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 ENLARGE

Ant colonies, and ants generally, are known for their resilience, and for their ability to apply textbook military strategies to overcome their enemies. The thing is, they sometimes help write the textbook itself. Such was recently the case, when experts at the University of Granada turned to colonies for inspiration in creating new types of military strategies. The computer model that was used relies on the interface of a commercially available game, and is fairly intuitive, [AlphaGalileo](#) reports.

By **Tudor Vieru**, Science Editor

6th of November 2009, 15:32 GMT

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Essentially, what the new simulation does is help strategists figure out the best possible route through a certain environment that satisfies any number of given conditions. This is crucial on the battlefield, where generals, for example, need to take the troops on a road that has asphalt on it, is next to a river, and is sheltered on one side by cliffs. Just input the restraints into the computer model, and the newly designed algorithms, based entirely on how ant colonies get around, will display the route that best meets these criteria.

The essential video layout of the popular turned-based strategy videogame Panzer General™ was used for the work. This is only fitting, considering the massive impact that this game has had on the gaming community, as one of the first rather accurate simulators of World War II's most famous battles. The UGR researchers, from the university's Computer Architecture and Technology Department, naturally refined the layout, and introduced some limitations and exceptions, so as to make the rendered maps resemble reality closely.

In addition to the researchers at UGR, experts from the Ministry of Defense's Doctrine and Training Command of the Spanish Army (MADOC) also participated in the construction of the new model. The organism has taken a keen interest on the new device, and it may be possible to introduce elements of it into its future military strategies. The algorithms could also be used to plot the optimum course for a sales agent, so that he or she minimizes wasted time and extra fuel consumption.

“In addition [...] it could also be useful to solve planning problems for the distribution of goods, trying to serve the highest possible number of customers starting from a central warehouse, considering the lowest possible number of vehicles,” the UGR scientists conclude.

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