

# Finding the Tunnel's Light

## Winning the Vietnam Campaign Game

By Tony Curtis

Who out there among us has not felt that the U.S. could have — should have — done better in Vietnam? That tired old phrase “now you can change the course of history” takes on added power when talking about a Vietnam simulation. Most of us would dearly love to see that part of our military history altered.

I helped to playtest *Vietnam's* campaign game and found that the US player can win, but it's a tough fight. Not surprisingly, the US player has to use a different strategy than the one we lost with historically.

Simply stated, the US player must seize the strategic initiative and win the pacification effort. Every action by the US player has to be directed towards increasing the number of population points under South Vietnam (SVN) control. There are two advantages for the US when he wins the battle for controlling the hearts and minds of the population.

*First.* Not only does the US player get to fully form and upgrade the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), but it allows the formation of a large pool of replacements for a long war of attrition. I've never lost a US unit, and seldom any ARVN units, but the ARVN has absorbed large quantities of replacements due to heavy fighting. The ARVN has to sustain a major part of the fighting and casualties in order to prolong the US presence past 1971-1972.

*Second.* By reducing the amount of Viet Cong (VC)- controlled population, the US player dramatically curtails the effectiveness of the VC. Not only is the VC hard to catch and kill, they are the force most able to slow and halt the pacification effort. The cost to form VC units increases proportionally to the ratio of the VC draft level to VC-controlled population. The VC draft level increases when VC units are formed or replacements are created. The more the US player hurts the VC, the faster the VC draft level rises.

The level of VC-controlled population determines how many VC combat units can be built in each province. Each population point allows the expenditure of one supply point. Since a single VC battalion costs two supply points to create, it's apparent that high levels of VC-controlled population are needed to create a meaningful number of VC units.

Thus, as this ratio increases, so does the cost to the National Liberation Front (NLF) player to form VC units (see the sidebar 'The VC's Problems With Pacification' for more information). Keeping the South Vietnam provinces swept free of the VC determines how quickly the VC-controlled population falls. Not only does it become costlier to build VC units, it becomes much harder to field them inside of South Vietnam.

Of course, VC units can still be created at will in Laos, Cambodia or the Ho Chi Minh trail boxes, but their effectiveness is impaired because many of the highly populated areas in South Vietnam are outside of even strategic movement range. They can cause a lot of trouble in the border provinces, but because of their location, they can only look on while the populous coastal provinces are pacified.

Winning the pacification effort requires more than saying “go beat the VC and occupy territory.” We need to look closely at how much force is required, what areas of South Vietnam must be secured first (and why), and how to most efficiently fight and defeat the VC and NVA.

### Part One: Initial Deployment

*“All US involvement in South Vietnam hinges on two key indices: US morale and US commitment. Morale represents the nation's willingness to become involved in Southeast Asia, to send troops and economic aid, to deal with internal dissent, and to sustain losses. Commitment represents the degree to which the US is already involved. So long as US morale is higher than commitment, the nation remains willing to contribute more to the war effort. But when commitment exceeds morale, the country is more deeply involved than it would like to be, and its participation in the war must be reduced.”*

— from the Vietnam rulebook

The US player has to make two important decisions regarding his force levels: how much to create or bring in, and when to do it. Duplicating the historical deployment will bring the historical result: the US forces will do a decent job at pacification, but the strain on the US morale levels from the large amount of forces committed will force a total US pullout and a South Vietnamese collapse during 1973-1975. Letting the ARVN go it alone with minimal US ground support never gets pacification off the ground. In fact, with the ARVN doing most of the work against the VC, the government-controlled population will start to slide into the VC camp.

The best course for the US player lies somewhere in between. The US build-up must be more rapid than historically, but stop short of historical levels. The ARVN has to take up the slack by assuming an active role in the fighting from the outset. The US player has no real choice other than to hit the ground running.

Consider the situation before turn one of the first season begins: the NLF player has 90 supply points available for VC formation. Regardless of what the US player brings in as reinforcements, the NLF player will also have 18 commitment points (the original 10 given in the scenario, +3 for current US commitment, and +5 for NVN morale 40 or less). Assuming the US player bombs the north and the trail, the NLF player still will have in the neighborhood of 120 supply points which could be created and sent down the trail. Not all supplies will go for creation of VC units: replacements must be created, and supply must be reserved so that units can be created in the coastal provinces at the start of the second season without resorting to inefficient sea supply.

So at the beginning of the game, the US player will be looking at almost all of the 70 VC battalions in the countermix. That many units cries out for a large initial US reinforcement so that destroying the VC units can begin in earnest.

An even more compelling reason to bring in a large force is that each of the VC battalions not eliminated or forced out of populous provinces will affect the pacification die rolls at the start of the second season. The more of them left, the greater the negative effect. Consequences for the US player are grim. There is the outright loss of population and the delay in repairing the damage done. Provinces losing population to the VC will make it harder for pacification to work.

The following is a schedule of reinforcements which allows the US player to go after the VC immediately. Note that no more than 50 commitment points are introduced per season. The SVN morale does not benefit from anything over 50, but the NLF does in two ways. They get 20% of all new US commitment as NVN commitment. On

seasons 2 and 3 they would earn 6 extra commitment points because commitment would be over 75 and 125, respectively. US morale cannot stand the pounding of season after season where new commitment is substantially above 25. Up to 25 costs 2 morale points. Each 5 new commitment points thereafter costs 1 each.

### Season one

#### Unit (commitment points)

Remainder, 3d Marine Division (4)  
 Entire 101st Airmobile Division (10)  
 Entire 1st Air Cav Division (9)  
 3 155mm Artillery Battalions (3)  
 33 air points (11)  
 8 airmobile points (4)  
 21 replacement points (7)  
 2 SVN aid programs (2)

### Season two

#### Unit (commitment points)

Entire Americal Division (11)  
 Entire 25th Division (9)  
 30 air points (10)  
 6 airmobile points (3)  
 24 replacement points (8)  
 2 SVN aid programs (2)  
 49 ARVN supply points (7)

### Seasons three thru ten

#### Unit (commitment points)

Entire 1st Marine Division  
 Entire 4th Division  
 The Battleship New Jersey  
 6 to 8 175mm Artillery Battalions  
 2 to 4 155mm Artillery Battalions  
 130 to 150 air points  
 60 to 70 Airmobile points  
 3 Riverine points  
 Replacements as needed  
 SVN Supplies as needed  
 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Division (optional)

The first two seasons are giant killers, requiring 100 commitment points. Seasons 3 through 10 require between 10 and 25 commitment points each, with the higher amounts occurring earlier and then tapering off. The divisions listed above are my personal preferences because of their strong brigade artillery.

I listed the 1st Brigade, 5th Division as an optional unit. I use it mostly against massed North Vietnamese formations. I keep it combined as a brigade because it has an awesome pursuit modifier, and can accommodate up to 48 artillery, air or naval points. It's pretty good for security operations too.

There are two gentlemen's agreements players should agree to before the game. We know that dedicated artillery is more effective than independent artillery, and much more so in the Division HQ artillery. A player interested in gamesmanship can bring in more of these than allowed by introducing single brigades of divisions with HQs and their ar/ar cav battalions "attached." The commitment point cost is identical to introducing independent artillery, but the benefit to the US player is much greater. US divisional HQs, then and now, are located with the bulk of the division. To introduce them with what amount to independent brigades is wrong and should not be allowed. Agree that at least two brigades or regiments of a division have to be introduced in order to bring in the HQ. Personally, I bring in all three. When it comes to our stalwart Free World Allies, take them all gladly except for the Thai Black Panther Division. It's not very strong, and the three commitment points required to bring it in can be better used elsewhere. The rapid US build-up does yield a small dividend for the US player — the Free World Allies (FWA) units become available for use sooner.

