The Royal Italian Army (RIA)

An Army Faction Concept for *Company of Heroes 2*

By

u/bshaw4

Nov 21, 2020

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 2
Suspension of Disbelief 2
History Dictating Mechanics 2
General Army Mechanics 2
Infantry Squads Overview 4
Support Weapon Teams Overview 5
Vehicles Overview 5
Armored Units Overview 5
Small Arms Overview 6
Division Command – Tier 1 8
Corps Command – Tier 2 10
Army Group Command – Tier 3 11
Supreme Command – Tier 4 12
Luftwaffe Fallschirm-Panzer Doctrine 14
Infantry Assault Doctrine 15
Anti-Armor Doctrine 16
Salvage Doctrine 18
Trench Warfare Doctrine 19
Artillery Recon Doctrine 21
Airborne Doctrine 22

Acknowledgements

Forgotten Weapons – information on Italian small arms in WW2.

Potential History – information (and memes) on Italian-made tanks in WW2.

Carlos Danger, GrenadierIT19, & FreeJones12 – faction concepts that gave me inspiration.

Wikipedia – weapon and vehicle stats, such as weapon model numbers, calibers, etc.

Suspension of Disbelief

With the inclusion of Western-front armies, the multiplier setting of *Company of Heroes 2* takes place during the latter years of World War 2. This immediately makes any inclusion of the Italians in the game an anachronism, as the Italians surrendered in 1943. So, history must be slightly changed—in the context of the game—in order for the Italians to be an Axis faction.

Specifically, this use of the Italians in COH2 assumes that the Italians, as a whole, were unified under Mussolini's command and supported the war. This unification would prevent (among a list of potential changes) the Kingdom of Italy from erupting into civil conflict in 1943, and allow them to remain in the war as an Axis power for a longer timeframe.

Note: This history-changing idea is meant to keep the Italians in the war longer in order for them to appear in COH2. The idea was not made in an attempt to answer the question of whether it would have drastically changed the outcome of the war. To that end, I have no clue.

History Dictating Mechanics

While designing an Italian forces army for COH2, I followed a pattern of letting the state of the Royal Italian Army in WW2 dictate the mechanics, allowing the flavor to match reality. For example, the Italian Army had an excellent sub-machine gun, the MAB 38A, which has the best SMG stats in the game. On the other hand, the Army had a vastly underpowered armored force, which is reflected in cheap-costing, Italian-made tanks making up the bulk of RIA armored units.

Having history dictate the mechanics also prevented me from heavily influencing the end direction of the faction, whether purposefully or unconsciously. There were only a couple of instances where I had to force something to fit (such as flushing out some commander abilities).

Overall, I hope that I have created a template for an army that is both true to the Royal Italian Army in WW2 and would be fun for many types of gamers to play.

General Army Mechanics

Veterancy

RIA units can gain up to 3 veterancy levels.

Starting Unit

The RIA begins the game with one Alpine Sapper squad.

Base Tiers

The RIA base has 4 tiers:

- Tier 1 – Division Command
- Tier 2 – Corps Command
- Tier 3 – Army Group Command
- Tier 4 – Supreme Command

The tier buildings are based on, and named after, the organization of the Royal Italian Army. You start with Tier 1 unlocked, from which you can upgrade to additional tiers.

Upgrading to a new tier automatically builds the corresponding building. RIA buildings cost less fuel to build than other Axis buildings since they do not need secondary upgrades to fully activate. However, no tier can be skipped to advance to Tier 4.

Infantry Mechanics

Since infantry are a main pillar of gameplay in COH2, the player needs to have good options for healing, reinforcing, and retreating their squads. It is preferable to have several options for each of these three mechanics, or else the player is locked into a single playstyle.

For healing infantry, the RIA has the following options:

- Heal at the medical camp built at the base (upgrade from Division Command).
- Heal at medical camps built by Alpine Sappers (Tier 2 unlocked).

For reinforcing infantry, the RIA has the following options:

- Reinforce at the main base.
- Reinforce at medical camps built by Alpine Sappers (Tier 2 unlocked)
- Reinforce at Breda 61 Halftracks (Tier 3 unlocked).

Besides performing soft retreats, the RIA has the following retreating options for infantry:

- Retreat back to the base.
- Retreat to a Retreat Point building designated by the Capitano (Tier 4 unlocked).

Tank Mechanics

In COH2, the RIA has access to many cheap, Italian-made tanks. Since the RIA has remained in the war, it can also rely on German allies to acquire powerful tank destroyers and heavy tanks.

Note: Pictures from the Beutepanzer Museum show Hitler inspecting new models of tanks, including the Italian-made P40. While the Jagdpanzer and Jagdtiger shown are scale models, the pictures capture the relationship between German and Italian tanks in WW2. The pictures were

also an inspiration for my choices of some of the Italian and German tanks that the RIA can use in COH2.

Due to a limited industrial force, Italy was far behind in the tank production game in WW2. However, what the Italians lacked in technology, they made up for in fighting spirit:

> "Enormous dust-clouds could be seen south and south-east of headquarters, where the desperate struggle of the small and inefficient Italian tanks of XX Corps was being played out against a hundred or so British heavy tanks…I was later told by Major von Luck…that the Italians, who at that time represented our strongest motorized force, fought with exemplary courage." – Erwin Rommel

All Italian-made tanks in the game are the weakest tanks found in their respective classes. For example, even though the P40 is classified as a medium+ tank, its stats are closer to a Sherman medium tank than to a Panther medium+ tank.

While Italian tanks have worse stats than other tanks, they do come to the battlefield cheaper and sooner. To compare, the M13 medium tank is weaker than Allied tanks in the same class (T-34, Sherman, & Cromwell). However, the M13 arrives after the RIA's Tier 3 is unlocked, which is sooner than the respective Allied unlocks (Soviet Tier 4, USF Tier 4, and UKF Tier 3).

