

DESIGN NOTES FOR “INTO THE VALLEY OF TEARS THEY RODE”

**By
Alan R. Arvold**

Back when I first got the game Divided Ground, one of the first scenarios that I played was “Valley of Tears”. I found the scenario to be intriguing but was plagued with some historical inaccuracies. I also tried the linked campaign series for both sides of the 73 War up in the Golan and again found the scenarios in them filled with inaccuracies. I then resolved to correct these inaccuracies and make the Valley of Tears scenarios more historically accurate. But first I had to do some research on the subject. I found that there were six separate battles over four consecutive days, although some histories tend to blend these battles into three or four. Another factor was getting the equipment and vehicles right for each side. Divided Ground does have some inaccuracies in its orders of battles for the various sides, despite the work of various gamers in improving them over the years with numerous patches. While its successor Middle East does correct those inaccuracies, there are some units which must be converted as those same units in both games represent different numbers of personnel in them. Also note these scenarios, which were created in 2005, reflect what was known back then. As newer information has come out since then which can cause some serious changes in the orders of battles for both sides, I feel the newer scenarios in Middle East are better able to portray them. These scenarios in this set were created for Divided Ground and will remain in Divided Ground. Their conversion to Middle East is only for their preservation, not to compete with the more modern interpretations of these battles.

Map

The map was based on maps from the British War Office series of 1960. The maps for the Golan Heights area were done in the late 1950s and were pretty accurate for the 1967 War. By the 1973 War there were some changes but these were done by the military forces of both sides and were defensive in nature. The Golan Heights was largely denuded of civilian population and many farms and towns were abandoned, including the town of Kuneitra which was a ghost town. Because of the high elevation, the Golan Heights was dry place with few water sources so the Desert terrain suits the depiction far better for the time period than the more modern depiction in Middle East which uses Mediterranean terrain which is more indicative of the area from the late 20th Century to the present.

Orders of Battle

The orders of battles needed improvement and so I that’s what I did on both sides. I will discuss each side separately.

Syrian

The Syrians used a number of different APCs in their formations. Their primary APC in the 73 was the BTR-60PB. It was used primarily by the mechanized brigades, both divisional and independent, in their line mechanized companies. In Divided Ground, the Syrians do not have BTR-60PBs in their orders of battles and available unit listings, so I had to use Egyptian BTR-60PBs in their place. This is why one sees Egyptian units in the order of battles for most of the scenarios. The next most numerous APC in the Syrian army was the BTR-50. These were used by the support units in the armored and mechanized brigades and by the armored engineers. They were also used by the mechanized battalions of the armored brigades, based on the idea that armored infantry should be able to keep up with the tanks and the best way to do this was in tracked, not wheeled, armored personnel carriers. The next APC in numbers was the BTR-152 series. These were the first APC that Syria used and they had many left over from the 67 War and the period thereafter. These were used by the support units in mechanized and motorized brigades (there were never enough BTR-60s to supply every unit in the mechanized brigades). The Syrians had enough left over to equip one line company in each line battalion in the motorized brigades with BTR-152s. (With the advent of the BTR-60s and 50s in the Syrian army, the Syrians came to regard the BTR-152 as some sort of armored truck and thus had no reservations about using them in motorized units.) The last APC in numbers was the BMP-1. This was reserved for special elite units such as the Assad Armored Brigade. Of course during the course of the fighting during the 73 War, the Syrians would re-equip their shattered units with what ever was available and frequently one would see mechanized units with two or more types of APCs being used in the line as well as the support units.

The Syrians used three different main battle tanks, the T-54, the T-55, and the T-62. The T-54 was primarily used in the armored battalions that were part of the motorized and mechanized brigades. The T-55 was primarily used in the armored brigades of the infantry divisions and in most of the independent armored brigades. The T-62 was used in the armored brigades of the armored divisions and in a few elite independent armored brigades like the Assad Guards Armored Brigade. (The Syrians had over 800 T-62 tanks so they were able to more lavishly equip units with them than the Egyptians.) Incidentally, the armored units in the motorized and mechanized brigades used four tank platoons while the armored units in the armored brigades used three tank platoons. However, it was not uncommon to see armored units equipped with more than one type of MBT in the latter part of the war as they were using whatever was available to refit their shattered units. The T-34/85 was still used by reserve units but during the war was frequently used in dug-in stationary positions.

Players will note that in the support units of the armored battalions I have changed the type of vehicles present. In the orders of battle that come with the game, armored units have MTU-1 bridge-laying vehicles in their support units, while in fact they had tankdozers. This mistake on the part of game developers at Talonsoft is easy to understand. In fact, the Syrians at the beginning of the battle had the tankdozers of the various assaulting units leading the way in order to clear the way through the minefields under engineer control, while the bridge-layers were initially held back and brought up when paths had

been cleared through the minefields to the Israeli anti-tank ditches. This meant that they were usually placed with the armored unit waiting to come up as well.

