

# ALASKA SCOUTS & THE ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN

*“Modern armies have never fought before on any field that was like the Aleutians... We would have to learn as we went along, how to live and fight and win in this new land, the least-known part of America: - Col Dashiell Hammett, author of the Maltese Falcon*

This 25-page NUTS Campaign Book focuses on the “Forgotten Front” of the Aleutian Campaign, a fight against a brutal enemy in brutal conditions that cost as many US casualties as many more well-known Pacific Island battles. This book provides Aleutian Island Campaign Background and Campaign Rules, the Alaska Scouts as a special unit you can play, and several battle scenarios.

Inside you'll find:

- Background of the Campaign & Campaign Map
- The History and Unit Organization of the Alaska Scouts
- A complete Special Operations campaign and 6 unique maps
- Terrain and Weather rules
- A new Battle Board map

**NUTS! WAR TALES!**



**ALASKA SCOUTS  
& THE ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN**

**THW**  
WARGAME

**NUTS!**

**Written by John Cunningham**

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## ***THE ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN & THE ALASKA SCOUTS***

This NUTS Campaign Book focuses on the “Forgotten Front” of the Aleutian Campaign, a fight against a brutal enemy in brutal conditions that cost as many US casualties as many more well-known Pacific Island battles. This book provides Aleutian Island Campaign Background and Campaign Rules, the Alaska Scouts as a special unit you can play, and several battle scenarios.



### ***WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY?***

While you can use this as a sourcebook for any Skirmish system, the specific rules are designed for NUTS. You will get the most out of this book if you also use the core NUTS 4e rulebook, the NUTS Compendium, and NUTS War Against Japan Campaign Book.

## ***THE ALASKA SCOUTS, AKA “CASTNER’S CUTTHROATS”***

While you can play a standard US Army campaign, the Aleutian Campaign saw the development and use of several special forces units – most notably the Alaska Scouts, nicknamed “Castner’s Cutthroats” by many.

### ***SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRED SPECIAL UNITS***

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The Aleutian Islands, largely unfamiliar to most Americans, remained obscure even as the United States entered World War II in 1941. Situated approximately 1200 miles from Alaska, these remote volcanic islands appeared desolate, characterized by barren landscapes and subjected to relentless, harsh weather conditions and unforgiving winds. Such inhospitable surroundings seemed uninhabitable to many, save for the indigenous Aleuts who called these islands home.

However, despite the islands' obscurity, Colonel Lawrence Castner recognized their significant strategic importance amid escalating tensions between the US and Japan. He firmly supported General Billy Mitchell’s statement that - “whoever holds Alaska holds the world” due to its pivotal strategic position. Castner advocated for the establishment of the Alaskan Defense Command as early as February 1941, emphasizing the need to create an intelligence force comprising individuals intimately familiar

with the land—individuals capable of surviving independently and moving undetected. This intelligence brigade was deemed ideal for espionage operations against the Japanese that operated independently of the newly formed Alaska Territorial Guard which was raised in early 1942.



*Colonel Lawrence Castner*

Amidst mounting tensions, authorization to form the 1st Alaskan Combat Intelligence Platoon, later known as the Alaska Scouts, was granted just weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Recruitment efforts commenced promptly to assemble this specialized unit.

In spite of the efforts made by the Alaskan Defense Command and the establishment of the new Alaska Scouts, the primary focus of the United States remained firmly oriented on the South Pacific. However, subsequent to the US entry into World War II in December 1941 and grappling with ongoing Japanese hostilities, the nation found itself with limited resources allocated to the Pacific theater.

By late 1941, Marine Defense Battalions had already been deployed to crucial US locations in the Pacific such as Pearl Harbor, Wake, Midway, Johnston, and Palmyra Islands. Furthermore, by early 1942, all available assets that could be spared were reassigned from the Atlantic to the Pacific Theatre. The consolidation of forces facilitated the United States' stand against the Japanese in the pivotal Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, preparing them for subsequent actions that would alter the course of the Pacific War and significantly impact the Aleutian Islands.

Similar to Castner's perspective, Japan's General Higuchi Kiichiro shared the belief that gaining control over the Aleutians, particularly Kiska and Attu, would grant command over the northern sea routes, preventing Allied actions against Japan. Additionally, possessing air bases in these territories would enable launching offensive attacks. Consequently, in conjunction with Japan's final assault on Midway, a battle group was dispatched in early June, targeting the Aleutian Islands partially as a diversionary tactic. This maneuver resulted in the capture of Kiska on June 6th and Attu on June 7th, 1942.

The Japanese takeover of these islands marked the tumultuous environment into which the Alaska Scouts were thrust—a unit whose remarkable exploits would later earn them the moniker "Castner's Cutthroats" - though members of the Unit preferred to call themselves "The Alaska Scouts."



### ***THE CUTTHROATS ASSEMBLE***

The 1st Combat Intelligence Platoon was comprised entirely of volunteers, including miners, trappers, prospectors, hunters, and indigenous Alaska Natives, most possessing no prior combat training but renowned for their rugged outdoor skills. Upon authorization, Castner promptly summoned four soldiers from his earlier service—Corporal Norton Olshausen, Privates James Redford, Donald Spaulding, and William “Sam” Bates.



Castner focused on recruiting Alaskans, swiftly enlisting ten individuals, among whom was a seasoned veteran with a decade of experience in Alaska and another who had previously served as a park ranger at Mt. Rainier National Park. As the platoon expanded to twenty-four members, Lieutenant Robert Thompson joined the ranks and was eventually promoted to Captain, assuming command once the unit grew to a strength of sixty-six.

Anticipating unconventional duties, the men dedicated themselves to grueling fifteen-hour days of physical training focused on enhancing leg strength and endurance. They also underwent instruction in Morse code, surveying, and Commando tactics. Operating in isolated groups of ten or fewer, the soldiers were granted significant autonomy to carry out their missions, relying on their ability to live off the land and employ stealth tactics to evade enemy detection.

Lieutenant Acuff praised the scouts, describing them as highly skilled outdoorsmen capable of functioning adeptly in any environment.

The standard equipment for Castner’s Cutthroats included a Trapper Nelson pack, a hunting knife, a .22LR caliber target pistol, and a sniper rifle—deviating from the typical issue of Springfield rifles or M1 Garands. However, the men were encouraged to use firearms they were most comfortable with. One soldier may prefer a hunting rifle, another a Browning Automatic Rifle, and still another a Thompson SMG.

### ***INTO THE MAELSTROM OF WAR***

The Scouts experienced their initial engagement during the Japanese assault in June 1942. In anticipation of the invasion, detachments were strategically placed on remote islands across the Aleutian chain to monitor enemy movements.