THEY COME UNSEEN

Rules of Engagement

BY COMMANDER ANDY BENFORD

THEY COME UNSEEN

World War II is over. The struggle for Europe is not. Facing each other across a divided Europe, NATO and the Soviet Union have reached a stalemate. Two vast militaries, two opposing ideologies, two emerging nuclear powers. War has not ended. War is now silent. Effective. Unseen.

The word has filtered back from NATO's intelligence gatherers: the Soviets are on the verge of a breakthrough with nuclear powered submarines. Deep in the Barents Sea, a series of hidden bases is disguised as a nuclear testing site. The Ice-Stations provide a perfect environment for submarine development, with deep waters and accessible ports. These strengths make them a perfect target for submarine attack. NATO deploys two of their old standard bearers, the diesel/electric hunter-killer submarines, to seek out the technology and destroy it. Their mission is to land saboteurs at these stations, to destroy what they find and steal any vital intel.

Outgoing communications have been detected by Soviet headquarters. It seemed wise at the time to station a minimal military presence in the Barents, to avoid adverse attention. The destroyer fleet is at defensive stations, but it's too late.

The enemy is already here.

Neither side can afford to acknowledge a conflict, as nobody wants to spark a nuclear war. The NATO submarine fleet is under strict orders not to use torpedoes: port sabotage is deniable, outright aggression is not. And if contact is suddenly lost with a submarine? Such is the fickle nature of the sea.

OBJECTIVES

In *They Come Unseen* players take command of NATO Submarines or Soviet fleets. NATO players must use stealth and deception to sabotage Russian test sites. They win by using their two Submarines to destroy four of the six Soviet Ice-Stations on the board. Soviet players must maximise the effectiveness of their two Destroyers, while using their logistics ships to keep vital stores of fuel and weaponry safe from attack. Soviet players win the game when both Submarines are confirmed sunk.

Players use the boards to map the position of their pieces, while keeping track of vital information on their Control Panels. These panels should be placed face down when not in use, to keep their information hidden from enemy eyes. While moving near the surface at periscope depth, the NATO players move their Submarine pieces on the Main Board. As soon as they dive below the surface, they switch to the equivalent square on the Deep Board. The Soviet players should use their Datum tokens to record the last known position of the Subs on the main board.

Up to two players control the two NATO Submarines, while up to three players control the two Soviet Destroyers, and the Soviet logistics fleet, taking care to use the correct Control Panel for each unit. These rules treat the players as teams, sharing control of the various fleets, though two players can take on one another without team-mates. The standard game is recommended for two or four players, though works with up to five.

ORDER OF PLAY

- NATO players move and act with both Submarines.
- Soviets moves and acts, using all of their ships and Destroyers.
- The storms move eastward.

It is recommended that new players disregard the rules relating to the weather until they have mastered the basic strategies of the game.