Israeli

In the Israeli 7th Armored Brigade, the primary tank was the Centurion. It is possible that one battalion, the 71st Armored Battalion, had M-48 tanks in the battle as they were hastily mobilized only days before and had to use the tanks that were immediately available in their mobilization area. (In other words, they used another unit's tanks and when that other unit mobilized, it used the 71st's Centurions.) In the scenarios I am equipping the 71st with M-48's.

One will notice Lookout Post 3 on the map, the Pillbox up front overlooking the road to Syria. This was an actual observation post which overlooked that section of the border. The unit inside it was about a platoon in strength. Besides overlooking the road, the unit sent out patrols to look over other sections of the border which were not immediately visible to the outpost. While not exactly infantry, being border guards, they had infantry training and thus I used a rifle platoon to represent them. (Historically this outpost managed to hold out for four days, with ever increasing casualties, until it was relieved by the Israeli 7th Armored Brigade as it moved into Syria.)

Players will notice a series of improved positions, along with a couple of trenches, set up on the Israeli side. These were prepared defensive positions which were constructed before the war. Most of these were firing ramps for the tanks, which is what the improved positions represent. The rest were a few trench systems for the Israeli infantry, set up in key locations. These defensive positions are set up in every scenario as they were prewar construction, and therefore more solidly built, as compared to defensive positions that are constructed during a scenario, which would be temporary in nature.

Conversion:

When converting from Divided Ground to Middle East, as I noted earlier there are some units which represents different numbers of personnel with in them. For example. in Divided Ground Syrian armored infantry and engineer units have a maximum of three strength points with each strength point representing 10-12 men. Israeli armored infantry, engineer and recon units have a maximum of four strength points with each strength point representing 8-9 men. In Middle East all these units have a maximum of six strength points with each strength point representing about 6 men. Not only that transport units in Divided Ground only carry one strength point of passengers for each strength point of transport unit. In Middle East most transport units can carry two strength points of passengers for each strength point of transport unit. So when comparing scenarios from both games, the strength points of these units will be different.

Scenario 1: The Opening Round

Since this is the first battle of the whole war, the terrain on the map is intact, with no damage what so ever. Thus the towns have no rubble and the Israeli anti-tank ditch has no breaks in it, save for the hexside where the road is, and this is blocked by a minefield backed by a series of block hexes along each fork in the road as it goes into Israel. The defending Israeli unit is the 71st Armored Battalion of the 7th Armored Brigade. This unit was the unit that was supposed to be there because of the prewar planning (the 77th Armored Battalion started the war set up south of Kuneitra). The Israeli artillery was limited to a single battalion that was in the 7th Armored Brigade, which had to be shared with other battalions in the brigade. The Israelis have no airstrikes as the majority of the Israeli Air Force is running missions down in the Suez against the Egyptians.

The Syrian main assault unit was the 85th Motorized Brigade, supported by various engineer elements of the 7th Infantry Division. The brigade only had a battalion of regular artillery, plus a rocket artillery battalion in direct support, despite the fact that they were attacking along a planned main axis of advance. Players will notice that some of the tank platoons are under strength. This is due to the fact that the 7th Infantry Division only had about 70-80% of it armored fighting vehicles on hand. Due to the lack of Israeli airpower in the Golan, the Syrians had temporary air superiority and so was able to get in a number of airstrikes along the entire Golan front, five of which are in this scenario. The 85th's mission was to capture the Israeli anti-tank ditch and breach it, so follow up second echelon units could assault into the Golan Heights.

Historically, the 85th captured the anti-tank ditch but were unable to breach it as Israeli gunners were shooting up the engineer assets as they were being moved up to the ditch. None of the tankdozers and regular bulldozers made it to the ditch and only three bridges were laid across the ditch and these quickly became unusable as they were shot up. Although the Syrians had the ditch in their possession, they could not advance further during the rest of the day, save for occasional infantry patrols.

Scenario 2: The Second Wind

When darkness fell on the first night of the war, the Syrians were able to bring up more engineering assets and thus work could finally begin on breaching the anti-tank ditch. By 2200 hours, at four different sites, bridges had been laid and bulldozers were filling in the ditches. On the map, this is represented by four single hexside breaches in the anti-tank ditch. Along the main road, the minefield had only been partially cleared, although some road blocks immediately behind it were cleared away. The 85th Motorized Brigade was ordered to advance west and capture the outlying villages so as to provide the second echelon forces with an adequate springboard to begin their assault the next day. Although the 85th had taken some serious losses during the day, it was still a viable force and so it advanced.

