

CGME Joe

*A CounterMoves strategy game of World War-era combat between
Plastic Army Men on a chess board.*

Version 2006.05.15

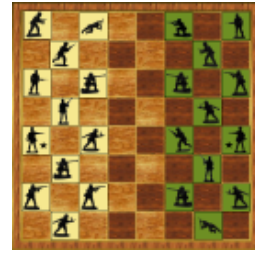


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1 Introduction

1.1 Specifications

Home page: <http://countermoves.sourceforge.net/>

Setup time: 5 minutes or less

Play time: Normally 10-20 minutes, longer if played too seriously.

Unit Scale: One playing piece per soldier or vehicle.

Board Scale: Abstract, one square is one soldier's zone of control.

Time Scale: Abstract, undefined. Played in conventional alternating turns.

Complexity: Simple - new players can be taught the rules in a matter of minutes.

Solitaire Playability: high

License/Distribution Policy: This entire work, including the graphics files (unit counters and game board) distributed along with it, are released into the Public Domain.

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1.2 What is Joe?

Joe is an abstract combat game in which plastic army soldiers duke it out for battlefield supremacy. Its inspirations lie in the sets of "little plastic army men" many of us played with as children. Such sets were invariably themed World War-era armies, and thus so is this game. Joe gets its name from the common nickname for American soldiers, particularly in the WWI and WWII periods: "government issue Joe", or "G.I. Joe", which is normally shortened to simply Joe.

This game is intended to be played using such army toys as playing pieces, but it can also be played without them by using substitute pieces, such as the printable counters which should have accompanied this document.

1.3 Revision History

An overview of changes made to each release:

- 2005.05.20 – initial release
- 2006.05.15 – minor textual changes/spelling corrections. Added the Grenades optional rule to replace Grenade Joes. Additional playing pieces created for grenade and bazooka ammunition. Removed the plain text copy from the distribution because exporting to text from OpenOffice does not take into account word wrapping.

1.4 Required components

- 1) 2d6 (you can get by with 1 and you'll never need more than 2)
- 2) Chess or checker board, or a drawn-up board.
- 3) Two different-colored sets of plastic Army Men. These are available cheaply in most game stores and in many "Dollar Stores". For the 3 sets i have, i paid 99 Pfennig (approx. \$0.70 at the time) for each pack of approximately 30 soldiers and one tank. For play you will need only 12 soldiers per team. Players may just as easily use coins, pawns, Lego(tm) people, soldier units from other games, or the printable counters distributed with this game.
- 4) Game tokens or extra dice are useful for marking things like grenade and bazooka counts for Grenade and Bazooka Joes. Pennies work nicely: place them under the unit to mark how much ammo it carries and remove them as they are expended.
- 5) These rules will refer to the CounterMoves' Generic Microgame Engine (CGME) rules at times, but do not require them: this is a standalone, complete game based off of the CGME system.

This game is very suitable for play using electronic boardgame interfaces like Thoth or QUB, even the most rudimentary ones like V_MAP, xpbm, and Teeny Weeny:

<http://countermoves.sourceforge.net/teeny/>

(Full disclosure: i wrote both QUB and Teeny Weeny to assist in the design and play of games like this one.)

2 Rules

2.1 Unit Statistics

Soldiers ("Joes") use the conventional CounterMoves CGME unit statistics, MOV, ATT and DEF, as explained below.

MOV: Movement score, or how many squares a Joe may move per turn. Movement rules vary per unit, and are described below.

ATT/RNG: Attack score and its **Range**, based on the primary weapon of the Joe. Aside from any listed attack score(s), all Joes are assumed to carry a pistol with an ATT/RNG of 1/1. Thus when a Grenade or Bazooka Joe runs out of explosives, he is not left defenseless. Some units do not carry a pistol, but they are specifically noted in their descriptions.

DEF: a generic **Defense** rating, representing physical defenses, training, and good old soldier intuition.

2.2 Joe Types

The exact Joes you have depend on the sets of pieces you have available. For example, in my sets, one team has no Bazookas, while the other has no M-60 (heavy machine gun) Joes. Likewise, one team has Snipers, but no Grenades. Not all Joes described here may be available in sets, and your sets may have pieces not described here.