Unique Faction Bonuses

Just like how the US Forces have tanks with better on-the-move accuracy and can de-crew vehicles for repairs, the RIA has several faction-specific bonuses. These bonuses were chosen to reflect how Italian troops and vehicles were well-suited for fighting in the mountains.

All units receive decreased acceleration and speed penalties when moving on sloped terrain.

- 25% decrease in acceleration and top-speed penalties given to units moving on slopes.

Additionally, Tanks and AT guns are less affected by slopes between the gun and the target.

- 25% decrease in the accuracy penalty given to AT guns when there is a slope between themselves and the target.

  Note: This bonus helps to reduce situations where an AT gun has line of sight on a target, but does not have a perfectly clean shot, resulting in the gun just shooting the ground.

Infantry Squads Overview

Italian Infantry Squads produced at the base:

- Soldati – Core Infantry Squad – Tier 1
- Alpine Sappers – Engineer Infantry Squad – Tier 2
- Capitano – Command Infantry Squad – Tier 2
- Bersaglieri – Elite Infantry Squad – Tier 4

Commander-specific Infantry Squads:

- Fallschirmjäger Ground Forces – Elite German Infantry Squad
- Controcarro Soldati – Anti-Tank Infantry Squad
- Folgore Paracadutisti – Elite Airborne Infantry Squad

Support Weapon Teams Overview

Italian Support Weapon Teams produced at the base:

- Breda M37 – Heavy Machine Gun Weapon Team – Tier 1
- Brixia Model 35 – Light Mortar Weapon Team – Tier 1
- Cannone 75mm – Anti-Tank Gun Weapon Team – Tier 2

Commander-specific Support Weapon Teams:

- 81mm Model 35 – Airdropped Mortar Weapon
- Obice 149mm – Artillery Weapon Team

Vehicles Overview

Italian Vehicles produced at the base:

- CV-33 – Tankette – Tier 1
- Breda 61 – Halftrack – Tier 3

Commander-specific Vehicles:

- L3 Lf Flamethrower – Tankette
- AS42 – Armored Recon Car

Armored Units Overview

Italian-made Tanks produced at the base:

- L6 – Light Tank – Tier 2
- M13 – Medium Tank – Tier 3
- Semovente 75 – Medium Self-propelled Gun – Tier 3
- P40 – Medium+ Tank – Tier 4

Commander-specific Italian Armor:

- M15 – Medium Command Tank
- Semovente 105 Bassotto – Medium+ Self-propelled Gun

German Tanks produced at the base:

- Jagdpanther – Medium+ Tank Destroyer – Tier 4

Commander-specific German Armor:

- Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer – Medium Tank Destroyer
- Bergetiger – Heavy Engineer Tank
- Jagdtiger Porsche 185 – Heavy Tank Destroyer

Small Arms Overview

This section goes into detail about the small arms that RIA units have in the game, since it would be too cumbersome to explain each gun each time that it is brought up.

M38 Carcano – Carbine Rifle

The M38 Carcano was a good bolt-action rifle, with both some strengths and weaknesses. It featured a shorter and lighter body than most carbine rifles, which gave it excellent handling. It also had a smaller-than-average caliber, which was still powerful enough to be lethal, but with far less recoil.

The rifle could hold six rounds, which is greater than the average of five, and bullets were loaded into the gun with en-block clips. Unlike the en-block clips for the M1 Garand, the M38's clips could easily jam. This loading issue was further complicated by the fact that individual rounds could not load into the gun.

All of these characteristics translate to a decent infantry rifle in COH2. Its stats feature a less-frequent, but slightly longer, reload compared to the Kar98. Additionally, it features a better moving accuracy, but has a lower average damage per shot.

Breda 30 – Automatic Rifle

While the gun is commonly referred to as an LMG, the Italian term "fucile mitragliatore" actually translates to an "automatic rifle". The Breda 30 had a clunky 20-round magazine that was built into the gun, and it lacked a practical quick-change barrel (it was possible to change the barrel but it required the sights to be re-zeroed). This resulted in a rate of fire that was far too slow to be effective in the role of an LMG, and it is relatively slow for even an automatic rifle.

While the Breda 30 was not a well-designed gun, it still provided an automatic rifle platform for Italian troops in WW2. In COH2, the weapon improves a squad's fire rate and medium firepower, and it can be fired on the move by any infantry squad. It is the second cheapest automatic rifle/LMG in COH2 (the cheapest being the DP-27).

MAB 38A – Sub-machine Gun

The Moschetto Automatico Beretta 38A is arguably one of the best SMGs produced by any faction during WW2. The gun had a high production quality, a good rate of fire, a low recoil, and a 40-round magazine. This translates in COH2 to a highly accurate SMG with less-frequent reloads that improves the close-to-medium firepower of the squad. However, these stats also make the gun the most expensive SMG in the game.

Armaguerra Model 39 – Semi-auto Rifle

While not produced in large numbers during WW2, the Armaguerra Model 39 provides a good semi-automatic rifle platform to select RIA units in COH2. The weapon improves a squad's rate of fire and long-to-medium firepower.

Beretta Model 1935 - Pistol

The M1935 was a robust and reliable pistol, and it was simple to manufacture and maintain. Despite these benefits, the weapon is still a pistol in a game with machine guns and cannons, so its stats have a small effective range and low damage. However, it is still better than nothing.

