COA Demo: Operation Anaconda, Clearing the Whaleback

We need to achieve:

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Obj CALGARY clear of enemy:  131300ZMAR02.
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We have only two hours.

We need to move:

C Company PPCLI

1/A Coy/PPCLI
2/A Coy/PPCLI
3/A Coy/PPCLI
Mor Sect/A Coy/PPCLI

1/C Coy/PPCLI
2/C Coy/PPCLI
3/C Coy/PPCLI
Mor Sect/C Coy/PPCLI

HQ 3 PPCLI

We have the following air assets to move them with:

C/101 Avn:

2 UH-60L Black Hawks

2 Pl/3 Bn/101 Avn:

4 CH47Ds

Battlefield Calculus:

Air Assault Fire Team moves at 1.5 m/s or 11.11 minutes/km and we only have two hours. If we need an hour for the fighting then we need to land within 5.4 kms of the objectives if we land right away or closer if we land later. This constrains our landing zones in theory but in actuality most all are that close and a heavier constraint is cover from enemy fire.

See the attached screenshots for candidate LZs.

Initial Plan:

1. Strafe the Area with the A-10s and B-52's immediately.

2. Send in the other Mortar Sections on the two Black Hawks flying in column of C/101 Avn. These are sent into the same LZ where we have located the 120 mm mortars of PL/1-87 which is a secure LZ.

It will then overfly the planned air assault route to see where there may be trouble spots and to help determine which LZs are best of the candidates.

3. Pick the best candidate LZ and clear around it.

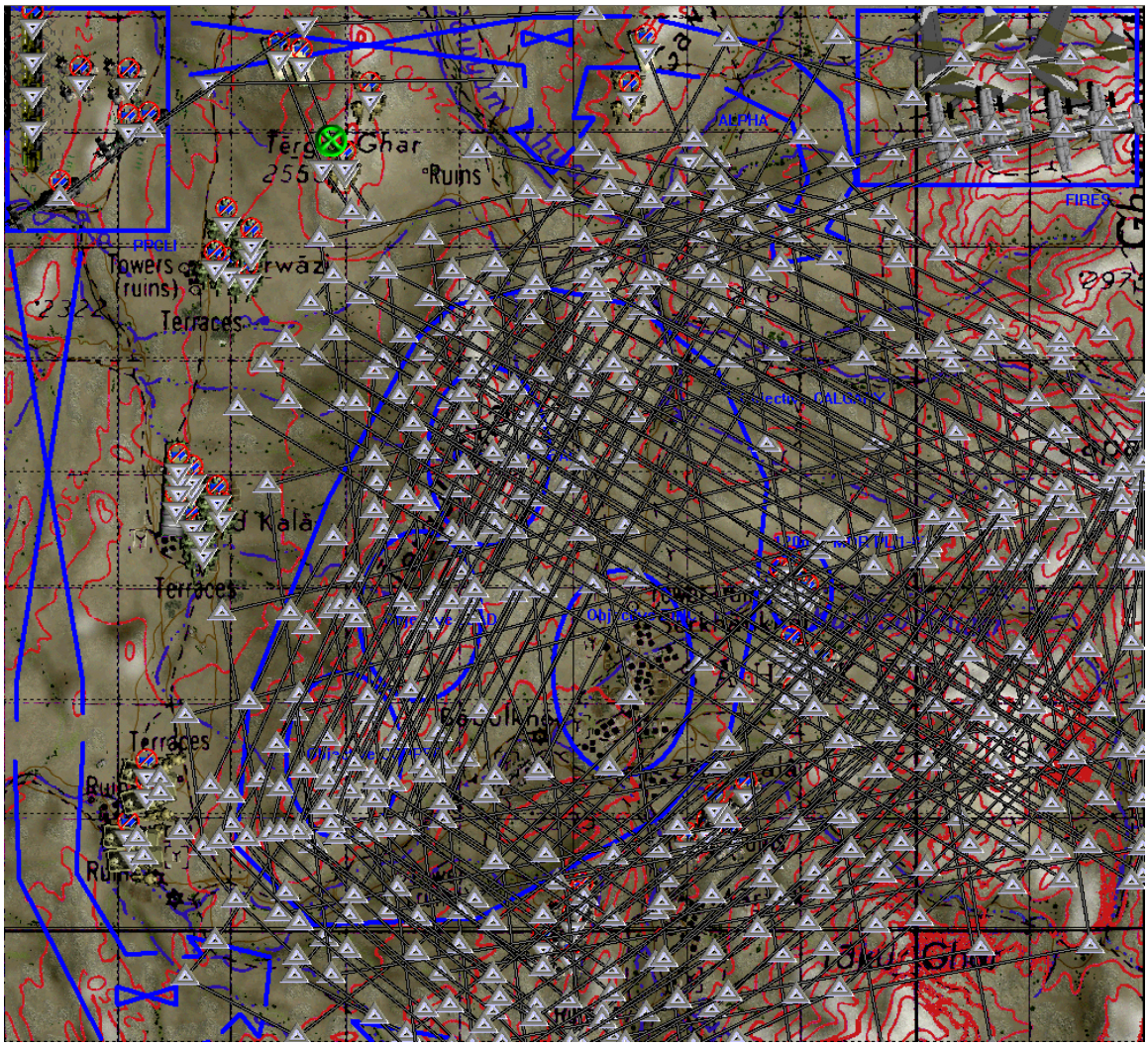
Results:

The strafing worked fairly well although I needed to have the A-10s in the area to spot for the B-52's and the B-52's have to fly almost dead onto the target to use the GBU's (DPICM setting on indirect fire).

I had focused on HMG and MMG teams but when my helicopters landed they were hit by mortar fire and suppressed but fortunately not suppressed. So next time around I should take out the mortars as HVTs.

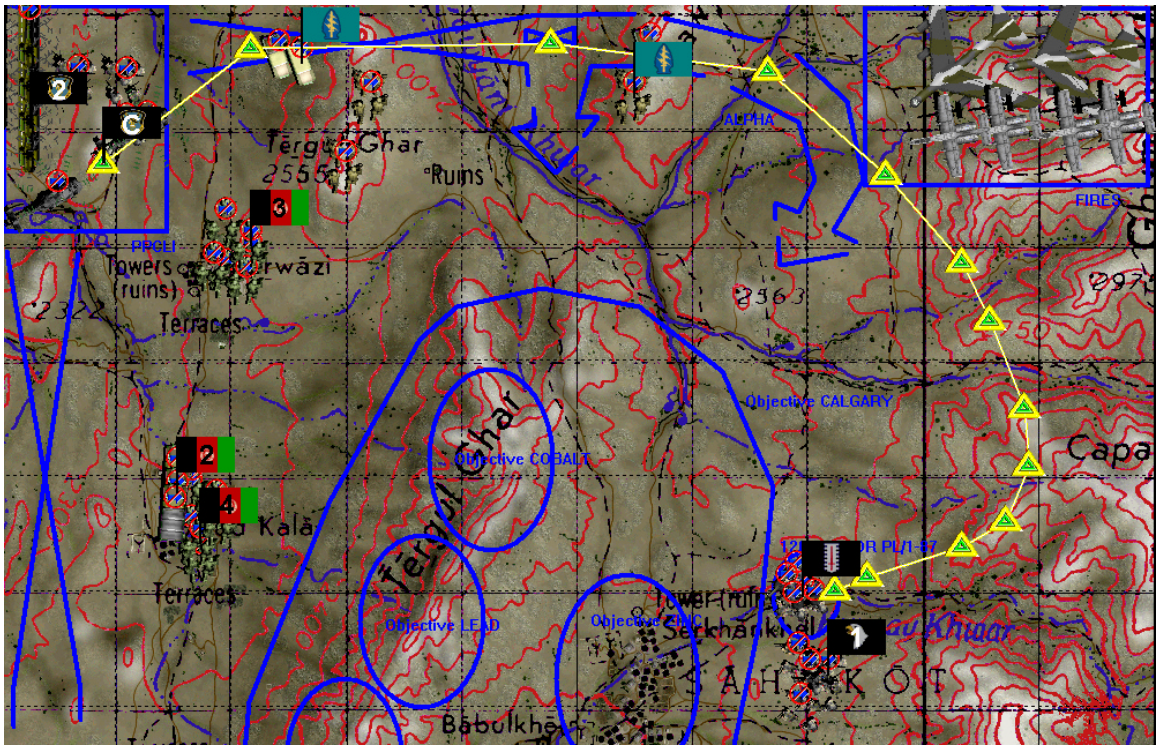
Using the Blackhawks to overfly the air assault route to find out the trouble spots worked well as it flushed out the MMG and HMG units that were going to cause trouble that might otherwise remain hidden.