Playtesting has shown that a US force of 6 or 7 divisions plus generous support levels is optimum for the campaign game. More ground troops drains US morale unnecessarily. If most of the US

countermix is employed, a lot of units are going to be underemployed or unemployed by mid-game, when the VC unit density is lower. You spend precious commitment and morale points every time you introduce US units; don't waste them by bringing in too much. But don't bring in too little ground strength. Past experience proves that six US divisions are more than twice as effective as three. South Vietnam has a lot of territory which must be secured, and it will require American ground troops in a lot of places to deter the VC. Let's face it: the ARVN, with its low pursuit modifiers and built-in VC alert bonus, will never do well fighting the VC alone. In addition to having enough units to go after the VC, a six or seven division density provides enough units to utilize as reserves and fire brigades. There are sufficient units to "checkerboard" contested provinces, and make search and destroy operations more effective, since US units not in the operation can block avenues of retreat, and serve as offensive reserves.

This large initial build-up will make more commitment points available earlier to the NLF player, but not enough to build the VC and NVA simultaneously and do justice to either. Your rapid build-up will force the NLF player into relinquishing either the pacification fight early, or delaying the 1968 Tet offensive.

So with the large initial US presence, the level of VC forces needed to contest pacification starts high and remains high. If the NLF player chooses to build the NVA and go for an early big offensive, the VC cannot infiltrate South Vietnam effectively. The US player will clear the critical provinces easily, and pacification will proceed more quickly than it did historically. What the NLF player gains is a North Vietnamese regular army possessing considerable firepower. It is this firepower which inflicts the majority of US/ARVN casualties. It is also this army which makes possible a truly crushing offensive. Backed by replacements and aided by the VC, the NVA has the staying power to launch enough attacks during an offensive to cause a drop of 20 to 25 US morale points. It does not take many such offensives to close the gap between US morale and commitment.

Or, the NLF player can completely ignore the NVA and concentrate on a strong VC for the first few seasons. Not only is pacification slowed, but in the first two or three seasons there may well be a small net gain in VC-controlled population. The US player will be forced to use fire extensively, and three or four worthwhile provinces will probably be driven into VC control because of it. Assuming you expended 50 commitment points in the first season, the NLF player will have 18 commitment points for second season VC production. You will be looking at all 70 VC battalions deployed again. The NLF player will have around 24 commitment points for season three, so you can expect to see no reduction then either. By now you are thinking "Why did I go for the fast build-up? Pacification is stalled, and the VC just keep coming back." Don't panic. The VC are at their strongest during the first two seasons. Beyond their battalions, they can create some expensive VC regiments. They can increase their initial strength only marginally.

As each season passes, add large amounts of firepower, upgrade the ARVN, and introduce enough US ground units to bring the force level up to that six or seven division level. This will enhance your search and destroy capability and produce higher VC unit and replacement losses. You will have locked the NLF player into a battle he can't win, and you'll be pacifying provinces despite the high levels of VC units fielded. The NLF player will be forced to put almost all commitment points into supplies and, by season four at the latest, personnel points for the VC draft. When the VC come out in strength and contest pacification, their losses will be high, and the original 143 VC personnel points will go quickly. The longer the NLF player concentrates on the VC-only strategy, the better it will ultimately be for you.

There are pitfalls to this strategy which are not obvious at first. The large VC losses raise the VC draft to ever higher levels. This plays into your hands as pacification picks up steam. The VC-controlled population starts to dwindle, making that ratio between VC draft level and population ever larger. Ultimately, pacification is not harmed, but the VC are. They become too expensive to build. The harder the NLF player fights with them early in the game, the sooner comes their demise.

Tactically, the NLF player always keeps some initiative because

he decides who runs the operations. Strategically, however, you have taken the initiative away with the rapid build-up. A slower historical build-up would let the NLF player keep pressure on pacification, but losses would be lighter and replacement costs less. There would be commitment points available to start building the NVA regulars. The rapid US build-up forces the NLF player to counter your moves, but without enough commitment points to do so adequately.

One last point about this build-up. The reinforcements brought in from season three onward are mostly support or artillery units. They are brought in because the old maxim "Firepower kills and more firepower kills better" holds true. Take a good look at the CRT. You can gain odds for an attack two different ways. You can mass bodies (ground strength points), or you can use some ground units and make up the difference with air, naval or artillery points. For example, pit 36 NVA ground strength points and 12 NVA artillery points against 12 US ground points and 36 air points. Both sides are evenly matched in total points. Assuming that terrain is not a factor and that a four is rolled, the NVA takes a 6-point loss and the US a 2-point loss. (NVA: 36 ground strength points plus 36 US air points to determine casualties; US: 12 ground strength points plus 12 NVA artillery points to determine casualties.) It doesn't take a massive number of ground units to prevail against the VC and NVA. It does require massive firepower.

The other side of our force equation is the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the ARVN. We made a serious mistake historically by carrying most of the weight of the war on our shoulders for the first three years. People conform to expectations. We didn't expect very much out of the ARVN, and they didn't disappoint us. Belatedly, we started "Vietnamization," and got a glimpse of an army that could fight.

Letting ARVN take a larger share of the fighting earlier pays dividends for the US player. Never forget the fact that the US player starts the campaign with 520 very finite morale points, and they go quickly. Defeating the VC/NVA requires sufficient ground forces, firepower, and replacements. The US player can provide enough of all three if he builds up to historical levels and neglects the ARVN for the first three years or so. The US player will also lose in much the same manner as occurred historically. Even using the US force levels mentioned earlier, commitment and NLF offensives will force the start of US withdrawal somewhere between seasons 20 and 24. Larger US force levels would only hasten the departure date. Eventually the ARVN has to be upgraded. If done sooner, it means that less US forces are needed initially, and some US forces will stay on far longer than historically. This is significant because VC units will never fare well so long as US battalions are around to chase them down. ARVN units are not well suited to killing VC because of its

## The VC's Problems With Pacification

To have a successful pacification program, you must defeat the VC and drive them out of as many provinces as possible. What may not be apparent is that as pacification becomes more successful, its success will be more harmful to the VC than the US and ARVN forces deployed against them. Pacification and the VC are irretrievably linked with the relation between the amount of VC-controlled population and the VC draft level.

The draft level begins at zero at the start of the campaign game, and increases with the expenditure of VC personnel and commitment points. They control 143 population points, yielding them 143 personnel points. These points go pretty quickly and then, as happened historically, NVA "volunteers" began filling the ranks. But, according to the rules, one NVA commitment point purchases 4 VC personnel points *so long as the ratio of VC draft level to VC controlled population remains at less than 4 to 1*. This purchase price will change. Keep the following ratios in mind:

VC Draft Level: VC Population Ratio	A NVN Commitment Point Buys
Less than 4 to 1	4 VC personnel points
4 to 1 — 6 to 1	3 VC personnel points
6 to 1 — 8 to 1	2 VC personnel points
8 to 1 or higher	1 VC personnel points

In theory, one NLF commitment point will always buy 4 VC personnel points regardless of the ratio. But, as the draft level increases over the population ratio, more and more points are lost through higher desertion rates, falling South Vietnamese recruitment, loss of sanctuaries and higher casualties caused as fresh, inexperienced troops are thrown into battle in place of experienced VC guerillas.

