

KANTAI KESSEN

An alternate history for War in the Pacific: Admiral's Edition — scenario 105

Two navies spent twenty years planning one battle. This is the war in which they get to fight it.

Kantai Kessen is a full alternate-history scenario built on Conkristador's Realism Scenario 1.1. It runs 7 December 1941 to 31 March 1946 on the standard map, and it is self-contained — you do not need CRS installed, and no map, art or pwhexe.dat file is touched. It adds files numbered 105 and nothing else.

It is not a list of unit tweaks. It asks one question and follows it everywhere it goes: **what does the Pacific War look like if the naval treaties never happened?**

The premise — six changes

- 1 **Versailles, 1919.** Japan is given German New Guinea outright rather than as a C-class mandate. Rabaul has been a Japanese naval base for twenty-two years, and it is fortified.
- 2 **Washington, 1922.** The conference collapses, and the London treaties of 1930 and 1936 never follow it. Nineteen years of unrestricted building by everybody.
- 3 **Tokyo, 1937.** The high command reorganisation works. Japan gets escorts, tankers and a real pilot training programme.
- 4 **Saigon, 1940.** Governor-General Catroux refuses the Vichy recall and takes Indochina over to de Gaulle. Japan's southern springboard is hostile ground.
- 5 **Washington, August 1941.** The Selective Service extension fails by the one vote it historically survived by.
- 6 **Berlin, 11 December 1941.** Hitler says nothing at all.

The trade at the centre of it

Twenty years of unrestricted naval building has to be paid for, and it is paid for out of both armies.

Japan completed the 8-8 Fleet exactly as the Diet authorised it in 1920 — eight battleships and eight battlecruisers, sixteen capital ships on the first morning. The Navy won the budget war outright, so the Imperial Army is thinner than it was, its 1944 and 1945 raisings are months late, and Japanese heavy industry is 21% smaller because the money went into hulls. America built the 1916 Program and kept building, which is exactly why the draft lapsed in 1941.

Both navies are enormous. Both armies are starved.

The carrier war is smaller as a direct consequence. Akagi, Kaga, Lexington and Saratoga were carriers only because Washington saved their hulls from the scrapyard; here they complete as the capital ships they were laid down as, and both sides replace them with smaller purpose-built decks. Deck counts roughly hold. Aircraft numbers do not.

What you get instead is the largest gun war in any Pacific scenario I know of. Sixteen Japanese capital ships against an American line reinforced by four battlecruisers. Night action, the Long Lance and crew ratings decide things that carriers decided before.

The road to war

The question I get asked most about the Indochina change is whether Mers-el-Kébir still happened. It did — and it happened harder than it did in our timeline, and it is the reason the scenario works.

3 July 1940, and where Strasbourg was

Force H shelled the French squadron at Mers-el-Kébir to stop it reaching German hands. Bretagne blew up, Dunkerque and Provence were wrecked, and 1,297 French sailors were killed by their allies of three weeks earlier. Historically **Strasbourg** worked up to full power, ran the gauntlet and reached Toulon — the one ship fast enough to get out.

In this scenario she is not there to get out. She is at Cam Ranh Bay, and that follows directly from the first premise: Japan has held Rabaul and the German Pacific since 1919, so the Far East is a French naval priority in a way it never was. The **Division navale d'Extrême-Orient** is a real squadron — Strasbourg, Flandre, Lamotte-Picquet and the Bougainville avisos — rather than the flag-showing token it actually was.

So Somerville's arithmetic on 3 July is slightly different and the outcome is *worse* for France: his targets are Dunkerque, Bretagne, Provence and the destroyers, and the one ship that could have broken out is four thousand miles away. Mers-el-Kébir here is more complete than the real thing. Nobody reaches Toulon.

And **Flandre is a Washington ship in the most literal sense**. She was one of the five Normandie class laid down in 1913 and suspended in 1914. Four were scrapped in the early twenties *because of the treaty*; only Béarn was finished, as a carrier. No treaty, no scrapping: Flandre is completed in the twenties, rebuilt in the thirties, and sent east.

Catroux decides after Mers-el-Kébir, not before

The dates are tight and they matter.

Date	Event
18 June 1940	de Gaulle's appeal
22 June	Armistice
3 July	Mers-el-Kébir
July	Vichy recalls Catroux from Indochina. Historically he obeyed, and went to London alone
August	Éboué takes French Equatorial Africa — after Mers-el-Kébir
September	Sautot takes New Caledonia; the Dakar expedition fails, largely because of Mers-el-Kébir

So Catroux refuses the recall **knowing the Royal Navy has just killed 1,297 Frenchmen**. That is not a warm alliance. It is a governor-general deciding that Japan is the nearer threat, and that Vichy neutrality buys nothing from a power that has been building without limit since 1922.

This is load-bearing, because it explains three things the scenario needs. Why the Armée d'Indochine is 48,000 men with no modern anti-tank gun and brittle morale: the colony is cut off, condemned by Vichy as traitors, and does not trust its ally. Why Britain sends nothing: it is fighting Germany alone and has nothing to send, and after 3 July it would not be welcome anyway. And why **the patron is Washington rather than London** — Roosevelt was personally hostile to de Gaulle, but a Free French Indochina is a strategic asset against Japan, and the United States in this scenario is Japan-first.

Which is where the Hawk 75s come from

France was the largest export customer for the Curtiss H75 — roughly 300 ordered, and the Groupes de Chasse flew them through the Battle of France. When France fell, the undelivered balance of the French contract was diverted to Britain and flown as the Mohawk.

In this timeline it is not diverted. It goes to the one French administration still in the war, and the US lets it go because the US wants Indochina held. GC 2/595 *Vautour* at Tan Son Nhut is not a substitution for the MS.406s the game does not contain — it is the tail end of a real French order, delivered to Saigon instead of Liverpool.

