

DESIGN NOTES FOR THE GAME “MIDDLE EAST ’67” SIX DAY WAR OF 1967 SCENARIO (REVISED)

**By
Alan R. Arvold**

Middle East’67 is an operational computer game by HPS Simulations which recreates the various wars between the Israelis and Arabs during the middle to late Twentieth Century. It was designed by John Tiller and is a very good game. However I found fault in the 1967 War scenarios, namely the orders of battle for both sides. John in his design notes clearly explained the reasons for such poor orders of battle, basically both sides to this day (2010) have never released a comprehensive order of battle for their forces in that war. There were deliberate gaps and misinformation in the OOBs that were released to the public. In fact, the real orders of battle may well never be known, at least until everyone who was ever alive during the time that war occurred has passed away and there is nobody left who can possibly profit from that information. This has made for an extremely frustrating situation for war game designers who want to present an accurate presentation of that war in their games.

I too have experienced this frustration while designing scenarios for various games that deal with the Arab-Israeli Wars of the Twentieth Century. However, in my quest for better scenarios for the 1967 War, I have amassed a rather comprehensive order of battle for both sides over the years. Most of this comes in the more recent years as I was doing work on improving the scenarios, and creating new ones, for the game Divided Ground by Talonsoft. I did a lot of work on scenarios from the 1967 War in that game and decided to impart the knowledge gained from them to Middle East ’67. I do not claim that it is 100% accurate, in fact some of the numerical designations of the units of both sides in the OOB are a deliberate fabrication as I could not find out what they were, but those units were numbered in accordance to the owning side’s policy and procedures for unit designations.

The Israelis

The Israeli Defense Force (as the Armed Forces of Israeli are generally called) had a particular system of labeling their battalions in the early years of its existence. The battalions were numbers in the multiple of tens based on their parent brigade’s numerical designation. (For example, the 1st (Golani) Brigade would have its battalions numbered in the teens, the 2nd Brigade would have their battalions numbered in the twenties, the 11th Brigade would have their battalions numbered in the 110’s, etc.) this was regardless of what type of battalion that it was. Not only that, the Israelis would frequently change the numerical designations of individual battalions within the brigades to give the impression that they were rotating battalions in and out of the reserves to and from the regular army. Perhaps the best example of this was the 77th Armored Battalion. Many post war histories of the 1967 War listed this battalion as being in the 7th Armored Brigade. However the battalion number did not exist in the Israeli Defense Force during the 1967 War. About a

year before the war, its numerical designation was changed to the 79th Armored Battalion, under which guise it fought during the war. Shortly after the war it was changed back to the 77th Armored Battalion, taking with it its operational combat history during the war as the 79th, hence the confusion between the two units (who were in reality the same unit). Some times the Israelis would number a battalion out of sequence with its parent brigade's numerical designation, perhaps the best example being the 82nd Armored Battalion in the 7th Armored Brigade, in order to further confuse their enemies.

This system worked well for the original brigades of the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces). However by the mid-Sixties, this system was being discontinued in the new brigades that were being raised as Israel expanded its armored and airborne forces. In order to fill them, battalion numerical designations from the original brigades were randomly assigned to the battalions of the new brigades, while the battalions in the old brigades were assigned a new number, usually from within the particular brigades numbering scheme, though occasionally a number from outside the brigade's scheme was used. Perhaps a good example of this was the Israeli 55th Paratroop Brigade, with the 28th, 66th, and 71st Paratroop Battalions. Also just before the war, some brigades traded battalions in preparation for their particular missions, so the battalions kept their old numbers.

Although most of the numerical designations of the battalions have been identified, there are some brigades where it has proven impossible to find the battalion numbers, mostly due to the Israelis refusing to divulge the information to anyone. This was most particularly true in most of Paratroop Brigades. In cases like these I have used the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalion designations within the OOB for those brigades.

Support units within the brigades usually had the same numerical designation as the parent brigade did, although there were a few exceptions such as in the 10th and 16th Brigades. Almost every brigade had a scout or recon company and most had a mortar battalion as well. Brigades which did not have a mortar battalion usually had an artillery battalion assigned to it in its place. Only a few brigades, mostly the paratroop and one or two infantry brigades as well, did not have any support elements at all.