Then, as pacification picks up steam,

it feeds upon itself. When the SVN government reaches the 140 morale point level and pacification gets a beneficial column shift. As provinces have more population shift to government control, the columns used for pacification become more favorable, speeding the loyalty slide to the south. The 4 to 1 ratio is the hardest to reach, with the 6 to 1 and 8 to 1 coming easier because as the population controlled decreases, it affects the ratio much more dramatically than the gain in the VC draft level. Here is an example:

Season	VC Draft Level	VC Population	Ratio
1	75	143	Less than 1 to 1
5	204	126	1+ to 1
10	309	105	2+ to 1
15	402	74	5+ to 1
20	498	55	8+ to 1

By the 20th season, the NLF player will be receiving a 35- to 40-point morale increase per season, but, to keep up the pressure on the US player, most and maybe all of this will have to be used for commitment. If by season 20, one VC

about twice as expensive to produce than the stronger NVA regulars. It also becomes harder to deploy the VC where they are the most effective — inside of South Vietnam. With the exception of the starting VC set-up, from season one onward, supply expenditure for VC unit creation is limited to the amount of VC-population controlled on a province-by-province basis.

For example, in the Summer 1965 season, Quang Gnai province has 9 VC-controlled population points. Since a VC

battalion costs 2 supply points to create, up to 4 VC battalions could be placed in Quang Gnai, assuming no VC battalions were there during the initial placement. Several seasons later, if there are only 4 VC-controlled population points in Quang Gnai, only 2 VC battalions could be formed.

Neither of these examples takes into account the doubling of capacity through the use of VC supply conduits. When fewer VC battalions can be formed, it becomes easier for the US/ARVN forces to hunt them down. This enables the pacification die rolls to shift more population over to the government, making formation of the VC units inside of South Vietnam even harder. The entire pacification process becomes a vicious cycle for the NLF player, and a bright spot to be enjoyed by the US player in what will be a long and often frustrating war for him.

— Tony Curtis

battalion costs one NVN commitment point, the NLF player has a problem. To field even 30 VC battalions, plus the supplies to build them, plus replacements, would eat up all of the available commitment points. There is also the NVA regular army, far more battleworthy than the VC, which has to be built, upgraded, and supplied with replacements.

As the pacification goes against the VC, it becomes harder to justify building VC units which, counting supply, are

*"The most important problem experienced by American forces in Vietnam was not taking territory; US forces were strong enough to go anywhere that they were required. The problem was engaging the enemy. NLF forces could hide among the people, or melt away into the jungle when US forces arrived. The ARVN had been heavily infiltrated by NLF sympathizers; VC units frequently knew about an impending operation before the ARVN troops actually involved in it."*

— from the Vietnam rulebook

low pursuit modifiers, but when fully upgraded are capable of defending against the NVA regulars. A US/upgraded ARVN in the last 20 seasons is a winning combination, able to keep the VC under control and the population gains under government control while holding off everything the NVA can muster.

US casualties are a constant drain because they require replacements which raise the commitment level and decrease morale. It only makes good sense to use the ARVN whenever possible to absorb losses. There will be enough cases where there are only US units available to take losses, so whenever possible, start operations with ARVN units included. This is essential when slugging it out with large NVA forces, where losses can be several strength points per round, and combat can last several rounds. Taking losses of that magnitude with US or FWA forces is unacceptable. The ARVN has to absorb the majority of the losses to prolong the presence of US ground forces. To do so, the ARVN must have enough SVN-controlled population to draw upon an ample replacement pool. And in order for the ARVN to remain strong throughout the campaign game, pacification has to succeed. The US player must boost the population under SVN control from the original 217 up to the 300 to 320 level during the course of the game.

When seeking to get the most out of each US commitment point, think about this: one commitment point buys seven SVN supplies. These supplies can upgrade three ARVN regiments and one ARVN armored battalion. For one commitment point you receive seven extra ground strength points (two per regiment and one for the battalion.) and six extra artillery strength points (two per regiment). Bringing in an equivalent amount of US strength would require at least two commitment points. The cost of ARVN artillery is equivalent to US artillery units, and will be needed when US withdrawal occurs. If the US player has neglected to form them he will pay an extra price during withdrawal. First, he will have to remove the US units he introduced in lieu of the ARVN units, then, he will have to remove additional units to lower commitment enough to provide supplies for building and upgrading ARVN units.

When starting the campaign game, the US player has 110 SVN supply (100 provided at the start and 10 for the 217 SVN population controlled). The US player can expend these to "create" an ARVN from the countermix. For the first season, the ARVN should defend vital areas and supply assistance to arriving US forces. This means occupying all provincial capitals and major cities, and occupying Saigon with enough strength to prevent a game-winning *coup d'main* against it. Towns located off of roads should be occupied, but those on roads can be left open because towns occupied by the NLF count against pacification only if held by the NLF at the end of the season. NLF units place themselves at a disadvantage if they occupy towns on roads; the US player can run security operations against them before the end of the season. (Remember, there is no alert movement for the VC in a security operation.)

The initial countermix for the ARVN can take many forms, but don't create any augmented units on turn one and don't create any Rangers either — they just cost too much on turn one with the limited amount of supply available. Creating 3 ranger units on season one would only assure a 50% chance of their use in search and

destroy operations (die rolls of 4 or above would keep them out) and would cost the equivalent of 10 regiments and a battalion, or 21 battalions you couldn't form. Here is a sample of available units and what can be formed:

UNIT	Inf Bn	Inf Rgt	Div HQ	Ar Cav	Ar					
Available	18	41	13	17	12					
Formed	18	35	0	6	12					
Supply Cost	12	70	0	6	12					
						105	155	175	Ranger	Replacements
						12	5	6	5	N/A
						0	0	0	0	20
						0	0	0	0	10 = 110

No artillery was formed on turn one: too expensive. The large number of battalions formed frees most of the ARVN regiments from occupation duties so they can join US units in search and destroy missions.

On seasons 2 through 4, the remaining armor or ar cavalry battalions are formed and the rangers are built. Seasons 5 through 10 are used to form HQ's and upgrade all of the infantry and HQ's units. Some artillery is formed. Seasons 11 through 20 are used to form the remainder of the artillery and activate the last 2 ARVN divisions (the divisions may be activated sooner in place of forming the artillery or upgrading the existing regiments). Five years into the campaign game, you will have a full-strength, augmented ARVN on the ground by the time any US withdrawals begin.

Now that you have your initial ARVN countermix, you are in for a real treat. Actually, it's the NLF player who will get the laughs. You have to determine the loyalty and ability levels for your one- and two-star SVN leaders. The system requires keeping track of each leader's current loyalty on the map, but it is well worth it. Nothing else conveys so well the can of worms we opened when we started doing business with an often corrupt and inefficient command structure. Ability levels range from abysmal to very good for one- and two-star levels, with most falling into the mediocre range. The US player gets the luxury of being able to assign ARVN divisions to corps as he sees fit, making it possible to compensate for poor corps commanders by placing good quality division commanders under them, and doing the reverse with good corps commanders and bad division commanders. If this were as far as it goes, there would be no real problems, but each one- and two-star leader also has a loyalty rating. Murphy's Law decrees that there will be at least one or two leaders with horrible ability ratings, but super loyalty ratings — in other words, you will never be able to get rid of them. I always had at least one division, and often two, permanently garrisoning province capitals or major cities. Conversely, I always had to replace at least one officer of above average ability because of loyalty ratings of 6 or below. Usually I was also able to replace at least one terrible leader because of low loyalty.

The most important SVN leader to worry about is the ARVN chief of staff. He controls two divisions: the Rangers and the Paratroopers. They are swing units capable of going to Corps Areas requiring assistance, or where no division can function effectively under the Corps Commander due to low ability or low loyalty. Of equal or greater importance is that the C of S controls all ARVN artillery: itself a very powerful force.

