

DESIGN NOTES FOR THE MOST TERRIBLE NIGHT

**By
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The Most Terrible Night is a scenario that was originally created by Al Sandrik for the game Divided Ground. It did not come with the video game, instead it was posted on the now-defunct Games Depot web-site. The scenario was based on the boardgame "Suez 73", which was published by Games Designer's Workshop in 1981. It was the biggest scenario that Al Sandrik had created for Divided Ground and could justifiably be considered to be his magnum opus. Yet for all of its grandeur, it did have its faults. The biggest telling fault is that Sandrik made this game just after Divided Ground came out, before even the first patch for the game was released or posted by Talonsoft. Thus it was strewn with errors. For this reason I basically left it alone and concentrated on my Chinese Farm scenario series. Now that in my program to convert all Divided Ground scenarios to Middle East I have come to this scenario, I am forced to deal with it. The process took somewhat longer for this scenario because of its size and depth. But as I corrected the errors I saw the makings of a great scenario and my congratulations goes out to Al Sandrik for its creation.

Mapboard

In studying the mapboard I noticed that the distances and sizes of certain terrain features did not look quite right. I saw that Sandrik based the design of the map on a section of the "Suez 73" mapboard. He patterned it after that. Checking against a copy of a "Suez 73" game map that I have I found that his map was perfect enlarged version of it. However the "Suez 73" was designed for an operational level game. Divided Ground is tactical level game, requiring a tactical level map and so in enlarging the "Suez 73" map, a lot of little terrain features we are used to seeing on the other maps of the Chinese Farm area are missing. Also the distances between locations just did not match those on other game maps of the same area, so I did so measuring and found that Sandrik's map uses about 200 meters per hex, not the standard 250 meters. While this cuts the real life ranges of all weapons down by a fifth, because this battle is happening at night it really does not matter. But since the map was looking rather bland I added some terrain features. I added the railroads that are on both sides of the Canal and also that little marshy island in the Great Bitter Lake. None of these will any effect in the game, they just make the map look more accurate.

Orders of Battle

Sandrik based his primary order of battle for both sides on the order of battle from the "Suez 73" game, at least as far as the identity and number of brigades and independent battalions on each side. However he used the T.O. & E. data from the original Divided Ground OB Editor. This was before even the first patch came out from Talonsoft, correcting them. Thus I had to go through each major unit and make corrections where needed based on the latest patches for Divided Ground (Patches 1.4 and 2.0). For example, I had to increase the Egyptian artillery and rocket units from four to six strength points each. In another case I had to changed the tanks in one of the armored brigades on the Egyptian 21st Armored Division from T-62 to T-55. (T-62s were only in special independent armored brigades.) On both sides I added HQ tanks to the tank companies, battalions, and in the Egyptian case, brigade level command units. I added SA-7 units to the Weapons Companies which historically had them in the Egyptian forces. One will notice that the line brigades in the 21st Armored are understrength. This is

because they participated in the abortive 14 October offensive and took losses which have not been replaced. In addition, the 18th Mechanized Brigade has two of its battalions located off map and out of the scenario as a result. I made some minor changes when converting from Divided Ground to Middle East. For example, I changed the engineer units in the Egyptian 4th Engineer Battalion to Bridge Engineer as they are located around the pontoon bridge crossing the Suez Canal and charged with guarding it. In the Ain Jolloud Battalion I changed the militia units to Palestinian infantry as is appropriate for that unit. One problem that Divided Ground has always had has been its trucks. Only light trucks rate a six point unit, the medium and heavy trucks only rate a four. Since most passenger units in the game are six point unit, the light truck was the one that was always inevitably used to transport. I guess that the fact that the symbol of the light truck in the game looked like an open back medium or heavy truck also contributed to its almost constant use. Well in keeping with history I changed most of the trucks on both sides to medium or heavy trucks as appropriate, only rarely using the light truck for transport. I also gave the engineer units engineer trucks. One may wonder why the Israeli Boats and Rafts do not get trucks for transport in Divided Ground. This is because Divided Ground does not have the mechanism for loading and unloading Boats, rafts, and bridges on and from their trucks, so they must appear on their objective later in the scenario as a reinforcement as if they were transported as they would be in real life. This also applies to the Israeli Gilowa Ferry, it can not move on land, only in the water, so it too must appear at the objective as a reinforcement. However in Middle East the boats and rafts can be carried in engineer trucks so I added them to the Israeli order of battle and now they are transported on trucks from the board edge as reinforcements. Also the Gilowa ferry can now move on land as well as water and so it enters along a road as a reinforcement as well.

One of Sandrik's problems in his scenarios is that he loves leaders. He has too many leaders on both sides. Just about every company and battery has a leader. If that is not bad enough, he also overrates his leaders. I lowered the ratings of all leaders to those appropriate to their command level, with occasional exceptional leaders with slightly better ratings. But I did not remove the excess leader, I left them in. Excess leaders are those in artillery batteries and companies and the higher level command structures for those units. Also most support and weapons companies do not need leaders as these leaders' functions are usually administrative. But as I said, I leaving them all in as this is Sandrik's scenario.

Scenario

As I said before, the scenario is based on the boardgame "Suez 73", to be specific, the first scenario in that game which is also named "The Most Terrible Night". Sandrik's original version had a double line of Trench hexes in front of the Egyptian positions, going from the top of the map down around to just south of Chinese farm where they became of series of Pillboxes and Improve Positions. These were based on the Trench hexes on the "Suez 73" map. These were special defensive hexes in that game representing increased defensive positions in those hexes. I believe that Sandrik over-estimated the effectiveness of those defenses. I believe that he put the unoccupied trench lines out in front of the Egyptian positions as an anti-tank ditch because he did not know how to make one in Divided Ground. As it is, regular Trench hexes do not slow down anybody in the game and also they would give the Israelis free defensive positions to move into on the first turn that they did not have in real life. So I removed the trench lines. I also removed the unoccupied Pillbox and Improved Positions south of Chinese Farm for the same reason. In their place I gave the Egyptian forces a series of Blocks and Level 1 Minefields adjacent to their positions. This improves their defensive capabilities and is also what the Egyptians were able to erect during their week on the defensive. Also I gave the Egyptians in the Chinese Farm area Trenches in place of some of the Improved Positions because the irrigation ditches were used as trenches by the Egyptians in their defense. If I could I would change them all to

Trenches, but the placement of vehicles and mobile leaders requires I leave some Improved Positions so that they may derive some defensive protection. I changed the Pillboxes along the Suez Canal to bunkers on the East Bank and to Improved Positions on the West Bank as these are what they historically were. I kept most of Sandrik's objective hexes even if I do question some of their locations. However, I did move four 25-point ones that were in the south over bunkers that no longer exist. I put them into Chinese Farm to cover more hexes in there. Sandrik did misplace some units that were with other battalions that were not theirs. Most of the time these are support weapons from sister battalions (i.e. a 1st Bn/3rd Mech's anti-tank platoon in the 2nd Bn/3rd Mech's area and vice versa). These were easy to correct.

While converting this scenario to Middle East, I had to make some small changes to units set ups. Most of these were brought on by the changes in the carrying capacity of vehicles and the effects these had in the stacking of units in hexes. This also allowed to some minor changes to the reinforcement schedule.

Conclusion

Al Sandrik definitely created an impressive scenario here. It's too bad that he created so early before the patches came out for Divided Ground. If he had waited, many of the mistakes he made would not have occurred. But he didn't wait and as a result there were a lot of errors that I had to correct. Now it has become the scenario that I think that Sandrik meant it to be. Play it and enjoy.