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MAW SCENARIO

BATTLE OF PALO ALTO

May 18, 1846

In South Texas in 1836, at a place called Palo Alto (“Tall Trees”), the forces of two North American republics clashed in a battle, beginning a war that helped shape the destiny of the North American continent. The battle was the result of competing border claims to the Nueces Strip, an area of land between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande (Bravo del Norte) River. The disputed border between The Republic of Texas and Mexico was based on the surrender terms of Gen. Santa Anna after his defeat at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. The Treaties of Velasco stipulated the Mexican army must withdraw south of the Rio Grande. The treaty was never formally ratified by the Mexican government and was the source of Mexican claims to the Nueces Strip and in fact, all of Texas.

When the Republic of Texas accepted the offer from the United States to become a state, Gen. Zachary Taylor was directed to secure the more favorable Rio Grande boundary. Taylor built

Fort Texas on the north side of the Rio Grande, across from Matamoros, Mexico. The garrison was left under command of Maj. Jacob Brown and consisted of the 7th Infantry, a battery of four 18-pounders and four light guns. Taylor then departed and went to pick up the rest of his army and supplies, which were steadily arriving at Port Isabel, on the Texas coast.

The U.S. annexation of Texas was not well received in Mexico. President Mariano Paredes directed the army to concentrate at Matamoros and occupy the Nueces Strip. In 1846 the standing army of Mexico was three times larger than the American army. The United States was not a super power in 1846, and military observers were expecting a swift Mexican victory. Therefore, Gen. Mariano Arista, appointed to command the Mexican army, crossed the Rio Grande with confidence and laid siege to Fort Texas.

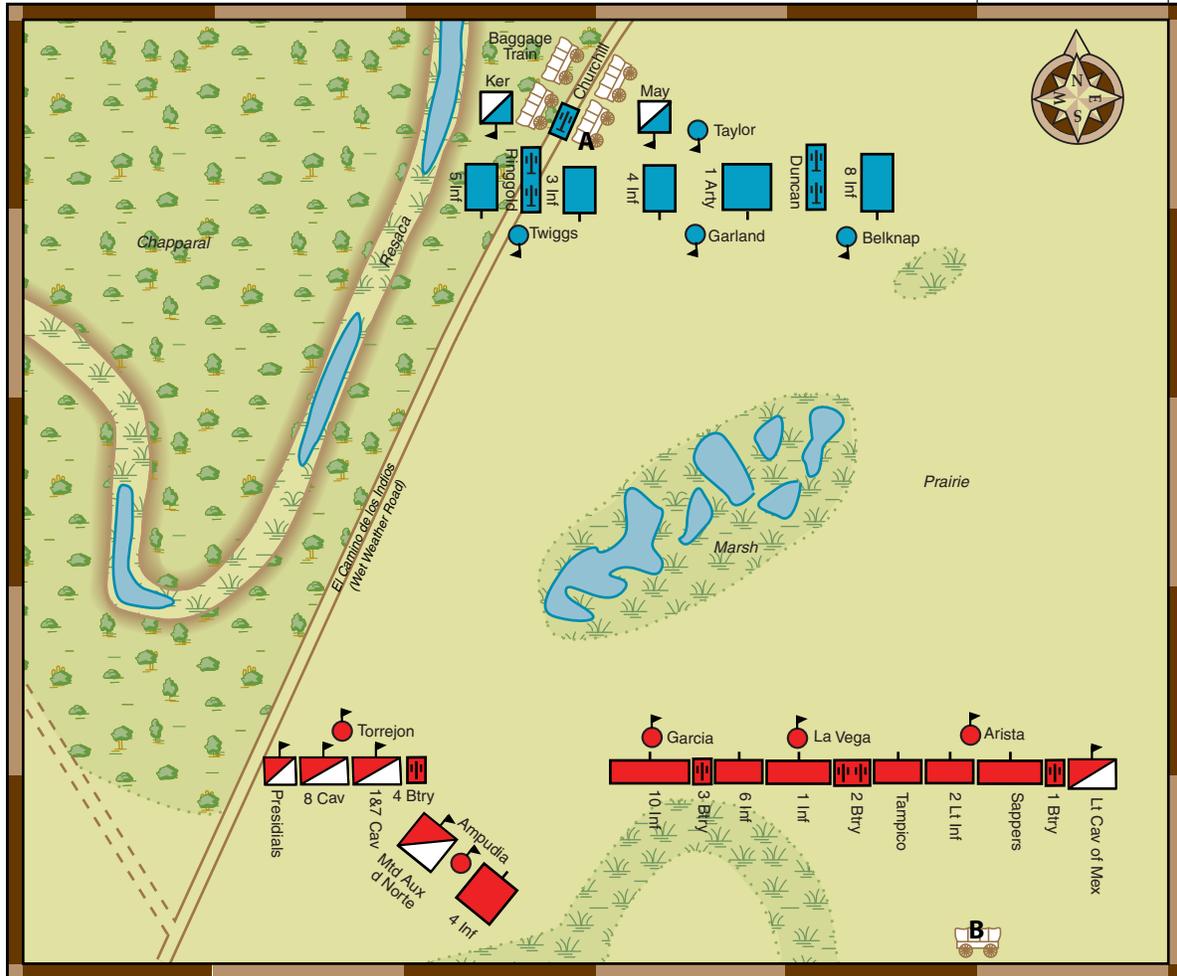
Taylor marched to relieve Brown. A force of 2,300 U.S. Regular infantry and artillerymen serving as infantry, supported by a few dragoons, two batteries of “flying” horse artillery, and a pair of siege guns escorted the supply train of 400 wagons.