The descriptions below are based off of (a) the three sets i have in front of me right now and (b) my memory of childhood sets, which were almost identical to these.

- **Average Joe:** ATT 2/1, MOV 2, DEF 2 These soldiers make up the bulk of a set, and come in a variety of poses. Soldiers which don't match descriptions of other troops can be played as either Average Joes or Captains.
- **Grenade Joe:** 3 grenades, ATT 4/1, MOV 2, DEF 2 These Joes normally have one arm pulled back, as if about to toss a grenade. Some Grenade Joes have pineapple-style grenades and some have stick-style, but the game effects are the same.
- **Bazooka Joe:** 3 bazooka shots, ATT 4/2, MOV 1, DEF 2. MOV increases to 2 when all bazooka ammo is fired. Player may voluntarily discard the ammo to get this bonus, but may not later pick it back up. These Joes are almost invariably in a kneeling position, except in some Japanese army sets, where the firer is standing and carrying an RPG (an equivalent weapon for our purposes).
- **M-60/Heavy MG Joe:** ATT 4/2, MOV 1, DEF 2 These Joes normally lie prone, with a big gun on a bipod sticking out in front of them.
- **Sniper Joe:** ATT 2/2 special, MOV 1, DEF 2 These prone or crouched Joes sneak slowly around the battlefield taking pot-shots at any other Joes who happen within range. Their sniper gun is unusually effective: an attack which ties or wins by one is considered a kill! (Can you say, "headshot"?). Snipers get -1 ATT or DEF when initiating or defending in a melee. [Design note: the special attack rating is statistically the same as increasing the ATT by 2, but models the "feel" more cleanly, IMO. e.g., i don't want Snipers to have an ATT equivalent to a Tank, but still want to make them to be just as deadly against lone Joes.]
- **Flamethrower Joe:** ATT 4/1, MOV 1, DEF 2 Gets +2 ATT (when attacking) or DEF (when defending) in melee combat. An attack against a flamer which ties or wins by one may cause the fuel tank to explode, killing the flamer and, if in melee combat, the attacking unit. If this happens, roll a die – on a 1 or 2 the tank explodes. My sets don't include a Flamer Joe, but i distinctly remember burning down my brother's bunker with one once as a child.
- **Kamikaze Jo:** Japanese sets only, normally. ATT 5/0 (melee only), DEF 2, MOV 2, but moves like a Captain (an agile little bugger!). KJ has no pistol, like other Joes are assumed to have (why give a man a pistol when he's wrapped up in TNT?). Engaging in melee combat destroys him at the end of the combat round, whether he wins the roll or not.
- **Radio Joe:** pistol, ATT 1/1, DEF 2, MOV 1. Once per game, RJ may call in an Air Strike, as described later. My sets have no Radio Joe :(.
- **Captain:** ATT 3/1, MOV 2, DEF 3. These Joes command the remaining grunts. Captain Joe often stands in some commanding pose, normally pointing in a "charge!" or "follow me!" gesture. In some cases it may be necessary to take an Average Joe and mark the piece with a darker-colored marker or, if the Joe is dark, something bright like a tiny piece of tinfoil (don't laugh: it works). OPTIONAL: allow another Joe type to act as a Captain: increase the Joe's ATT and DEF by 1 and apply the captain movement/combat rules. OPTIONAL: players may want to attribute other special abilities to Captains, like increasing ATT or DEF of units adjacent to them, or allowing them to call in reinforcements.

You will certainly want to come up with your own Joes, as well. Paratroopers, for example, might

have a one-time move of 4 (an air-drop), and revert to Average Joes after that. (Again, my sets are missing these Joes, but i remember having them in other sets, many years ago.)

ACHTUNG: Make 100% certain that all players are clear about what playing pieces represent what types of Joe. For example, a player may have an Average Joe who happens to be holding a grenade - this does not make him a Grenade Joe. That said, players should try to use the most obvious pieces for their Joes. In practice, distinguishing the Joes is rarely, if ever, a problem.

