

# The Sword And The Juggernaut

## The NLF Offensive in Vietnam

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In an earlier issue of the *Victory Insider*, Tony Curtis described a strategy for the US player to win the Campaign Game. He laments the defeat as a stain on the proud history of the U.S. Armed Forces. I would like to praise the military genius of the leaders of the Vietnamese Peoples' Liberation Forces. It is only now that we can begin to admit that the US was outmaneuvered militarily as well as politically by the brilliant and resourceful leaders of the Vietnamese Liberation Forces.

The Liberation Forces employed major offensives successfully in Vietnam, and in the game, it is also an integral part of a strategy for NLF victory. We will outline some basic points of strategy and tactics that will help the NLF to win.

### Airpower

American airpower is devastating. To minimize the effects of U.S. air, the NLF player should only launch major offensives during the Spring, when airpower is cut by 25%. All operations must be planned with this in mind. The NLF player must determine what his objectives are before he conducts his first operation. He must have a strategy that will trigger certain responses in his opponent and wastes his resources in defending targets of minor importance. The NLF player will want to divert American airpower, use up Airmobile (helicopter) Points and waste US/ARVN defensive resources.

Play your opponent. By that, I mean something more sophisticated than knowing his style of play. The NLF player must visualize how the situation appears to the US player, and have some conception of his options and possible responses. This will help you construct a set of "if-then" plans to meet them. Also, remember that any major offensive will eventually run out of steam. Estimate how many units and replacement points you can afford to lose and be ready to call a halt when it happens.

Keep the enemy unsure about your grand strategy and timetable for as long as possible. The initial disposition of NLF/NVA forces must not disclose the NLF main objectives, yet the forces must be logistically and geographically stationed to allow them to reach those objectives on the first turn. Be aware that the over-all battle plan will eventually become obvious, yet the longer it remains a mystery, the longer the US player will be off-balance.

Timing your main strike is very important. If it comes too soon, then your hand is tipped and an enemy response will follow sooner. The enemy can compensate and relocate his forces to match your troop concentrations. If the main assault comes too late in the offensive, then your reserve of NLF/NVA replacement points may be too low to exploit any gains made. Each NLF/NVA operation, great or small, must encourage unwise use and deployment of airpower and defensive reserves. In the initial operations, the NLF player must use sophisticated methods of trickery, bluff and diversion.

Attracting American airpower to trivial targets is more an art than a science. With different opponents, a plan will have differing degrees of success. A series of minor attacks with small Viet Cong units might attract US airpower, but with other players, a more elaborate trick may be necessary.

The "Credible Target Ruse" works upon the principle that the enemy is unclear about NLF objectives. The NLF player conducts an apparently large-scale operation against a key position, key town or major capital city. To the US player, the operation appears credible as a major objective because the target seems worthwhile. He sees a respectable number of NLF/NVA units in position or moving into position for a second round of combat. The attack has been delayed until a good number of minor NLF operations have been conducted. The goal of this diversion is to induce the US player to leap to the conclusion that "This is the big one!" and unleash his air force.

Once he has committed huge chunks of airpower, the NLF player can close the trap by declining to attack, or announcing that his attack will

involve only one or two units. With sufficient NLF/NVA forces, the Credible Target Ruse can be used repeatedly until enough US airpower has been drained so that the main assault can be conducted with very little sting from the air.

Variations of this ruse can be employed. Wave assaults can be used against the true objective even after the US player knows these targets to be the objective of the NLF player. The NLF player can mentally apportion his forces, planning ahead for two, three or four assaults on the same target in the same turn. These assaults would each be discrete, separate operations that would use up the enemy airpower before the final assault. At least the punishment from the air will be divided into smaller, less devastating packets.

While the influx of US/ARVN defensive reserves may tip the odds unfavorably for the final assaults (these reserves being triggered by the initial wave assaults), the influx of reserves may also put the US player's forces in a higher casualty column on the CRT. If there are too many reserves committed, the NLF player can call a halt to the wave assaults and try again later.

### Strategic Options

Any NLF major offensive will be a blend of two basic strategies: the Sword and the Juggernaut.

The Sword strategy divides the NLF forces into roughly equal strengths. These forces attack weak points in the line, avoiding the heavily defended positions. This will create so many pressure points that the US player cannot adequately defend all of them. The NLF plays the odds to win a significant fraction of the objectives. Although some of the attacks will fail miserably, other attacks will succeed immediately or eventually. This strategy works best when the US/ARVN forces are spread thin and the US or ARVN replacement pool is dwindling. If many ARVN units are ineffective, then the US and Free World Allies (FWA) forces will be overworked retaking captured positions or relieving units facing the NLF offensive.