SETUP

1. Place the main board somewhere clearly visible to all players.
2. Place the deep board (the smaller of the two) somewhere in view of the NATO players, using the screen to hide it from the view of the Soviet players.
3. Place the Submarines on the main board at the two starting points indicated.
4. Place the Soviet Destroyers at Station Delta and Station Foxtrot.
5. Place all other ships and all container tokens at Station Echo.
6. Soviet and NATO players should take their respective control panels.
7. Place the additional components beside the large board.
8. Randomly draw a Ice-Station Card. Its number dictates the weather level in the Western Sea. Set weather levels in the Central and Eastern Seas as one and two numbers lower respectively.
9. (See 'Weather' on p.14)
10. Return that Ice-Station Card to the pile, shuffle them thoroughly and deal four cards face down to the NATO player. These are the NATO players' targets this game, and the only Ice-Stations they may attack. Place the two remaining cards back in the box without looking at them. The Soviet player should not know which Stations are being targeted.
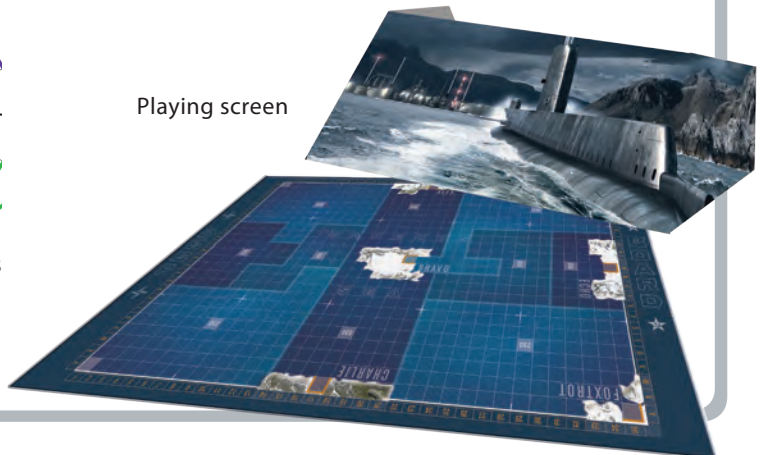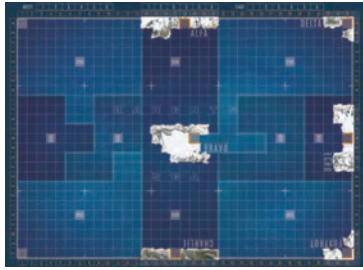
NATO
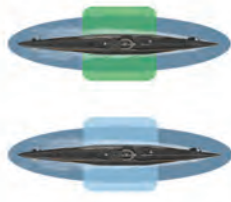
2x Submarines

2x Minefields

2x Submarine Control Panels
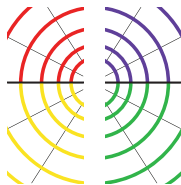
2x Punchboard
sonar references

Playing screen

Deep board

SHARED COMPONENTS

Main board

Container tokens

 8x Weapon tokens

 8x Fuel tokens
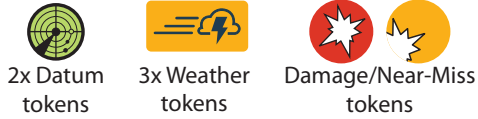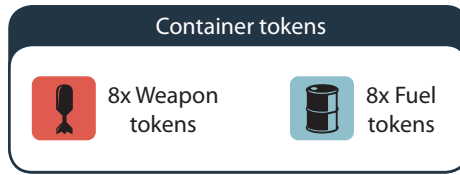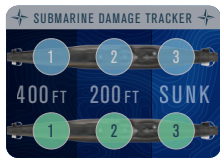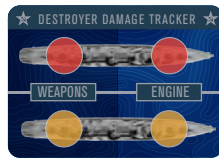
Note: Spare parts are included with the game. These should remain in the box, and the quantities listed on this page should be used.

 2x Datum tokens

 3x Weather tokens

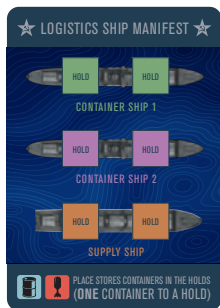 Damage/Near-Miss tokens

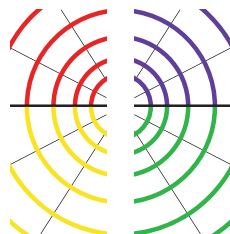Submarine Damage Tracker

Destroyer Damage Tracker

6x Ice-Station Cards

2x Destroyer Control Panels

Logistics ship manifest

2x Plastic sonar search pieces

2x Destroyers

2x Container Ships

Supply Ship

6x mortar pieces in two colours

SOVIET

5

ALFA

650

THE BOARD

Blue areas of the map represent the sea through which the players can move. Darker blue areas represent deeper water, as noted by the double border ❶ and the depth indicator ❷. There are three depths: 250, 450 and 650 feet. Areas of 250 feet are generally refered to as 'shallow water', while the other areas are generally refered to as 'deep water'. Water depth affects the speed and depth at which Submarines can operate: they are much more effective in deeper water. Soviet players should also beware shallow waters which have been infiltrated, as these are a prime location for mine attacks.