The American light artillery had a decided technological and tactical advantage, thanks to Maj. Samuel Ringgold. Ringgold had perfected light artillery tactics and schooled his U.S. gun crews in the use of lightening-fast maneuvers and rapid fire. The well-trained crews could move and deploy quickly, but



Palo Alto Scenario Map

300-yards
12"/ 15mm
18"/ 25mm
9"/ 6mm



even more critical was their ability to get a round downrange in less than a minute.

Taylor was within easy marching distance of Fort Texas when he encountered the Mexican army drawn up across the expansive plain at Palo Alto, a natural battlefield consisting of low-lying, coastal prairie grass and yucca, and spotted with wooded rises. Arista deployed his army in a nearly mile-wide line of battle, with his infantry, artillery and sappers in the center and cavalry covering both flanks. The bulk of his cavalry blocked the strategic Point Isabel to Matamoros Road near the left of his line. The Mexican Army was experienced and well disciplined, but poorly armed with old Brown Bess muskets and Baker rifles. Their cannon were antiquated as well, and drawn mostly by oxen, were far less mobile. Arista planned on using his superiority in lance-armed cavalry. Though they are extremely effective against broken infantry, the lancers were too light to attack formed infantry supported by artillery.

Taylor reached Palo Alto around midday on May 8th. The Mexican guns opened fire as the army deployed into line of battle. Taylor's artillery rolled forward to engage the enemy

guns, while the small contingent of dragoons was held back to protect the vast supply train.

Arista first sent his cavalry on the left through the chaparral to seize the supply train, but they were repulsed by disciplined volleys from U.S. infantry drawn up in squares and supported by mobile artillery. As the day wore on the U.S. artillery continued to harass the Mexicans. As casualties mounted, Arista was goaded into advancing his infantry on the right. After repulsing the Mexican cavalry, the Americans advanced their right wing as well, so by the close of the battle the opposing battle lines were pivoted nearly perpendicular from where they had started.

The American artillery dominated the battlefield during the four-hour cannonade. Ringgold, the master artilleryman, fell mortally wounded.

The battle ended in a draw. However, Arista decided to fall back during the night to Resaca de la Palma, hoping the cover afforded by the banks of the old river bed and dense underbrush would counter the enemy artillery advantage.