Clearing the Whaleback Setup, Picture, Showing All Paths:



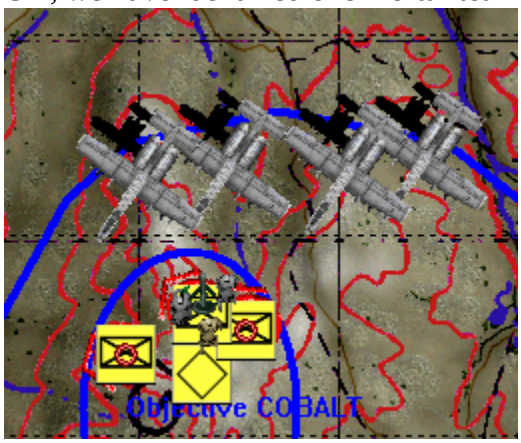
Clearing I'm intending on having all the planes traverse the whole area fairly thoroughly. I'm going to start the A-10's on hold fire to conserve their bombs for high value targets. Once I've identified those, we'll take those out, concentrating on MMGs, HMGs, and mortar teams. We'll use GBUs for those kind of targets, too, and Taliban Technicals, caves, and we'll use the HE bombs for clusters of personnel. But a first pass or two will be used to identify the HVTs.

Here is the path of the BlackHawks with their mortar sections:



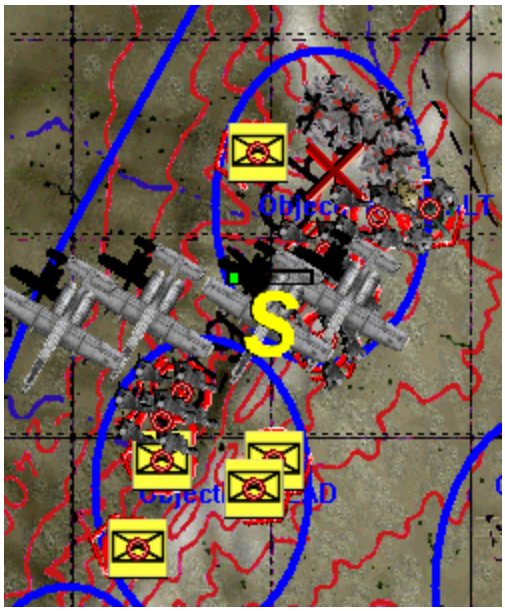
We start the clock now after putting the A-10s in hold fire. We see a Taliban Technical about at WB16449094 so we have vectored one A-10 and one B-52 so they will cross its path so they can target it.

OK, we have identified one mortar team:



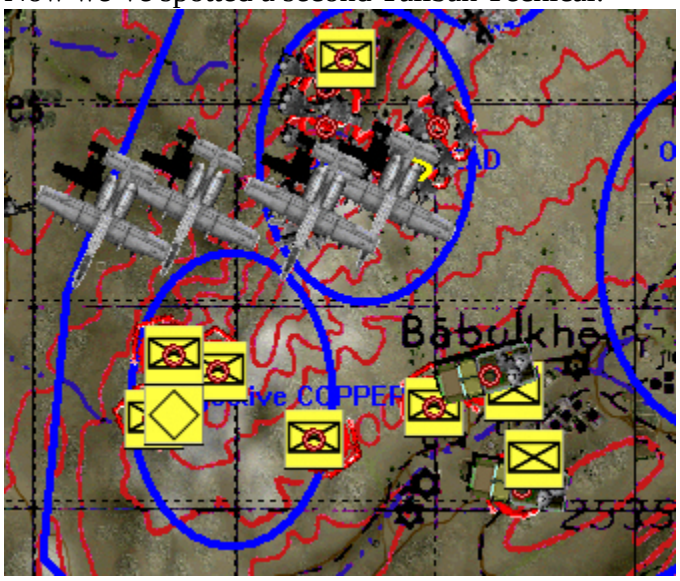
at about WB16169470 so we'll unleash the A-10's now, taking them out of hold fire, as that is a HVT. I'll also drop several HE from the B-52 on the target cluster as we go over.