The Juggernaut strategy deploys a strong NLF force against well-defended US/ARVN positions. Despite many other minor operations or diversions across the map, the Juggernaut would be the main action of the offensive. In theory, the Juggernaut would topple one objective, and then move on to a second objective in the line of march. For the life of the offensive, the NLF player may be able to seize one or two heavily defended US/ARVN positions.

The disadvantage of this strategy is that the US player can see what the NLF player is doing as soon as the Juggernaut is assembled. He can deploy his reserves and utilize strategic movement, holding, and patrol operations to block the Juggernaut's advance. US airpower will be used against the mass of NLF units. The NLF player will suffer a lot of casualties in the set-piece battles. So the NLF player must be careful not to sustain too many losses, and know when to move to the defensive. If he is not careful, he will have to run and give up the one or two objectives that he fought so hard for.

By combining these strategies, the NLF player can keep the US player off-balance. One or several Juggernauts could be used as a massive diversion to induce matching US/ARVN troop deployments. Meanwhile, an aggressive Sword strategy could be made against non-reinforceable positions all over the map. Likewise, a series of smaller task forces could break off from a Juggernaut, by-pass US/ARVN strongpoints and attack positions from which the US player has formed defensive reserves. The success of these two strategies depend upon the deployment of the NLF forces. Putting too much distance between two components of a Juggernaut that are supposed to link up will not work. Scattering NLF forces into task forces that are too small will tie them up in frustrating attacks on positions that will not fall or retreat. Deploying all NLF units into one massive Juggernaut will shorten the effective life of the offensive. The NLF player must be flexible and have a set of contingency

plans ready to implement.

### Guerilla Warfare and Set-Piece Battles

Hit-and-run tactics are good for inflicting moderate casualties on the US/ARVN positions, or for snatching ungarrisoned or lightly garrisoned provincial capitals. Yet guerilla tactics alone will not seize and hold them very long. This strategy is best used when coordinated with conventional formations that can topple strongpoints like bowling pins. Guerilla actions work best by spearheading a Juggernaut. They can cut roads and take up key positions and approaches to key positions so that the US player cannot deploy buffer units and obstacle units to slow down the Juggernaut. Likewise, guerilla actions can facilitate the withdrawal of main force at the end of an offensive, serving as buffers to the US/ARVN chase.

At some point in the offensive, the NLF player may be forced into a set-piece battle, either to take a main objective or as the only defense against a US/ARVN counterattack. If the set-piece battle is the only solution to capturing a main objective, then it is important to conduct the attack wisely and efficiently. The main assault should be made after all the possible casualties that can be cheaply inflicted on the US/ARVN replacement pool have been taken. It may be wise to conduct the main assault(s) on the second turn of the season to make sure that the enemy's replacement pool is as low as possible. The main assaults should be joint Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army operations unless the NLF player is using a wave attack with NVA mech units in the final push.

In a set-piece battle, the NLF player should follow these guidelines if the objective is heavily defended by US/ARVN units and airpower:

1. Take the time to seize key positions around your objective. Surround it to block lines of ground reinforcements and inhibit reinforcement by air. When making your timetable, you may have to take into account the time needed to brush away US/ARVN units in buffer perimeters around the main objective.

2. Hold key positions adjacent to the main objective with sufficient forces, even though these forces are not enough to actually take the objective. Take time to position your forces correctly so that those units that will take casualties will be ones that are attacking across rivers. These units (when the assault comes) will satisfy loss requirements without changing the assault odds much.

3. Besiege your main objective until the big main force units arrive along with artillery units. Be satisfied with bombarding the main objective until a good number of US or ARVN replacement points have been eaten up by other actions.

4. Drain as much airpower as you can with "Credible Target" and "Credible Assault" tactics before beginning a major assault.

5. Use VC/NVA units in the initial wave attack to distribute casualties between the two armies.

6. Attack at no less than 3:2 or 2:1 on the final assaults.

7. Save most of the NLF artillery for the final assaults.

8. Save most of your NVA Mechanized units for an assault with NVA units only so that their inherent +2 pursuit modifier can be used.