The Scenario

The scenario covers the entire battle of Palo Alto. It can be played by two or three players on each side, takes three to four hours to play, and requires a 6-ft. by 5-ft. playing area in 15mm scale..

Terrain

Terrain should be laid out as shown in the scenario map. The battlefield is level ground except for the resaca, an old riverbed near the west table edge. Rather than raise the entire surface to show this narrow drop in elevation, it is easier to represent the resaca with a strip of textured fabric. Terrain effects for the scenario are as follows:

Prairie. The prairie is an area of open ground that does not affect line of sight, movement or combat.

Chaparral. Chaparral is a wooded area consisting of brush and stunted trees that reduce line of sight to 10". Chaparral is rated broken ground for movement. In fire combat, the firing stands suffer a -2 for full cover only when firing at a target in extended line located in the chaparral. A target unit in any other formation does not receive a cover benefit. Chaparral does not provide favorable ground in charge combat, however, the cavalry charge modifier is reduced to a +1 for charging over broken ground.

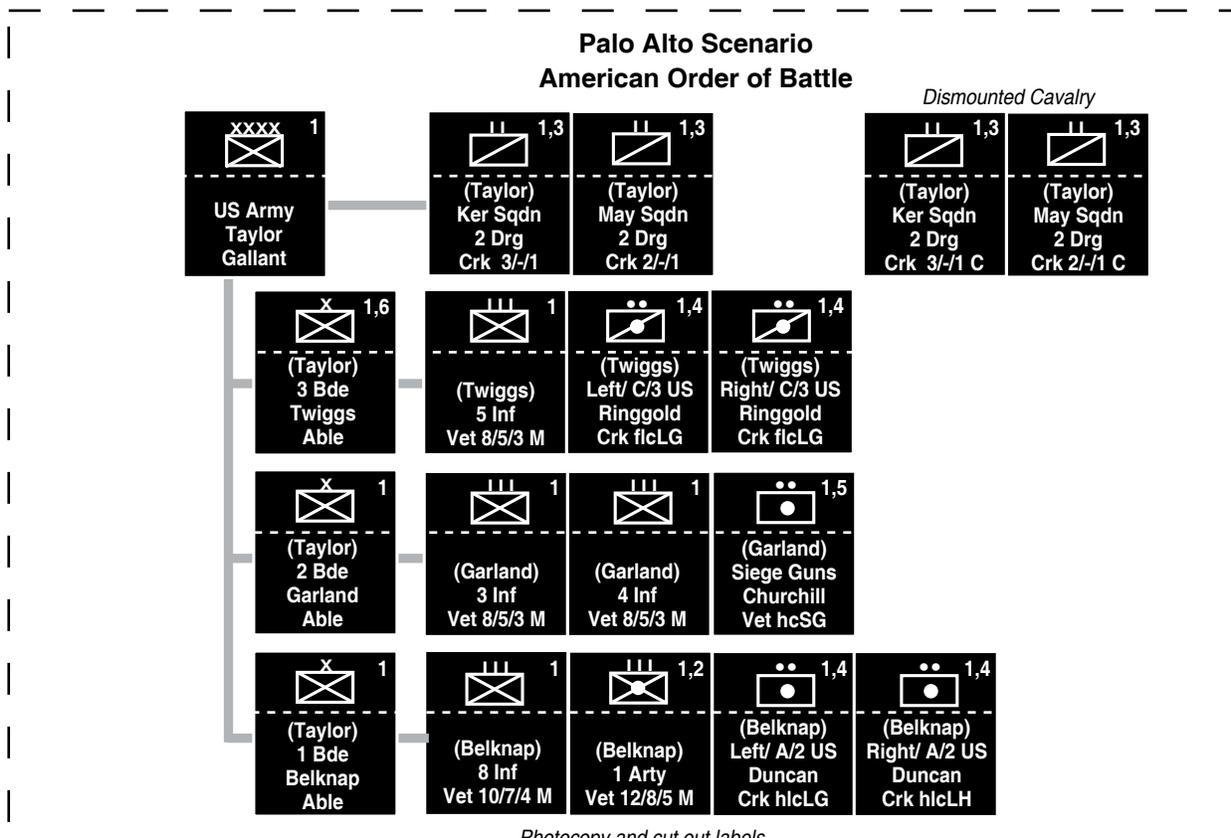
Resaca. The resaca is below-ground level and does not affect line of sight. Movement through the resaca embankments is at the rough ground rate. In fire combat, the firing stands suffer a