The players cannot move on or through any of the islands. They can only move onto the Station square indicated ❸. Use the additional square to hold container tokens brought to these stations.

A note on the playing pieces: the central square of the ship and Submarine pieces represent the square the unit is on. All parts of the token which extend outside this square are purely decorative, and do not affect gameplay.

ICE-STATIONS

All Ice-Stations can accommodate up to three ships at a time, plus an enemy Submarine. There is no limit to the number of container tokens which can be stored at a Station. When a Station is attacked, any ships or containers there are destroyed and removed from the game. The Station may not be used again for the entire game – players may put a damage token on its space to illustrate this. Each Station has its own specialism, bringing further consequences if it is destroyed.
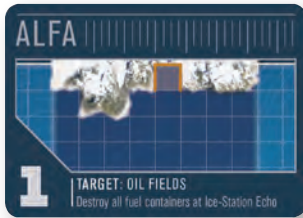
Stations Alfa and Delta control the fuel processing for the Soviets. If either is destroyed, all fuel container tokens currently at Station Echo are removed from the game.
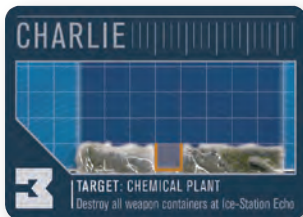
Stations Charlie and Foxtrot control weapon production. If either is destroyed, all weapon container tokens currently at Station Echo are removed from the game.

Station Echo is the main resupply port for the Soviets. If it is destroyed, fuel and weapon containers cannot be reused.

Station Bravo is the control centre for the Soviet Navy. Its destruction results in reduced output: all fuel and weapon containers are permanently reduced in capacity. Fuel containers are now worth 35 units of fuel and weapon containers only contain one salvo of bombs. Containers already on board a logistics ship remain at full capacity until either used or left at an Ice-Station, at which point they are reduced to the new capacity.

NATO ACTIONS

On the NATO turn each Submarine can move and/or take one action. Actions include snorting (recharging batteries), laying a minefield, or attacking an enemy Ice-Station. The Submarines can do this in any order, but each Submarine should complete their turn before the other begins.

Movement

Submarines may move in any direction, including diagonally. In optimal conditions they can move up to 14 squares in a single turn. Submarines use one unit of battery per square moved, and start the game with the maximum battery level of 20 units. NATO players should make sure to adjust their used battery units on their Control Panels, so they can clearly see how far they can move on their next turn. A Submarine does not have to move, though if it remains in the same square it still uses up one unit of battery.

Submarines must move more carefully and slowly while in shallow water. If at any point in their movement they would move through water which is 250ft deep as indicated on the board, their maximum move for the entire turn is six squares. Note that the depth of the Submarine itself does not limit movement, only the depth of the water.

Submarines may change depth while moving, going up or down 200ft per square moved. The four operating depths are: periscope depth, 200ft, 400ft and 600ft. The Control Panel should be used to keep track of the current depth. Movement up and down only occurs while moving forward or backwards. Submarines can only change depth while on the same square in exceptional circumstances. Depth is mostly useful to avoid enemy attacks, as the Soviet player may attack at the wrong depth. In extreme weather conditions the weather may render the NATO Submarines invisible to sonar searches.

Each Submarine may move, and then has the option of one of the following actions to end their turn. Any movement involved in these actions counts towards the Submarine's maximum move distance of 14 squares, meaning these options may not be available if the Submarine has moved too far in this turn.

Snorting (battery charging)

Attentive players will have noticed that a Submarine's batteries will run down extremely quickly. To recharge the batteries, Submarines must 'snort': return to periscope depth to run a diesel generator.

