

Taktikal

Description: a folded rectangle of metal of the same dimensions and proportions as a sixteen inch laptop computer. When touched, it unfolds into a three foot by four foot flat board, featuring a large green circle at one corner. Touching that corner activates an audio and text display that explains the rules of Taktikal. While the language is recognizable as English (with an odd accent), the text is bizarre: all spelling is phonetic, and there's a few letters in there that are not in the Western alphabet. As far as modern science can tell, Taktikal has no measurable energy signature.

It was immediately obvious that Taktikal comes from the future: it absolutely *looks* like something from the future. Which is to say, it's far too advanced in its design and ergonomics, yet not *alien* in the same way that something from Alpha Centauri would be. If that wasn't evidence enough? Well, the opened board also has "©2415 AD Pelgrane-Dizni" inscribed on it. That's usually considered diagnostic.

What does Taktikal do? It's a wargame. The *ultimate* wargame, allowing people to play at a squad, tactical, or strategic level for every army known to man, from the Sumerian period to World War IV (2224-2229 AD, and it

did not appear to be a fun time). Every battle, every skirmish, every possible match-up -- and every impossible one, too. Taktikal has comprehensive records of what those battles *did* look like, too: it's so accurate, researchers wonder whether any of the discrepancies that do exist are actually because we don't have complete information about them. Best -- or worse -- of all, it's "Sutebel fore Agez 12 tu 120." That's on the opened board, too.

There's nothing inherently wicked about Taktikal: it's an elaborate (and extremely entertaining) wargame, nothing more. The text is neutral in tone, except for a section in the beginning that discusses what war is, why it's sometimes necessary, why it's often not, and ends with a fairly pointed observation that real-life wars are not games. People trying to skip through that section discover that they... can't, somehow. There's something also in the ergonomics of the item that prevents people from playing it obsessively; sessions last 58 minutes, and once you play one, you don't want to play it again that day. How? Why? Probably very powerful future-social programming. Taktikal is *far* beyond our ability to duplicate.

Unfortunately (or fortunately), modern humanity can learn from the game itself. Play it for three sessions a week for three months, and you end up with an instinctive

understanding of logistics, tactics, and strategy equivalent to four years' training at West Point. You also stop being dyslexic, if you were before. People who are already good at such things get better, if not quite as dramatically; and people who are *geniuses* suddenly develop a remarkable ability to explain things to others. In other words: ironically, this is the sort of item countries would go to war over.

Doubly ironically, "Kaptchure Taktikal!" (a scenario where your squad of six has to capture the physical game) is itself the attacker tutorial scenario. "Difend Taktikal!" is the defender one.

- © Moe Lane. All rights reserved.
- <http://www.moelane.com>
- <https://www.patreon.com/MoeLane?ty=h>