-1 modifier for partial cover when firing at an infantry target in line aligned behind the near embankment of the resaca, or a -2 for full cover if that target is in extended line. In charge combat, defending infantry behind the near embankment receive a +1 modifier for favorable ground. The modifier increases to a +2 for a strong position if defending behind the resaca. Also, the cavalry charge modifier is reduced to 0 when charging a defender in or behind the resaca.

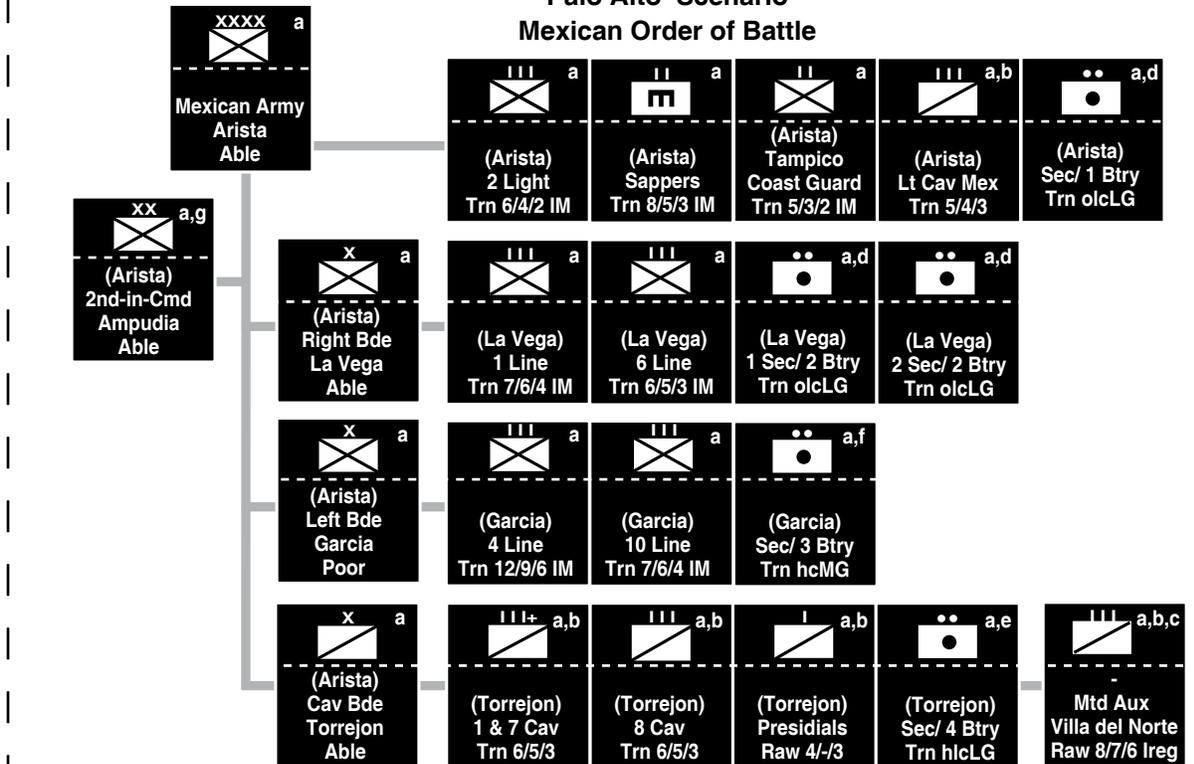
Marshes and Ponds. Areas of marshy ground and ponds do not affect line of sight. Infantry, cavalry and leaders may move through a marsh at the rough ground rate. Ponds are a major obstacle to movement. To cross, a unit or leader must move at the rough ground rate and halt when it enters a pond. In the next maneuver phase the unit or leader may exit the pond moving at the rough ground rate. A unit forced to retreat through a pond must lose formation, full retreat a full move broken, and does not halt when retreating across a pond. Marshes and ponds are impassible to artillery.