A Sub may snort by moving to periscope depth, then continuing at periscope depth for two more squares in a straight line. This increases their available battery by 10 units. They may then move a maximum of three squares in any direction, changing depth as allowed by their location. The snort movement counts towards the Submarines maximum move distance. As such, it takes up a Subs entire movement allowance in shallow water.

A Submarine must have at least one unit of battery remaining on arrival at periscope depth to snort. If a Submarine runs out of battery completely, it floats to the surface, and may not do anything else this turn. It must then stay in place for one complete turn, and gains 5 units of battery.

Laying Mines

Each Sub is equipped with a strip of acoustic mines, which it can place once per game. Minefields may be only laid in water which is 250 feet deep, and may not be placed diagonally. To lay a minefield, a Sub must move six squares in a straight line and end its move on the sixth square. The minefield is then placed in the preceding five squares on the deep board. Once laid a minefield remains active for the entire game.

Acoustic mines are triggered by the noise of a ship passing through their square at sufficient speed. Any Destroyer which moves 8 or more squares over the course of a turn triggers the mine. Logistic ships are louder: a move of 6 squares or more in a single turn triggers the mine. As Submarines are engineered to be almost silent, they may pass through a minefield undamaged.

When a mine is triggered it is best to let a Soviet player move their ship the full distance they had planned, then declare that they have hit a mine and move them back to the square where the mine is located. This avoids any debate about whether the ship was intending to move the full distance necessary to trigger the mine. Make sure they only spend the fuel corresponding to the distance they actually travelled, rather than the distance they intended to travel.

Often a Destroyer will move a little, take a sonar search, then move again. In this case, use the total distance it moved in this turn to calculate its speed, but only count the mines as triggered if it moves through the minefield after conducting the search: the Destroyer searches carefully for its target, then speeds up afterwards. Of course, if the Destroyer moved 8 squares before searching, count the hit as normal.

Station Attack

The NATO player may only attack an Ice-Station if they drew the matching Station Card at the beginning of the game. When a Sub moves into an enemy Ice-Station it immediately surfaces and lands its saboteurs, ending its turn. The Station Card is revealed to the other players, and all fuel and weapon tokens, logistics ships and Destroyers at that Station are immediately destroyed and removed from the game. Any additional actions relating to that Station Card happen immediately. The Ice-Station may not be used for the rest of the game: consider it destroyed.

While at an Ice-Station, a Submarine may not be attacked or rammed. The Sub must leave the Ice-Station at the beginning of their next turn.

As the maximum movement in shallow water is 6 spaces, laying mines will take up a Sub's entire movement for that turn.

The consequences of hitting a minefield are discussed in more detail in 'Damage' later in this rule book.

Submarines may not snort into an enemy Station, but they may snort out of it.

SOVIET ACTIONS

The Soviets have two main tasks on their turn:

- Use their Destroyers to hunt the enemy (Hunting).
- Use their Container and Supply ships to provide support (Logistics).

They may move their ships in any order, but some of the available options prevent them from taking others.

Hunting

The Soviets use their Destroyers to seek out and destroy the enemy Submarines before they cause too much damage. Each Destroyer may move, search using their sonar, attack and move again, before finishing their turn in one of three ways.

Movement

A Destroyer may move up to a total of 18 squares in any direction during their turn, but has a limited amount of fuel. Each individual move action has a fuel cost as per the following grid:

SQUARES MOVED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
FUEL USED	10	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	15	20	20	20	20	25	25	30	30	35	35

A Destroyer may move, take an action such as a sonar search or a refuel at a Station, then move again. Each move should be counted separately in terms of fuel use, but the total distance moved in a turn must not exceed 18 squares.

Sonar Search

A sonar search is the Soviets' main method of hunting Submarines. Based on their knowledge of how far a Submarine can move, and where it has been recently sighted, the Destroyer captain can move to an area where they think a Submarine is hiding and conduct a sonar search. Once per turn per Destroyer, the Soviets may declare a search, placing the plastic sonar pieces to the left and right of the Destroyer to form a 7x7 square sonar search area around the ship.