On the Israeli side, the 71st Armored Battalion had to be shifted north in order to stabilize the line up there and so the 77th Armored Battalion was brought up from south of Kuneitra to assume the 71st's former positions. Only the armored scout company from

the 71st remains on the map as the rest of the battalion is off the board to the north. Because of this, the Israelis were able to hold back one of the tank companies from the 77th in reserve. The 77th was special in that it was the elite unit of the brigade and so had four tank companies instead of the usual three (the fourth tank company formally being the armored scout company). Only the Israelis had a supply of starshells but it had to be rationed out among the defending units all along the Golan front.

Historically the Syrians managed to widen the gaps in the anti-tank ditch during the night, enough so that there was no more need to work on them. They also captured enough ground on the other side of the ditch to serve as the springboard for the second echelon forces. They might have gone further and taken some towns but fierce Israeli resistance in the towns prevented the Syrians from securing them. A few Syrian armored vehicles did get up to Israeli positions before being knocked out. The Israelis managed to stop the Syrians while keeping casualties to a minimum, but this would soon change.

Scenario 3: The Main Event

The Syrian 85th Motorized Brigade had done its job but it was a spent force. Thus it was sent back into reserve to rebuild. Taking its place was the main combat force of the Syrian 7th Infantry Division, the 1st Mechanized and 78th Armored Brigades. This scenario is based on the Valley of Tears scenario that comes with the game, with a few modifications of course. Both sides now have smoke rounds and the Syrians still have five airstrikes. (The Israeli Air Force was trying to make airstrikes against the Syrians but the Syrian missile shield was preventing them.)

It is this scenario that players will start to see the Egyptian BTR-60PBs being used by the Syrians. The Syrians have combined elements of both brigades in their assault formations. Their artillery assets have not increased due to commitments further north along the front lines.

The Israelis no longer have a reserve company of tanks as it had to be put into the front line to cover a gap left by the departure of the 71st Armored Battalion's armored scout company to the north. In addition, the 77th Armored Battalion is five tanks down due to them being withdrawn to division headquarters to help form a reserve there. Rubble is beginning to appear in the outlying towns, including Kuneitra, due to the fighting that occurred the night before. The minefield and several of the blocks on the road have been cleared the previous evening and along with the four filled in parts of the anti-tank ditch, can no longer hold up the Syrians. So the Israelis must depend on their tanks to stop them.

Historically, the Syrians launched several attacks during the day with the two brigades, this one being the first. The Israelis managed to stop them but some of their own tanks were knocked out in the process. The Syrians lost about half of their combat strength from the two brigades, but were still a viable force come the darkness.

Scenario 4: The Moon of Blood

After several daylight attacks the Syrians regrouped in the late afternoon for a night attack. Having noted the night before that the Israelis seemed to be deficient in night vision devices on their tanks, the Syrians felt that nighttime would be the best time to take on the Israeli tanks in an even fight.

The Syrians may seem a little strong for having such a decimated force but the mechanized infantry battalion of the 78th Armored Brigade did not see any action during the previous day, being held in operational reserve by the 7th Infantry Division commander. Now he committed it to bolster the rest of the assault force. There is no increase in the artillery commitment, which is kind of surprising considering the priority given to this assault. The Syrians have managed to clear away all other obstacles on the roads during the day, so their way into the Golan is un-impeded, save for the Israeli tanks.

The Israeli 77th Armored Battalion is down by eight tanks from the day's fighting. This in addition to the five they had to give up to the divisional reserves, puts them down to about 75% combat strength. Their artillery support is still the same, but at least they have star shells. There are more town hexes that have been turned into rubble. The Israelis still have most of their knocked out tanks still in position, they have had so little time to evacuate them that only a few have been sent back for repair. Lookout Post A-3 was still holding out but was down to 50% strength.

Historically, the Israelis were able to beat back most of the Syrian assault force in the single night assault that occurred. However they were forced to evacuate the town of Kuneitra, thus yielding this objective to the Syrians. The Syrians for their part noted that there were fewer Israeli tanks firing at them, so they know that they were wearing them down and so made plans to renew the assaults in the morning with fresh forces.

Scenario 5: The Wrath of Allah

Both the 78th Armored and 1st Mechanized Brigades were spent forces. The 78th was sent back into reserve to rest and re-build, but the 1st Mechanized has to be kept up front, holding the line. However, the Syrians noted that Israeli tank fire was substantially reduced from the previous day and so Brigadier General Abrash, the 7th Infantry Division's commander, urged the Syrian high command to release more reserves to him so he could continue the attack. The 20th Armored Brigade, from the Syrian 3rd Armored Division, was released to Abrash in the early hours of the morning of the 8th of October.