9. Be prepared to take 20% to 40% casualties of units assaulting the main objective before calling off the attack.

### Tactical Methods

Now that we have discussed the overall battle plan for the major offensive, we can outline some tactical methods to employ:

1. Cut strategic roads in many places. This can be done by moving units right onto the road, or stationing them alongside it in five or six locations. If they are on patrol, it will have the same movement effect as if they were right on the road.

2. Attack weak enemy outposts to quickly destroy them before the second round of combat.

3. Attacks on American-held positions at weak odds can be made to draw and drain American airpower. Earnest attacks should be made when that unit is isolated, on its own, and not combined with ARVN. Massive attacks with artillery support and offensive interdiction are best. The NLF player can also inhibit the escape of an isolated US unit by entering the target hex.

4. In general, keep NLF units in some sort of cluster formation to prevent easy encirclement by US/ARVN search and destroy missions. Only use units individually (usually Viet Cong battalions) to make hit-and-run attacks that drain US airpower or inflict minor casualties on the enemy. Individual units can be used to tempt US/ARVN search and

destroy operations or cut roads but, even then, try to keep units within one or two hexes of each other.

5. Use NVA Mechanized units to punch through weak spots and suddenly appear in battles that they were deployed near.

6. Get as much as you can out of one search and destroy operation with as many rounds of combat as you need to accomplish your purpose. Do not let US/ARVN delaying tactics slow you down. Very often, the US player will surround one of your main objectives, and, once attacked, retreat behind other US units so that the NLF cannot continue the attack. The NLF player can counter by positioning his forces in the perimeter-busting operation in such a way that no matter where the US player retreats, he will have to face operating NLF units. If the target inside the perimeter is a main or major objective, be ready to squeeze as much action out of your attack on his perimeter and be ready to assault the objective if the US player retreats there.

7. Use distractions, decoys and feints to attract matching enemy troop deployments or to attract search and destroy operations. The NLF player may want to sacrifice one or two VC battalions to decoy US units away from the main action. After the enemy has come after some of your isolated units or your decoy formations, he may not be in as favorable a position to strategically move these units next turn to the main action areas.

8. Keep the escape routes open. The US player may be waiting patiently for your offensive to end. In his offensive operations he might position his force deep in your rear to cut off your escape into the DMZ, Cambodia or Laos. Have sufficient force ready to fall back on these enemy units and clear them away. If this is not feasible, then alternative escape routes need to be found.

9. Concentrate NLF forces for defensive set-piece battles when the search and destroy mission uses more manpower than firepower. Conversely, scatter your forces in defensive actions when the S&D mission uses more firepower than manpower. If you have kept your units in clusters, and the US player attempts a major S&D operation against that zone, it is best to concentrate NLF units using reaction move, alert move and retreat. Even though such concentrations will make it easier for the US player to encircle the NLF forces, it also makes it more likely that such a concentrated force will be able to break out of the encirclement by crashing through the weakest US/ARVN units. This is a good tactic unless massive amounts of US firepower is available. If so, bring the enemy's operation to an quick end by sending your forces out in as many directions as possible. Deny the enemy an effective target hex to bring his firepower down on, even if that means dispersing (removing from the board) one or two VC units and scattering the remaining units. That is better than feeling the full effect of the airpower and artillery. If you can force the US player to end a heavy firepower operation, you have done the best that can be expected.

On the other hand, it is best to stretch out a heavy manpower S&D operation. The purpose is to force the enemy to chase you in the direction you want while punishing him in battles that are not all that favorable for him. Plan your retreats of massive forces over weaker units and outrun slower units which will keep shaving the odds against you even more, thus making the next round of combat less attractive for the enemy. If you run out of favorable terrain to retreat over and the odds against you mount, scatter your forces and compel the enemy to pick on one or two of your units while the rest escape. The US player will find that he has committed a lot of troops to an operation that has cost him a sizable amount of casualties while inflicting only moderate casualties.

### Psychological Warfare

"Playing your opponent" is the essence of *Vietnam*. There are no set strategies that will work all the time. The NLF player must keep the enemy unsure about what the appropriate US response should be. Blatent NLF troop movements warrant a response, but what kind? Obvious troop concentrations may demand a matching deployment from the US player. NLF forces scattered in a region, yet within range of a key position that could be the focal point of an NLF assault can also cause the US player to think twice about moving his forces to another area.

Remember that the NLF player must have definite objectives for each operation. The US player will not always respond as you want him to, but there will be times when he will. And when that happens, you can exploit this opening to the fullest advantage.