The solid black line on the sonar pieces should line up with the front of the Destroyer, leaving a red and a purple search area to the front sides of the ship, and a yellow and a green area to the rear sides of the ship. The forward areas of the sonar search are smaller but more accurate: a Submarine within these areas is more likely to be successfully attacked.

The NATO player then consults the corresponding areas on the deep board, using the cardboard sonar tokens to help if necessary. If any Sub is within the one of the sonar search areas the NATO player must declare which one by saying 'Contact (that colour)'. If there are no Subs in the search area then nothing is detected, and the NATO player declares 'no contact'.

The line of squares between the sonar pieces, and the square the ship itself is on, are sonar blind, and Subs on these squares are not detected. Similarly, a Sub is not detected by sonar if line of sight between the ship and the Sub is blocked due to an island, or if it is hidden due to extreme weather conditions. If a Submarine has been detected then it's time to attack!
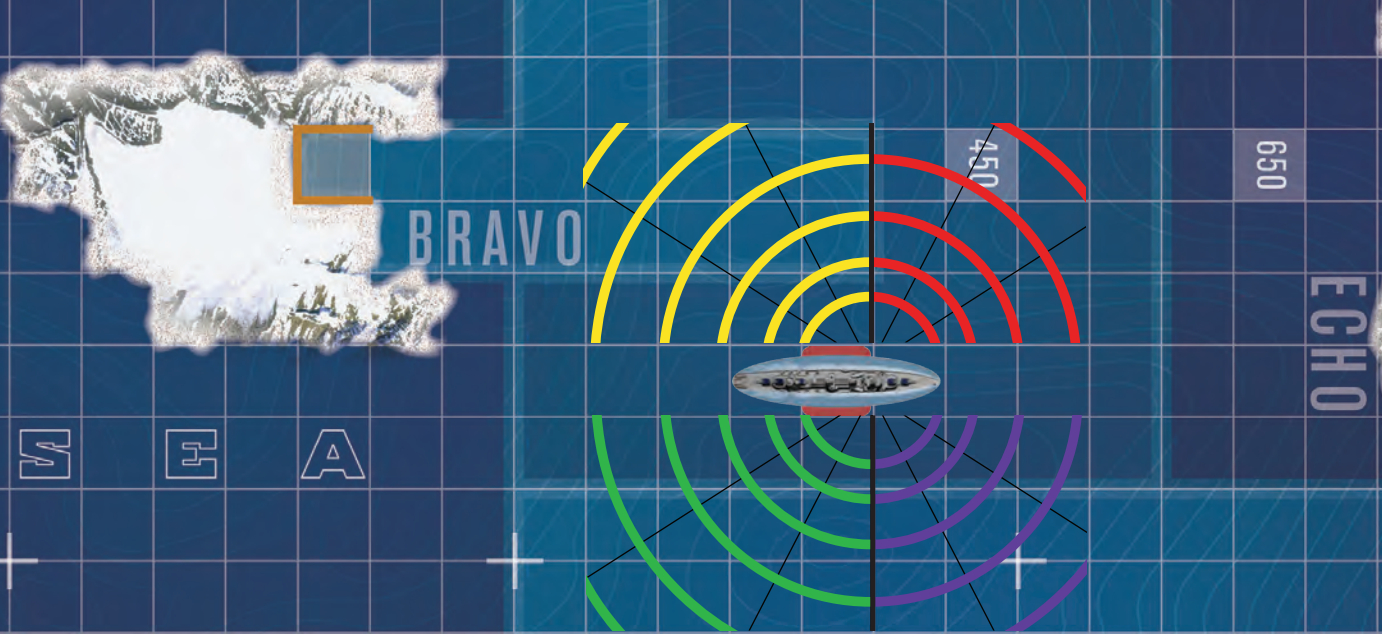
Attack

The Destroyer may attack once for each Submarine detected by a sonar search. Each attack costs one salvo, consisting of two sets of three mortar bombs. The Soviets place three black mortar pieces and three white mortar pieces on six squares within the contact area, and declare a depth at which each colour is set to explode. Mortars may not be fired at a square containing another ship.