2.3 Basic Game Setup

Each team gets 12 Joes. The exact make-up of the team will depend on your mix of Joes, but here is the suggested "basic game" Joe mix:

- 6 Average Joes
- 2 Bazooka or Heavy MG Joes
- 2 Sniper Joes or 2 Grenade Joes
- 1 Captain Joe
- 1 non-Captain Joe of your choice

One player sets up his 12 units on the 12 dark squares on his side of the board, while the other sets up on the 12 light squares on the other side. Both players set up simultaneously, and may use some sort of sight-blocker during setup if it makes them feel better.

Movement is not restricted to any color of square once play starts.

Play starts after both players are set up, as described in the Turn Sequence section.

Solitaire game setup: as above, but first place the Captains of each team directly across from each other in the middle of the board, then mix up the Joes and place them randomly in the remaining 11 starting positions.

Scoring:

Scoring is very simple: most Joes give one Victory Point (VP) to the team who kills them. A Captain is worth 4 VP. Special units like Tanks may have per-scenario VP scores. The team with the highest score at the end of the game wins.

Some scenarios might give or take VP for other conditions. For example, if one side has an oil tank or bridge to defend, perhaps it is worth 10 VP and requires 2-3 successful attacks (or specific types of attacks) to destroy it.

Ending the Game:

The game ends when one player has no more Joes or concedes, or 5 turns have gone by without any combat. At this point VP are calculated and a winner (highest VP total) is declared.

Players will certainly come up with their own scenarios, unit mixes, and whatnot. While the game might play well on more traditional maps, i highly recommend keeping with the chess board: the simplicity of it is one of the attractions for me.

Playing Tips:

- Don't let your Captain vegetate! He is a flexible unit, and can often be used to make a surprise attack

when an opponent does not take his diagonal movement/range ability into account.

- Don't hold on to your grenades and bazooka shots: use them! It does sometimes happen that a Bazooka or Grenade Joe actually runs out of ammo and has to go running about with his pistol, but it more often happens that the Joe dies with 1 or 2 shots left.

2.4 Turn Sequence

1. Roll for initiative: each player roll 1d6, highest roll wins (re-roll ties). Player with initiative is Player A.
2. Player A acts with up to 3 units (no more), resolving the actions as described below. No single unit may be chosen to act more than once per turn, nor is a player required to act with any units.
3. Player B acts with up to 3 units, as in step (2).
4. Repeat until the game is over.

Possible Actions a Joe may take:

- Move any amount, up to his MOV value. If the Joe does not engage in melee while moving then he may fire after moving.
- Fire, then move up to his MOV allotment.
- Some scenario-specific action.

Thus a unit may not move, fire, then move again. A unit may initiate melee combat during movement, as described below.

"Fire" has the generic meaning of "attack with a weapon or use a unit's special ability."

2.5 Movement and Ranges

Non-Captain Joes may only move in straight lines - not diagonally. Each square normally costs 1 MOV to enter, though scenarios may define different movement costs for some squares.

The direction a Joe is facing is irrelevant, though some special units (like the Tank) have facing rules.

Joes may not move through friendly units [design note: this adds to the strategic element, IMO], and must engage in melee combat if they enter a square containing an enemy unit.

A Joe may always move at least one square, unless blocked by other Joes or squares which are specifically marked as impassible. Thus, even if a Joe has only 1 MOV and a square costs 2 to enter, the Joe may still enter it.

Movement and range are counted in non-diagonal squares only except where specifically noted. Only the shortest route is counted. For example, assuming the letter 'J' represents a square with a Joe in it, the numbers show the range from the Joe to the target square:

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 4 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| | | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | ♂ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | | | 4 | 3 | 4 | | |

Captain Joes treat adjacent diagonal hexes as normal adjacent hexes. Thus all 8 squares around a Captain are considered 1 square away for movement and ranged combat purposes. Note that only the 4 diagonal squares immediately adjacent to the Captain count as 1 for distance purposes: two diagonals away are counted as normal. This is demonstrated below, where C is a Captain Joe and the numbers represent the firing range to the squares around him:

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 4 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| | | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | ♂ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | | | | 4 | 3 | 4 | | |

That is, all ranges are counted normally except for the 4 squares placed diagonally around the Captain, which are treated as normal adjacent squares.

