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ORDER OF APPEARANCE WORKS IN PROGRESS Russ "ATO" LOCKWOOD, STAFF DEVELOPER

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ATO 2025 Annual: *Hard to Swallow*



The 2025 Annual provides two games in one package: *A Road to Ruin*, an operational-level solitaire design on the Russian attempt to capture Kyiv outright in the first chaotic and brutal month of the war, and *A Terminal Illness* is a two-player low- to moderate-level simulation of the battle for the Antonov Airport.

A Road to Ruin: The Russians expected an easy victory over Ukraine, but the 2022 invasion soon floundered thanks to Ukraine's ad-hoc mobilization of professional soldiers, foreign legion troops, hastily-recruited militia, and small groups of special forces troops. Russian plans centered around a lightning capture of Kyiv, supported by a ground column advancing on one main approach. Ukrainian resistance stiffened around the airport and the Western suburbs of Bucha, Iprin, and Moschun. Meanwhile, Ukrainian ambushes plagued Russian re-supply efforts, turning overwhelming force into a see-saw battle for the capital.

Steven Cunliffe designed this solitaire game on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the attack on Kyiv. As the Ukrainian commander, deploy your forces across the main urban setting to fight the Russians block by block. As you protect the capital, the Russian forces on the attack use up their supplies – in essence a nail-biting race against time.

In a separate section of the map, a Russian convoy speeds to re-supply the front-line troops. A clever movement mechanic, assisted by Campaign cards, governs the convoy's "fast" or "slow" progress. That progress ties into that race against time, especially influenced by Ukrainian special forces ambushes. The struggle over an important bridge will determine whether the convoy can take a short-cut to the city or have to go the long way around. The Campaign card will also determine how many Russian incursions (attacks into an adjacent district) are allowed. With every new game, the cards get reshuffled, generating new challenges in every replay.

Meanwhile, Russian artillery hammers the city districts. The more buildings pounded into rubble, the fewer Command Points (CPs) available. And CPs are desperately needed to draw new units, deploy drones, and build barricades.

A Terminal Illness: Paul Rohrbaugh's two-player area game dives into the nitty-gritty of the Russian effort to capture Antonov Airport just northwest of Kyiv with airborne infantry and Spetsnaz special forces. Units are company-sized and each turn represents four hours. Ukrainian Rapid Reaction units and militia responded to the attack thanks to Russian intelligence leaks and US and NATO intel advice. Units activated for movement is by a card draw from a regular card deck. Special rules for air and artillery support, armor, and the special forces. The all-important morale—and associated die rolls—impact ammo resupply, troop strength, and air and artillery support.

ATO 2026 Annual: *The Road to Tokyo*



Like the 2025 Annual, the 2026 Annual provides two games in one package: *The Road to Tokyo*, a two-player (but uniquely, four-sided) game depicting events in the WWII Pacific Theater for the first six months of 1944 and designed by Stephen Cunliffe, and *Thunder on South Mountain*, a two-player brigade-level American Civil War game covering the 1862 Battle of Turner's and Fox's Gaps and designed by Scott Holmgren.

The Road to Tokyo: Centers around the air war against airbases in New Guinea and against carriers and airbases in the Central Pacific. One player is Gen. MacArthur and the other is Adm. Nimitz. When one player launches an Allied attack, the other player takes on the Japanese role. A clever victory system depends on racking up publicity points—the highest-scoring player then takes the second phase of the campaign and defends against the Japanese A-Go plan. Strategy cards help govern the dogfighting and bombing operations.

Thunder on South Mountain: Offers a traditional tactical hex-based wargame with each hex equaling about one-fifth of a mile (350 yards). Army Posture is an important part of the clever command and control mechanic, for USA and CSA postures are cross-indexed to use one of seven specific Sequences of Play. Players pick the individual formations for a specific order of activation, which is in turn affected by Leader Effectiveness. In addition, this game's outcome can tie into *ATO 64's Sharpsburg* game.

Turn to our ad on page 46 to see more about both of these projects!

The Usual Suspects: As always, if you have any **rules questions** for any *ATO* game, you can post them on ConsimWorld and/or BoardgameGeek or drop an e-mail at gamesupport@atomagazine.com. If you have **non-game** related questions, like a customer service issue, send an e-mail to admin@atomagazine.com.