Now, a bad corps commander can be worked around by some judicious division switching. Bad division commanders can be assigned to areas where at least their divisions defend vital cities or capitals, if nothing else. But a bad C of S is a serious problem. It turns your two swing divisions from assets into liabilities — just two more divisions suitable for garrisons. Worse yet, all the ARVN artillery becomes useless for most, if not all, offensive operations. Fortunately, chances of this happening are remote. Historically, the troops under the C of S were among the best in the ARVN, and you may want to make a second gentleman's agreement to ensure that the C of S has decent ability and loyalty ratings, even if it means increasing the odds that one or two of the Corps Commanders come out

below average.

The US player has another problem to take care of as quickly as possible: raising the SVN morale level to 140. First of all, as SVN morale rises, the loyalties of one- and two-star leaders will tend to rise, making a coup less likely. The US player does not need coups: they render most of the ARVN ineffective for the season and cost the US morale points. They decrease SVN morale by eight, costing the US additional commitment points. At a morale level of 140 or more, the pacification die rolls are shifted one column to the US player's advantage accelerating the slide of provinces into the government camp. It means that any province under VC control will be converted to government control over time if VC/NVA units are eliminated or forced out.

How can the US player help get SVN morale up to 140 as quickly as possible? First we have US commitment. Rapid build-up in the first two turns alone yields a 20-point increase to SVN morale (taking the first two turns representing 100 commitment points ÷ 5). Another facet, overlooked often, are the US aid programs. The first two aid programs per season cost one commitment point each and increase the SVN morale by ½ a die roll each. The average increase per season is 3 to 5 morale points; a very effective use of commitment points for the first two or three seasons. They shouldn't be needed after that, since any aid programs past the second per season yield only one point each. The commitment points used to buy them could be better spent elsewhere.

One other means of boosting morale is by not allowing provincial capitals to fall. It doesn't add morale to the SVN, but it prevents negative deductions. Progress in pacification also increases SVN morale. Once over certain levels, SVN morale increases. One method I found useful was unrestrained strategic bombing of the North for the first ten seasons; the 40 morale points was invaluable to the SVN efforts.

The strategic bombing of the North holds other benefits for the US player. During the first ten seasons, the NLF player's biggest constraint is in commitment points. He has the dilemma of trying to maintain the VC while building up the NVA. Why not add to his problems? Unrestrained bombing of the North eliminates 3 or 4 commitment points of supply each season from the amount being sent south. If the NLF player wants to form 50 VC battalions in the next season, he will be forced to allocate 13 or 14 commitment points so that he will have the necessary 100 supply points to send after the bombing is over. Upgrading the anti-air defenses will either lower the supply losses or raise the amount of US airpower necessary to keep them high, but upgrading costs commitment points. After 10 to 12 seasons, the South Vietnamese don't need much more help on their morale. The morale loss on the American side can't take much more either. In short, it's no longer cost-effective.

Bombing the trail has nothing to do with raising SVN morale, but while we are on the subject of strategic bombing, we should cover it.

Low-level trail bombing is used from the start. Eight air points guarantees one hit on the trail, reducing the first season supply capacity from 9 per commitment point to 8 per point. Assuming 15 commitment points are spent on supply, that reduction is the equivalent of 7 VC battalions not formed, or 45 replacements not created! If the NLF player wants to increase supply flow to where light trail bombing cannot cause any reductions, 8 valuable commitment points will have to be spent to raise the optimal trail status two boxes. If the trail status is not raised, keep up the light bombing. If it is, stop bombing for a while. When bombing the North is halted, recommence trail bombing with a vengeance. There is no morale point loss for trail bombing, and from the tenth season or so onward, the Achilles' heel for the NLF player is manpower for the VC, not supply. Pacification will be causing the ratio of VC draft to VC population to rise to where the NLF player no longer gets 4 VC personnel points for each commitment point expended. When the ratio reaches 6 to 1, only 2 personnel points out of the 4 are available for units or replacements (a reduction of 2). At 8 to 1, there is a 3 point reduction to 1 out of the original 4. If trail bombing inflicts enough hits to lower personnel capacity to 3 per commitment point instead of 4, a reduction of 2 at a 6 to 1 ratio means only 1 personnel point gets through. At an 8 to 1 ratio, the reduction of 3 means that none make it. The intensive trail bombing will force the NLF player to spend more commitment points to increase the trail status by several

*"In most wars, there is a line or front, across which opposing forces face one another. Each combatant tries to hold onto his territory and push or maneuver the other into surrendering ground. Vietnam was different. Even at the height of US involvement, there were simply not enough US troops to hold a line along the entire length of the country and to prevent the infiltration of men and equipment. The result of this was very fluid combat."*

— from the Vietnam rulebook

boxes and avoid the personnel reduction.

### Part Two: Where Pacification Begins

In guerilla warfare, the side that defends everything ends up defending nothing. As the US player, you need to remember that even with the ARVN, you will never have enough forces to simultaneously pacify the entire country — so don't try. You do have enough forces to pacify what is vital initially, and then spread out for the rest as the campaign progresses. Never lose sight of which provinces are most vital in terms of population points. Compare your population control sheet with the government-controlled population levels at the start of the campaign game. Notice that none of the provinces with nine or more population points is so firmly in VC control that pacification is hopeless from the outset. Of the eight-point provinces, only Tay Ninh and Vinh Binh are solidly VC. The VC will be out in force from the first season onward, so not all of the big provinces will be saved for pacification from the start. The VC can't be everywhere either. They may field 65 to 75 units, but if they opt to overload several key provinces, they will be weak in many others. Your task becomes one of identifying the provinces to "let go" in the first season, and the provinces to fight for regardless of VC presence.

Starting with I Corps, here is an analysis of the provinces showing which should be defended and where free fire can be employed.

#### I Corps (5 provinces, 54 population points)

Quang Tri and Thua Thien are pro-government, the remainder are mostly VC-controlled. Quang Tri is vulnerable to attacks because of its proximity to the DMZ and the trail. In both Thua Thien and Quang Tri, you can use free fire, but for different reasons. First of all, I have developed a rule for free fire: any province where there is enough government-controlled population to let you roll for pacification using the right-hand (most favorable) column, you can use free-fire when necessary (lots of targets or NVA regulars in division strength or more) because even with the -2 for free fire, it's very hard to come up with more than small adverse results. Don't make a habit of using free-fire in firmly controlled provinces, but if you need strength elsewhere, or the province is being overrun, one or two seasons in a row is usually OK.

For other provinces where pacification rolls are made on the 2nd through 5th columns, free fire has to be used more selectively. You have to weigh the impact of a -2 for free fire against what the VC/NVA will have left in the province at the season's end if free-fire isn't employed. If not using free-fire would leave enough VC/NVA units alive to shift pacification by -2 or more, you may want to use free-fire as a one season stop-gap until you can get more ground force and firepower into the area. There are four provinces — Quang Tri, Tin, Nam and Gnai — where this applies. Additionally, there are two provinces — Quang Tin and Quang Nam — where it may be necessary to use free fire for an extended period of time, driving both into the least favorable, pro-VC pacification column.

Should it become necessary to "write-off" an area for pacification initially, this will be one of the prime candidates because of the above reasons.

If the VC do concentrate in Quang Tin and Quang Nam, they are thin elsewhere, so you can afford to sacrifice a couple of otherwise desirable provinces in order to maximize the killing of the VC. Your pacification efforts in the areas the VC have left alone will more than ultimately offset your population loss. Later, with the one column shift, plus sufficient forces, these can be won back. Isolated from the trail, Quang Gnai will have to depend upon VC sea supply or pool supply. There is no border safe haven for the VC. If kept free of the VC, this 14 point province will slide over to the government side. Try at all times to keep enough ground troops and firepower in Quang Gnai where all VC can be eliminated without using free fire. This province should get "kid-glove" treatment.