OTO 35 – Impact Grenade

Italian impact grenades were marked with distinctive red casings during WW2, gaining them the infamous nickname of "Red Devils". In COH2, the OTO 35 is a thrown grenade that explodes as soon as it lands, just like the Grenadier's Rifle Grenade. While it does more damage (on average) than a rifle grenade, the OTO 35 has a shorter range, a longer animation before use, and the grenade model is bright red. All of these give ample warning that an impact grenade is heading towards the enemy.

OTO 42 – Incendiary Grenade

Refined from the Molotov Cocktail concept, the OTO 42 Incendiary Grenade was a glass bottle of fuel, which was ignited on impact by a built-in OTO 35 grenade. In COH2, the OTO 42 does some damage when it impacts and then deals AOE damage.

Breda 42 – AT Grenades

The Breda 42 was an AT grenade which needed a fairly long throw distance for the spring and spool detonation mechanism to activate. In COH2, the Breda 42 is an AT snare grenade with a

large “too-close-to-throw” zone. This creates a small “sweet spot” of not being too close nor too far for the grenade to be thrown.

Bakelite Mines

Bakelite Mines used more plastic components than other mines, which made them harder to detect by minesweepers. For COH2, this means that minesweepers need to be closer to these mines before they are spotted and can be disarmed. To balance this mechanic, Bakelite mines cost the same amount of Munitions as British M6 mines (30), but do slightly less damage. The mine can be triggered by both infantry and vehicles.

Division Command – Tier 1

The RIA base begins with the Division Command building, which can build Tier 1 units, upgrade to new tiers, build a medical camp, and unlock grenades.

Tier 1 allows you to build core infantry, machine gun teams, mortar teams, and tankettes.

Soldati Grenade Upgrade

Manpower: 100 Fuel: 15

Once purchased, this upgrade allows Soldati squads to use OTO 35 Impact Grenades.

Base Medical Camp Upgrade

Manpower: 125 Fuel: 10

Purchasing this upgrade adds a medical camp to the RIA base that heals nearby infantry squads. The building is destructible.

In order to ensure that retreated squads make it back to the medical camp, the base retreat point is set in the middle of the RIA base.

Soldati – Core Infantry Squad

Models: 5 Manpower: 250 Pop: 7

A five-man infantry squad armed with M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles. The squad has access to OTO 35 impact grenades and Breda 42 AT grenades, both of which have a requirement to be unlocked. The squad has two weapon slots. Effective at long range.

The squad can be upgraded with one Breda 30 Automatic Rifle, which fills one weapon slot.

Build: Sandbags.

Upgrade: Breda 30 (40 Munitions).

Abilities: OTO 35 Impact Grenade (Grenade Upgrade), Breda 42 AT Grenade (Vet 1).

Breda M37 – Heavy Machine Gun Weapon Team

Crew: 4 Manpower: 250 Pop: 6

The Breda M37 had a slightly larger caliber than other HMGs and had a decent rate of a fire. It used tray-fed magazines, rather than traditional box-fed magazines. In COH2, the Breda M37 has less suppressing power than the MG-42 (because of rate of fire), but is stronger than the MG-34 (because of caliber size). However, the frequent tray-magazine reloads makes the team vulnerable to being overrun by multiple enemy squads.

The tray-feed system replaced used bullet casings into the tray. The intention was that the trays could be recycled to make new ammunition. While the reality of war made this intention impractical, the function now appears in COH2 as a risk-vs-reward ability: Ammo Cycle.

- When active, the HMG team processes used ammo for 10 seconds, converting them into a small amount of Munitions (3-5). While the ability is active, the team cannot fire, and a Munitions icon displays above the unit. This ability can only be activated once the HMG team has had to reload at least once (to prevent it from becoming a farming unit).

Ability: Ammo Cycle, Armor Piercing Rounds (Vet 1).

Strategy: This ability, plus the reloading weakness, ties the HMG's performance directly into how well you can micro-manage the team (even more so than with other HMGs in the game).

Brixia 35 – Light Mortar Weapon Team

Crew: 4 Manpower: 200 Pop: 5

The Brixia 35 light mortar was a rapid-fire, small-caliber mortar that had a relatively short firing range. In COH2, the Brixia 35 fires faster and has more precision than regular-sized caliber mortars, but only deals (relatively) half the damage.

Abilities: Smoke, Rapid-fire Barrage (Vet 1).

Strategy: In the early game, the Brixia 35 brings enough firepower to provide a possible counter to Allied HMGs. As the game progresses, the focus of the unit is to cause battlefield chaos through rapid-fire shock value and smoke.

CV-33 Tankette

Manpower: 240 Pop: 3

In COH2, the CV-33 fulfills the roles of an early infantry support platform and a mobile suppressing unit. It is armed with one forward-facing 6mm machine gun.

The CV-35 upgrade replaces the armament with twin 8mm machine guns and gives the tankette the Suppress ability. Additionally, this improves the tankette's armor.

Upgrade: CV-35 (60 Munitions).

Abilities: Suppress (upgrade).

Corps Command – Tier 2

Tier 2 allows you to build engineer squads, AT guns, officer squads, and light tanks.

Alpine Sappers - Engineer Squad

Models: 4 Manpower: 220 Pop: 6

To avoid confusion with the names of other faction engineers, Italian engineers in COH2 are from The Alpini, the distinguished mountain infantry of the Royal Italian Army. The squad can easily be recognized on the battlefield by the Cappello Alpino that each model wears.

Alpine Sappers are a four-man engineer squad, armed with M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles. Their stats are better than Rear Echelons and Combat Engineers, making them the best long-range engineers in the game. The squad has two weapon slots.

Build: Caches, Barbed Wire, Bakelite Mines, and Medical Camps (Tier 2 unlocked).

- Sapper-built medical camps cost 150 Manpower and 15 Fuel. If the camp is in friendly, connected territory, it can heal and reinforce nearby infantry squads out of combat.