Once the attack depth is declared the NATO players check the locations on the deep board. If the depth and location are correct, NATO declares a hit. If the location is correct and the depth is within 200ft NATO declares a near miss. Otherwise they declare a miss.

The Soviet player should adjust the remaining number of salvoes on their Control Panel, while the NATO player records damage, if any, on the Submarine damage track. After a sonar search or attack, the Soviet player may move the Destroyer once more before taking one of the final actions.

Ramming

If NATO is careless enough to leave a Submarine at surface level, any ship can destroy it outright by ramming it. Move the ship directly into the same square, and remove the Submarine from the game. The ship sustains the same damage it would if it hit a mine. *(See 'Damage' on page 13.)* This is only likely to occur if the Submarine has been forced to surface because it has run out of battery power.

Sonar Watch

Once the Soviets have finished moving the Destroyers, they should set up the sonar pieces in the same configuration as for a sonar search. If at any point on the NATO player's turn their Sub is in any part of the sonar range they must declare 'contact (colour)'. If the Sub moves through two sections of the sonar they must declare, 'contact (colour 1), contact (colour 2)', and so on. The Soviet players must wait until their own turn to react to this information.

A Soviet Destroyer conducting a sonar search

Soviet players may not ram into a Station which has been destroyed: the harbour is considered impassable.

Logistics

Just as the Submarine commanders must be wary of running out of battery power, the Destroyer captains must stay constantly aware of their remaining fuel and ammunition. Running out of either could leave the Submarines with a clear opportunity to attack. To avoid this scenario, and to ensure no single Station is too valuable a target, the Soviets must use their Container and Supply Ships to make certain that the fuel and weapon containers are accessible on most areas of the board. These containers are used to refuel and rearm the Destroyers at Ice-Stations or via the Supply Ship.

Container Deployment

A Container Ship may move up to 14 squares per turn. The Supply Ship may move up to 16 squares per turn. Container and Supply Ships do not have Control Panels as they have enough fuel for the whole game. These logistics ships may not enter and exit the same Station in a single turn.

The Soviets use their logistics ships to move containers from Station Echo to different Ice-Stations on the board, where they can be stockpiled or used by the Destroyers to refuel and/or rearm. To load or unload a container, simply move a logistics ship into a Station or to the same square as another logistics ship. Containers may then be exchanged freely. Each Container or Supply Ship can carry up to two container tokens of any colour. There is no limit to the amount of containers which can be stored at an Ice-Station. The Soviets should use the Logistics Ship manifest to keep track of which ships are carrying which containers.

Resupply

To re-arm or refuel a Destroyer, simply move it to an Ice-Station that has a relevant weapon or fuel token.

- Fuel (blue) container tokens contain 50 units of fuel.
- Weapon (red) container tokens contain two salvoes of mortar bombs.

The token is spent: add the new fuel and/or salvos to the Destroyer's Control Panel, and return the token to Station Echo where it is reusable from the start of the next turn. Any remainders are lost. Multiple containers may be used at once, if the Soviets wish. Any container tokens which are on board a ship or at a Station which is destroyed are lost! Remove them from the game.

RAS (Replenish at Sea)

Another option to resupply the Destroyers is to RAS. To conduct a RAS, move one or both of the Destroyer pieces alongside the Supply Ship, then move them all four squares in a straight line in any direction. The Supply Ship's containers are spent, the container tokens are returned to Station Echo, and those values are added to a Destroyer's supply, or split between both Destroyers.