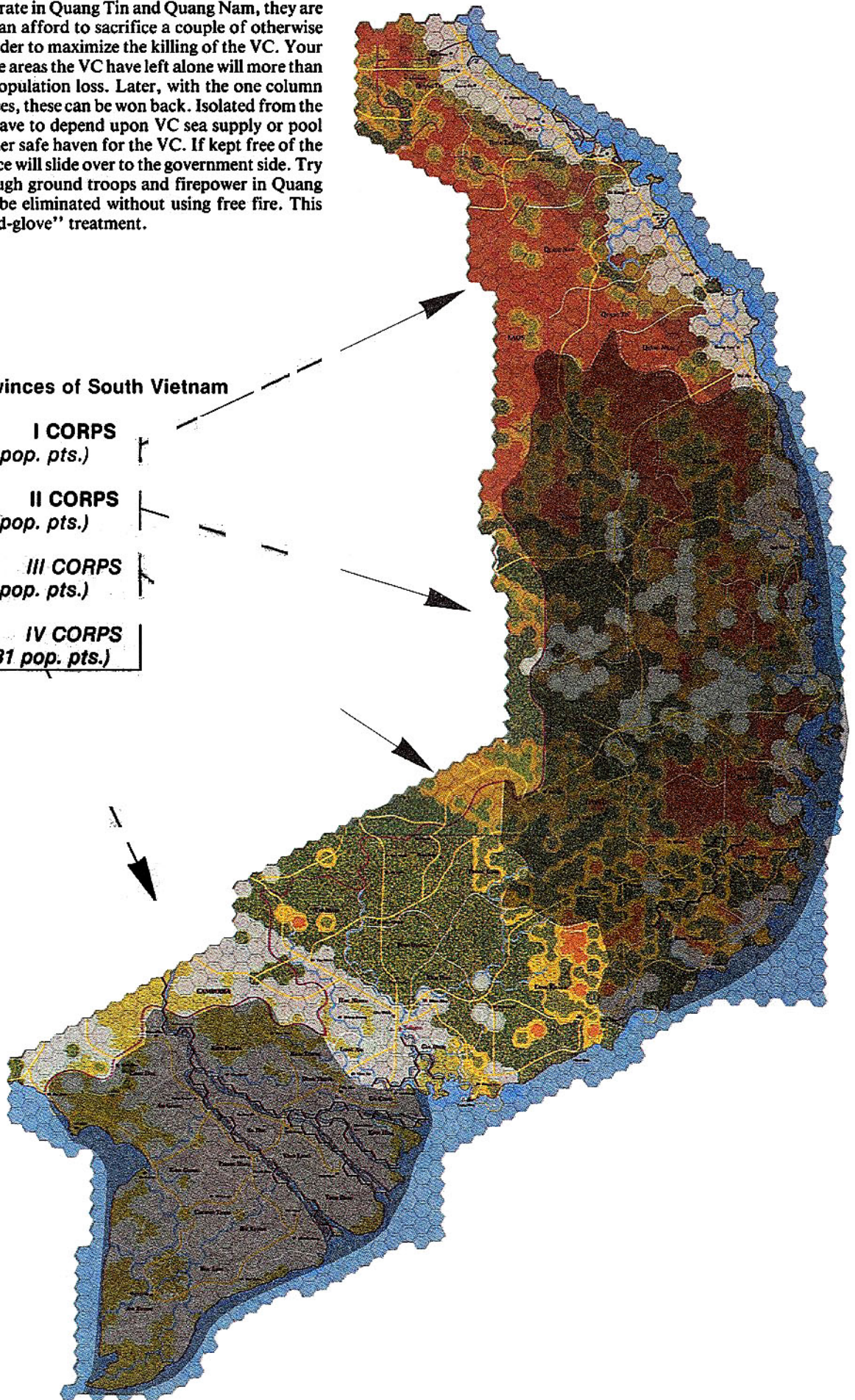
### The Provinces of South Vietnam

**I CORPS**  
(5 provinces/54 pop. pts.)

**II CORPS**  
(7 provinces/57 pop. pts.)

**III CORPS**  
(7 provinces/47 pop. pts.)

**IV CORPS**  
(16 provinces/131 pop. pts.)



### II Corps (7 provinces, 57 population points)

This region is divided into four coastal provinces, which must be secured, and three interior provinces which may be turned into free fire buffer zones. Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa and Binh Thuan account for 39 of the 57 population points. All are isolated from the trail. The main VC efforts will usually be in Binh Dinh and Khanh Hoa. It is vital to keep enough force in these provinces to preclude free fire, if possible, while completely clearing them of VC each season. Of the other three provinces, Phu Bon can be saved fairly early because it has only a small border with Cambodia and the trail. The border is easy to block and only a couple of VC battalions can be created there per season. Kontum and Tuyen Duc total only 11 population points. Both have substantial borders close to the trail. Both can be used for free fire early in the game while most available forces are used to pacify the coastal provinces. These two provinces are second of four areas where the US can "sacrifice" small amounts of population to gain more elsewhere.

### III Corps (7 provinces, 47 population points)

Two provinces, Long Khanh and Bien Hoa, are so firmly in government control that the VC seldom bothers with them. Tay Ninh and Phuoc Long are so firmly VC that free fire is the order of the day for the first few seasons. Both have extensive borders with the trail. Both are subject to massive VC/NVA overloads. We are talking about 13 population points of which the Government starts with 2! Until the one column shift applies, it is not going to be possible to swing these provinces out of VC control anyway. This doesn't mean abandoning the provinces to the VC, it means killing them as economically as possible, allowing larger forces to clear more sensitive areas without free fire. Hau Nghia and Long An fall into the category of places to clear without free fire whenever possible.

### IV Corps (16 provinces, 131 population points)

The provinces fall pretty much into two camps: a central core of highly populated provinces which have to be preserved for pacification, and exterior provinces which can be written off depending upon the presence of the VC. Here is how I divide them:

KEEPERS	Pop. Pts.	Govt. Cont.
Chau Doc	11	5
Kien Phong	8	6
Kien Tuong	8	6
An Giang	12	8
Sa Dec	6	3
Vinh Long	11	7
Ba Xuyen	9	4
Dinh Tuong	9	6
Kien Hoa	12	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>49</b>

WRITE-OFFS	Pop. Pts.	Govt. Cont.
Kien Giang	8	3
Chuong Thien	6	2
Phong Dinh	7	1
An Xuyen	5	0
Bac Lieu	7	3
Vinh Binh	8	1
Go Cong	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10</b>

At first glance you might say that writing off 45 population points is too much, but the sad truth is that those seven "write-off" provinces could not be successfully pacified anyway. It would take an incredible amount of luck to swing Vinh Binh or Go Cong into the government fold until the one column shift is available. A large part of the ten government-controlled population points in those provinces would probably be lost through normal pacification die rolls before considering free fire. Depending on how the VC are deployed, provinces such as Kien Giang, Chuong Thien and Bac Lieu might be pacified early on. On the positive side, however, you are going to control 9 provinces which will eventually yield 37 additional population points versus the 10 you are losing on a temporary basis. I say

temporary because terrain and geography work heavily against the VC in the Delta. Most of the firmly controlled VC provinces are coastal provinces; isolated geographically from the trail and across-border sanctuaries. Supply must come either from the pool or by sea.

The terrain is also not favorable. In the entire IV Corps there are only two hexes providing more than a -1 defensive shift. The extensive marshlands and river system often act as detriments to the VC because US units using airmobile or amphibious points can pursue faster than the VC can run. The initial US position in the central core of provinces allows your forces to expand outward, pushing the VC across the border in one direction, and into the sea in the other.

