

DESIGN NOTES FOR ACAV

By

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Back in 1973, in the magazine Jagdpanther #2, there was a Panzerblitz article titled "ACAV, Mechanized Warfare in Vietnam". The authors of this article were Rick Pavek and Steven Cole. It was another in the mass of armored warfare variants that came out in the early to mid Seventies that were based on the game Panzerblitz, both in professional and amateur periodicals. The article contained supplemental rules that would deal with the unique terrain that Vietnam presented, plus simple rules for paradrops and helicopters. It also had two counter sheets printed on paper, which meant that they had to be mounted and cut out, and six map sheets which when put together made three Panzerblitz size map boards. The terrain on the map sheets did not portray the deep jungles of Viet Nam, though there was extensive jungle terrain on them. It more portrayed the coastal plain such as that south of the city of Hue, the type of terrain that mechanized operations would be expected to be conducted in. One strange thing about the map sheets, there were no bridges where the roads crossed the streams, only fords. (I guess the authors thought that Nam was so backward that they did not believe in bridges.)

The article contained five scenarios. These scenarios were rather crude in their structure and organization. Victory conditions were rather simple, who ever score more points in destroyed enemy units won the game. There was no victory points for objectives or units exited off of the board. Thus the scenarios in sense became slaughter fests in their play and outcomes.

The unit counters and unit organization in the scenarios were based on those of another game, namely SPI's "Red Star/White Star" (1972). It seems that the authors did not have access to information that the more professional designers were only just beginning to acquire at the time, so they had to rely on regular government released information. (The Federal Government was still operating in its Cold War mentality in that any information that was released was frequently laced with deliberate falsehoods and misinformation, after all we didn't want the Communists to find out what we were really up to.) Thus the armored cavalry units will look strange in that they are still using M114s long after they were historically removed from Viet Nam and their unit organizations are based on the ones that are being used in Europe at the time, not Viet Nam.

Still I felt that these scenarios deserved inclusion in the Divided Ground: Viet Nam module and have taken it upon myself to convert them to that format. Here then are those scenarios.

Scenario #1

Scenario #1 presented a US fire base being attacked by rockets from the North Vietnamese Army (hereafter designated as NVA) and the American response to that. The

fire base is located on top of the biggest hill on the board. In the original scenario it had six forts and twelve mines (2-1), an overabundance of artillery, and a mechanized brigade of two mechanized infantry battalions, one armored cavalry squadron, an airmobile infantry battalion complete with helicopters, and a self-propelled artillery battalion. Facing this massive force is an NVA infantry regiment with two NVA infantry battalions, two Viet Cong (VC) infantry battalions, and the rocket artillery battalion.

Before continuing on, I would like to mention that I am maintaining my policy of giving units in defensive set ups Improved Positions if they don't already have other defensive works. Yes I know that a lot of gamers don't like this and they are free to remove them from their own personal copies of my scenarios. However those Improved Positions that are set up on the fire base should remain there as fire bases were always laced with defensive works.

The scenario set up is that all of the US units are set up on the big hill with the exception of the airmobile battalion which is mounted in helicopters and set up behind the big hill. The NVA has two infantry battalions set up in defensive positions, one of which is also defending the rocket artillery battalion. The other two are set up in forward positions in the woods south of the big hill with the mission of assaulting the fire base should the Americans move out with its mechanized brigade in search of the enemy. The American player is the first player and thus the aggressor in this scenario and must move out to engage the enemy. Just waiting for the enemy to attack the hill won't work. The NVA does not have enough force to take on the entire US force in an up front fight and would rather just like to bombard the fire base anyway, getting victory points for kills the easy way.

Players can alter the set up of the NVA side to their liking while the Americans are restricted to the big hill or just behind it.

Scenario #2

Scenario #2 is the same as #1 except that the map board configuration is different, in that it the long version of the map board. In this situation the NVA can only defend in depth as it does not have any nearby jungle to the big hill to set up an assault from. There are no changes to the US set up in this scenario. This is a harder scenario for the Americans to win do to the NVA defense in depth and th short amount of time in the scenario.

