All Guns Blazing!
Newsletter of the Naval Wargames Society
No. 165 – January 2008

Editorial

Happy New Year everyone!

I hope you all had a fantastic Christmas and a great New Year. As 2007comes to an end we look forward to 2008 and wonder what developments we'll see in naval wargaming. One eagerly awaited new release on the horizon is "Fleet Action Imminent", the WW1 incarnation of GQ3, which I think was high on many people's Christmas lists (printing problems alas prevented it appearing in my stocking on the 25th).

As I write this the latest NWS event on board HMS BELFAST has just concluded. Simon has sent in some photos of the event (including some shots of his nifty 1/600 Type 12 and Type 22 conversions). I am hoping to be able to publish a report in the next issue. This month's battle report comes from the US, where Dave Schueler and his local crowd of gamers has been having fun and games in the Eastern Mediterranean. Looks like a fun time was had by all (well, at least ONE side was having fun, but that's giving away the plot ☺)
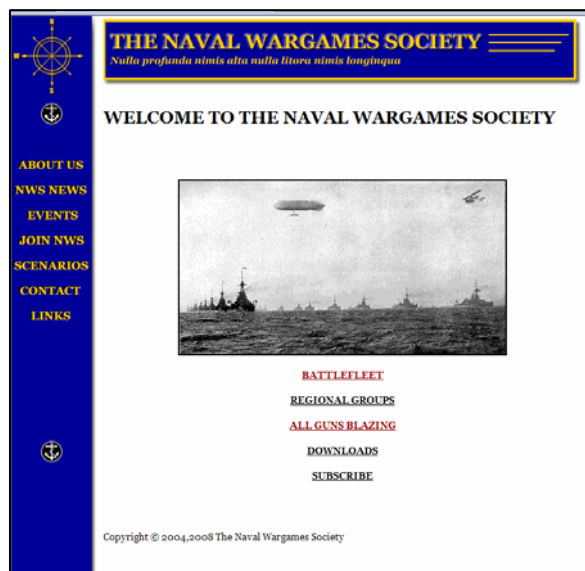
Finally, apologies for missing last month's issue. A case of "real life" getting in the way of wargaming I'm afraid ☹

Yours aye,

DM
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The NWS Website

After 3 years of looking after the NWS website Bill Madison has handed over the reigns of power (or at least the ftp address and passwords) to me. I have taken over as "webmaster" and will be making incremental changes to the site over the coming months, bringing it more up to date and adding content where appropriate. I have already started by uploading the last year's issues of AGB so if you missed any and want to catch up then they are there for your reading pleasure.

If you have any comments or suggestions for changes, additions, etc. or any material that you'd like posted on the site please don't hesitate to contact me.

The website address is:

www.navalwargamessociety.org

The Missile Boat War
## The 1973 Arab-Israeli War at Sea
By Dave Schueler

Every year between Christmas and New Year's Day I run a naval mini-campaign for my friends. This year's game was the 1973 Arab-Israeli War at Sea using David Manley's Bulldogs Away rules and the campaign on his website. We had around six hours to play our game and the campaign was designed to last seven game days, but I figured things would move pretty quickly after the first couples of game days. It was expected to be a frustrating game for the Arab players, although they would have a better chance than their historical counterparts.

The Historical Background

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War at sea was the first conflict in which the primary naval weapon on both sides was the Surface to Surface Missile (SSM). The Soviet Union began developing and deploying naval SSMs in the early 1960s. However, the first successful SSM attack was not made until 1967 during the "War of Attrition" between Egypt and Israel. On October 21, 1967, the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* (an ex-British Z Class DD) was patrolling outside of the Egyptian city of Port Said when two Egyptian Komar class missile boats attacked it with four SS-N-2 'Styx' missiles. The *Eilat* had little warning of the attack and her WWII vintage equipment proved useless against the missiles. At least three of the four missiles hit the destroyer, quickly sinking it and opening the missile age at sea.