Marshes and ponds do not provide a cover benefit in fire combat. In charge combat, a defending unit receives a +2 modifier for favorable position if the attacker charged through a marsh or pond.

Roads. The road that runs along the border between the prairie to the east and chaparral to the west is rated in good condition. Units in march column, limbered guns, and leaders may move on this road at the road movement rate. The short stretch of secondary road running near the southwestern edge



Palo Alto Scenario Mexican Order of Battle



Photocopy and cut out labels

of the table, is only a trail in poor condition. Movement along the trail is at the open ground rate.

Baggage Train. The American supply train is located near the northern edge of the table at point A. The large train of 400 wagons can be represented by four oxen- or horse-drawn wagon markers. The supply train cannot move and is a key terrain feature for determining victory conditions and resupplying ammunition. A unit may move through the baggage train at the broken ground movement rate. The unit cannot occupy the supply train and must have enough movement to pass completely through it. The supply train does not affect line of sight or charge combat. In fire combat, firing stands suffer a -1 modifier for partial cover when firing through the train, or a -2 for full cover if the target is in extended line. The supply train cannot be destroyed.

The lone supply wagon marker at point B is only for Mexican ammunition resupply and is not a key position for determining victory conditions. See special scenario rules for ammunition resupply.

Friendly Table Edge. Broken Mexican units must retreat away from the enemy and toward the southern table edge. Broken American units must retreat toward the northern table edge. The retreating unit must halt at the table edge. If it fails to reform in the following Maneuver Phase, its remaining stands are removed from play and count toward heavy casualties.

Order of Battle

The following number of stands is needed:

STAND	AMERICAN	MEXICAN
Infantry	41	44
Infantry command	5	7
Cavalry	4	24
Cavalry command	2	5
Dismounted cavalry	4	0
Dismounted cavalry command	2	0
Artillery (gun with limber)	5	5
Supply train	4	1
Army leader	1	2
Brigade leader	3	3
Total	71	91

American Force. Total stands represent a force of 2,280 men and 10 guns.

- 1) All units and leaders start on the table: army leader Taylor with 2 cavalry regiments; brigade leader Twiggs with 1 infantry regiment and 1 battery; brigade leader Garland with 2 infantry regiments and a 1 section of siege guns; and brigade leader Belknap with 2 infantry regiments and 1 battery.
- 2) The 1st Artillery Regiment functions as infantry.



- 3) The two regiments of dragoons may charge with cold steel when mounted. Dragoons may also maneuver and fight dismounted. Dismounted dragoons cannot charge with cold steel. The small three-stand units do not require a horse holder marker.
- 4) Ringgold's and Duncan's batteries are rated as "flying" artillery (See special scenario rule).
- 5) Heavy carriage siege gun (hcSG).
- 6) Twiggs is second-in-command of the army and replaces Taylor should he become a fallen leader (See special scenario rule).

Mexican Force. Total stands represent a force of 3,400 men and 10 guns.

- a) All units and leaders start on the table: army leader Arista with 1 light infantry battalion, 1 sapper battalion, 1 coast guard battalion, 1 cavalry regiment, and a 1 section field battery; brigade leader La Vega with 2 infantry regiments and 1 field battery; brigade leader Garcia with 2 infantry regiments and a 1 gun section; brigade leader Torrejon with 2 cavalry regiments, 1 squadron of Presidials cavalry, 1 regiment of Rancheros; and 1 gun section; and second-in-command leader Ampudia.
- b) All Mexican cavalry cannot dismount and are armed with lances (See special scenario rule).
- c) The mounted auxiliaries are Rancheros, who in addition to a raw experience rating, can only be under provisional command and receive a -1 modifier in their maneuver check and in charge combat.
- d) Oxen-drawn light carriage, light gun (olcLG).
- e) Horse-drawn light carriage, light gun (hlcLG).
- f) Heavy carriage, medium gun (hcMG).
- g) Ampudia is second-in-command of the army and replaces Arista should he become a fallen leader (See special scenario rule).