Upgrade: Hazard Removal Package (30 Munitions).

- This replaces one gun with a minesweeper, improves repair and build time, and grants access to the Wire Cutters ability.

Abilities: Repair, Wire Cutters (upgrade).

Cannone 75mm – Anti-Tank Gun Weapon Team

Crew: 4 Manpower: 300 Pop: 7

The Italian Cannone 75mmwas a field gun with less traversal but more range than the German Pak 40. In CoH2, this translates to an AT gun with a relatively thin, but long, firing arc. When used with spotting units, the Cannone 75mm can cover a large area of the battlefield.

Capitano – Infantry Command Squad

Models: 4 Manpower: 200 Pop: 4

A four-man command infantry squad featuring a smartly-dressed Italian officer. Only one Capitano can be on the field at a time. When the Capitano appears on the battlefield, he comes with one of the following fashionable items on his uniform:

- Summer maps: a blue sash on his jacket or a white flight scarf around his neck.
- Winter maps: a white eagle feather in his cap or a white-camo winter poncho.

The Capitano is armed with a Beretta Model 1935 Pistol and his squad members are armed with M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles. The squad can call in recon flights, and designate retreat points.

For the Recon Fight, a CANT Z.501 “Seagull” reconnaissance plane is dispatched to scout a specified area. The plane has good visibility, but is not built for durable combat. If the plane is disturbed by AA fire, it immediately peels off and attempts to return to base.

The Capitano can designate an RIA medical camp or ambient building as a retreat point for RIA infantry. The ability has an incredibly long cool-down and only one building can be designated at a time. If the building is destroyed, the Retreat Point is lost.

Upgrade: Frontline Experience (Vet 1, 60 Munitions, 2 Pop)

- Issues four Armaguerra Model 39 rifles to the squad and fills both weapon slots. The squad’s accuracy and defense stats are greatly increased to be on par with other infantry .

Abilities: Recon Flight, Designate Retreat Point (Tier 4 unlocked).

Strategy: The Capitano squad acts like the USF Major, but comes to the battlefield sooner and with less abilities. The squad has poor combat stats, which can be improved through an upgrade. It can be worth getting the Capitano early to level up and upgrade the squad. However, it is also viable to not purchase the Capitano until Tier 4, just to use the retreat point.

L6 – Light Tank

Manpower: 250 Fuel: 50 Pop: 6

While the L6 is lightly armed and armored, it makes an excellent scouting unit. It is armed with a 20mm Berretta cannon, and a coaxial 8mm machine gun. It has an excellent line of sight. Effective against light vehicles and infantry.

The tank can activatable an Enemy Detection ability to detect enemy units in the fog-of-war on the mini-map. Additionally, the tank can toggle a Recon Mode on and off, as the tank’s commander switches between firing the main gun and improving line of sight.

Ability: Enemy Detection, Recon Mode (toggle).

Army Group Command – Tier 3

Tier 3 allows you to build to halftracks, medium tanks, and medium self-propelled guns.

Breda 61 – Halftrack

Manpower: 220 Fuel: 30 Pop: 5

The Breda 61 Halftrack was an Italian-made vehicle based on German halftrack designs. Normally used to tow artillery pieces, the 61 Halftrack appears in COH2 to fill either the roles of troop transport, mobile reinforcement point, and AA weapon.

While a hearty halftrack, the Breda 61 does not have any weapon emplacements. It can transport a single squad, which can fire out of the vehicle. Infantry squads who are near the halftrack can use it as a reinforcement point.

A Flak Trailer upgrade adds a 2cm Flak 38 AA Gun to the back of the vehicle. The flak gun fires behind the vehicle, like the USF AA Halftrack, but is less maneuverable and takes time to set up after moving. The halftrack can no longer reinforce, but it still can transport a squad.

Upgrade: Flak Trailer (70 Munitions).

Abilities: Reinforce, Transport Squad.

M13 – Medium Tank

Manpower: 280 Fuel: 70 Pop: 8

The M13 is a cheap medium tank, armed with a 47 mm turret, a coaxial 8mm machine gun, and twin forward 8mm machine guns. Effective against infantry, light vehicles, and light tanks. Effective against heavier armor when using HEAT rounds and/or flanking.

Ability: HEAT Shot.

Strategy: Because the tank can focus three machine guns onto an enemy squad (when facing forward), the M13 is an excellent anti-infantry tank. However, with such a small turret for a medium tank, the M13 must be used in large numbers, with good micro skill, and/or with combined arms in order to be effective versus enemy tanks.

Semovente 75 – Medium Self-propelled Gun

Manpower: 270 Fuel: 85 Pop: 10

The Semovente 75 is a M13 tank chassis supporting a 75mm Model 34 Mountain Gun. The self-propelled mountain gun shoots a low-velocity, short-range bombarding shot similar to the StuG E. However, it can switch to using "Effetto Pronto" HEAT shells to provide decent direct fire against enemy armor. Effective against infantry and light vehicles. Effective against all but heavy armor when in Direct Fire mode.

Ability: Direct Fire (toggle). It takes 6 seconds to toggle the ability.

Strategy: This self-propelled gun is versatile, which can be both a strength and a weakness. It is more adaptable to the battlefield, but its split role makes it weaker than other units in the same class. Not quite an assault tank and not quite a tank destroyer, the Semovente 75 has stats between the StuG E and StuG G. It is a unique unit that requires good skill to use properly.

Supreme Command – Tier 4

"Salus Rei Publicae Suprema Lex Esto." ("The Safeguard of the Republic shall be the Supreme Law.")

- Royal Italian Army Motto

Tier 4 allows you to build elite infantry, improved medium tanks, and German tank destroyers.