Scenario #3

Situation #3 was originally a paratroop drop for both sides. A small Republic of Viet Nam Army (RVNA) force is set up on the board surrounded by a VC force in danger of being destroyed by attacks from all sides. Both sides during the course of the game would bring in forces by paradrop, gliders, and helicopters. (While glider and helicopter counters were provided, there were no rules stating exactly what each type of counter

could carry.) To make matter worse, both sides would each roll two dice at the beginning of their respective player turns and the resulting numbers would be the number of units, randomly picked from their respective airborne forces, that they could bring in on that player turn. This made for a very chaotic scenario that was more frustrating than fun to play.

I changed this scenario to a US paratroop drop with a paratroop battalion arriving every other turn and the paratroop brigade's heavy units arriving on the board by road. (Historically the US did perform one paratroop drop in Viet Nam during the war.) The NVA paratroop brigade became an infantry regiment with all units arriving by road from the other side of the board on game turns that the Americans had no reinforcements. This results in an escalating battle where both sides are feeding units into it in a more organized manner. I also took out the helicopters and gliders for both sides, save for the US Cobra gun ships which are combat units. (Historically the NVA did have a Soviet trained paratroop brigade in North Viet Nam but would never have risked it in the south due to the lack of air superiority they had there.)

In this scenario the US player will be trying to save the encircled RVNA force before it is wiped out. The US has an airborne brigade with three airborne infantry battalions, a light tank company, two artillery batteries, an aviation company (Cobras), and a few extra support units. The NVA will be trying to destroy it while keeping the American paratroopers at bay. To achieve this they have an infantry regiment with two NVA infantry battalions, two VC battalions (already on the board at the beginning of the game), a rocket artillery battalion, a light tank company, an anti-aircraft battalion, and an artillery battery. All in all both sides each have a pretty formidable force.

There really isn't any variation in the set up. Both sides must be set up where they presently are in order to preserve the situation that causes the battle to occur in the first place.

Situation #4

Situation #4 is the mandatory tank battle that one would expect in any Panzerblitz variant of the time. A US armored force enters the board on an armored patrol through the area and runs into an NVA armored force doing the exact same mission, only coming in from the opposite side of the board. As a result, a meeting engagement occurs.

The tank forces of both sides are not very big, only about a battalion's worth of tanks on each side. (But then Viet Nam was never known for Prokhorovka size tank battles anyway.) The American force consists of a mechanized infantry battalion, an armored cavalry squadron (minus one troop), one armored company, one aviation company (Cobras), and one self-propelled artillery battalion. They also receive nine air strikes. The NVA force has a tank regiment (which is really a tank battalion), an infantry battalion, an anti-aircraft battalion, a sapper company, and a battery of artillery. Clearly the NVA is the weaker force and should take on a defensive strategy in the meeting engagement.

There is no variation in the set up as there is nothing to set up. Both sides enter the board on Turn 1.

Situation #5

Situation #5 is a standard company size mechanized patrol through an area by a US combat team. The team consists of a mechanized infantry company reinforced by a scout platoon from an armored cavalry squadron. It is also supported by an off-the-board artillery battery. The team enters the board on Turn 1. The opponent is a standard VC rifle company reinforced by an NVA recon platoon. The NVA side starts the game set up on the board fixed in place, at least until the US first fires at them, then they are free to move.

The map board has only two ACAV boards so it is smaller than the previous scenarios. This gives the US more time to search for the VC company with a reasonable chance of combat occurring within the time limit of the game.

The VC company's placement on the board is optional at the NVA player's choice. Before the beginning of the game he may move it to wherever he wants. The only requirement is that wherever it is placed, its units must be fixed in place. They do not have to be together, the NVA player may spread them all over the board if he wants to.

Conclusion

I hope that players enjoy these conversions of these old Panzerblitz variant scenarios from the game's glory days of the early Seventies.