The results are better than I expected:

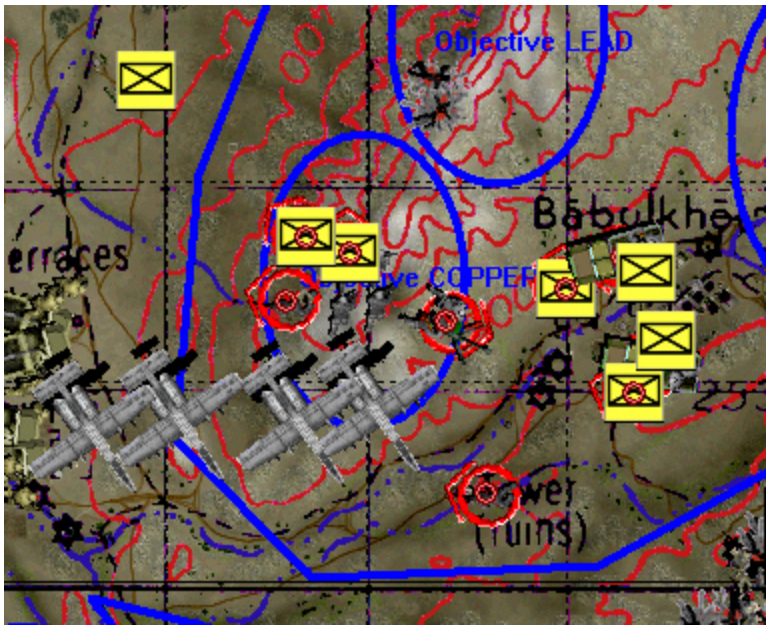


and this is before using the GBUs!

Now we've spotted a second Taliban Techical:


this one about WB16229178. We'll vector planes to target it, too. We'll also hold fire again on our A-10's since the B-52s seem to be doing a good enough job with their bombs we might as save what the A-10s have.

We found another, a Taliban HMG team:

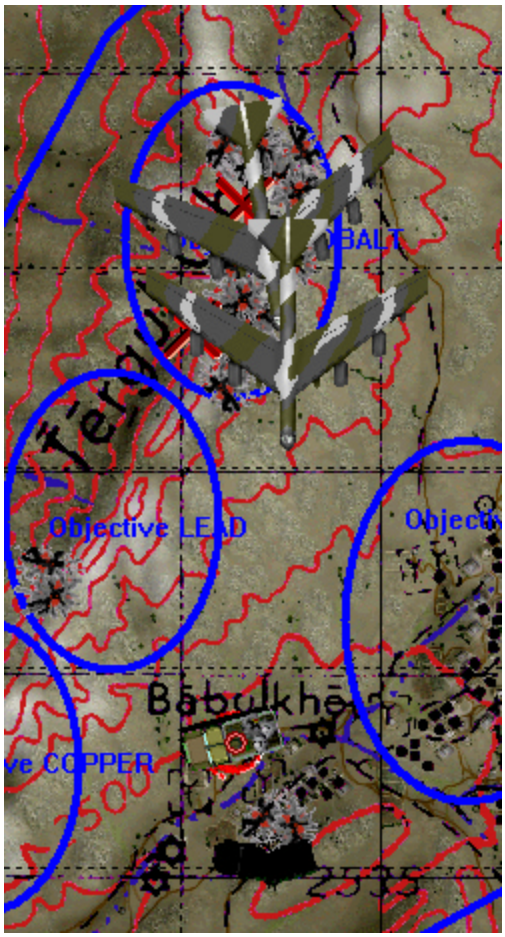


about at WB15409130. We'll get them on a second pass.