Bersaglieri – Elite Infantry Squad

Models: 5 Manpower: 340 Pop: 9

The Bersaglieri were elite Italian troops in WW2, distinguished by their excellent training, marksmanship, and physical strength. These characteristics are reflected in COH2 in the squad's stats and abilities. Bersaglieri squads can easily be recognized on the battlefield by the black feathers adorning their helmets.

An expensive, five-man squad of elite infantrymen, armed with M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles. The squad has excellent accuracy and high hit points. Has two weapon slots. The squad can take one of two weapon options: Armaguerra 39 Rifles or MAB 38A SMGs.

- The Armaguerra 39 upgrade issues four semi-auto rifles to the squad, and fills one weapon slot. The upgrade also grants access to HEAT Rifle Grenades.
- The MAB 38A upgrade issues four SMGs to the squad, and fills one weapon slot. The upgrade also grants access to OTO 35 Impact Grenades.

Upgrades: Armaguerra 39 Rifles (60 Munitions), MAB 38A SMGs (100 Munitions).

Abilities: Sprint, HEAT Rifle Grenade (upgrade), OTO 35 Impact Grenades (upgrade).

P40 – Medium+ Tank

Manpower: 360 Fuel: 125 Pop: 13

Classified by the Italians a heavy tank, the P40 is the largest Italian-made tank. However, compared to heavy tanks of the other armies, the P40 actually falls closer to a medium tank. It was armed with a 75 mm turret, and a coaxial 8mm machine gun. It is effective against all targets, except for the heaviest tanks.

The P40 is the weakest Medium+ in the game, yet it is still a Medium+. Using USF tanks to compare, the P40's stats are better than the Sherman but worse than the Sherman Easy Eight.

Upgrade: Pinnacle-mounted Breda M37 HMG (45 Munitions).

Jagdpanther – Medium+ Tank Destroyer

Manpower: 440 Fuel: 190 Pop: 16

Provided by German allies to fill the role of a reliable and hard-hitting tank destroyer, the Jagdpanther is the most powerful non-commander tank that the RIA can access in COH2. It is armed with an 88mm Pak 43 gun, has great mobility (once upgraded), and excellent armor. Effective against all armored targets.

It can be upgraded with both an MG-34 (to provide anti-infantry firepower) and an Ausf G Chassis improvement (to increase acceleration and turn speed).

Upgrades: Pinnacle-mounted MG-34 (40 Munitions), Ausf G Chassis (60 Munitions).

Luftwaffe Fallschirm-Panzer Doctrine

Based on the Fallschirm-Panzer Divisions, this Luftwaffe commander is efficient and ruthless. He provides you access to a powerful assortment of German infantry, armor, and tactics.

Note: After losing the majority of its aerial power in WW2, the Luftwaffe redeployed as ground forces. Fallschirm-Panzer Divisions served in Italy, which makes this commander a perfect fit.

Ambush Camouflage – 1 CP

Breda M37 teams, Soldati infantry squads, and Fallschirmjäger Ground Forces can be upgraded with camouflage, allowing them to conceal themselves when in cover or deep snow. When attacking an enemy, the squad breaks camouflage and does more damage for a very short period.

Upgrade: Ambush Camouflage (20 Munitions)

Fallschirmjäger Ground Forces – Elite German Infantry Squad – 3 CP

Models: 5 Manpower: 340 Pop: 10

Note: The loadout of OKW Fallschirmjägers (no AT, four FG-42s, and camouflage) forces the unit into the extreme role of anti-infantry ambushers. While powerful, the role is rigid. With Fallschirmjägers re-appearing for the RIA, I designed them to be adaptable elite infantry.

While no longer airborne, Fallschirmjägers can be deployed to the battlefield as a five-man elite infantry squad. The squad is equipped with K98 Rifles and has two weapon slots. Effective against infantry at long range and against armor at close range.

The squad can use Blendkörper Smoke Grenades, Booby Traps, and Panzerwurfmines.

- The Panzerwurfmine is a thrown AT mine that does more damage, but has less range, than the Panzerfaust. Since the power of the mine comes from the angle of impact, the ability does more damage the closer the squad is to the target.

The squad can be upgraded with one of two weapon choices: FG-42s, or MP-40s.

- The FG-42 upgrade issues two FG-42 automatic rifles, fills both weapon slots, and improves the squad's medium firepower. The upgrade also grants the Concentrated Fire ability, which increases the received accuracy of a targeted infantry squad. If one weapon slot is already filled, one FG-42 can still be purchased (but without the ability).
- The MP-40 upgrade issues 5 MP-40 SMGs, fills both weapon slots, and improves the squad's close firepower. The upgrade also grants the ability to Hold Fire.

Upgrades: Ambush Camouflage (20 Munitions), FG-42s (60 Munitions), MP-40s (25 Munitions).

Abilities: Panzerwurfmine, Blendkörper 2H Smoke Grenade (Vet 1), Booby Trap, Concentrated Fire (upgrade), Hold Fire (toggle, upgrade), and Camouflage (passive, upgrade).

Panzer Commander – 5 CP

Munitions: 30

P40s, and Jagdpanthers can be upgraded with a German Tank Commander. The upgrade improves the accuracy of the tank and allows the unit to call in coordinated artillery strikes.

Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer – Medium Tank Destroyer – 7 CP

Manpower: 320 Fuel: 100 Pop: 12

The Hetzer is a compact and efficient tank destroyer. It is armed with a powerful 75 mm Pak 39 gun. Effective against most armored targets.

Upgrades: Pinnacle-mounted MG-34 HMG (40 Munitions).