This special range for diagonal squares does apply when figuring line of sight or whether a Captain can move around surrounding enemies. For example, a Captain blocked on the upper and right sides may move or fire into his upper/left as if that square is unblocked.

2.6 Ranged Combat

A Joe may fire his weapon at any enemy within range. Range is counted exactly as for movement.

To make an attack, do the following:

1. Declare the attack: tell the other player which of your units is attacking which of his, and which weapon he's using (remember, most Joes have a pistol in addition to their primary weapon).
2. Optional: Defender may react if optional rules allowing reaction abilities are used (they are not used by default). An example of a reaction ability is the playing of a card or special ability.
3. Attacker rolls 1d6 and adds his ATT score.
4. Defender rolls 1d6 and adds his DEF score.
5. Apply the result: if the attacker wins by 2 or more the defending unit is destroyed and removed from play. Any other result, except as explained below, has no effect on the attacker nor defender except that the attacker may lose ammo (only some units have limited ammo).

Line of sight (LOS): a Joe may not fire upon a target which is blocked by another unit. A unit has an LOS if it could walk the distance to the target without encountering an intervening enemy. Of course, use attacker's RANGE, not his MOV (and not counting any special movement abilities), for figuring out LOS. [The LOS rule was added at the suggestion of Marc Duerner, who placed units to block me from firing upon his Commander before i had explained that there were no LOS rules.]

Critical Hits: when an attacker rolls a 6 and the defender rolls a 1, the attack is an automatic success

unless it cannot succeed for other reasons (e.g., an Average Joe shooting his rifle at a Tank).

OPTIONAL: allow the attacking player to melt the defending Joe with a lighter or, even better, a small butane blowtorch (available at electronic shops everywhere). Achtung: this option can generate quite a bit of stinky smoke, so be sure to open the windows and turn off the smoke alarm before trying it out.

Critical Misses/Counterstrike: If the attacker rolls a 1 and the defender rolls a 6, the defending unit may (but is not required to) make an immediate counterattack! This is treated as a normal attack and does not count against the unit's movement or actions in any way (but may cost ammo). The attacker must be in the defender's attack range in order to be counterattacked.

Counterstrike VP bonus: if a counterstriking unit destroys his would-be attacker with a critical hit, his player scores 1 bonus VP (call it a style point award).

2.7 Melee Combat

When a Joe enters a square containing an enemy, melee combat immediately ensues. Entering melee ends a Joe's movement for the turn: even if he would have had MOV left over after engaging in melee, all MOV are expended in the attack. Note that a Joe may engage in both ranged and melee combat in one turn by first firing and then moving.

All Joes have approximately the same training and have ATT and DEF scores of 2 in melee unless otherwise noted (special case: a Captain is always at +1 ATT and DEF in melee). As with ranged combat, both players roll 1d6: the attacker adds his ATT and the defender adds his DEF. The result is calculated differently from ranged combat, however:

- Attacker wins by 2 or more: defending unit destroyed.
- Tie result or defender wins by 1: attacker is repelled back to the square he initiated the attack from.
- Defender wins by 2 or more: attacking unit is destroyed.

If one player rolls a natural 6 and one rolls a natural 1, the unit for which the 1 was rolled is destroyed. The unit which rolled the 6 is never adversely affected in this case, even if the numbers indicate that he should have been destroyed, pinned down, or some other scenario-specific effect. For example, even if the attacker has ATT 7 against the defender's DEF 1, if the defender rolls a 6 and the attacker rolls a 1, the attacker is done for and the defender is not. As for ranged combat, this does not apply when one Joe could not possibly harm the other (an example eludes me at the moment, and the basic rules have no such known case).