To my chagrin I discover the A-10s aren't actually holding any bombs, so I'll unleash them again...

We've found another HMG team about WB16568888. We'll have the B-52s use GBUs on it. I change fire mission from HE to DPICM for the GBU as my first B-52 is heading towards the Taliban technical now.

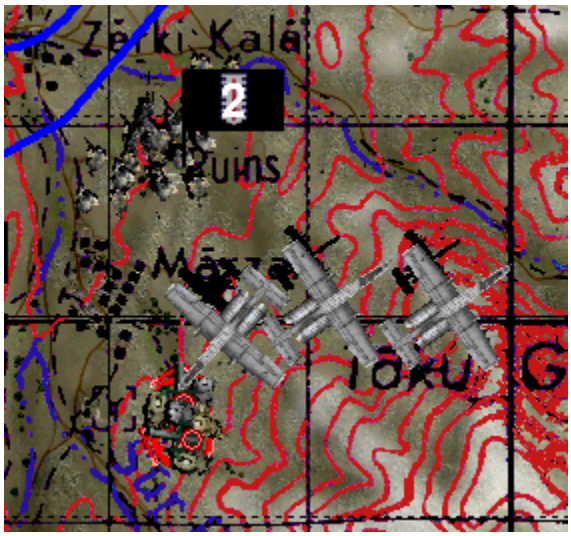
And we get it...



Note you have to be flying almost dead on to use these GBUs.

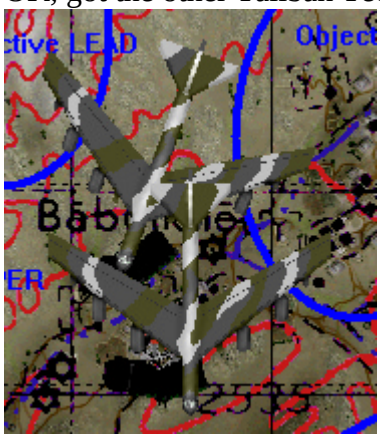
I can't believe one of the A-10s was destroyed! Oh well. Anyway, I need to redirect them back to act as spotters for the HMG for the B-52 for its GBU.

We found another Taliban mortar:



at about WB18528944.

OK, got the other Taliban Technical:



...and we got the two HMGs....

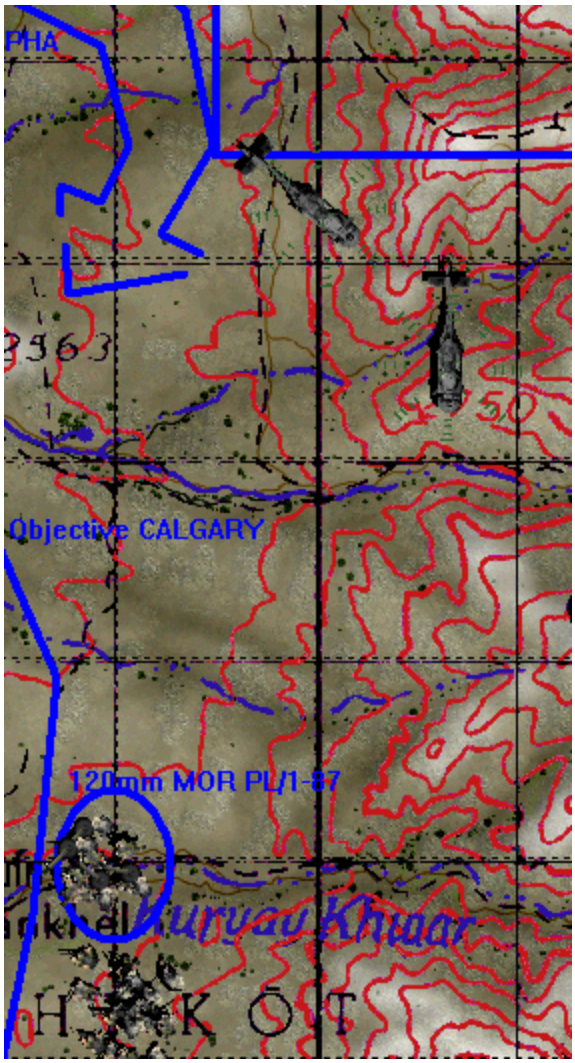
Found another AQ mortar team:

about WB17609018.