The original brigades in the IDF were numbered 1 through 16. After that new brigades had their numbers were randomly chosen without any particular concern for numerical order.

The four Israeli divisions (known as Ugdahs in the IDF) were usually called by their Division Commander's last name, although three of them did have numerical designations, Tal's division being the 84th, Yoffe's being the 31st, and Sharon's being the 38th.

As artillery battalions were being formed in the IDF they were usually given a numerical designation from the brigade they were assigned. However as artillery battalions started to become independent, assigned to their own artillery regiments, they were given numerical designations which were unused in the lowest numbered brigades.

The reasons for the high numerical designations of the two artillery brigades are unknown.

The 16th Infantry Brigade was unusual in that it had at least eight infantry battalions assigned to it, although four of them were reserve formations and reassigned to other missions during the war.

The 10th (Harel) Armored Infantry Brigade had an armored battalion (the 95th) which had five maneuver companies in it, four with Sherman tanks and one with Centurion tanks.

The Egyptians

The Egyptian Army has done more than any other army in the Middle East to keep its Order of Battle for the 1967 War a secret, even to this day (2010). Most of what we know about the Egyptian order of battle for that war comes from the Israelis, and this was from captured vehicles and material in the Sinai. And even this is relatively incomplete. While we have a pretty good order of battle for the Egyptian 2nd and 7th Infantry Divisions and the 20th PLA Infantry Division, the information on the rest is relatively sparse. This is because the Israelis literally destroyed and captured these three units in the first two days of the war, with most of their records intact. The other divisions, though either destroyed or badly mauled, managed to evacuate their records or they were destroyed, thus leaving the Israelis with not much to go on when identifying which wrecked vehicles belonged to which units. Thus we have had to go on a lot of indirect information to get the identification of the other units in the Egyptian Army. I can not guarantee the accuracy of all of the unit identifications for the Egyptian units, indeed some units I just guessed at the numerical designation, based on known unit naming procedures in the Egyptian Army before and after the war.

The Egyptians had in the Sinai six divisions, plus a division size task force, and numerous independent brigade, regimental, and battalion size units. While most of the divisions had existed for some years in the army, they all had their internal organization rearranged during the months prior to the 1967 War. This was because many of the their best battalions were busy fighting in the civil war in Yemen and so when the divisions were ordered to move into the Sinai, their places had to be filled with second line or National Guard units in order to appear being up to strength.

The Egyptian 2nd Infantry Division had only two maneuver brigades (the 10th and the 12th) but had two artillery brigades (the 51st and 52nd) and the 6th Tank Regiment which had two tank battalions, plus the division's anti-tank battalion under its command..

The Egyptian 3rd Infantry Division had three maneuver brigades but only one artillery brigade. None of their assigned numerical designation are known for sure and so I used the numerical designations that they had in the 1973 War. The 141st Armored Brigade was completely equipped with T34/85 tanks.

The Egyptian 4th Armored Division had two armored brigades (the 2nd and the 3rd), a mechanized brigade (the 18th), and an artillery brigade (the 46th). The numerical designations of the two armored brigades are known, but the others are based on their 1973 War designations. The two armored brigades were equipped with T-54/55 tanks.

The Egyptian 6th Mechanized Division had two infantry or mechanized brigades. Their types have never been fully established and different histories give different descriptions. For the game I made them mechanized brigades. The 125th Armored Brigade was also assigned to the 6th Division. It was a strange brigade as it had different types of armored battalions and companies within its ranks. These includes a heavy tank battalion (with JS-III tanks), a regular medium tank battalion with T-34/85 tanks, a tank company with Centurion tanks, and an assault gun battery with JSU-152 vehicles (since these do not exist within the game I substituted a JS-III company for them). The division also contained an artillery brigade. As the numerical designations of the mechanized and artillery brigades are unknown, I used the brigade designations from the 1973 War. The division also had two commando battalions assigned to it as well as an extra anti-tank battalion.

