

PE TANG 1900 Strategy Tips

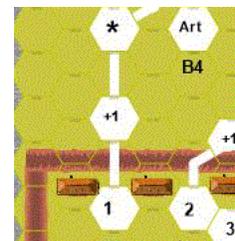
Pat La Pella, April, 2023

This is a solitaire, introductory war game, designed by Marco Campari for Lumaca Games. The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) was an attempt by Chinese nationals to oust the foreign powers from China. Pe Tang 1900 involves a little known siege that spanned 57 days and featured an unusual alliance between French, Italian, and Japanese units guarding Catholic Chinese civilians in a cathedral.

Introductory War Games: Introductory war games like Pe Tang 1900 are a great way to introduce new players to the war gaming hobby. An introductory war game should have short, easy to understand rules, a small map, a small number of units with different combat or movement capabilities, and be fast and easy to play. These games have a limited number of strategies and tactics that you can discuss easily during and after the game. This article covers the strategies and tactics that I employed when I played this game.

Spoiler Alert: Part of the fun of playing a war game for the first few times is the process of discovering the strategy and tactics needed to play the game well. If you prefer to discover Pe Tang 1900 on your own then play the game a few times before you read the rest of this article.

Game Play: Your objective is to hold off the Boxers until the Japanese units arrive and that can be difficult as you do not have enough units to occupy each position within the cathedral. The Boxers outnumber you and approach the cathedral relentlessly in order to engage in hand to hand combat. There are also several Artillery units that can fire at your units. In addition to your units, you also have a supply of ammunition and managing that ammunition is crucial as it determines the number of activations for the Boxers each turn. If you run out of ammunition then you will be unable to participate in the Allied Fire phase, your only chance to make the Boxers retreat each turn.



Map Detail

Turn Sequence:

- Deployment Phase:** Place your units where they will best defend your position
- Boxer Phase:** Expend ammunition to determine Boxer activations and move the Boxers
- Allied Fire Phase:** Fire at Boxers and Artillery if you have ammunition
- Artillery and Mine Phase:** Boxer Artillery and mines attack your units
- Hand to Hand Combat Phase:** Fight off any Boxers that breach the cathedral walls
- Event Markers Phase:** Employ your optional special events
- Victory Condition Phase:** Determine if the game is over

Decisions: You need to make up to 3 smart decisions each turn in the Deployment Phase, the Boxer Phase, and the Allied Fire Phase. Later in the game, you will decide whether to use the 2 special events available to you in the Event Markers Phase.

Deployment Phase: The Boxers are all far away at the beginning of the game so it's a little easier to decide where to deploy your units. You have 4 units but there are 6 positions that need to be defended in the cathedral so your decision is to determine which 2 positions will be vacant. As the game

progresses, the Boxers will come closer. Make sure the closest Boxer units have an allied unit defending the position. Later in the game you may need to leave a position with a close Boxer undefended in order to defend positions where Boxers are even closer to the cathedral.

Once you decide which positions to defend, you must decide where to place your units. The Italian unit gets a bonus for shooting at Boxers on spaces labeled with an asterisk "*" and 4 of the 5 Boxer positions have a space with an asterisk. At the same time, realize that the unit at the cathedral roof position, number 6 inside the cathedral, can fire at any of the 5 Boxer positions and at any of the Artillery units. Thus, to maximize your number of targets and to maximize the Italian combat bonus, place the Italian unit on the cathedral roof. Use the Italian unit to fire at a Boxer on a space with an asterisk or to fire at any other Boxer or Artillery unit.

The Chinese Civilian unit gets a bonus for hand to hand combat but it is weaker than your other units for fire combat. If you are close to getting into hand to hand combat then locate the Chinese Civilian unit at that position. Otherwise, it is best to place the Chinese Civilian unit at a position that has a weaker Boxer unit.

Place the 2 French units wherever the Boxers are closest to the cathedral. It's usually better to place one French unit in a position with a weaker Boxer unit.

Boxer Phase: In this phase you decide how much ammunition to expend and then activate the Boxer units based on that decision. The more ammunition expended, the fewer the number of activations for the Boxers. You will not have enough ammunition to last for the entire game so plan to use no ammunition for some of the earlier turns and expeditiously use your ammunition in subsequent turns. Most importantly, do not run out of ammunition before the game ends. If you run out of ammunition then you will have to skip the Allied Fire Phase. I usually expend no ammunition for the most or all of the first 4 to 6 turns. If the Boxers get too close I expend ammunition in the next turn and continue to do so until the pressure is off and then go back to expending no ammunition until I know I have enough ammunition to last until the end of the game.

For the basic game, I usually hold on to my ammunition for the first 4 turns and then expend the minimum amount for the rest of the turns in the game. This gives the Boxers 28 activations for the entire game. For the advanced game, you have to go 6 turns without expending ammunition and this gives the Boxers a total of 30 activations. Boxer activations have several possible outcomes. The Boxer can move closer to the cathedral or an Artillery unit can fire. On rare occasions, a mine will explode from a tunnel beneath the cathedral.

Allied Fire Phase: Your third decision is to determine your priority targets and whether your units will fire. This decision becomes more crucial when the Boxers are getting close to the Cathedral. You should spread your fire so that as many Boxer units as possible will retreat rather than trying to push only 1 Boxer unit all the way back in retreat. My recommended *priorities* for each unit in this phase are:

For units that are not on the cathedral roof:

- Assign the unit to fire at a Boxer at the same position or
- Assign the unit to fire at an Artillery unit or
- Do nothing if there are no suitable targets

For a unit on the cathedral roof:

- If the unit is the Italian unit, assign the unit to fire at a Boxer on an asterisk square before any other unit fires on that Boxer unit or
- For any unit on the roof (Italian, French or Chinese Civilian):
 - assign the unit to fire at a Boxer unit with no Allied unit at that position or
 - assign the unit to fire at a Boxer unit that has an Allied unit at the same position or
- Assign the unit to fire at an Artillery unit or
- Do nothing if there are no suitable targets

It's critical that you fire every eligible unit every turn in order to keep the Boxers at bay and to silence the Boxer Artillery units. The Boxers will attempt to get inside the cathedral for hand to hand combat so firing on them can cause them to retreat. Activated Artillery units appear about 1/6th of the time but if they hit your unit then the unit is reduced. A subsequent Artillery hit on a reduced unit eliminates the unit from play. Eliminating all 3 Artillery units negate future Artillery activation.

Hand to Hand Combat: It will take several turns before hand to hand combat can occur and I have played many games where there was no hand to hand combat. If you lose at hand to hand combat then the game is over and you have lost. If you position the Chinese Civilians at the position where hand to hand combat will occur then you will have a better chance to win. But because this is such a dangerous action, I usually assign a second unit to the position where hand to hand combat will occur.

Event Markers Phase: You receive 2 special events that you can use at any time. One special event allows you to reroll a bad die roll while the other one skips a turn allowing the Japanese to arrive one turn earlier. I would hold the reroll for a bad hand to hand combat outcome. The other special event is useful at any time.