### Deploying Your Armies

The ARVN is fairly straightforward: for I Corps and II Corps, five divisions and half of the battalions. Only the provincial capitals in the II Corps "write-off" provinces should be garrisoned. Place +2 divisions in III Corps and Saigon; +3 divisions in IV Corps. The rest of the battalions will garrison provincial capitals in both Corps areas. The majority of divisional units in III Corps should be in the Hau Nghia/Long An area. The majority in IV Corps should be in the "Keeper" provinces.

Of the US units, place the remainder of the 3rd Marine Division at Qui Nhon. The 1st Air Cavalry has the Divisional HQ and one brigade in Saigon, one in Vung Tau, and the third at Cam Ranh. The 101st Airmobile Division deploys into both Can Tho and My Tho in IV Corps. Deploy one 155 battalions with the 101st Division, one at Cam Ranh, and the third in Qui Nhon. On the second season, deploy the Americal Division in the I Corps/II Corps area, and the 25th Division in the Delta. Subsequent reinforcements enter as the situation dictates.

Initially, the units you bring in should deploy in second status (headquarters on map and battalions without artillery attached). You will need the units deployed as battalions to go after the numerous VC units. In second status the pursuit modifier is one greater than if the artillery is attached directly to the battalions.

Later in the game, when the NVA regulars start to appear in force, some of the brigades will be recombined into first status single unit brigades to receive the enhanced combat power and pursuit necessary to take on the NVA.

Always take the war to the VC or the NVA. Remember that there is no place inside South Vietnam where the VC or NVA can hide from US/ARVN forces. You have the mobility and firepower to crush anything in sight, so use it. When you write-off a province to the VC, don't pull out permanently. Go after the VC there too. Your job in this case will also be easier, since you can use free fire and make your interdiction, air and artillery strength all the more potent. You can utilize true economy of force by dispatching the VC in the write-off provinces with a smaller force while reserving the majority of your forces for the non-free fire sweeping of the critical provinces. In 10 to 15 seasons, the pacified coastal and populous provinces will allow you to move your campaign into the border and fringe provinces. The preponderance of US/ARVN forces along the border will allow pacification to proceed even here without using free fire. Those few VC units which can be deployed in the interior or coastal provinces can be hunted down by small airmobilized forces. You are collecting the much-needed population points in a highly efficient manner, beginning with those provinces which can be won without the one column shift.

### Fighting the VC and NVA

Given the US commitment point and morale level constraints, you will find yourself playing not only against the VC and NVA, but also against the clock. You need a good dose of fighting smarts, because your opponent controls two entirely different types of forces. The VC units are not very combat worthy, but their ability to make reaction movement requires large amounts of force to trap them. When in clusters of four to six units, they are difficult to surround and destroy. They can use strategic movement not only to escape from dangerous situations, but also to position themselves at the end of a season to affect the upcoming pacification die rolls.

The NVA units cannot react, but they are far stronger, especially in artillery. It takes a great deal of firepower to amass favorable odds against them, particularly in the mountains. Their primary value to

the NLF player is to inflict casualties on the ARVN and US forces. Although good on the attack, the NVA units are at their best when occupying terrain that the US player must retake.

*Conduct efficiently your search and destroy operations.* This is obvious, but vital to note since these operations will account for destroying ninety percent of the VC units. This operation is important and complex enough to warrant coverage in a separate article. (See the next issue of the *Victory Insider*. Editor.)

While you must be aggressive against the VC and NVA, this does not mean taking foolish risks which cause excessive casualties or cost morale points. Do not fall victim to the "attack at all costs" syndrome, especially when only US or FWA units are involved. Every replacement point consumed in combat brings you closer to the point where withdrawal has to begin. Be very sure that there is an offsetting benefit for the losses you take.

Then there are the times when you will be able to bring overwhelming strength to bear against the VC/NVA. Your chances of taking casualties can be reduced if you leave some ground units out of the attack. Throwing your results into a lower column will lessen the odds of destroying or chasing off the target units, but trading losses is an attritional game that the NLF will ultimately win. So long as the NLF player has uncommitted units within striking distance of

US units, it is the foolish US player who allows his replacements to fall to zero. There is no situation where a three-point US morale loss for a unit loss is justified. It is better to lose a provincial capital or take a temporary setback in pacification rather than lose a US unit. It is also a foolish US player who uses units of the 1st Air Cavalry and 101st Airmobile after all airmobile points have been used. Any airmobile loss suffered would cost an entire morale point. You will have a hard enough time against the NLF without providing aid and comfort to the enemy in the form of costly errors.

*Keep ground, artillery and air points reserved for emergencies.* In this game you must keep reserves. If you commit everything and the NLF player still has units uncommitted, you can bet they will be used during the last part of each second seasonal turn to disrupt the upcoming pacification die rolls in the ensuing seasons. Here are two examples: In IV Corps you have used all available US and ARVN units in the second turn to clear the Delta, and you have done a good job. But there are five uncommitted VC units just across the border from Chau Doc. With no US or ARVN units to interfere, the NLF player runs five consecutive strategic movement operations to place these VC units in five cultivated hexes of An Giang province. Score a 5 on the pacification die roll. The US player will be very lucky not to lose any population, and the 5 makes it certain that none will be gain-

## USING THE FLOW CHARTS

The procedure of the Operations Phase is somewhat complex and different from most other games. These charts, or schematic representations, have been provided to clarify and summarize the events of the Operations Phase. Like the Sequence of Play, these charts specify what must be done, and the order in which it must occur. To use the charts, start at the top of the general Operations Flow Chart (below) and follow the arrows, answering the questions posed in the tinted boxes either "yes" or "no"; in each gray box, follow the instructions. If you are

undertaking a security, search and destroy, or clear and secure operation, the general Operations Flow Chart will direct you to the appropriate specialized chart on the following page. When you come to a box marked "Return to Begin Operation," start again with the general Operations Flow Chart. The Operations Phase has not ended until you reach the "End Operations Phase" of the general chart. Note that these charts are merely aids, and the rules themselves are final authority in any dispute.