After the loss of the *Eilat*, the Israelis felt they could no longer afford to maintain a traditional navy and undertook a new program that would not only change their navy, but change naval warfare. The Israelis chose to convert their navy over to one where small fast missile-armed ships would be the main combat force. With this decision they began developing their own SSM, the Gabriel, and designing ships to carry the missile. But more importantly, the Israelis began to look for a way to defeat the Styx missile. For their missile boats the Israelis invested heavily in new shipboard electronic warfare systems, which included electronic support measures (ESM) to detect enemy search radar and the Styx homing radar, electronic countermeasures (ECM) to jam these radars, and chaff rockets to create false radar targets. By the time war broke out in 1973 the Israeli transition to the new missile boat navy was practically complete, but the entire force was still untested and many wondered if the new missile and electronic warfare systems would work.
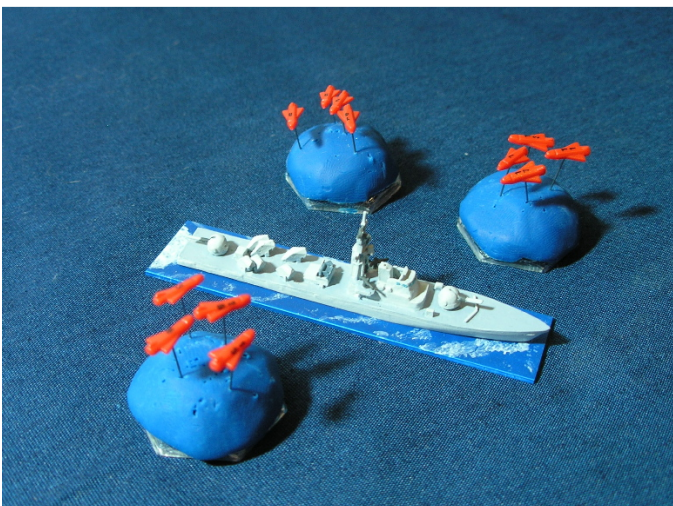
The new Israeli Navy got the chance to prove itself on the night of October 6, 1973, the opening night of the latest war between Israel and its Arab neighbours. While the rest of Israel's armed forces were struggling to hold off their Arab attackers, the Navy went on the offensive sending five missile boats north to Syria. The objective of the Israeli force was to bombard oil facilities at the Syrian port of Latakia and try to draw out and destroy any Syrian warships. The Syrians were not expecting this move by the Israelis and had only two picket ships (a P-4 PT boat and a T-43 minesweeper) stationed outside of Latakia. The Israeli force first encountered the torpedo boat, which raised the alarm and headed for port, but an Israeli 76mm gun quickly destroyed the small boat. With the alarm raised, three Syrian missile boats, a pair of Komars (each armed with two Styx missiles) and one Osa (armed with four Styx), were dispatched to engage the Israelis. The Israeli commander, not knowing Syrian missile boats were on the way, continued to move after the minesweeper. Once the Israelis had closed the range, they launched a pair of Gabriel missiles at the minesweeper, quickly sending it to the bottom.

Meanwhile the Syrian missile boats closed in and finally came within radar range of the Israelis. The Syrians, with the longer ranged Styx missile, quickly launched their missiles at the Israeli ships. With missiles in the air the

Israeli electronic warfare system went to work launching chaff rockets and putting the ECM systems into action. These two systems flooded the Syrian radar with contacts (after the battle the Syrians reported that there were at least 20 Israeli ships in the area). However, the Israelis were still unsure how their new electronic warfare systems would do against the incoming missiles. As the Styx missiles closed, it quickly became apparent that the electronic defences had done their job as the Israelis watched the missiles fly pass their ships and dive harmlessly into the water. The Syrians didn't know what to make of the situation, but the two Komars (now out of missiles) turned around and started heading back to the port at full speed, while the Osa fired off its last two missiles. However, these missiles proved just as ineffective as the initial salvo. That was not the case for the Gabriel missiles though, the Israelis were able to close with the Syrian missile boats and use their new missile to destroy all of the Syrian ships. In less than thirty minutes the face of naval warfare had changed forever.

During the remainder of the war there were several more missile boat engagements, but in all cases the Israeli electronic warfare and chaff systems were able to defeat the Styx missiles, while Gabriel missiles destroyed Syrian and Egyptian ships. When the war ended the Arab navies had fired over 50 Styx missiles at the Israelis without recording a single hit. On the Israeli side around 70 Gabriel missiles had been expended with 14 Arab ships sunk. The action during this war showed the continued importance of the SSM, but also showed that it could be defeated by a well designed and coordinated defence system.