Ko Chang, and why Thailand's grievance is personal

The Franco-Thai War of October 1940 to January 1941 is the one that shapes the opening. Historically Vichy Indochina fought Thailand and Japan ‘mediated’, which meant forcing France to cede Battambang and Champasak in the Tokyo treaty of May 1941. Here it is *Free French* Indochina fighting, so Japan has no reason to mediate and every reason to back Bangkok outright. Thailand takes the provinces by force with Japanese backing — which is why Battambang is Thai ground in the scenario and why the Imperial Guards Division starts there.

But at sea it went the other way, and it really did. On 17 January 1941 at Ko Chang, Lamotte-Picquet and four avisos destroyed a large part of the Royal Thai Navy — the coast defence ship Thonburi and two torpedo boats sunk, for no French loss. It is the only unambiguous French naval victory of 1940–41, and it was won six months after Mers-el-Kébir by men who had every reason to be finished with the war. That is why Lamotte-Picquet is at Saigon on 7 December with morale worth modelling.

The irony at the middle of it

Britain shelled the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir to keep it out of Axis hands. In this scenario **the French fleet ends up in Axis hands anyway** — not scuttled at Toulon in November 1942, but boarded in the dark at Cam Ranh Bay on 7 December 1941, taken from the one French administration that had chosen the Allied side and paid for the choice.

Strasbourg, the ship that in our timeline outran Somerville's guns only to be scuttled by her own crew two years later, here outruns Somerville by being on the other side of the world — and finishes the morning under the Rising Sun, with her machinery intact and two thousand miles between her and any yard that can take her.

What is different when you actually play it

There is no Pearl Harbor raid

Kido Butai deploys to the interception line instead. Japan does not need to forestall the American fleet — it needs the American fleet to come west, into a Mandate barrier that has been fortifying since 1919. Guam is a fortress inside that barrier; Truk and Saipan are fortified in reply. The Central Pacific is a wall in both directions.

The first morning is spent taking Indochina

Cam Ranh Bay falls in the night with the two captured French capital ships in it — and the garrison fired the fuel farm, blew the cranes and scuttled in the fairway on the way out, so Japan owns a wrecked anchorage and 12,000 tons of supply where there were 73,000. Saigon and Haiphong are still being fought for at turn one, against the Cochinchina brigade, the 9e RIC, the 5e REI and the colonial gunners. The Imperial Guards Division and two tank regiments are coming up the road from Battambang.

Because Saigon is hostile, the Genzan, Kanoya and Bihoro rikko are at Hainan and on the Thai fields instead — and they sank Force Z from Saigon at four hundred miles. **Force Z's fate is a real question in this scenario rather than a scripted one.** The Borneo invasion convoys stage from Takao and cannot start until Cam Ranh is

working.

The gun war is the main event

Sixteen Japanese capital ships, including the four Kongos and Akagi, Kii, Owari and Suruga as 41,200-ton battlecruisers, against an American line reinforced by four battlecruisers of its own. Yamato joins in May 1942. The two Number 13 hulls — 47,500 tons and 18.1in guns — were starved on the slip and complete in 1944, eight years late and long after they could have decided anything.

Japan's night-fighting advantage is real but smaller than it was: extreme night torpedo work was the answer to being outnumbered five to three, and a fleet that can fight in daylight did not train to that pitch in the dark. The gap is twenty-seven points, not forty-three.

The ships the treaties actually distorted

London 1930 capped destroyers at 1,500 tons, with only 16% of tonnage allowed up to 1,850. Japan tried to put Fubuki armament on a 1,400-ton hull anyway and got Tomozuru capsizing in March 1934 and the Fourth Fleet typhoon buckling hulls in September 1935; Hatsuharu and Shiratsuyu were rebuilt with their guns cut. Here neither compromise happens and both classes are Asashio-sized with the full battery.

The American half is more literal. The US spent its entire over-1,500-ton allowance on thirteen ships — the Porters and the Somers, 1,850 tons and eight 5in — and put everything else into 1,365-ton Farraguts. Without the clause there are more leaders, and every Farragut and Mahan is two to three hundred tons heavier.

The US Army is late, and Japan can escort a convoy

The draft lapsed, so 1942 American formations are six months late and 1943 formations four, and the autumn reinforcement of the Philippines never sailed. America has ships and aircraft and very few soldiers until 1943. The Marine Corps is untouched.

On the other side, the 1937 reorganisation gives Japan a Sea Escort Command running from January 1942, kaibokan a year early, and tankers and repair ships it historically did without. The 1943 convoy massacre is not a foregone conclusion. Note that Japanese escorts will not appear on the DE line of the reinforcement screen — that is stock AE behaviour, not a bug: the game's DE filter is class type 13, which is Allied-only, and Japanese kaibokan are type 15.

Download and install

- Requires War in the Pacific: Admiral's Edition at a recent official patch level. Built and tested against 1128.
- **Self-contained.** You do not need CRS 1.1. No map, art or pwhexe.dat file is modified. Only files numbered 105 are added.
- Copy everything in the archive's SCEN folder into your game's SCEN folder. Kantai Kessen appears as scenario 105.
- **Start a new game.** A save carries the scenario data it was created with.
- If you already use slot 105, back those files up first. To uninstall, delete the files numbered 105.

A note on how it was built

Every one of the roughly 12,200 changes is applied from a source change sheet with a note recording the reasoning, rather than by hand-editing the tables. The data files are in the archive in readable CSV form. If you want to know why something is the way it is, ask — there is an answer written down for all of it.

Bug reports, balance feedback and arguments about the history are all welcome. Especially the arguments about the history.