## Operations Flow Chart

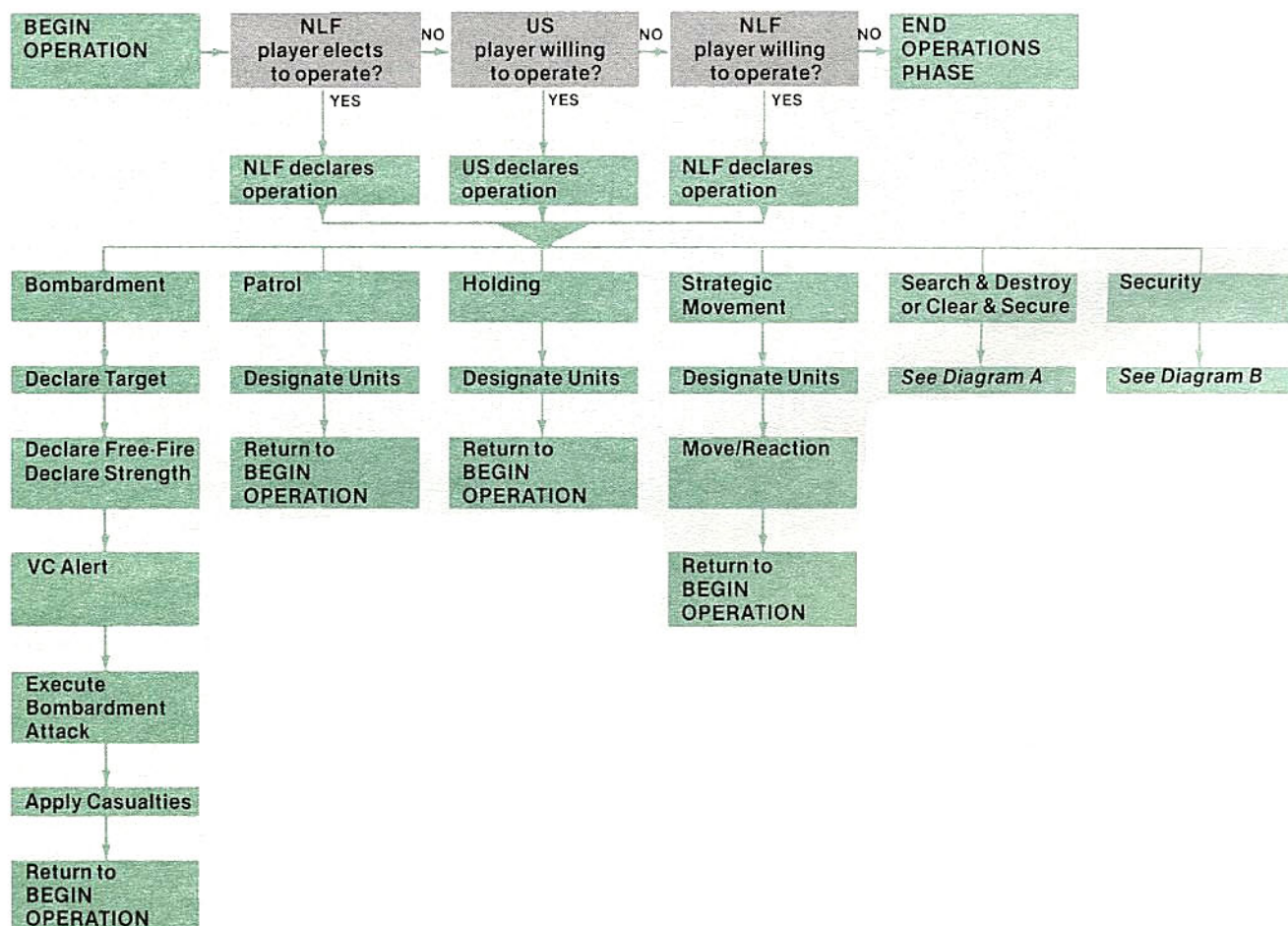
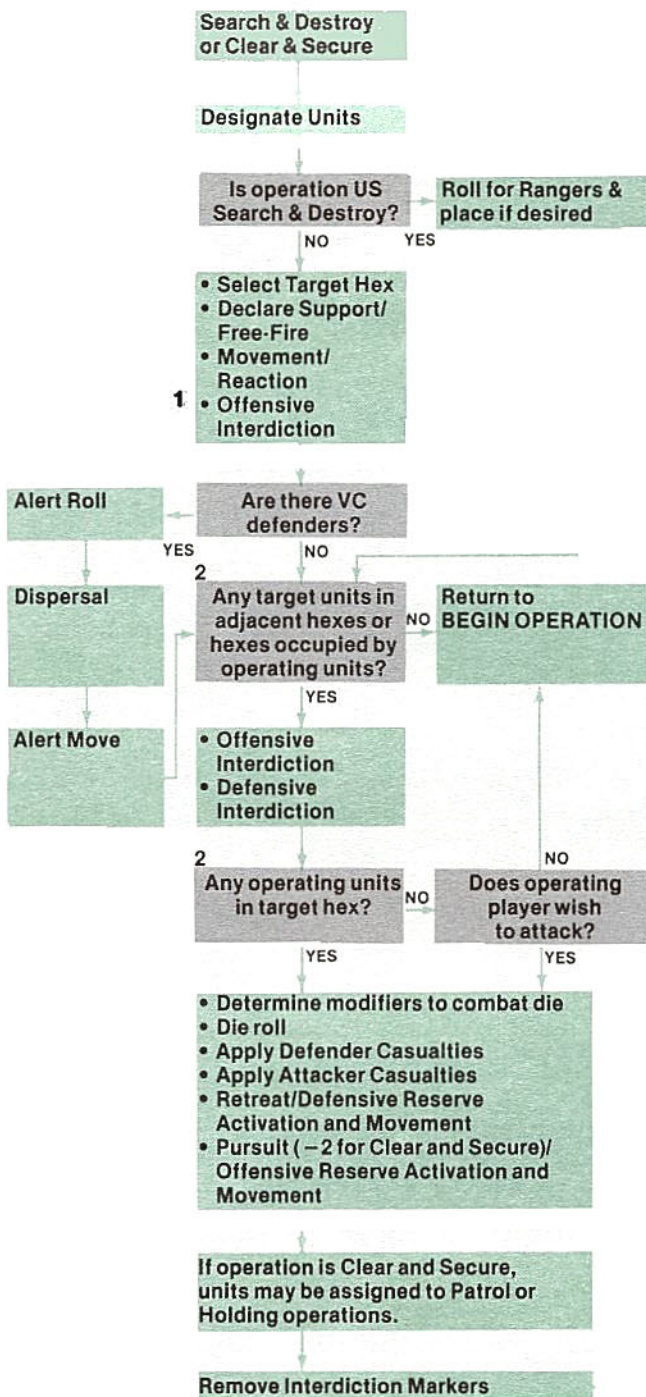


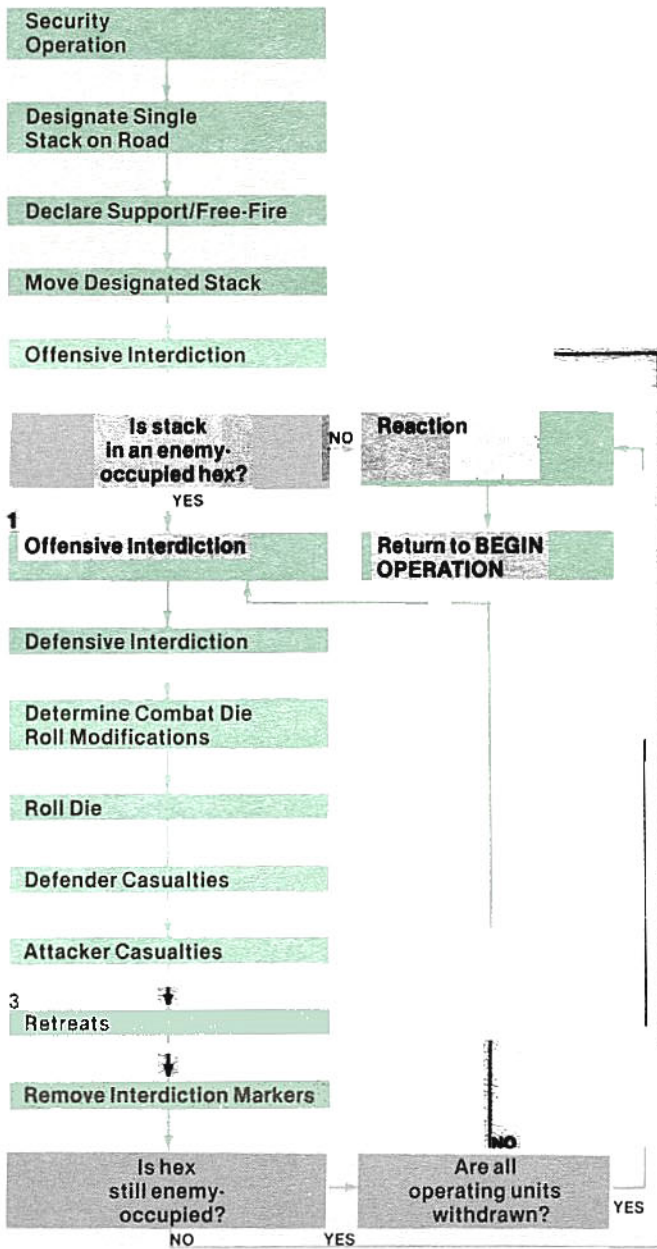


DIAGRAMA:

# Search and Destroy/ Clear and Secure



# Security Operation



1. Offensive interdiction counts toward first round fire.
2. If operation is Clear and Secure, units may be assigned to Patrol or Holding Operations.
3. Attacking units may withdraw.

ed. To add insult to injury, the NLF player runs five consecutive strategic movement missions at the start of the next turn, moving the VC units back over the border in safety.