3 Optional Rules

3.1 Generic Optional Rules

Here are some ideas for options to spice up the game:

- Grenades: treat all Grenade Joes as Average Joes and give each player a set number of grenades (4 is a good number) which he must divide amongst two or more Average Joes during game setup. If the players agree, Joes which die while carrying grenades drop their grenades, and they may be picked up by another Joe by simply entering the square there the grenade(s) is (are).
- Explosive attacks, like a bazooka or grenade, hit their target on a tie or win by 1 (which is normally a miss). Alternately, if you are not already using the Pinned Down rule (below) then

treat an “explosive miss” (tie/miss-by-1) as a Pin result.

- Pinned Down: Attack rolls which result in a tie or the attacker wins by 1 pin down the defending Joe. Place the pinned Joe on his side to note his state. The Joe may not act for the remainder of this turn nor the following turn, but is otherwise unaffected (he is assumed to be taking cover, and thus has no DEF penalty, but is also assumed to be panicked and erratic, and thus has no DEF bonus). A pinned-down Joe becomes un-pinned the next time he moves, and may defend normally if engaged in melee.
- Airstrike: can be called in by Radio Joe once per game. Radio Joe must be within 4 squares of the target. Target square undergoes an ATT 5 attack and adjacent 4 squares undergo an ATT 2 attack. OPTIONAL: If the attack roll on the center square is a natural 1, the airstrike hits an adjacent square (roll randomly), or perhaps the enemy player may place the attack in any square within, say, 3 of its original target.
- Terrain: give certain squares a terrain type, which provides certain movement or combat adjustments. For example, Joes in a City square might get +2 DEF (or more). Try making some squares impassible, or Hazards (as described in CGME's core rules). When using terrain, melee defenders should get any terrain bonuses while attackers should not.
- Bunkers, trenches, and foxholes to protect Joes, barbed wire to hinder them, and spies to assassinate or bribe them...
- Reinforcements, entering along a player's edge, or perhaps spawning around the Captain. (Killing the Captain then stops the flow of reinforcements...)
- Decoy Joes: moves like normal a Joe of its class (Average, Bazooka, etc), but may not attack. Automatically "destroyed" when attacked.
- Assign each Joe a dollar cost and build your platoons by buying your units.
- Land mines. These are treated as ATT 4 Hazards: a unit entering a mined square immediately undergoes an ATT 4 attack. Entering a mined square costs 1 extra MOV (the Joe is being careful!). When engaging in melee in a mined square, the attacker must survive the mine attack before engaging the defender (who is not affected by that mine roll). Note that landmines imply Minesweeper Joes - my childhood sets had minesweepers - but that these units are essentially useless unless mines are used.

3.2 Cards or Counters for special abilities

Make up a deck of cards, let each player draw 3-5 at the start of the game, and use them to enable special abilities during play. Rather than cards, make up counters or chits representing these abilities, and allow players to draw them at certain times. Perhaps start the game with a few randomly-drawn ones, or place a few of them face-down on the board at the start of the game, and the player who collects them may play them when he likes. Think "power-ups".

Another method of dealing out cards is to allow each player to draw one every X turns (X=3 or 4 might be reasonable), as long as the player has a Captain Joe in play. This simulates "charging" abilities, as depicted in some GameBoy games like Advanced Wars(tm) 1 and 2.

Some ideas for such cards:

- Steal Initiative: may be played before initiative is rolled, to automatically get the initiative for the turn. If both players play this, the cards cancel and initiative is rolled as normal.
- Sniper Shot: one non-Sniper Joe gets +1 RNG this turn and the attack is made as if it came from a Sniper (tie or win-by-one kills the target).
- Artillery/Airstrike: as described for Radio Joe, but may be called by from any friendly Joe (for range purposes).
- Numbers: play these to add to dice rolls. e.g., have cards with the numbers 1 to 3 on them. Play them after the dice are rolled or before, as the players agree.

- Land mine: played during enemy movement phase, directly after a unit moves (before melee, if any). The square just moved into was mined, and unit undergoes an ATT 4 attack. Minesweeper Joes are immune to such attacks.
- Cross-dresser: change the type of any non-Captain Joe to any other non-Captain Joe type.
- Lost in the Woods: played immediately after an enemy Joe moves (before melee, if any). The Joe gets lost along his way, and walks in a circle back to his previous square. He expends all of his MOV and may not attack this turn.
- Captain's Prerogative: played at any time, including directly after an attack is declared. The player may swap the position of his Captain and any other Joe who is within 4 squares and is not in a vehicle.