The Egyptian 7th Infantry Division was less than a month old when the war started. It was also the largest with three infantry brigades (the 9th, 11th, and 16th), one National Guard brigade (the 112th), one armored brigade (the 14th), and two artillery brigades (the 49th and 57th). In addition, it had an engineer battalion assigned to it (the only division to have one). If this is not enough, there were numerous tank, heavy tank, and anti-tank battalions assigned either to the division directly, or to one of the maneuver brigades. Each brigade had its own internal organization. The 9th Infantry Brigade only had two infantry battalions as its third one was detached to the 20th PLA Division. The 11th Infantry Brigade had an additional PLA battalion which came from the 20th PLA Division. The 16th Infantry Brigade had two infantry and one mechanized battalions, which was why some histories label it as the 16th Mechanized Brigade. The 112th National Guard Brigade has been frequently misidentified as a regular army brigade in some histories. This is probably due to the fact that between the 1967 and 1973 Wars, it had its status upgraded from a national guard to a regular army brigade. The 14th Armored Brigade, which was equipped with T-54 tanks, was actually detached and sent south to the central Sinai a few days before the war began.

The Egyptian 20th PLA (Palestine Liberation Army) Division had three PLA infantry brigades (the 1st, 107th, and 108th), each which had three PLA infantry battalions and a PLA artillery battalion. The 108th PLA Infantry Brigade was an exception as one of its infantry battalions was a regular army battalion (from the 9th Infantry Brigade of the 7th Infantry Division). It also had a tank battalion (the 53rd) and two commando battalions (the 63rd and 72nd) assigned to it. The 53rd Tank Battalion still had its old British style T.O.& E. from the 1950s, it never converted over to the Soviet style of organization like the rest of the Egyptian Army did.

The Shazli Armored Task Force was small division size force consisting of an armored brigade (the 24th), an infantry brigade, and an artillery brigade. The 24th Armored Brigade

was equipped with T-54 tanks. The infantry brigade had one infantry and two paratroop battalions in it. The numerical designations of the infantry and artillery brigades are unknown to history, thus their designations are purely my guess.

The Sharm-el-Sheikh force, which was located down on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, was a force of about two brigades. The one real brigade, the 13th Infantry, had one infantry battalion, one paratroop battalion, and one artillery battalion. There were also three reserve infantry battalions in the force as well.

The 1st Armored Brigade, which was equipped with T-54/55 tanks, was an independent armored brigade that was scheduled to reinforce the Egyptian forces in the central Sinai when the war started. It was originally located west of the Suez Canal near the city of Ismailia.

The 2nd Recon Regiment was a two battalion force, tasked with patrolling along the border between Egypt and Israel. When the Egyptian Army started placing combat units along the northern part of the border, the 2nd switched its patrolling to the central and southern part of the border.

One will see a lot of Army Attachments which were spread all over the Sinai. These include at least four anti-tank battalions, five infantry battalions, one artillery battalion, three anti-aircraft battalions, and two artillery detachments. In addition, there were three border patrol battalions which were stationed along the border between Egypt and Israel. However, these occupied static positions along the border while the 2nd Recon Regiment patrolled in-between those positions.

Battalions in the Egyptians given numerical designations based on when they were originally raised, without regard to what type they were. This included not only regular army battalions but also reserve and national guard battalions as well.

The Jordanians

Of all of the Arab Armies in the war, the Jordanian one probably has the best known T. O. & E. It had twelve brigades, two of which guarded the northern, eastern, and southern boundaries of Jordan and are not included in this list. Of the remaining brigades, eight of them (the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 12th, 25th, 27th, and 29th) were infantry brigades and the other two (the 40th and the 60th) were armored brigades. The Jordanians, following British procedures, called their armored and artillery battalions regiments, although they did maintain two independent armored battalions (the 10th and the 12th). Their infantry and independent armored battalions and artillery regiments were given numerical designations in the order in which they were originally raised. For some reason the regular armored regiments in the armored brigades were given numerical designations separate from regular system that the Jordanians used.

