

DESIGN NOTES FOR THE GOLAN SERIES SCENARIOS

By
Alan R. Arvold

The Golan Series scenarios are revisions of existing scenarios in the Divided Ground game as well as a new one. All of these scenarios are from the Israeli/Syrian 1973 Linked Campaign Games. Though these scenarios were initially presented as part of these linked campaign games in the original game, in subsequent patches they were presented as stand alone scenarios in their own right. However they were mostly based on their linked campaign versions, with little or no changes to their order of battles or the scenarios. Thus they were no more fun to play than the Linked Campaign Games themselves. Now I have taken the effort to make these stand alone scenarios more historical.

List of Scenarios

.The Golan Series includes the following scenarios:

The Valley of Tears
Rafid
The TAP Oil Road
Bnot Yaackov Bridge
Across the Purple Line
A New Enemy
High Water Mark
Uphill All the Way

Note that the Valley of Tears was covered in another scenario set and is only mentioned here briefly.

History

Back when Divided Ground was originally being developed, scenario design and development was the responsibility of .Edwin “Mick” Conmey. He had originally planned to use six of the above scenarios as stand alone scenarios only as they were historical actions in the 1973 War. The Bnot Yaackov Bridge scenario was not planned as a 1973 scenario, instead it was another scenario entitled Fatih Allah, based on a battle during the 1948-49 War for Independence. (In that scenario the map was different in that there was a big lake in the Hulah Valley, which the Israelis drained after the war in order to create more farmland for their fledgling nation.) Conmey had prepared all of the mapboards for the planned scenarios in the original game first before embarking on the scenarios themselves and their respective Orders of Battles. (This does not include those scenarios that were offered by other members of the team.) When the word came down from Talonsoft's management that the development team only had one more week to get

Divided Ground ready for production, Conmey only had completed about half of the planned scenarios and one Linked Campaign game (the Jordanian campaign of 1967). These were mostly from the earlier wars. With only a week left Conmey made a few mini-scenarios using portions of the bigger mapboards which were for scenarios which would never get done. As the deadline drew near he found he still had a lot of unused mapboards. Noting that six of them occurred in the Syrian Front in the 1973, he conceived of the 1973 Golan Heights/Syria Linked Campaign game. He devised a quick Order of Battle for the Campaign game with only minor variations for the Israeli and the Syrian versions respectively. He then quickly devised the scenarios (which did not go through the usual playtesting).

The scenarios, and the Linked Campaign game in general, have acquired the reputation of that the Israelis can not lose in them and the Syrians can not win. Conmey obviously favored the Israeli. Yet, he did include an extra scenario in the bunch in case the Syrians won. This was the Bnot Yaackov Bridge scenario which was hypothetical, but represented a real fear that the Israelis had if the Syrians won in the Golan Heights. For this he used the Fatih Allah mapboard (he eliminated the lake on the mapboard as it was not there in 1973). In the Israeli version of the Campaign game the scenario descriptions were pretty straight forward and rather innovative, but the ones of the Syrian version were down right silly. Anyway the Campaign game was the only format that these scenarios were in in the original game of Divided Ground.

Later patches introduce stand alone versions of the Valley of Tears, Rafid, The TAP Oil Road, Bnot Yaackov Bridge, and A New Enemy, but these were just minor variations of the Campaign game versions. The only thing historical about them was that they happened (with the exception of the Bnot Yaackov Bridge scenario), although not in the way that the scenarios presented. However Al Sandrick did his own version of the Across the Purple Line, which was the Mazraat Bein Jan scenario in the Campaign game, giving it a more historical flavor. (I later modified it, correcting the mistakes that Al made in it.) Later on I redid the Valley of Tears scenario, making it into an historical seven scenario set. But the rest were left alone until recently when I decided to make them historical plus make an historical version of the High Water Mark scenario from the Campaign game.

The Scenarios

The following are brief descriptions of the five scenarios presented. As I had said before, Valley of Tears will not be listed here as it were already covered in other scenario set.

Rafid: This scenario presents the initial Syrian attack on the Israeli positions around Rafid on the afternoon of 6 October, 1973. Historically the attack was driven off because the Syrians had to breach the anti-tank ditch in front of the Israeli positions, allowing the Israelis the opportunity to shoot up the engineering vehicles attempting to breach the ditch. However a second attack that night was successful as the Israelis no longer had their visibility and range advantage.

The TAP Oil Road: This scenario presents the Syrian flanking attack on the Israeli 36th Mechanized Division Headquarters at Nafakh on 7 October, 1973. Historically the attack caught the Israelis by surprise but they quickly rallied and beat off the lead elements of the Syrian 91st Armored Brigade. However the main body was fast approaching and the headquarters would have been destroyed if it hadn't of been for the arrival of the lead elements of the Israeli 79th Armored Brigade which stopped the 91st Armored cold and precipitated a several hour long meeting engagement, which allowed the headquarters to escape. By the way, the Israeli Armor School Battalion which is in this scenario, has no numerical designation. Some Israeli sources list it as having the numerical designation of the 71st. However, other Israeli sources listed the Armor School Armored Battalion and the 71st Armored Battalion as being two separate battalions. I chose to designate the Armor School Battalion as being separate from the 71st Battalion.