The Game

After a quick introduction to the campaign and tactical rules, we were ready to start our campaign game. Each side started out by checking the status of their ships (there was a chance they would be unavailable) and planning their missions for the first day.

The first day started in a somewhat historical manner with the Israelis running a bombardment mission to the Syrian port Latakia. The Syrian defending force consisted of four P-4 PT boats and the Israeli bombarding force consisted of four Saar 3 missile boats. The Syrians moved to get into torpedo range, while the Israelis wondered why no missiles were being fired at them. The Israeli guns opened up just before the Syrians could launch torpedoes, damaging two PT boats and knocking out some torpedo tubes. But the Syrians were able to launch their remaining torpedoes, then turned away from the Israelis and fired their heavy machine guns as they ran. A lucky machine gun hit ripped through one Israeli ship wrecking it, but that would prove to be the only Syrian success for the day as all the torpedoes missed and the Israeli Gabriel missiles and gunfire destroyed the PT boats. While the PT boats had reported their contact with the enemy, the Syrian naval command decided not to send an interception force and the Israelis bombardment of Latakia proceeded unhindered.
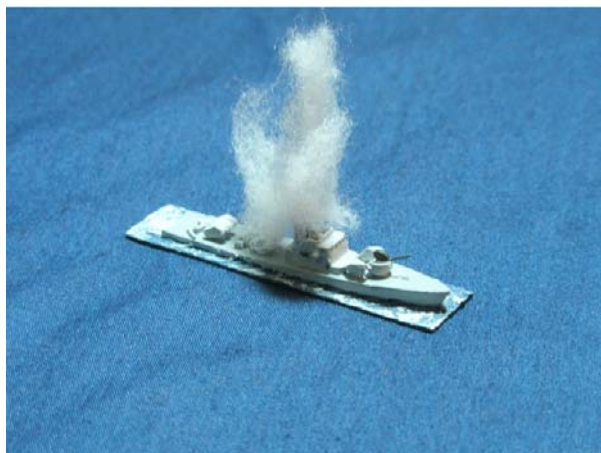
The next action was at the Israeli port Haifa and showed an attempt a coordination between the Arab navies as each sent an offensive patrol to Haifa. The battle with the Syrian force occurred first. The Israelis had one Saar 4, one Saar 3 missile boat and two Saar 1 gun boats defending the port, while the Syrians had three Komar and one Osa missile boats attacking. Unaware of the new Israeli electronic countermeasures, the Syrian radar operators were overwhelmed with number of contacts they saw on their radar scopes (this was a random event that caused the hit chance for the Styx missiles to be 1 in 20). When radar contact was established, the Israelis contacted their naval headquarters reporting the contact. The headquarters had also received an intelligence report that an Egyptian force was approaching too and dispatched an interception force with a Saar 3 and Saar 2 missile boat to support the defensive patrol, but these would not arrive for several turns. Once in missile range, the Syrians quickly launched their Styx missiles, targeting several Israeli ships, but the Israeli countermeasures were too much for the missiles and they all splashed harmlessly into the sea. Since the Israeli missiles have a shorter range than the Arab Styx missiles, the Israelis had to undergo the missile attack

before they could get into range to retaliate. With their missiles expended, the Syrian boats turned to disengage; but the Israelis were now in range to fire their missiles. In the end only one Komar was able to escape.

Now it was the Egyptians turn. The Egyptian force was a powerful one, with six Osa missile boats. The Israelis still had their defensive patrol, although they had expended most of their missiles, along with the interception force that was slated to arrive soon after the action started. The Egyptians moved into Styx range and fired off their missiles, spreading the missiles out to all the Israeli ships in range. One Styx was able to burn through the Israeli countermeasures, crashing into and sinking the Israeli Saar 1 gunboat *Mivtach*. The Israelis moved to avenge *Mivtach*, but were only able to catch and sink two of the Osas.

The second battle off Haifa was the last battle of the first day. The Israelis felt pretty good about how things had gone, although the wrecked ship from a lucky machine gun hit just seemed wrong. The first day ended with mixed results for the Arabs; sinking a gun boat and wrecking a missile boat were good, but they came at a high cost (three Osa, two Komar missile boats, and four PT boats). The Arabs felt they needed better tactics for fighting the Israelis and came up with an idea for the next day's battles.