3.3 The Tank

(ACHTUNG: this option is largely untested.)

Most plastic army men sets come with a tank - complete with a rotatable turret :). What would army men be without their tank?

The Tank requires a least one Joe to drive it: any Joe may move into a square containing an empty tank to occupy it. A Joe may enter or leave the tank at any time during his own movement phase *before* the tank moves. Once a tank's movement has started for the turn, no units may enter or leave it until the next turn, except for the case of an overrun, as explained below. Entering and exiting the tank cost no MOV, but does also not change which square the Joe is in.

The tank has special movement rules:

Tanks, in the time frame depicted by Army Men sets, were clunky vehicles which consumed massive amount of fuel and required a lot of maintenance. Not unlike modern tanks, in some regards. To reflect their clunky and maintenance-heavy nature [and to keep them from totally overrunning the field], tanks only have a MOV of 3.

Tanks may only move directly forwards or backwards (backwards costs 2 MOV), and turning 90 degrees requires 1 MOV. If the tank has only one pilot, the turret must stay in the facing it starts out in: the pilot may not move it. A tank with a second Joe, a gunner, has 2 special MOV which may be used independently of the driver's MOV, but only to turn the turret. Again, a 90 degree turn costs 1 MOV. A tank with only a pilot may not fire and move in the same turn. A tank with a pilot and a gunner may fire on a turn when it moves, just as for normal Joes. No more than two Joes may occupy a tank at one time.

The tank has two weapon systems, only one of which may be used in a given turn:

Antipersonnel MG: ATT 2/1, but only directly in front of the tank's body (not the turret).

Main gun: ATT of 5, with a special range, as described below.

The firing arc of a tank's main gun is based on the square the tank is in and the direction the turret is facing, as demonstrated below. Assume that 'T' is our tank and that it is facing to our right. The squares it may fire in to, and their ranges, are:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | |
| T | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | 1 | 2 | |

Likewise, if the turret is pointed towards the bottom of this page:

| | | | |
|----------|---|---|--|
| T | | | |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| 3 | | | |

Note that the tank only has 1 reachable square at range 3.

A tank which enters a square containing an enemy Joe *may* immediately try to squash the Joe: roll an ATT 3 against the Joe's normal DEF. If the squash fails, the enemy Joe initiates a special melee with the effects described below. If the melee fails, the enemy Joe stays in the square with the tank but *must* be moved (even if only to overrun the tank again) during his owner's next movement phase.

[Rationale: no Joe in his right mind is going to sit there next to an enemy tank without either trying to get rid of it or trying to get away from it. Besides, we want to avoid stacking issues.]

A squash attempt uses up the Tank's remaining movement, as the tank must maneuver quite a lot to try to run down an unwilling target.

The defense of a tank is special: it is immune to most attacks, and other attacks affect is as described below. These descriptions are given in terms of:

Attack Type: attacker's ATT score vs tank, Tank's DEF

Here is a list of defense rating for the tank:

- Another tank main gun: ATT 5, DEF 4
- Bazooka Joe: ATT 4, DEF 4 (If not using bazooka, treat as Other Joe.)
- Grenade Joe, thrown grenade: ATT 1, DEF 4
- Grenade Joe or Kamikaze Jo, drop grenade in cockpit: ATT 3, DEF 4. If not using grenades, treat as Other Joe.
- Captain Joe, attempt to take cockpit: ATT 2, DEF 4. Overrun: does not destroy tank!
- Other Joe, attempt to take cockpit: ATT 1, DEF 4. Overrun: does not destroy tank!
- Airstrike, same square: ATT 5, DEF 3
- Airstrike, adjacent square: ATT 2, DEF 4
- Land mines: ATT 4, DEF 2 (soft underside)

Joes who engage a tank in melee and lose are not automatically killed, as the tank does not actively defend itself.