149mm Sector Artillery – 12 CP

Munitions: 230

While the ability is active, any enemy unit that enters the designated area will be targeted by heavy Italian 149mm artillery. This ability is more powerful, but more expensive, than the German Sector Artillery.

Infantry Assault Doctrine

This aggressive commander grants you access to units and abilities that bolster your infantry squads. Relying on the strength of your core infantry, and supplemented by powerful support abilities, you can create decisive offensive pushes on the battlefield.

Soldati Assault Training - 1 CP

Soldati squads can be upgraded with two MAB 38A SMGs to improve their short-to-medium effectiveness. This fills one of the squad's weapon slots. The upgrade also gives the squad the "Hit the Dirt" ability. The squad cannot take both the MAB 38A and Bred 30 upgrade.

Upgrade: Two MAB 38A SMGs (50 Munitions).

Ability: Hit the Dirt.

L3 Lf Flamethrower - Tankette – 3 CP

The L3 Lf was a flamethrower variant of the CV-33 tankette, improving the tankette's roles as an infantry support vehicle. In COH2, the L3 Lf has a gas tank trailer, and is armed with one 8mm machine gun and a flamethrower weapon. The trailer causes the tankette to have less acceleration and turn speed than the CV-33.

The tankette has the Flame Intimidation ability, which forces a selected enemy unit to retreat.

Ability: Flame Intimidation.

Tactical Movement – 4 CP

Munitions: 40

All infantry within the specified area will sprint for a short amount of time.

M15 – Medium Command Tank – 5 CP

Manpower: 300 Fuel: 80 Pop: 9

Deploy a M15 Medium Command Tank to the battlefield to coordinate infantry assaults. Only one M15 can be deployed on the field at a time.

This unit is a combination of two M13 variants: the M15 and the M40. The M15 had a faster turret rotation and better armor than the M13. The M40 had a radio to coordinate assault groups. In COH2, both of these upgrades make this unit an excellent infantry support tank.

Ability: Heat Shot.

Strategy: While the M15 is better than the M13 (and still has the Heat Shot ability), it is still a relatively weak medium tank. This means it does better in infantry pushes than in large armor battles.

Infantry Support Artillery – 12CP

Munitions: 250

When activated, any enemy unit in the marked zone and within sight range of RIA infantry will be targeted by off-map artillery for the duration of the ability. If no infantry remains to spot for the artillery, the rate of fire is drastically reduced. If no line of sight remains, no shells are fired.

Anti-Armor Doctrine

This brash commander provides equipment and units to vastly improve your selection of anti-armor units and abilities. Additionally, the commander has enough sway with German allies to acquire a variant Jagdtiger Heavy Tank Destroyer.

Strategy: The anti-armor abilities this commander provides, especially the Jagdtiger, are the RIA's answer to late-game heavy tank battles.

Controcarro Soldati – Anti-Tank Infantry Squad – 2 CP

Models: 4 Manpower: 300 Pop: 6

Deploy a four-man Soldati squad equipped with two M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles and two captured Polish Wz. 35 Rifles.

- The Polish Wz. 35 was a magazine-fed, bolt-action AT rifle. It was less cumbersome than other AT rifles, but still hit hard. While powerful, the gun suffers the same disadvantage as other AT rifles in COH2: it is not effective against heavier armor. However, it is only moderately bad when fired against enemy infantry, as opposed to absolutely bad.

An upgrade adds one German Panzerschreck to the squad. The squad has no free weapon slots, so it cannot take any other weapons in the game.

Upgrade: Panzerschreck (50 Munitions, Vet 1).

Ability: Breda 42 AT Grenade.

Emergency Repairs – 4 CP

Munitions: 35

Vehicle crews gain the ability to repair critical damage on their vehicles. The crew is very vulnerable during this repair procedure.

Anti-tank Ambush Tactics – 5 CP

Cannone 75mm weapon teams are granted the passive ability to camouflage while not firing.

FG 1250 Infrared Sights – 6 CP

Jagdpanter and Jagdtiger tank destroyers can be upgraded with FG1250 infrared sights to improve their line-of-sight. A large spotlight is placed on the tank, giving it a unique silhouette that easily identifies it. A “Destroyed Spotlight” status is now also a possible critical damage.

Upgrade: FG 1250 Infrared Sight (50 Munitions)

Jagdtiger Porsche 185 – Heavy Tank Destroyer – 12 CP

Manpower: 680 Fuel: 230 Pop: 22

A generous gift from German allies, the Jagdtiger Porsche 185 is the most powerful tank that the RIA can acquire in COH2. This unit is a combination of two Jagdtiger variants: the Porsche suspension and the Sd. Kfz.185.

The Porsche suspension had eight wheels, giving it a slightly shorter chassis than the standard nine-wheel design. The Sd. Kfz.185 variant had an 8.8 cm PaK 43 gun, since there were shortages of the 12.8 cm PaK 44 gun.

These two variants create a unit that is distinguished from the OKW version by a shorter body and gun barrel. This means it has less range, penetration, and damage than the OKW Jagdtiger. However, to compensate, it has a faster fire rate, a faster acceleration and turn speed, and does not require an engine upgrade.

The Jagdtiger Porsche 185 also needs to perform better in combat than the Jagdpanther, despite the fact that they have the same AT gun (because game mechanics reasons). So, the Jagdtiger has slightly better range and penetration than the Jagdpanther, in addition to more armor and health.

Upgrades: FG 1250 Infrared Sight (50 Munitions).

Ability: World Piercing Rounds

Salvage Doctrine

This prudent Italian commander grants access to special salvage abilities and armored units, making sure that your army is always well-supplied. Additionally, the commander has access to a railroad gun to provide powerful artillery support.