The four squares moved while conducting a RAS count towards the total movement the ships are allowed in a turn, but no fuel is spent. If a Destroyer runs out of fuel and your Supply Ship is still in play, the Supply Ship may move to the same square as the Destroyer, allowing a RAS move. After conducting a RAS move the ships involved cannot do anything else this turn, but the Destroyer may set up a sonar watch as normal.
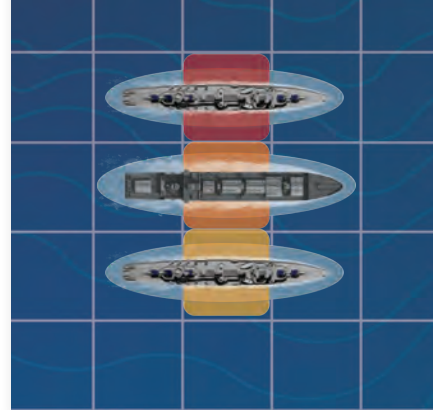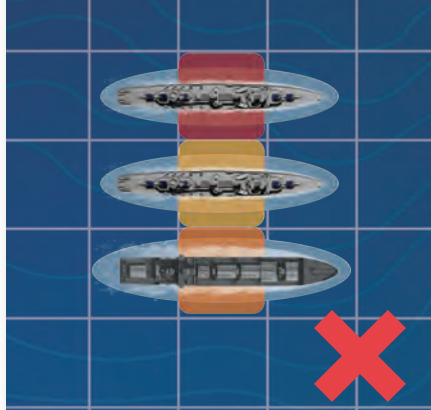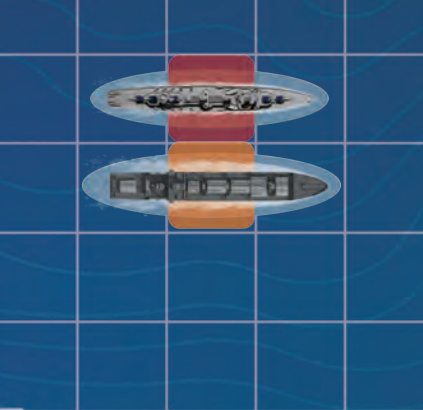
DAMAGE

Damage in *They Come Unseen* occurs in a number of ways:

- Submarines can be damaged by bombing or ramming.
- Ships can be damaged by minefields, ramming, or by being in a Station when it is attacked.

Submarine Damage

Submarines can take three direct mortar hits before they are sunk. Every time they are hit, a damage token should be added to the Submarine damage track. Make sure the damage is allocated to the correct Sub. If a Sub suffers a near miss, add a near-miss token to the damage track. If there is a second near miss on the same Sub, replace that near-miss token with a damage token.

Each hit limits the depth at which a Submarine can operate. One hit means a maximum depth of 400ft for the Submarines, while two hits means a maximum depth of 200ft. Once a Sub has three damage tokens it has been sunk, and is removed from the game.

Submarines may also be damaged by ramming. Any Sub left at surface level can be rammed by any ship which is within range. The Sub is immediately destroyed and removed from the game.

Ship Damage

Logistics ships and Destroyers are damaged in one crucially different way: if a Destroyer is damaged it can be repaired; if a Supply or Container Ship is damaged it is immediately destroyed and removed from the game. Any containers on board a ship when it is destroyed are removed from the game, and cannot be recycled.

A damaged Destroyer immediately reduces its fuel by 20 units, may not use sonar or weapons, and may only move a maximum of six squares per turn. It may still ram a Sub, and RAS, but its total fuel may not exceed 80 units. Note the damage by placing two damage tokens on appropriate Destroyer on the Destroyer damage track.

A Destroyer may repair one unit of damage for each full turn spent in a Station. Turns spent entering and exiting the Station do not count towards the repair. Soviet players may choose which areas to repair first: a tactical repair restores sonar and weapon capabilities; an engineering repair restores maximum fuel capacity, salvo capacity and move distance. Both damage/repair types are indicated on the Destroyer damage track. Any ship, including a Destroyer, which is at a Station when it is attacked is immediately destroyed and removed from the game.