The second day started with a Syrian offensive patrol at Haifa (game note: Each side had certain required missions, along with some optional ones, but the Syrians had the bad luck of rolling for required ones at the wrong time). The Syrian force had one Osa and four Komar missile boats up against three Saar 2 missile boats and one Saar 1 gunboat. The Syrians were ready to try the new "missile overwhelm" tactic. The new tactic was a variation on the "shoot and scoot" tactic used on the first day; but instead of spreading the missiles out to multiple targets, the missiles were all fired at one target in hopes of getting a hit. The Syrian missile boats executed the new tactic firing 12 Styx missiles at the nearest Israeli contact and turning away. However, Syrian luck had not changed with the new tactic and all the missiles missed the target. Meanwhile, the Israelis were able to close the gap and fire missiles at two of the Syrian boats sinking one Komar and wrecking the Osa. The remaining Komars decided to continue with their escape, abandoning the disabled Osa, which was sunk by gunfire.
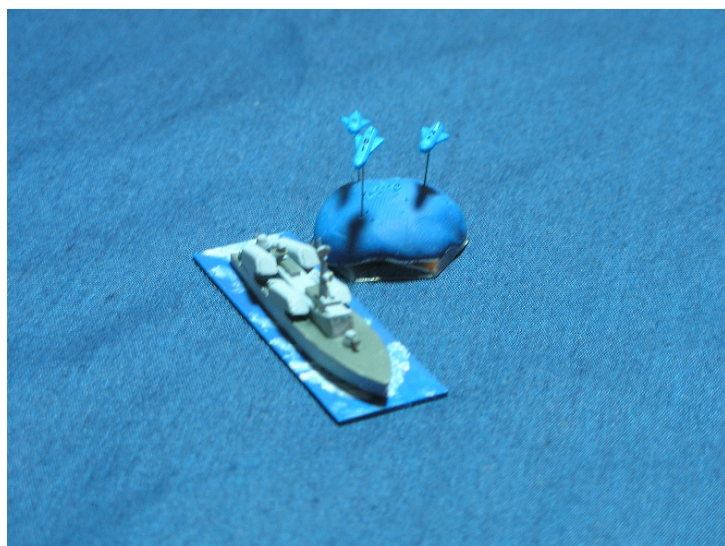

The next battle involved an Israeli offensive patrol and Egyptian defensive patrol off the Egyptian main port, Port Said. The Israelis sent six missile boats (two Saar 4, two Saar 3, and one Saar 2), while the Egyptian force consisted of four Osa missile boats (interestingly, these were the same four Osas that had escaped damage off Haifa the previous day). As soon as the Israeli contacts were detected, the Egyptians called for an interception force. Then Egyptians followed the new attack tactic, concentrating all their missiles on the nearest target and turning away from the oncoming Israelis. The 16 Styx missiles raced toward the Saar 4 missile boat *Keshet* and one was able burn through the countermeasures to score a hit, wrecking *Keshet*. But the four Osas were unable to escape return fire (the Saar 4 boats were carrying Gabriel II missiles, which have a longer range than the Gabriel I, but still not as long as the Styx range) and all four were sunk. With the demise of the defensive patrol, the interception force was recalled, ending the second day.

As the campaign rolled into its third day, the Arab navies were starting to feel the strain of the high tempo combat operations. The Syrian Navy was only able to send two ships (both of her T-43 class minesweepers) on defensive patrol, while the remaining ships (three Komars and two P-4 PT boats) were unable to sortie. The Egyptians were not having as many maintenance problems (they only had three ships that were not available to sortie), but combat losses were causing them to do their best to avoid the Israelis.

The Israelis were also starting to see some attrition issues with more than one-third of their starting ships sunk or in repair. Even with these maintenance issues, the order came down from headquarters for a bombardment mission on Latakia. The Israelis mustered four Saar 3 missile boats for the mission and they ran directly into

