

1991

Harpoon

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Recommended Citation

Palmer, Michael and Bond, Larry (1991) "Harpoon," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 44 : No. 4 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol44/iss4/15>

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“blue-suiter” and civilian, will find this book fascinating.

DALE PACE
Johns Hopkins University

Bond, Larry, designer. *Harpoon*. Campbell, Calif.: Three-Sixty Pacific, Inc., 1990. \$59.95

Harpoon is the best tactical or operational simulation of modern naval warfare currently available for the personal computer. The player controls ships, submarines, and aircraft in an attempt to achieve victory in one of the game's thirteen scenarios. The player can control either Soviet or Nato forces—United States, British, and Norwegian—in battles for control of the northeastern Atlantic.

The designer, Larry Bond, is a former naval officer best known as the coauthor of Tom Clancey's *Red Storm Rising* and as the author of the best-selling *Red Phoenix*. Bond is also the designer of the original *Harpoon*, a sophisticated manually played game that was first released about ten years ago.

Manual *Harpoon*, while “realistic” for a commercial simulation, requires an enormous amount of tiresome bookkeeping and also a third player—an umpire—to introduce the fog of war into the play. In PC *Harpoon*, the computer serves as opponent, umpire, and bookkeeper. The result is a fast moving and easy to play (although not so easily mastered) simulation of modern naval combat.

Bond has designed a game that allows the player to perform as a modern naval commander faced with multidimensional threats. Although there are simple scenarios that allow the player to control a single force only, facing a one-dimensional threat (submarines versus submarines), the more elaborate scenarios involve air, surface, and subsurface forces, a three-dimensional threat, and include weather fronts that must also be considered while operations are planned. The player should be aware that some of the larger scenarios can cover up to four days of operations in real time!

The scenarios cover most types of action that would occur between Nato and the Soviets in the northeastern Atlantic. The player must escort convoys to Norwegian or Icelandic ports, shepherd amphibious forces to Iceland, execute antisubmarine sweeps and patrols, and intercept Soviet naval sorties and amphibious assaults. Conversely, the player may take command of Soviet forces in each of the scenarios. Starting units and locations differ in successive sessions, but of course the first playing of a scenario usually packs the biggest surprises and is the most challenging.

One criticism I have of the scenarios is that only one involves an American carrier—conducting an operation against Soviet submarines and land-based aircraft on Iceland. Given the focus of the Maritime Strategy, it seems almost criminal not to have included a plot that pitted a single aircraft carrier task force against

a quarter of the Soviet aircraft based in the Kola.

Three-Sixty Pacific has already released a second scenario disk that covers battles for the North Atlantic sea lines of communications and includes the United States, British, French, and Spanish navies. Planned future releases include a set of Mediterranean scenarios and a scenario editor that will allow the player to juggle forces. A Macintosh version is also in preparation.

While computer *Harpoon* is an uncomplicated game compared to its manual namesake, it is far from simple and will prove demanding for the player, who must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each platform. This can be quite a task for the uninitiated. *Harpoon* includes fifty-one surface, twenty-two submarine, and forty-four aircraft types. In *Harpoon's* larger scenarios, effective control and use of several different types of platforms can be a daunting challenge. For example, a British Lynx helicopter armed for a surface strike mission can not be immediately assigned to counter a submarine threat that suddenly materializes; it must first be rearmed, and that takes about thirty minutes.

The distributor "highly recommends" that you have a 80286 computer, a hard disk, and a mouse. From my own experience, a mouse greatly speeds up the play and makes simple the tedious tasks of the game. This is not a game for an 8088 machine. It will require at least one 1.2MB 5.25

inch, or 1.4MB 3.5 inch drive, or two 720KB 3.5 inch drives.

In its initial version, *Harpoon* had some serious glitches and was prone to lock-up. Three-Sixty Pacific has provided me with a revised version that appears to have eliminated the most serious bugs, and the distributor will mail the new production version of the game, complete with revised and updated disks and manuals, free, to all purchasers who have returned their registration cards. Nevertheless, some problems do remain. At the end of one scenario I recently played, my computer displayed the graphic for a Norwegian victory parade, but played the Soviet national anthem!

These minor problems aside, a major criticism of the design itself concerns the extent to which the player can exercise command and control over his forces. For example, although the fog of war shrouds the enemy, the player is free to command individual platforms at any point in the game. While the rapid pace of events frequently denies the player the opportunity to take control, his ability to coordinate and control the operations of a half-dozen submarines spread about the North Atlantic appears to this reviewer (who admittedly has never commanded anything at sea) to be grossly exaggerated.

Harpoon is an excellent game and a serious examination of modern naval warfare. It is a well-programmed and a well-designed simulation created by a former naval officer who has spent over a decade attempting to simulate

the reality he knows. It is well worth the price.

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Van Creveld, Martin. *The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance*. New York: The Free Press, 1990. 134pp. \$19.95

The Training of Officers will not earn Martin van Creveld much praise from the nation's war college faculties and alumni. In a short but pointed monograph, he raises disturbing questions about how Western nations, particularly the United States, prepare their officers for high command, especially at the staff and war college level.

Beginning with a brief history of how senior military commanders achieved their positions in the past, Van Creveld notes that formal education and training of officers are relatively recent phenomena. Driven by the increased complexity of warfare and the rise of standing armies, most major powers had established military academies and war colleges by the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the latter varied widely in quality and not all were taken seriously by their respective militaries.

Van Creveld devotes considerable attention to the Prussian-German War College, or *Kriegsakademie*, which between 1815 and 1945 "was regarded as the best of its kind and served as a model for many of the

rest." Several factors were responsible for its sustained excellence, most of which are missing from contemporary American institutions, according to the author. The *akademie* produced proven officers who had survived the tough entrance exam (twenty percent passing rate) and a rigorous three-year, diversified, professional education. Its well-specified "product" was a middle-grade officer qualified to perform as chief of staff or operations officer of divisional and higher formations. Graduates gained considerable seniority vis-à-vis contemporaries and, following a probationary period, entered the elite General Staff. Perhaps most importantly, the military faculty consisted of senior promotable officers who served as role models for students. Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Guderian, and a host of other future field marshals and senior generals taught there; some at their own request. Indeed, "service on the faculty was a coveted assignment and an honor. Far from sidetracking a man's career, it carried substantial financial benefits and was regarded very much as an essential step on the way to a senior post."

In contrast to the *Kriegsakademie* as well as today's top Soviet academies (which have many of the former's attributes), U.S. staff and war colleges suffer from numerous institutional flaws. Among other problems, they lack: competitive entrance exams; a college role in student selection; a sufficiently long, comprehensive educational program ("the true reason" for the *Kriegsakademie's*