Game Length

The game is played in 15 turns starting with the American player turn at 12:00 p.m., and ending after the Mexican player turn at 3:30 p.m.

Victory Conditions

One side must achieve more victory conditions than its opponent to claim victory. Victory conditions are achieved by inflicting heavy casualties and greater losses on the opponent and capturing a key position as follows:

Heavy Casualties. The American player achieves one victory condition after Mexican forces lose 23 troop or gun stands. The Mexican player achieves one victory condition after American forces lose 25 troop or gun stands.

After an army reaches its threshold for heavy casualties, all



Charged by Mexican lancers, a U.S. infantry regiment forms a hasty square, while a gun crew takes shelter in the square.

units receive a -1 modifier in subsequent maneuver checks.

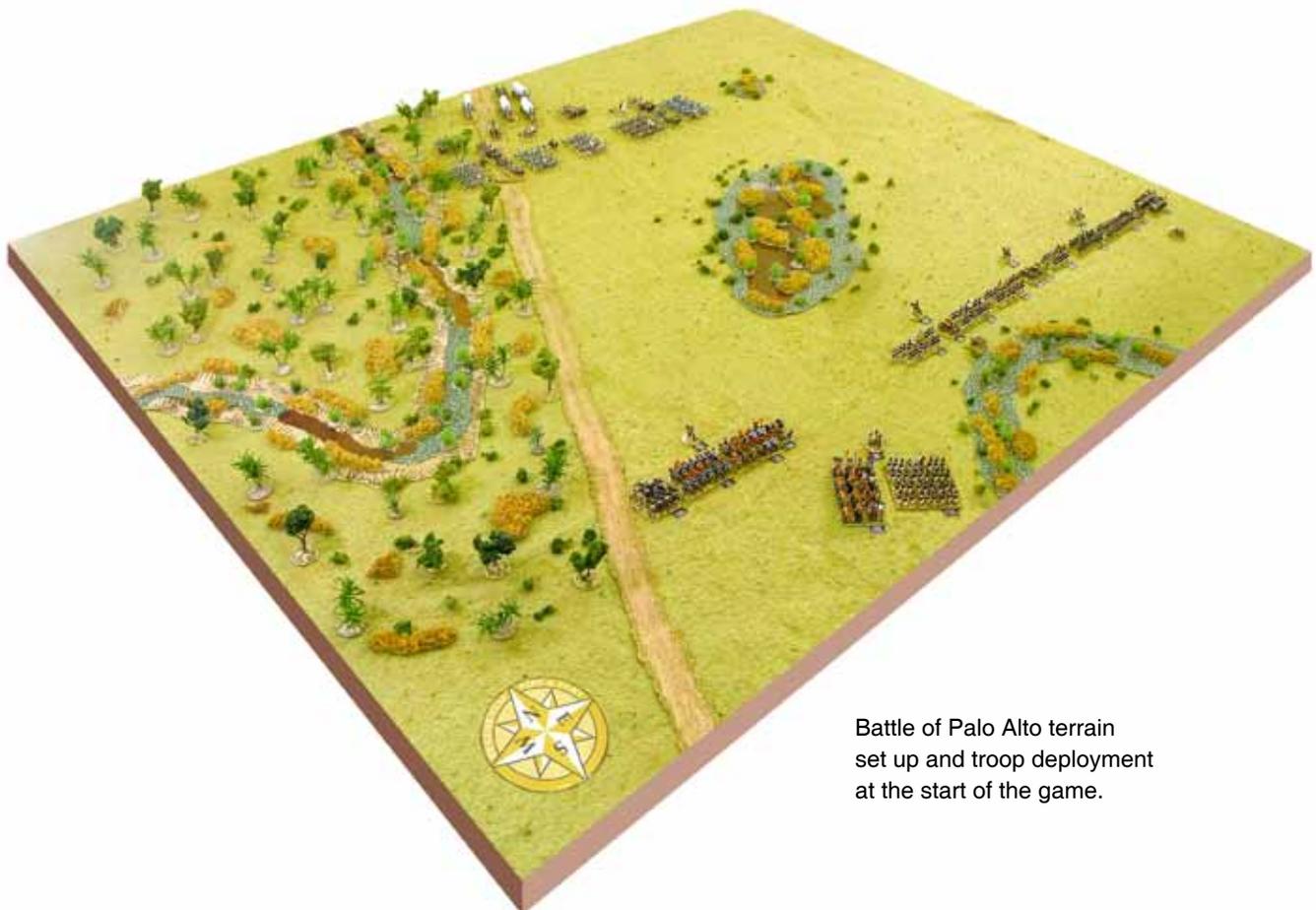
Greater Losses. A second victory condition is achieved and the modifier increases to a -2 after one army reaches both its heavy casualties threshold and suffers greater losses than the enemy.