When a tank is destroyed or successfully overrun, roll 1 die for each Joe in the tank: on a 1 or 2 the Joe escapes, otherwise he dies. If one Joe escapes, place him in the square with the tank. If an enemy Joe just overran the tank, the Joe exiting the tank initiates a melee combat but has -1 ATT (he's trying to get out of the tank!). After that melee (if any), roll for the second Tank passenger (if any). If the second in-vehicle Joe escapes, resolve any potential melee as before. If there is no enemy Joe, but a friendly Joe, move the last-exited Joe into some adjacent, unoccupied square (not diagonally unless no other move is possible). If by some odd chance there is no escape route, the Joe melts inside the burning tank and dies (or, if the tank is not destroyed in the overrun, the "Overflow Joe" simply suffocates to death for lack of personal space).

Optional Tank Rules:

- Tanks ramming tanks: there are no rules provided for this. Make up your own. Remember, however, that these are not heavy-duty Cybertanks, and are likely to break down after one or two rams.

- Limited fuel: give the tank a total number of MOV which it may spend during the game. Perhaps 12 or 15 would be good numbers. Players must decide whether rotating the turret counts against the fuel limit.
- Limited Ammo: give the tank 3-5 shots, after which it is only good for squashing or firing its Antipersonnel guns.
- Add a random chance of breakdown, to help make the tank less powerful. This of course implies the existence of Greasemonkey Joe to repair downed tanks.
- Players will need to arbitrate their own rules for things like entering a square containing a bunker or foxhole.

Now that I think about it... one of my childhood sets had a jeep and an artillery gun. We'll leave those rules as an Exercise for the Reader.

4 Scenarios

4.1 Plastic Factory Blockade

In a region known as "Plastic Alley", Team One has set up a blockade of Sniper Joes to keep enemy Joes from reaching the valuable plastic factory to the north. Team Two needs the plastic to build more Joes - their supply of specialized Joes have been almost completely eliminated in recent battles!

Team Two's goal is to destroy or break through the blockade and get as many Joes as possible through to the factory (the more Joes, the more plastic they can bring back with them). Team One's goal, of course, is to stop them! Unfortunately for Two, the factory cannot produce plastic of their color, so they cannot use it to mould reinforcements for their blockade.

Defender sets up first:

- Select a side of the board to defend.
- 10 Joes: 6 Sniper Joes, 3 Average Joes, 1 Captain.
- Deploy along the dark squares in the first 3 rows.

Attacker then sets up on the opposite side of the board:

- 12 Joes: 8 Average Joes, 1 Grenade Joe, 1 Bazooka Joe, 1 Captain, and one additional Grenade, Bazooka or Average Joe.
- Deploy along the light squares in the first 3 rows.

Play then begins, the Attacker going first, followed by the defender. After that, roll for initiative each turn. Play continues until one team no longer has Joes on the board or 5 turns have gone by without any combat. Victory is determined by VP difference:

- Difference 8+: Whoop-ass Victory
- Diff of 5-7: Reasonably Sound Victory
- Diff of 3-4: Marginal victory
- Diff of 0-2: No clear winner

Special rules:

- VP values for kills: as in the basic scenario, non-captains are worth 1 VP and Captains are worth 4.
- Escape: Joes may escape from either the Defender's or Attacker's edge of the board. Joes which

leave the board may not come back, regardless of where they exit. Exiting the board costs 1 MOV, and any number of Joes may exit via the same square in one turn (i.e. exited Joes do not block the path for their buddies). No VP are scored for exiting via one's own side of the board, but Joes fleeing this way cannot be killed by the enemy for VP.

- Attackers score 2 VP for each non-Captain Joe which exits via the Defender's side of the board. Escaping the Captain is worth 4 VP: he's setting a leadership example by making a charge for the factory!
- Remember that Snipers kill targets more easily than most Joes by treating ties and wins-by-one as kills. In this scenario, Snipers score normal VP if they kill an enemy via a tie or win-by-one, and +1 VP they win the attack by 2+ (head shot!). Thus a headshotted enemy Captain is worth 5 VP.