In I Corps you have again done an outstanding job of clearing the VC and NVA out. As the second season closes, two uncommitted NVA divisions come across the DMZ and attack Quang Tri City. You are out of air points and your artillery has been committed elsewhere. The only uncommitted ground units are too far south to enter as defensive reserves. The NVA enter the city, taking heavy losses that are offset by the fact that next turn, Quang Tri's pacification die roll will be modified by -11! Chalk up a major population shift, and many seasons of careful pacification have just been blown away. Again, the NLF player conducts strategic movement operations to get the NVA regulars far away from the scene of the crime while you stand by powerless to halt their flight.

But, there are ways to counteract this end of turn threat from the VC and NVA. First of all, leave some ground, air and artillery units uncommitted near threatened areas. Their mere existence of these reserves will discourage all but the most massive and determined NVA attacks. When the VA or NVA units threaten to head for cultivated hexes, use your reserves to play cat and mouse with them. The larger the number of uncommitted VC or NVA units, the more you keep uncommitted. If the NLF player has five uncommitted VC units, but see that you have the strength to destroy the first four that come across, the gain he can get out of the fifth unit will not outweigh losing the first four. Another way to counter VC and NVA units that have successfully moved is to make it impossible to strategically move back on the next turn. Place US/ARVN units between the VC/NVA and the border on patrol operations in the special operations designation phase. Also, units can be strat moved during the US/ARVN strategic phase to interpose themselves between the VC/NVA and the border. Both types of operations can be carried out before the NLF player gets a chance to perform operations during the next turn. This way, the offending units will pay the price for the damage they did.

There is a more passive means to discourage VC/NVA strategic movement. In particularly vulnerable stretches of the border, position some of the chronically ineffective ARVN regiments. Among their few redeeming virtues is that they still possess a zone of control. Place them 2 hexes inside the border with 2 hexes between each unit. With 5 ranger units in the holding box the border will cost terrain +2, and each of the next three hexes will cost terrain +1 to exit. Even a VC unit with 21 movement points will find it tough to go too far. Most of the desirable coastal cultivated hexes will be out of range. These slow-down units placed near the border make the NLF player think twice about creating units further inside Vietnam, especially in the mountains, because US/ARVN units inside the borders don't just impede entry, they also hinder or block retreat. FWA units such as the Koreans or the Queen's Cobra Regiment are even better because they can be put on patrol, making movement cost terrain +2 to exit. Left alone, they are vulnerable to casualties, so try to stack an ARVN battalion with them to absorb the losses.

It is far cheaper to occupy some hexes within South Vietnam with a single unit than it is to use several units apiece to drive the VC out of each one.

In the Delta some of these troublesome hexes are 1373, 1775, 1966 and 2066. In the mountains of I Corps and II Corps, some of the hexes you might want to deny to the VC are 5631, 4919, 5548, and 4734. Each of these hexes gives a VC unit a terrain movement factor of +3 on an alert roll. The hexes surrounding the above hexes generally cost less to enter, making escape easier and requiring more US/ARVN units to block the escape routes. Much of the time you can use final round pursuit bonuses from nearby operations to position units in these "perfect" VC hexes to deny them to the VC in the next recruitment phase. If you don't have the units to pursue, then use ARVN battalions, ineffective ARVN Regiments or the Philippine unit to occupy these hexes. Another way to advantageously use final round pursuit is to create a couple of stacks of ARVN or ARVN/FWA units on roads using final pursuit. These will be available for security operations on the following turn. They will be strong enough to crush the average VC battalion caught on a road, and powerful enough with air strength added to do the same to any NVA units found. If the units are not needed for security operations,

simply move them out as needed to nearby search and destroy operations.

The NLF player can heavily contest a province by using a supply conduit to double the number of VC units created in a province, forming them into clusters. As many additional units as possible will be strat moved across the border to form additional clusters. Once established in clusters, the VC are very hard to displace, and cause adverse pacification results. The US countermeasure is to "checkerboard" these contested provinces so that VC clusters cannot develop. Picketing the border is a good way to start. Augmented ARVN infantry battalions are good also. They have no zones of control, but they can deny hexes and block retreat. The US armored cavalry squadrons placed on patrol status often provide an effectiveness to this "checkerboarding" out of proportion to their low ground strengths. Again, the NLF player may have second thoughts about committing large numbers of VC units to areas where they cannot cluster or escape. Deploy your ground units where they will be most effective. Mechanized battalions and armored battalions work best along roads, clear hexes and grassland hexes where their high pursuit bonuses can be exploited. They do pretty well in hills, but become very marginal in most other types of terrain. Your air-mobile units can be used to greatest effect in the mountains, forested hills and, surprisingly, the marshlands of the Delta (where they weren't employed historically).

Speaking of pursuit in the Delta, there is one method which beats airmobile, and that is the amphibious point. They are expensive to acquire, but you only need two or three of them since they cannot be destroyed.

*Use your dedicated artillery, primarily the division HQ's and the Americal DS unit.* These units can support any operation in range without being tasked so long as at least one of their respective subordinate units is taking part. This is one of the greatest force multipliers in the game if you use it correctly. You have to do a little planning to make sure that these units will be within supporting range of two or preferably three operations per turn. Because you will need more firepower in the mountains of I Corps it only makes sense to employ the Americal Division there where the multiplier effect of its dedicated artillery can be put to best use, freeing support points for other needed areas.

*Don't be afraid to invade Cambodia or Laos.* The best time to do so is immediately preceding an NLF offensive. This allows you to destroy a lot of potentially destructive units cheaply on the other side of the border, where free fire has no negative consequences. This is especially true of the open terrain opposite III Corps and IV Corps. Often enough damage will be done that the entire offensive will have to be called off in order to rebuild units and replacements. Figuring out when an offensive will commence is not as tricky as you might think, assuming of course, that the NLF player is planning on throwing a full-fledged one. The first tell-tale sign is a really large accumulation of NVA, and possibly VC, replacements. Offensives require a great number of replacements to be truly effective. This is because an offensive's success is proportional to the number of attacks made, and NVA/VC attacks, relying more on ground strength points than artillery, are expensive.

The second clue is that many NVA units generally wait in the safety of the trail holding boxes until an offensive is imminent, and emerge the turn before an offensive is declared. If the US player has collected air points as he should have, the NVA forces will be forced into hiding or lose 20 to 30 SP's per turn to bombardment attacks. Pay special attention to what the NLF player does during each winter season. If an offensive comes, it will usually be in the spring season because of the 25% reduction in US air and airmobile points due to monsoons. Invasions to destroy NVA units retreating during or after an offensive can be very effective also.

In summary, the 1965-1975 campaign game is winnable for the US player, but the victory won't be cheap or easy. Start big with the US forces, use the ARVN as much as possible, accumulate firepower instead of ground troops, put priority on securing the areas yielding the most population points to the SVN government, and take the war aggressively to the VC and NVA wherever they may be. You will be able to hold the strategic initiative from turn one and never relinquish it.