In this scenario, the Syrians begin to get some more modern equipment. The T-62A and the BRDM-3 with the Sagger ATGMs make their appearance here. The Syrians have surrounded the Israeli Lookout Post A-3 to keep it from causing any more problems but would not deal with it any further until after they had made the breakthrough into the

Golan Heights. Due to the closing down of their offensives further north, the Syrians had allocated an additional battalion of artillery to this attack. The Syrians still receive airstrikes but not quite as many as before as the Israeli Air Force is beginning to make inroads against the Syrian missile shield and starting to go after the Syrian Air Force.

The Israeli 77th Armored Battalion is at about 60% strength. However, the Israelis have moved the 75th Mechanized Battalion up from the south of Kuneitra and it has cordoned off the western approaches to that town. They have also moved the whole of what is left of the 71st Armored Battalion down from up north to help bolster the defense of the area. The 7th Armored Brigade has established a small four tank reserve at its headquarters to handle any breakthroughs. The 7th Brigade has also been able to bring up its mortar battalion in order to increase the Israeli artillery assets. Due to the inroads that the Israelis have made against the Syrian missile shield, they have been able to get a couple of airstrikes in on this battle.

Historically, it was basically a repeat of the day before. The Syrians tried to bludgeon their way through and got smashed in the process. But the new T-62A tanks and the Sagger ATGMs took their toll on the Israeli tanks and the Syrians noted this. The Israelis were close to their breaking point and one more attack should do them in.

Scenario 6: The Final Fury

Sensing that the Israelis were close to their breaking point, General Abrash pleaded with the Syrian high command for more reserves. The high command yielded to Abrash's requests and pulled out all the stops for this final attack. Not only did they give him the best armored brigade, the Assad Guards Armored, but they also gave him a helicopter commando battalion to insert behind the Israeli front lines. With this force, Abrash was sure that he would break through to the Jordan River.

The Syrians not only have the T-62A again, they also have the BMP-1 APC, complete with Sagger ATGMs. In addition, they have a complete commando battalion, transported by helicopters, which arrive on Turn 4. The morale level of the Assad Brigade and the commando battalion are the highest in the Syrian Army. Given the priority that this attack received, the entire artillery brigade of the 7th Infantry Division was allocated to it. The Syrians only have two airstrikes though as Israeli planes have damaged the Syrian missile shield and are intercepting more Syrian planes. However, a helicopter attack squadron has been attached to the commando battalion, and it can roam around the Israeli rear area looking for targets of opportunity. As before the Israeli Lookout Post A-3 is surrounded, but the Syrians have no plans to take it.

The Israeli situation has improved from the night before. During the night they were able to repair some of the lightly damaged tanks and re-crew them. The Israelis are at about 50% combat strength overall which was better than the 35% they were the evening before. However they have no on-board tank reserve due to every tank being needed in the front line. But they do have a composite tank company coming in on Turn 10 as

reinforcements. The most important thing is that they now have six airstrikes with which to deal with the Syrians. Their mortar battalion is still on the board but is in danger from the Syrian commandos should they be landed close by or from the attack helicopters themselves. The morale of the Israeli units is no longer uniform due to the fact that these men have been going through three days and two nights of constant combat and/or the threat of it and are worn out.

Historically this attack was supposed to have happened the night before. However, as General Abrash was organizing the attack, his command tank was hit by Israeli fire just before sundown and he was killed. The attack was postponed until the next morning so another general could be flown down from Damascus to take over the 7th Infantry Division. The new commander General Berakdar, was not the equal of General Abrash, though he did use Abrash's plan for the attack. As it were this attack did break through the Israeli front line and there was a wild tank melee behind the line with the Syrians getting the upper hand. However the Israelis received reinforcements in the way of a composite tank company made up of tanks of several destroyed units and this temporarily turned the tide of battle. But then the Syrian commando landed near El Rom and the Israelis were face with the possibility of withdrawing to the Jordan River. But then the Syrians, with victory in their sight, started a general withdraw from the Golan Heights, events further south having forced this upon them. The Golan Heights, and Israel, were saved by the sacrifice and courage of the Israeli 7th Armored Brigade.

Scenario 7: Hypothetical

This scenario is hypothetical version of the previous scenario which explores what could have happened if the attack went through the night before and General Abrash was not killed earlier on and still in command. The Syrians have the same forces as in the previous scenario but the Israelis are down to 35% combat strength, plus they have no airstrikes (it being night) and no reinforcements coming in. The Syrians too lose their airstrikes but this will not hurt them as much as the Israelis. The Israelis have little chance of winning this, given equal opponents but they will certainly acquit themselves well. This scenario gives the Syrians their best chance of victory.

Conclusion

I hope that these design notes give players a good idea of the reasons behind the structure of these scenarios. Players should feel free to experiment and make changes to see if they could make them better (beyond what they were historically). Enjoy the scenarios.