Optional Rules:

- Give the defending Captain a Sniper weapon, giving him the attack capability of a Sniper while keeping his standard abilities.
- Allow the Sniper Joes to snipe their own teammates! This allows them to gain VP at the obvious cost of losing a Joe. Roll such attacks normally, with the *other* player rolling the die for the defending friendly unit. A Joe being attacked this way *must* counterstrike if the attack is a critical miss. (Normally, making a counterstrike on a critical miss is optional.)
- Trade one defending Joe for a Sniper Post. This emplacement can hold one Joe at any given time. It provides a +2 DEF to the Joe, and a +1 RNG if the Joe is a Sniper. If a bazooka, grenade, or similar explosive attack kills a sniper in such a post the post is destroyed as well. The post is placed as a unit during initial setup and may not move the rest of the game. Non-sniper Joes gain only a DEF benefit from the post, as their weapons are not made for long-range sniping.
- Give the defender 2 Sniper Posts, one on each edge of the board, and reduce his unit total by 2 non-Captain units of his choice.

Play tips:

- If the attackers wander in small groups into the snipers they will be chewed up.
- Try to get the Captain through to the other side: that's worth the same as 4 kills.

5 Commentary and playtest/design notes...

This is my favourite home-grown game design in a long, long time. Alongside "CounterColors", this is one of the few designs i've found with engaging-enough game play to keep me interested for more than a couple games. The setup is easy, the play sufficiently strategic, flexible enough to keep one thinking about new options, and simple enough to keep track of without scratch paper (though a few tokens help).

The first game went better than i could have expected for an off-the-cuff set of rules. The Dark team was down 2-to-4, with one Average Joe and one MG Joe against two Snipers (they're slow to get around), and two Bazookas (they are, too). Remarkably, the Darkies made it through, with one Average Joe holding the exact center of the board. It was a picture-perfect ending, all in all. While i thought the game was decided once the Darks were outnumbered 4:2, the game is unpredictable enough that the faster Average Joe was able to get at the Bazookas (one of whom managed to take out the MG Joe with a Counterstrike hit using his last shot).

The following 3 or 4 games were widely varied: each time won a major victory once and the others were fairly close calls. A winner cannot be reliably predicted until one team is down to 1 or 2 Joes.

While 3 Joes are unlikely to take out 6 or 7 enemies, it is possible. Consider, too, that the team with only a handful of Joes gets to move all Joes each turn, which is a strategic advantage for them.

Strangely enough, in 3 of the first 4 games, at least one of the Captains was taken out with a critical hit - once as the result of a counterattack from a bazooka when the Captain rolled a critical miss.

The initial turn sequence called for acting with 4 soldiers, but it seemed that the team who got the first initiative stood a decent chance of wiping out too many of the other team on the first go, so this was cut to 3. On an aggressive first move it is possible to eliminate 3 enemy Joes, but 1 or 2 is far more likely.

Three Joes per turn seems high enough to allow some flexibility in actions but small enough to make players choose their movements wisely. The addition of the initiative roll every turn should make players think twice about what units they choose to move and what moves they take. This also greatly changes the endgame, as the team with fewer units can often make a comeback if assisted by timely initiative rolls.

The first several games didn't have Snipers, but used the prone figures as so-called Sneaky Joes instead. They had ATT 2/1, MOV 1 and DEF 4, but a -2 to melee rolls. They were pretty useless, however, always hanging around until the endgame, so Sneakies became Snipers. The Sniper attack ability is powerful enough to get the player to actually use them.

The basic game model is probably quite themeable, meaning that we could set up similar games around it with little work. Some which come to mind, considering only games built around low-cost sets of plastic figures:

- Cowboys and Indians, of course, though this variant might offend some senses of political correctness.

- i've forgotten their name: the little pink wrestling figures which were so popular sometime back in the late 80's. i had tons of them.

- Strangely enough, there seems to be a niche left to fill in the space-themed figures market (or maybe everyone is still only buying Star Wars(tm) figures?).

- Mecha. i'm working on one variant, but the only relation to Joe is that it's played on a small square grid (4x4 to 6x6, actually - even more abstracted than Joe's board).