Salvage Training - 0 CP

Alpine Sappers receive the ability to salvage de-crewed support weapons and vehicles for fuel.

L6 Ammo Carrier Upgrade - 2 CP

The L6 Light Tank can be retrofitted as an ammunition carrier. The tank gains additional armor, but its 20mm gun is disabled (since the unit does not carrying shells for itself). This only leaves a single 8mm machine gun in the turret as the only armament.

The tank gains the Ammo Supply passive ability, which grants all friendly armor within range a slightly increased fire rate (but the effect does not stack).

Upgrade: Ammo Carrier (100 Manpower, 15 Fuel).

Ability: Ammo Supply (passive).

Point Resource Reclamation - 4 CP

A passive commander ability. When you capture a fuel or munition points from the enemy, you immediately receive with a small resource bonus from that territory.

Bergetiger – Heavy Engineer Tank – 10 CP

Manpower: 450 Fuel: 150 Pop: 14

Note: Only one Bergetiger was ever captured in WW2 in Italy. This makes it a fitting to include it as a unit for the RIA in COH2.

While the Bergetiger appeared as a German repair unit in Company of Heroes 1, I decided to give it more utility in COH2. This brings the unit closer to its intended (though disputed) role in WW2, and makes it shine as a heavy support tank. The tank's abilities make it a mechanized and armored engineer squad (hence the classification I gave to the unit).

The Bergetiger is an intriguing Tiger variant, with the main gun replaced by a crane arm. Its intended purpose is disputed, either being a vehicle-recovery tank or a mine and obstacle clearer. With COH2, it is easy to include both purposes as mechanics. We can also bring back the COH1 Bergetiger's ability to repair vehicles.

Deploy a Bergetiger Heavy Engineer Tank to the field. Only one Bergetiger can be deployed at a time. It is armed with one forward MG-42 machine gun and one pinnacle mounted MG-42. The Bergetiger can use its crane arm salvage de-crewed support weapons and vehicles for Munitions and Fuel. While out of combat, it can repair friendly vehicles. A minesweeper upgrade allows the tank to spot nearby enemy mines and disarm them with the crane arm.

A "Main Gun Destroyed" critical damage disables the crane arm, preventing the tank from salvaging, repairing, or disarming. Effective against infantry, light vehicles, and mines.

Upgrade: Minesweeper (40 Munitions).

Abilities: Salvage, Vehicle Repair, Minesweeper (passive, upgrade).

Strategy: The Bergetiger's lack of AT firepower means that it costs far fewer Command Points and resources compared to other heavy tanks. The Bergetiger is a strong support unit which can be used as a mobile repair station behind the front lines. Additionally, its heavy armor allows it to act as a damage-sponge in large-scale battles (and then salvage wreckage from engagements).

381mm Railroad Artillery – 12 CP

Munitions: 200

The Italian 381mm artillery gun is a hard-hitting navy cannon affixed to a train platform. The weapon delivers a single 381mm artillery shell to the battlefield. Effective against all targets.

This ability provides the you with a powerful, but expensive, offensive artillery attack.

Trench Warfare Doctrine

A veteran Arditi from The Great War, this daring commander has ample experience with digging into, and assaulting, entrenched positions. Additionally, the commander has access to powerful self-propelled guns and off-map indirect firepower.

Note: This commander pays homage to Italian Shock Troopers from World War I, which were absolutely terrifying mad lads. Additionally, the doctrine ties into the mentality of some generals from World War II, who could not move away from old tactics and adapt to a more modern war.

Strategy: If used correctly, this commander provides powerful opportunities to hold your ground and to push the enemy back. However, if used carelessly, the commander will leave you flat-footed as you face off against strong mechanized and tank tactics.

Soldati Entrenchment Training – 0 CP

Soldati squads are able to build trenches and lay Bakelite mines. They also gain access to OTO 42 Incendiary Grenades, which can be used by unlocking grenades from Division Command.

Engineer Assault Upgrade – 1 CP

Alpine Sapper squads gain access to two additional upgrade options.

The MAB 38A upgrade issues four SMGs your Alpine Sappers, filling all weapon slots. This turns the squad into close-range assault engineers. The upgrade also improves the squad's defense (and gives the model helmets).

The Lanciafiamme 41 d'assalto upgrade issues one flamethrower weapon to the squad, filling one weapon slot. This upgrade improves the squad's effectiveness against infantry and buildings.

- The Model 41 Assault Flamethrower was a rifle-like weapon that was lighter than other flamethrowers. In COH2, it is cheaper than other flamethrowers, but has less range.

Upgrades: MAB 38As (100 Munitions), Lanciafiamme 41 d'assalto (50 munitions).

Dig In – 2 CP

Munitions: 40

While this ability is active, RIA units gain an additional defense bonus while they are in yellow or green cover.

Semovente 105 "Bassotto" – Medium+ Self-Propelled Gun – 7 CP

Manpower: 500 Fuel: 160 Pop: 16

Deploy a Semovente 105 to the battlefield. This assault tank has an Italian 105mm howitzer gun mounted on an M15 tank chassis. The Semovente 105 was relatively long and thin for an assault tank, which led to its affectionate nickname of "Bassotto" (Dachshund). Effective against infantry, light vehicles, and buildings.

An armor upgrade (based on the M43 variant) replaces the bolted armor with welded armor, increasing the defense of the vehicle.

Upgrades: M43 Welded Armor (80 Munitions).

Abilities: Bunker Busting Barrage (Vet 1).

81mm Mortar Artillery Barrage – 8 CP

Munitions: 80

A mortar artillery barrage from off-map 81mm mortar teams can scatter enemy forces. While not the most powerful artillery strike, this barrage forces opponents to react or take damage.