The armored brigades each contained two armored regiments, a mechanized infantry battalion, and a self-propelled artillery regiment, as well as a recon squadron. The armored contained three armored squadrons that were equipped with either M-47, M-48, or Mk 3 Centurion tanks. The mechanized infantry battalions were equipped with Saracen armored personnel carriers, a variant of the Saracen armored car, which is why they have the armored car designation for their hard target status. The artillery battalions were equipped with self-propelled 105mm artillery vehicles. The recon squadron was equipped with Saladan armored cars.

The infantry brigades each contained three infantry battalions, one artillery regiment, and engineer company, an AT battery (17 Pdr ATG), a mortar company (107mm Mortars), and a recon squadron. The infantry battalions were foot infantry, whereas the rest of the units within each brigade were motorized. Two of the brigades (the 1st and 2nd used Saladans in their recon squadrons, the rest used the Ferret armored car. Three of the infantry brigades (the 1st, 2nd, and 25th) had batteries of 155mm Long Tom guns attached to them. Each infantry brigade had given name as well as a numerical designation.

The independent tank battalions each had four squadrons of tanks, compared to the armored regiments which only had three. They were equipped with either M-48 or Mk 3 Centurion tanks.

The Jordanians also had other Arab units operating within their borders. There was the Iraqi 8th Motorized Infantry Brigade (frequently misidentified as the 8th Mechanized Brigade in many histories). It had three motorized infantry battalions and one tank battalion (T-34/85 tanks) as well as an anti-tank battery (85mm ATG) and a mortar battery (120mm Mortar). There were two Egyptian commando battalions (the 33rd and 53rd) and one PLA infantry battalion as well.

The Syrians

The Syrians, like the Egyptians, were not very forthcoming with their T. O. & E. for their army in the 1967 War and again we must rely on the Israelis for most of the information that is available. The Syrian Army had at least twelve brigades broken down as follows; five infantry (the 8th, 11th, 12th, 25th, and 32nd), four reserve infantry (the 50th, 60th, 89th, and 132nd), one mechanized (the 17th), and two armored (the 14th and 44th). These were grouped into three division size units called brigade groups (or group brigades in some histories). These brigade groups were administrative units only, they did not coordinate operations between their own brigades or those of other groups.

There were at least ten artillery battalions in the Syrian Army during the war, eight which were assigned to the brigade groups and two which were held in general reserve. There were also two anti-tank battalions (100mm ATG), both of which were held in general reserve.

The armored brigades had two tank battalions (T-54 tanks) and one mechanized infantry battalion which used BTR -152 armored personnel carriers. They also had an engineer company and a recon company. The mechanized brigade was organized like the armored brigade except that it had two mechanized infantry battalions and only one tank battalion (T-34/85 tanks). There was also an independent heavy tank battalion (JS-III tanks) that was held in general reserve.

The infantry brigades each had three motorized infantry battalions, one tank battalion (T-34/85 tanks), an engineer company, a self-propelled anti-tank battery (SU-100), and a heavy mortar battery (120mm Mortars). The reserve infantry brigades had three reserve infantry battalions, an anti-tank battery (85mm ATG), a heavy mortar battery (120mm Mortar), and an engineer platoon.

There were at least seventeen independent reserve infantry battalions that were spread out in various locations from Damascus to the Golan Heights of which seven were deployed on the forward edge of the Golan Heights along the Syrian/Israeli border.

It is not known how the numbering scheme for the Syrian battalions worked. What is known is that most of the battalions changed their numerical designations every time another coup occurred in Syria. Syria was plagued by numerous governmental coups up until about 1970 when they finally ceased when the present regime took over and finally provided a stable government. While the numerical designations of the brigades and the brigade groups were well known, few of the battalion designations were ever known with any certainty. Thus most of the numerical designations of all of the battalions in the game are of my own guess work.

Conclusion

This completes the design notes for my revised 1967 War scenario in Middle East '67. I hope that players of the game finally get a good idea of the actual forces involved in that war.