Bnot Yaakov Bridge: This scenario presents a hypothetical Syrian assault across the Jordan River into the Hulah Valley. Historically this attack never happened but could have if the Syrians were successful in breaching the Israeli defense of the northern sector of the Golan Heights. However this comes at a cost as all of the Syrian assault divisions are largely spent and units from the Syrian strategic reserve are required to pull it off. While some members of the Syrian senior leadership would have gone all out for an offensive into Israel, the top leadership knew the limitations of the Syrian forces and would have gone for a more limited offensive to force the Israelis to the peace table.

A New Enemy: This scenario presents the Jordanian attack on the Israeli flank in their advance into Syria. Historically the Israelis saw the attack coming and deployed their 17th Armored Brigade to give the Jordanian 40th Armored Brigade a very warm reception. But the Jordanians were not fanatical like the Syrians or incompetent like the Iraqis in their attacks, but were very professional in their attacks. Although the Israelis did beat back the Jordanian attack, they soon acquired a healthy respect for their new enemy's military competence.

High Water Mark: This scenario presents the first Israeli attack in the Saasa area of Syria. Historically the attack failed with the loss of twenty Israeli tanks. The Israeli force was tank heavy with little infantry (namely engineers and recon troops) and had little chance against what turned out to be a very strong Syrian defense with fresh troops from the 3rd Armored Division. The Israelis attack several more times over the next two days, finally taking the Tel Shams hilltop on the second night with a paratroop battalion supported by tanks. But they could not crack the defense on Saasa Ridge and so ceased further attacks into Syria for the rest of the war.

Across the Purple Line: This scenario represents the main Israeli attack on the Mazraat Bein Jan area. This was originally done by Edwin "Mick" Conmy as part of the linked campaign game for the Golan Front. As a scenario it was not very good. As it was the last of the campaign scenarios the Israeli force would be pretty much weakened from losses in the previous scenarios and it would look like that the Syrians finally had a chance to win. But alas it was not to be. Conmy gave the Syrian force a Morale rating of 10%

which meant that any Syrian that got disrupted would usually be destroyed before it could recover. Al Sandrick took this scenario and made it into a stand alone scenario and posted it on Games Depot. His version was certainly much better than the original scenario but it still had its faults. First he was using the Syrian order of battle from the original game, before any patches had come out correcting the errors in them. Second he gave the Israelis all dismounted leaders and then mounted them on existing vehicles in the Israeli order of battle. This is not so bad for the mechanized infantry as they were riding in APCs, but for the tank units it was a disaster. Any tank platoon that was carrying a leader could not fire as long as the leader was mounted on it. This meant that about a third of the Israeli tanks were rendered impotent as long as the leaders were being carried. Third, his arrival of Israeli reinforcements was strange. They would just appear along the the length of road coming from the southwest corner of the map. Not just one unit at a time as it they are moving in column along the road. No, they would all appear along a seven or eight hex length of road as if the Israelis had acquired transporter technology out of Star Trek. Fourth, he tended to overrate the Israelis leaders. Still I liked the scenario so I endeavored to correct the mistakes that Al made. I corrected the Syrian order of battle, made all Israeli leaders mobile instead of dismounted, had the Israelis entering along the road as if they are in column, and lowered the morale ratings of most of the Israeli leaders. Finally that scenario became what it meant to be. Historically the Israelis did capture Mazraat Bein Jan on the 12th of October but did not advance much further north than that before a general halt was ordered for all Israeli forces in Syria.

Uphill All the Way: This represents the third battle for Mount Hermon. This was another of Conmy's "quickie" scenarios that he did in the week before Divided Ground's release. It's not a bad scenario but it tries to portray a real life fifteen hour battle in less than two hours of simulated game time. I made several changes to the scenario. First I made it a night scenario as it should be. Next I increased the game length to twenty turns. Both sides had forces which were not placed on the map, I either placed them on the map or deleted. (Off the board artillery do not need their headquarter and transport units.) I added to the Israeli line battalions their support companies. However I included the mortars and machine gun units, the anti-tank elements were left out as they were not used. I increased the number of tanks that the Israelis had from five to six. (They started with six but one broke down shortly after the operation started and did not get into actual combat. I guess that's why Conmy only gave them five.) For the Syrians I added sniper teams to each commando company. (The Israelis encountered a lot of sniper fire during the operation.) Also I changed the anti-tank weapons that the Syrians had. (Because of the mountainous, rocky terrain, they left their heavier anti-tank weapons behind, opting to use lighter ones.) Thus the weapons company had 82mm Recoilless Rifles instead of 107mm. The line companies had 73mm Recoilless Rifles in the Divided Ground version and RPG-7 teams in the Middle East version. (Historically they were RPG-7 teams but since Divided Ground does not have those units I had to used something else.) One will note a lot of Air defense units in the Syrian order of battle. Historically, after the Syrians captured the Israeli observation post early in the war, they moved up some independent air defense units on their side of the mountain to bolster the defenses against the Israeli Air Force. I lowered the Syrian artillery ammo level to 40%. (The 70th Artillery Brigade which was supporting the commandos had displaced further away during the war and operating at its

extreme range, thus it was less responsive to indirect fire requests.) Finally for the Middle East version, I rated this scenario as Historically Based, not Historical. Conmy took some shortcuts in creating this scenario that I could not correct. Still it is an interesting sceanrio.

Conclusion

.This completes the fixing of these scenarios from Divided Ground. I hope that players find them more enjoyable than the original versions from the game.