WEATHER

Storms are a frequent occurrence in the cold waters of the Barents. The weather has a number of effects, depending on how high the Storm Level is. The best military commanders will anticipate changes to the weather, and plan ahead accordingly. The main board is divided into Western, Central and Eastern areas. Storms always move from west to east across the board.
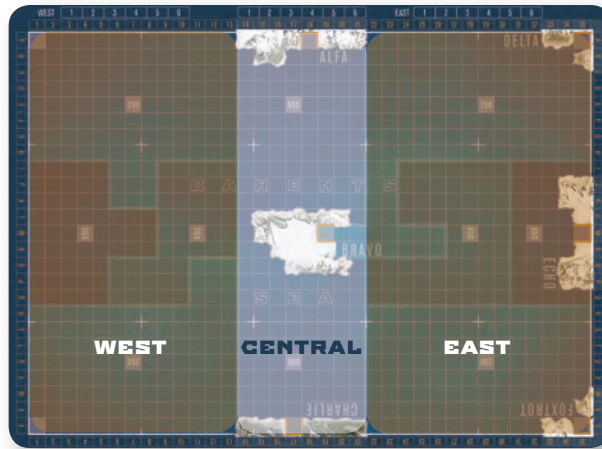
The Storm Level has two main effects – making the seas rougher and causing a thermal 'layer' to form underwater, rendering sonar unreliable. At the start of the game the Storm Level in the Eastern Sea is set at random by drawing a Station Card. This in turn sets the weather in the other two seas, e.g. if the weather in the Eastern Sea was set to 2, the Central Sea would be 1 and the Western Sea would loop back to 6. The weather effects do not come into force until after the first turn. As such there is no weather change at the end of the first turn. Think of this as the calm before the storm.

The Storm Level affects play as follows:	
Storm Level 1, 2 or 3: Calm	• The weather has no effect.
Storm Level 4: High Waves	• The maximum move distance of all ships is reduced by 4 squares.
Storm Level 5: Rough Seas	• The maximum move distance of all ships is reduced by 5 squares. • Transfer between Container and Supply Ships is not allowed. • The storm causes a 'layer' to form underwater interfering with sonar: Submarines at 400ft and 600ft cannot be detected.
Storm Level 6: Storm Warning	• The maximum move distance of all ships is reduced by 6 squares. • Transfer between Container and Supply Ships is not allowed. • The seas become too rough for RAS moves. • Ships and Submarines may not enter or attack an Ice-Station, though they may leave one. • Submarines cannot Snort. • The 'layer' caused by the weather moves deeper, meaning only Submarines at 600ft cannot be detected by sonar.

After both teams have taken a turn, move all weather tokens one step to the right and note any changes in the Storm Level. If a token moves past Level 6, it goes back to 1.

PLAY VARIANTS

They Come Unseen is best with an equal number of players, but a number of other options are possible.

Two Players:
The two-player game can also work with one Submarine and one Destroyer (plus logistic ships), which may suit new players. In this version the NATO player should declare where they are placing their Submarine before the Soviet player places their Destroyer.

Three Players:
Two players can share control of a team, which can be split in the following ways. Be warned that these variants can be extremely tough for the single player.

- Two Submarines versus one Destroyer (plus logistics ships) – In this instance, count every near miss against the Submarines as a hit.
- One Submarine versus two Destroyers (plus logistics ships) – In this instance, three near misses adds up to one hit, rather than two. The NATO player should take three Station Cards to determine their targets, rather than the usual four.

Another option is as for either of the two-player game combinations, but with the third player operating the logistics fleet.

Five Players:
For five players, allocate one Destroyer or Submarine to each of the first 4 players, and give the last player control of the logistics fleet. Players should be aware that any communication between them may be intercepted if they're speaking too openly or obviously. For this version, players should move and act in the following order:

- Submarines
- Container Ships
- Destroyers
- Supply Ship

Destroyer captains should remember to leave enough remaining movement in their turn to complete a RAS move. They should also note that moving the Supply Ship after moving the Destroyers creates an opportune hiding place for nearby Submarines.