THE WOLVES ARE OUT THERE

MARITIME TACTICAL DECISION GAME #2 BY JERRY HALL



PLAYER INSTRUCTIONS **Read this side only. Do not turn the page until you have made your decision.**

THE SITUATION

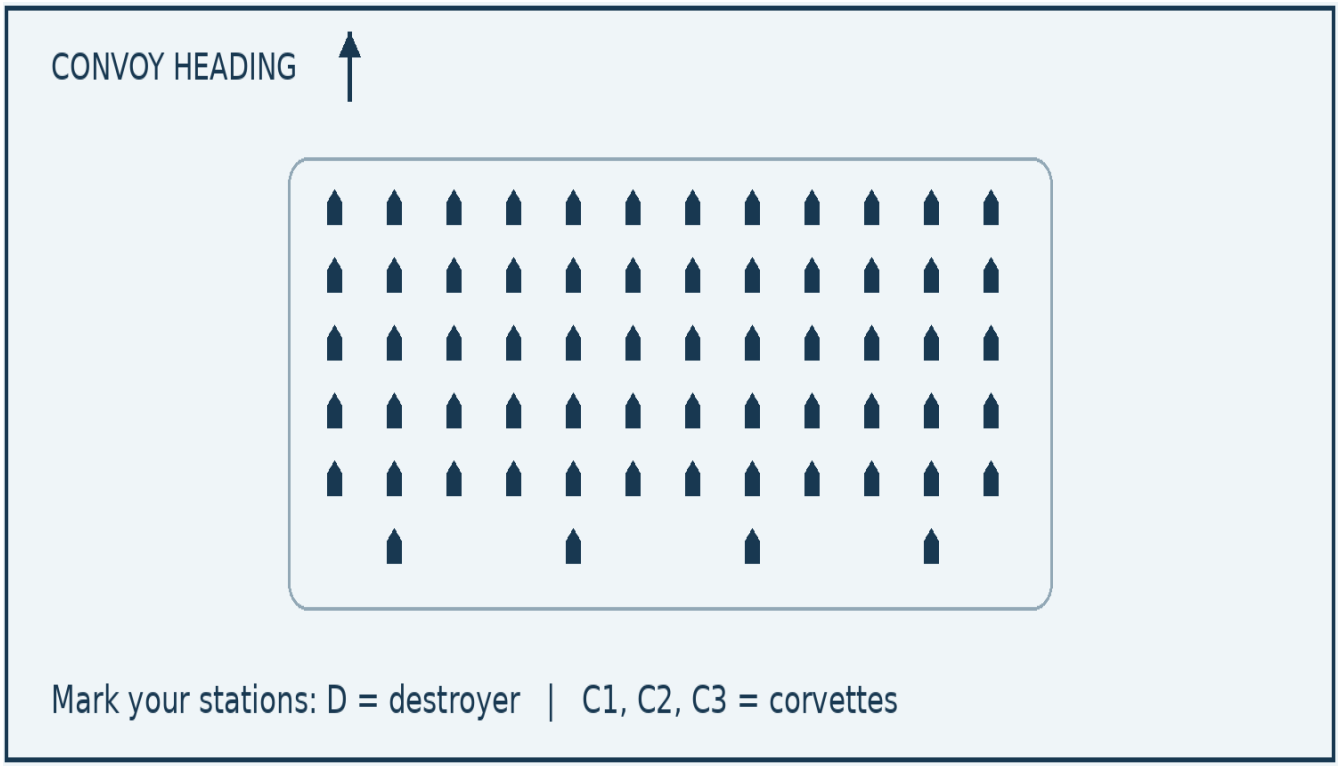
You command four escorts protecting more than sixty merchant ships in the North Atlantic in 1941. Your force consists of one destroyer and three corvettes, small warships built for escort duty.

The convoy is slow and spread across several columns. You are beyond the reach of friendly aircraft. Darkness is approaching.

German submarines are reported along your route. You do not know their number or positions. A surfaced submarine can be hard to spot at night. Your underwater sound detection is most useful once a submarine dives.

Signals are difficult to pass between ships after dark. The convoy must keep moving, and your escorts need their orders before nightfall.

CONVOY FORMATION · SCHEMATIC / NOT TO SCALE



MISSION & DECISION

Get as many merchant ships as possible safely through. Mark your four escort stations on the diagram and explain why you chose them. Include a standing order for an escort that detects a submarine outside its station.

MISSION: **INTENT:**

MAIN EFFORT: **PRINCIPAL RISK:**

STOP | MAKE YOUR DECISION BEFORE TURNING THE PAGE

FACILITATOR / HISTORICAL REVEAL

Read only after the player has committed to a decision.

THE HISTORICAL CASE

This exercise is based on Convoy SC 42, which sailed from Nova Scotia for Britain in late August 1941. HMCS Skeena and three Canadian corvettes initially guarded more than sixty merchant ships. The player's briefing and convoy diagram are simplified reconstructions of the escort problem before contact.

WHAT HAPPENED

A gale delayed the convoy and forced several ships to drop out. Short on fuel for a wide detour, the convoy turned north. A U-boat found it off Greenland on 9 September, and other submarines converged.

The convoy lost 16 merchant ships. Reinforcements included the Canadian corvettes HMCS Chambly and HMCS Moose Jaw, which sank U-501. The surviving merchant ships continued toward Britain.

THE COMMAND LESSON

With four escorts and a wide perimeter, every station leaves a gap somewhere. The screen must reflect where you think an attack is most likely and where a penetration would do the most damage.

Pursuing a submarine can interrupt an attack. It also opens a gap in the screen until the escort returns or another ship covers its station. Judge the pursuit by what it does for the convoy.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION

1. **Where did you expect the first attack, and what did you base that on?**
2. **Where did you put the destroyer, and what did that position let it do?**
3. **Which approach had the least coverage? How could a U-boat exploit it?**
4. **When would you let an escort leave station to pursue a contact?**
5. **How would the remaining escorts cover the gap during that pursuit?**

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Allow 5 minutes to mark stations and write orders, then 10–15 minutes to compare screens and discuss. Before revealing the outcome, give each player a contact report from their least protected sector and ask how their orders would apply.

USE, SOURCES AND CREDITS

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Sources:

Royal Canadian Navy, Fighting the U-Boats (1939–1945).

Veterans Affairs Canada, Valour at Sea, "The Battle of the Atlantic."

Convoy diagram: AI-generated schematic for Art of Command™.

Photo: HMCS Skeena (D59), ca. 1931–1944. Photographer unidentified. Ken Macpherson / Naval Museum of Alberta, Canadian Navy Heritage image IKMD-04292, via Wikimedia Commons.