the Syrian minesweepers. As soon as the minesweepers detected the Israeli force, they sped up and turned for home, knowing that there was no one to call for help. But the faster missile boats quickly closed in on the minesweepers, sank them with missiles, and then continued on with their mission to bombard Latakia.
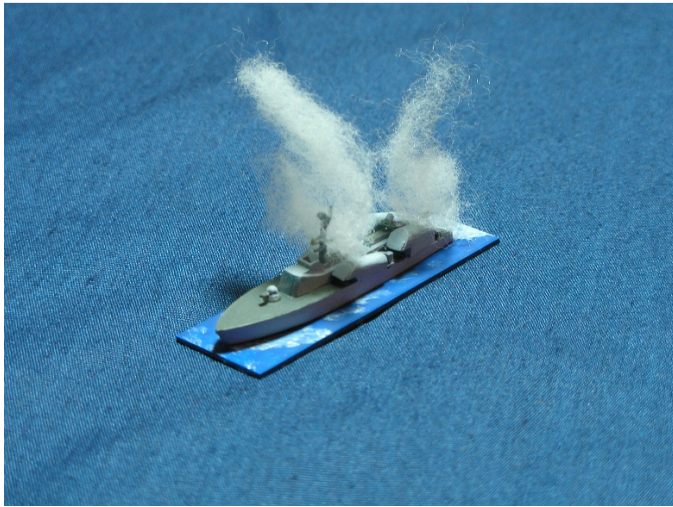
That was the only battle for day three and the Arabs were working on a new tactic for their next missile battle, although they were also hoping to just keep out of the Israeli's way.

On the fourth day of the campaign, the Israelis, feeling they had pretty much knocked the Syrians out of the war, decided to seek out a decisive encounter with the Egyptian Navy. Reports had been coming in of Egyptian ships firing rockets into Israeli positions in the Sinai and an offensive patrol was planned. The Israeli patrol, which included one Saar 3 and three Saar 2 missile boats, ran into an Egyptian patrol of one Komar and five Osa missile boats that were covering the Sinai bombardment force. This battle gave the Egyptians a chance to try out their new tactic. Realizing that the Israelis only had a limited number of chaff launchers per ship, the Arab players decided to try firing missiles in a series of waves, hoping that the final wave would not have to pass through chaff, so it would have a better chance to hit. The Egyptian force approached with a spread out formation to implement the new tactic. But this allowed the Israelis to close and engage the boats that would have launched the final wave, forcing them to launch early to avoid being hit with missiles still on board. While it is hard to tell if this tactic would have worked with a little more refinement, it did result in two Styx hits on the Saar 2 boat *Haifa*; damaging and then sinking it. However, the Egyptians paid a heavy price as all their missile boats were sunk by missiles and gunfire.

That ended the fourth day and the campaign, since it was time for people to leave for the day. Although at this point neither of the Arab navies was in any shape to continue fighting. Victory points were tallied and it showed an overwhelming victory for the Israelis. The Israelis had two ships sunk (a Saar 1 and a Saar 2) and two ships wrecked (although one was repaired during the game) during the game, while the Syrians lost two Osas, three Komars, four P-4, and two T-43s and the Egyptians lost eleven Osas, and one Komar. The biggest reason for the Arab loses was that once one of their ships was damaged or wrecked the Israelis could track it down and sink it with gunfire (using their 76mm or 40mm guns), while the Arab ships largest gun was a 30mm on the Osa class, so they couldn't stick around for a gunfight with the Israelis. The Arabs also suffered from some atrocious die rolling.

We were able to play out seven battles during the campaign, which was pretty good considering the players had to fill out paperwork for mission planning between battles. Overall everyone had a good time, even though the Arab players felt things were tilted toward the Israelis.

NWS Events and Regional Contacts, 2008

NWS Northern Fleet – Falkirk East Central Scotland

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e-mail: kenny.thomson@homecall.co.uk   *- Website:* http://falkirkwargamesclub.org.uk/

Falkirk Wargames Club meets each Monday night at 7pm with a variety of games running each evening. Naval games are popular with 2 or 3 run each month. Campaign games sometimes feature in our monthly weekend sessions. Games tend to be organised week to week making a 3-month forecast here a waste of time. Please get in touch if you'd like to come along.

- Popular periods – Modern (Shipwreck), WW1 and 2 (GQ), WW2 Coastal (Action Stations), and Pre-dreadnought (P Dunn's rules)

NWS North Hants [Every 3rd Sunday]

Jeff Crane 31 Park Gardens, Black Dam, Basingstoke, Hants, 01256 427906
e-mail: gf.crane@ntlworld.com

NWS Wessex [Bi-Monthly Meetings]

The Wessex Group has gone into (hopefully) temporary abeyance for the moment. If anyone living in the Bath / Bristol / Gloucester area (or further afield) would like to take on managing the group please contact myself or any of the other NWS officials.