We found another cluster of targets for HE bombs:

which deserves another pass by the B-52s. Except they are all out of HE bombs so we'll just use GBUs anyway. But now we'll concentrate all the aircraft on this area.

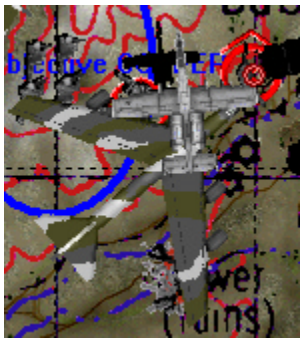
So far our helicopters with the mortar sections have traveled undisturbed and our getting close to the 120 mm PL/1-87 LZ.



So far so good.

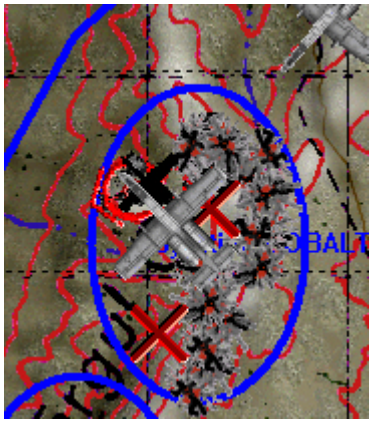
We've found (or rediscovered) another AQ mortar team at WB16929416.

We've also found an AQ HMG team at WB15489144


we definitely have to take out. OK, got it!

Let's see if we can clear Obj COBALT so we can land on it. Oops...looks like the mortar team is still there, so we'll have to eliminate them.

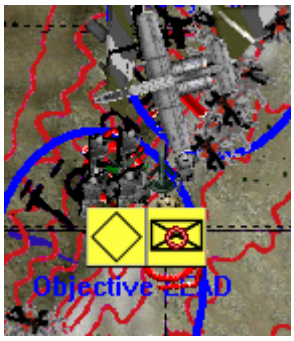
Getting overconfident. I also found a Taliban MMG team hiding in OBJ COBALT too about in WB15889454



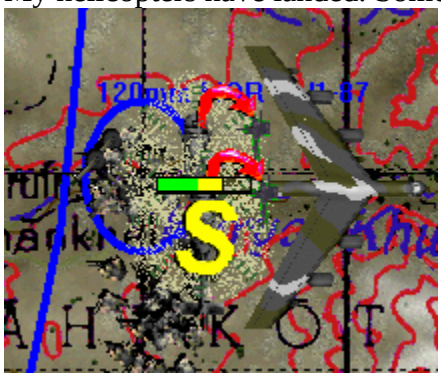
OK, we finally the AQ mortar team in OBJ Cobalt and now we vectoring the B-52 for the MMG team.

Now we have the MMG team. We can start clearing OBJ Lead and then it looks like we really could land in OBJ Cobalt!

Again I'm using the A-10s for spotters and B-52s to take out the targets. We are currently 10 minutes into the scenario. I found another AQ HMG team in OBJ Lead I'll have to take out. About WB15589324.



My helicopters have landed. Some are taking fire. Time to dismount.



I know what you're thinking. No, I didn't bomb my own troops this time. The B-52 should happened to be passing overhead. Trust me on this. They are under mortar fire. Still have at least one mortar team to take out.

We will try to clear the village, too as there are only two fighting positions there. That turned out to be a good idea as one of them was a 120 mm mortar.

Oh, now I'll let the Blackhawks go home, overflying the rest of the air assault route and seeing if they can draw any more fire. Good luck guys!

