DESIGN NOTES FOR BLOODY EPIPHANY
By
Alan R. Arvold

  Bloody Epiphany was originally a scenario created by Peter Hickman for Divided Ground. It was not part of the original game nor was part of the official updates or patches. It was instead an original scenario that was posted on the now-defunct Games Depot website. Now at first it looked like a great scenario, especially in its hypothetical concept. But as I studied it further I found several errors in its execution. For one thing both sides had a shortage of leaders. For another thing was a poor command and control structure in the order of battle for both sides. There were also errors in the set up of both sides on the board. Various level headquarters were located in the same hex, something that would not happen in real life. A lot of battalion headquarters were holding a place in the front line. There were gaps in the front of both sides. Within several battalion set up areas there were company subordinate units that were mixed up with each other in the set up hexes, so you have examples like a company that has one platoon set up seven hexes away in another company's area or and isolated company size force that has three platoons, each from a different company and still under control of their original units. (Yes, situations like this do happen in real combat, but the platoons would be under control of the companies that they are attached to, not still under control of their parent unit.) If that was not bad enough, he was also using units from the 1956 War in the order of battle for this scenario which would occur in 1949, before they were historically introduced to the using army in question. The fact was, this scenario needed some serious revision in order to make more relevant to the times which were being portrayed.

The Mapboard

  The mapboard was really the best part of the scenario. It really looked like what area would look in the immediate post World-War-Two years. Players will note that the area looks a lot greener than the maps for Rafah 1956 and most especially for Rafah 1967. This is because over the decades the desert had been slowly encroaching into the area. Blowing sands were gradually filling in the depressions and gulleys, making them disappear from view. The sand also gradually covered some of the fertile farm land, making them wastelands. So there is nothing wrong with the map board, its just reflecting what the area looked like in the late 1940s.

The Orders of Battle

  It was the orders of battle for both sides that certainly needed work. While the general size and composition of each force was pretty good, the organizational status was poor. There were battalion and brigade headquarters controlling the forces, yet there was a definite shortage of leaders. I remedied that problem. Then there was not an overall commander and headquarters for the Israeli side. Again I gave them a divisional one as the Israelis would have learned their lesson by now after the debacle at Faluga a few months before where each brigade operated on its own, loosely controlled by a distant headquarters in Tel Aviv. (Sadly they would make this mistake again at Abu Aghiela in 1956.) On the Egyptian side the force was controlled by a division headquarters which controlled four brigades. Yet its name, the Rafah Counter Attack Force was misleading as the two infantry brigades were clearly defensive in nature and the other two brigades (the 1st and 2nd Motorized Groups) were each really an armored battalion with a lot of supporting units attached, not worth being given a brigade command. So I relabeled the Egyptian force as the Egyptian Defense Force, made the two motorized groups as

regimental commands, and put both of them under a brigade headquarters labeled the Egyptian Counter Attack Force, which itself is another brigade under the Defense Force headquarters. Now both sides have a more streamlined command and control structure. Next came dealing with individual units. On the Egyptian side we had an sIG II in their 2nd Motorized Group. In the Order of Battle Editor for Divided Ground there is indeed an sIG II for the Egyptians in the Israeli War for Independence although it is totally missing out of Middle East. I did some checking on this assault gun and found that the Egyptian Army did indeed have them, the only problem was that they were non-operational. (They were captured by the British from the Afrika Korps in 1942 and after shipping a few back to Britain for evaluation, left the rest in Egypt for the Egyptians. By 1949 they were being stored in a motor pool as there was no ammunition for the guns and no spare parts for the vehicles.) So I replaced the unit with a 25 Pdr howitzer troop and accompanying truck unit. There was also the numerous BTR-ZPU 14.5mm vehicles in the Egyptian order of battle. This vehicle was not available until the early 1950s. However I found that they were being used in Divided Ground to represent the self-propelled 20mm AA gun that was mounted on a truck. So I left them in the Divided Ground version and used the self-propelled 20mm in Middle East. On the Israelis side I saw that they had self-propelled 120mm mortars and 20mm AA guns. As it turns out, the self-propelled 20mm was available in the late 1940s, even if it is not in the Divided Ground Order of Battle Editor for the Israeli War of Independence, so I left them in both versions. However, the self-propelled 120mm mortar was definitely not available, so I replaced it with a ground mounted version of the 120mm mortar and a halftrack unit for transport. Also in the original scenario the author had different types of rifle units in some of the infantry units, in some cases they were rifle units from the 1956 War, in other cases they were militia units. I corrected both of these to the standard rifle unit for the Israeli War for Independence. (By this time in the war, the militia units were left behind to defend the settlements. As for the 1956 rifle units, they were used to create a fictional commando unit that the Israelis never had.)

I also re-labeled several units in the orders of battles, giving them the appropriate numerical designations. Perhaps the most bizarre unit was the Israeli 7th Mechanized Commando Battalion in the original scenario. Such a unit never existed in 1949. (This was the unit that had the 1956 rifle units.) I made it into a regular infantry battalion that just happens to have halftracks as transport. One will notice that most of the units are understrength and missing subordinate units. This is deliberate. At this stage of the war most brigades on both sides had many of their subordinate units scattered all over the place fulfilling various missions. Also the Egyptians are still using the old British T.O.&E. Organizations for most of their units. Again this deliberate as the Egyptian Army at this time still had a strong British influence.

The Scenario

The scenario set up followed the general set up that Peter Hickman had in his original scenario. However, I had to switch some units around to cover gaps in his set up. Not just that, I had to move back some battalion headquarter units from the front lines to positions where they could cover all units under their control for command and supply purposes. Unfortunately, I could not always position the brigade and the divisional headquarters to cover all of their subordinate battalions and brigades. This was especially true for the Israelis who are set up in a wide outside arc on the map. The Egyptian set up is also in an arc but is in a smaller area and and command and control is total. Also with all of the changes that I made in this scenario I no longer classify it as a Hypothetical scenario for Middle East, instead I classify it as a What If.

Conclusion

Peter Hickman had a great idea for this scenario, but his execution was poor. I only strove to make this a better scenario worthy of both Divided Ground and Middle East.