Artillery Recon Doctrine

This purposeful commander brings specialized equipment and units to get additional lines of sight for long-range artillery firepower. Additionally, the commander has access to off-map smoke screens and can call in strafing air assaults.

Smoke Barrage – 1 CP

Munitions: 50

A designated area is bombarded with smoke shells from off-map artillery, allowing you to move units under the cover of smoke.

AS42 – Recon Armored Car – 2 CP

Manpower: 200 Fuel: 10 Pop: 4

The SPA-Viberti AS42 was a minimally armored reconnaissance car. While it was adaptable to many terrains, the vehicle was primarily used in the North Africa front. It could transport up to five men and mount a machine gun or an AT rifle.

In COH2, the AS42 comes as a higher-speed, lower-armor scout unit to contrast the L6 Light Tank. It is armed with a mounted Breda M37 HMG. The vehicle has amazing speed on roads and can transport one squad. The car's tires can be upgraded to improve speed off the road, and in mud and deep snow. Additionally, the car's mounted weapon can be upgraded to a Swiss Solothurn Rifle to provide mobile AT firepower.

Upgrades: Pirelli Artiglio Tires (30 Munitions), Solothurn S-18/1000 AT Gun (60 Munitions).

Ability: Step on It (Vet 1), Covert Recon (4 CP).

SIM Intelligence Packages – 4 CP

AS42 Recon Cars and L6 tanks are provided with radio equipment and camouflage covers, giving them access to the Covert Recon ability.

Ability: Covert Recon.

- Once activated, the unit becomes camouflaged, cannot move, and cannot fire. If the unit has other applicable abilities, those abilities can still be used. If the unit is in yellow or green cover, the camouflage becomes harder to spot. The ability requires 3 seconds to activate and deactivate, and has a 120 second cooldown.

Obice 149mm – Artillery Weapon Team - 8 CP

Crew: 4 Manpower: 400 Fuel: 50 Pop: 13

Alpine Sappers gain the ability to build Obice 149mm Artillery Weapon Teams. Compared to the Soviet 152mm Howitzer, the Obice 149's smaller caliber shell deals slightly less damage but has slightly greater range.

Macchi C.205 Strafing Attack – 12 CP

Munitions: 175

Two Macchi C.205 "Greyhound" fighters will loiter over the battlefield, strafing targets of opportunity for the duration of the ability with their 20mm cannons. The Greyhound's 20mm cannons are weaker than the Stuka's 37mm cannons and IL-2's 23mm cannons, making this strafing attack cost less Munitions than either ability.

Airborne Doctrine

This tenacious commander grants you access to Italian Airborne troops and resources, providing excellent anti-partisan experience and air-dropped power. The commander can also call on the Italian Royal Airforce to provide anti-tank support firepower.

Radio Network – 0 CP

At one point during WW2, Italian airborne troops were deployed as anti-partisan forces in Yugoslavia. In COH2, this anti-resistance experience comes in the form of the Radio Network ability, allowing the RIA to listen in on enemy communications.

Airdropped 81mm Model 35 Mortar – 1 CP

To airdrop: Manpower: 125 Munitions: 50

Once crewed: Crew: 4 Pop: 6

The Italian Model 35 Mortar fired a higher caliber shell than the Brixia 35, placing its firepower on par with the mortars of other armies.

The weapon has access to a Barrage, a Creeping Smoke, and an HE Barrage. The first two abilities have an excellent range, but the HE Barrage can only travel about half the distance.

Abilities: Barrage, Creeping Smoke, HE Barrage (Vet 1).

Strategy: Having an airdropped 81mm mortar adds an interesting choice of timing. While it is acquired slightly later than the Brixia 35, the 81mm can be worth the wait to get the additional firepower. However, getting the 81mm as early as possible also reveals to the enemy that you using this commander and are listening to their communications with the Radio Network.

"Folgore" Paracadutisti – Elite Airborne Infantry Squad – 3 CP

Models: 5 Manpower: 340 Pop: 9

Italian Paratroops served in North Africa, Italy, and Yugoslavia during WW2. In COH2, these infantry squads are named after the "Folgore" Division, which fought with unwavering belligerence, truly earning themselves the nickname of "thunderbolts". After the battle of El Alamein, the British stated that:

> "The remnants of the Folgore division put up resistance beyond every limit of human possibility." - BBC transmission

Deploy a five-man elite infantry squad from the air, armed with M38 Carcano Carbine Rifles. The squad wears distinct blue-green and brown jump uniforms. Has two weapons slots.

Two weapon upgrades are available and the squad can take both. The Breda 30 upgrade adds one Breda 30 automatic rifle to the squad and fills one weapon slot. The MAB 38A upgrade adds 4 MAB 38A SMGs to the squad and fills one weapon slots.

Abilities: OTO 42 Incendiary Grenades, Breda 42 AT Grenades, Tactical Assault (upgrade).

Upgrades: Breda 30 (40 Munitions), MAB 38As (100 Munitions).

Mark Vehicle – 8 CP

Munitions: 80

The targeted vehicle is subject to an increase of focused fire from nearby opponents.

Sparrowhawk Bombing Run – 12 CP

Munitions: 200

This ability orders a specific length of area to be bombed with eight bomblets (less than 50kg) from two SM.79 "Sparrowhawk" medium bombers, each one coming in from an opposite approach vector. The location must be in line of sight to activate the ability.

The Sparrowhawk bombing run is not as precise or as powerful as other bombing runs (the German's Stuka Bombing Strike is a single precise bomb, while the Soviet one is four bombs in a line). To make up for the lack of precision, the Sparrowhawks drop a total of eight bomblets between two bombers. This makes the bombing run slightly longer and harder to shoot down, and increases the chance of a bomb scoring a hit.