Key Position Lost. The American baggage train is a key position. The Mexicans achieve one victory condition if a Mexican unit passed through the American baggage train at location **A** at any time during the game. The Americans achieve one victory condition if any Mexican units fail to pass through the baggage train during the game. The Mexican ammunition supply point at **B** is not a key position.

All units in the American army receive a -1 modifier in subsequent maneuver checks on each turn after the baggage train is lost. If in a later turn the baggage train is retaken, the -1 modifier does not apply. Retaking your own baggage train does not count as a victory condition or cause a negative modifier to the opposing side.

Special Scenario Rules

Ammunition Resupply. American units that suffer a low on ammunition effect may replenish their ammunition by moving within 12" of the baggage train at location **A** and perform a replenish ammunition maneuver. Low on ammunition Mexican units must move within 12" of the supply wagon marker at location **B** and perform a replenish ammunition maneuver.



Battle of Palo Alto terrain set up and troop deployment at the start of the game.

A unit cannot replenish ammunition for the remainder of the game after an enemy unit passes through **A** or **B**.

Flying Artillery. American light artillery were highly drilled. The gun stands in the two batteries under Ringgold and Duncan are rated as flying artillery. Flying artillery may perform an additional maneuver function if they successfully roll a Double Quick effect in their maneuver check. Each gun stand can full move, unlimber, and fire, or may limber, full move, and unlimber.

Ringgold's battery had sufficient mounts to maneuver as true horse artillery. They are rated as mounted, light carriage, light guns (Fly mlcLG). Duncan's battery may perform the additional maneuver allowed with flying artillery, but move at the slower horse-drawn light carriage rate, with either a light gun (Fly lcLG), or light howitzer (Fly lcLH).

Second-in-Command. Should either army leader become a fallen leader and be permanently removed from the game, he is not replaced by a generic poor leader. Instead, his second-in-command assumes command of the army as an able leader after one full game turn. Twiggs is the American second-in-command who replaces Taylor. Ampudia is the Mexican second-in-command replacing Arista. Besides taking command of the army, the second-in-command assumes command of all units that were under the immediate command of the army commander. Twiggs also remains the immediate commander

of the units in his brigade. If a second-in-command leader becomes a fallen leader he is replaced by a generic poor leader.

Mexican Lancers. Mexican cavalry are armed with lances. A lance has a steel point on a wooden staff, which required a degree of skill to wield on horseback. There is a debate as to the effectiveness of the lance in combat. A cavalry charge with lowered lances had an advantage in the initial impact, but compared to the sabre, lances were a clumsy weapon at close quarters. To represent the dubious quality of the lance, Mexican cavalry only receive the +1 charge combat modifier for cold steel when the opposing enemy unit is disordered or broken troops, or limbered or silenced guns.