cover then 3 men equal 2 dice.

If men are defending and attacker starts in their rear then 4 men equals 1 dice.

Five rabble or townsfolk equal 1 die.

Add number of dice and cast them all. A 5 or 6 cause an enemy casualty.

For every six casualties on a side cast another die: A 1 means one casualty must be a leader. Compare the number of casualties and consider a leader 3 men lost instead of 1.

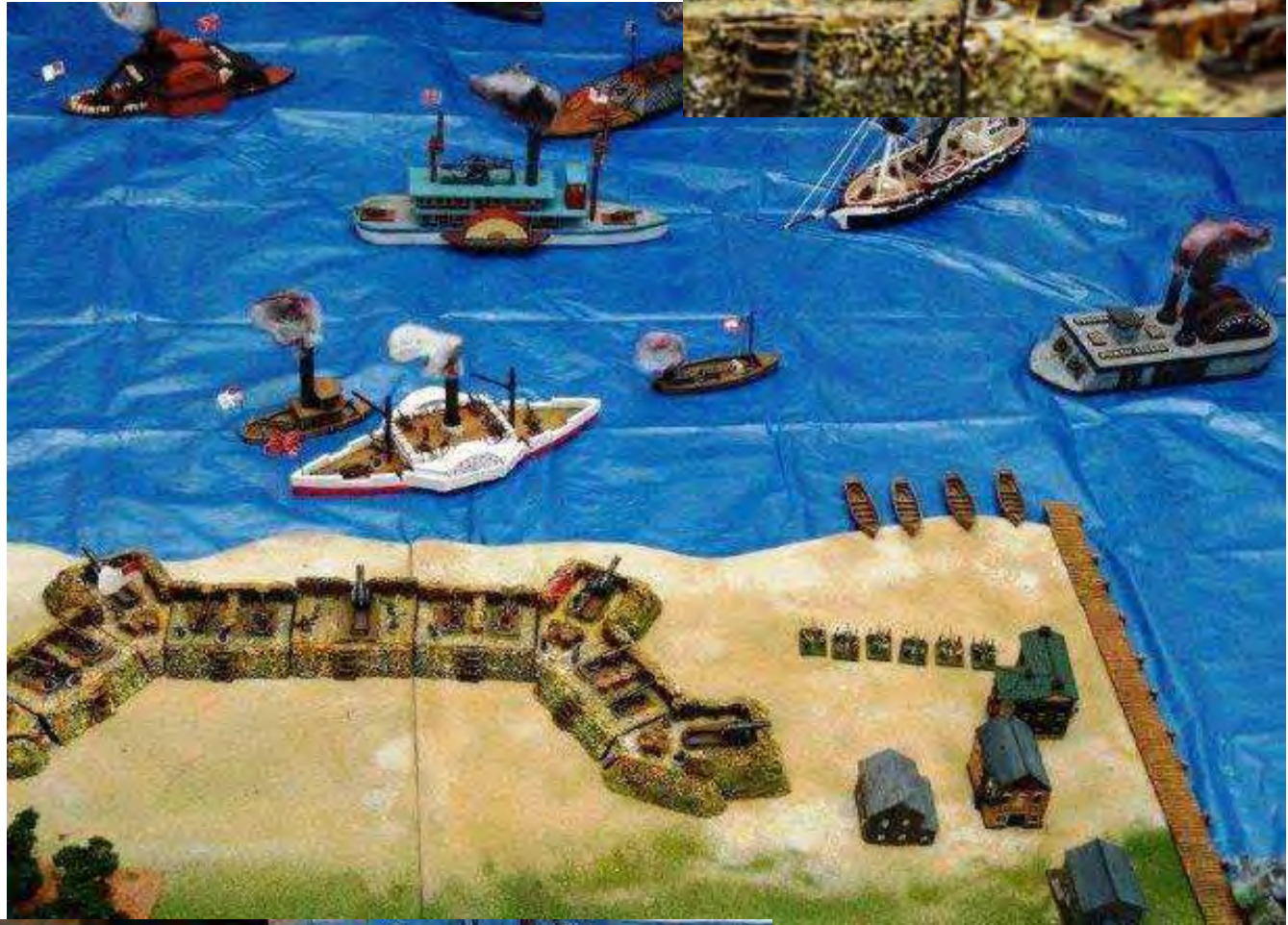
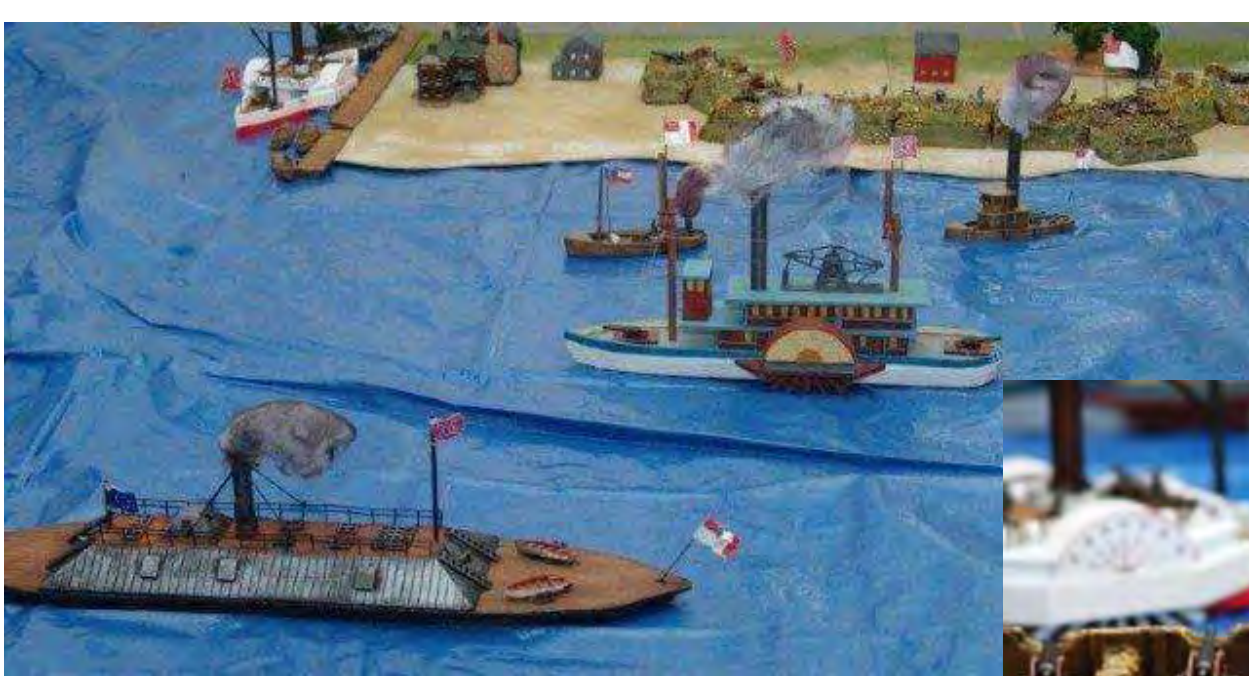
A difference of 1 or 2 means a continued melee; fight another round of combat immediately.

A difference of 3 or 4 the loser recoils 4 inches away but facing the enemy; the winner may attack again on a 4, 5 or 6.

A difference of 5 or 6 the loser runs 4D6 to the nearest cover with backs to the enemy. The winner may move 2D6.

### **Small arms fire**

Small arms fire between groups of infantry or firing on crewed artillery is at a range of six inches between men OR between firing men and edge of fort section. Men who are not blocking each other and have a direct line of sight to enemy man or fort section each cast a die. A six is a hit with no modifiers for terrain, cover or anything else. Troops may fire on land artillery batteries with small arms and essentially kill the crew. To do so, fire at the enemy land battery who do not have roster crew and four hits will take out one gun (crew). In this time scale there is insufficient time to re-crew the gun with experienced men and so the gun is out of action for the remainder of the game.



All figures, terrain and ships are 15mm scale.