This is Whaleback COA 6. Found another Taliban MMG team about 16649130.

My helicopters head back and take some small arms fire from an AQ fire team about at WB16868906. This is Whaleback COA 7.

I'm down to 3 GBUs and no other bombs. There is one cave in OBJ Lead so I'll take that out first since it is in one of the objectives and it seems caves can only be taken out by air. Then I'll take out that fire team since the A-10's are out of bullets. Then I'll have to shift to my mortars and just use the planes as spotters!

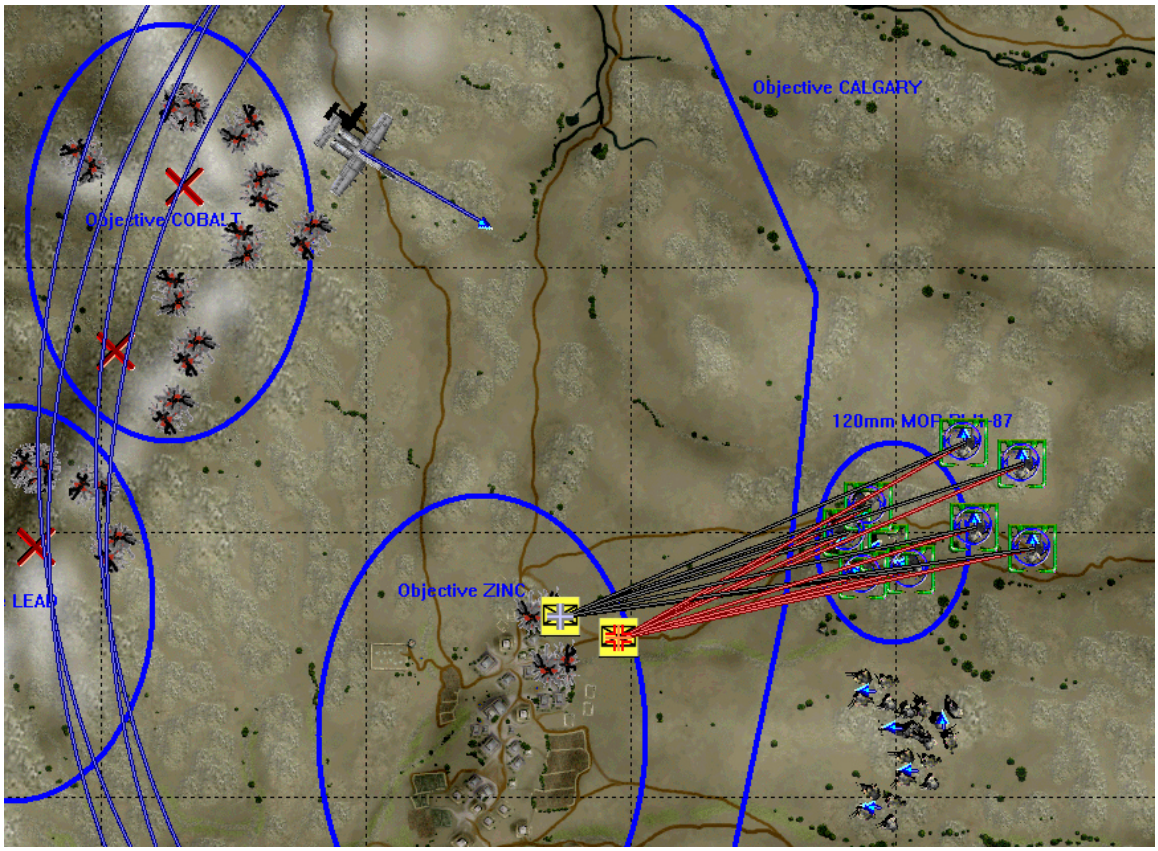
Well I got two caves and the AQ fire team that fired on my helicopters and now I'm out of air munitions.

OK, time to commit to an LZ. I'm going to go for a landing in OBJ COLT as it appears to be cleared. First I'll designate mortar firing groups if I need them for suppression.

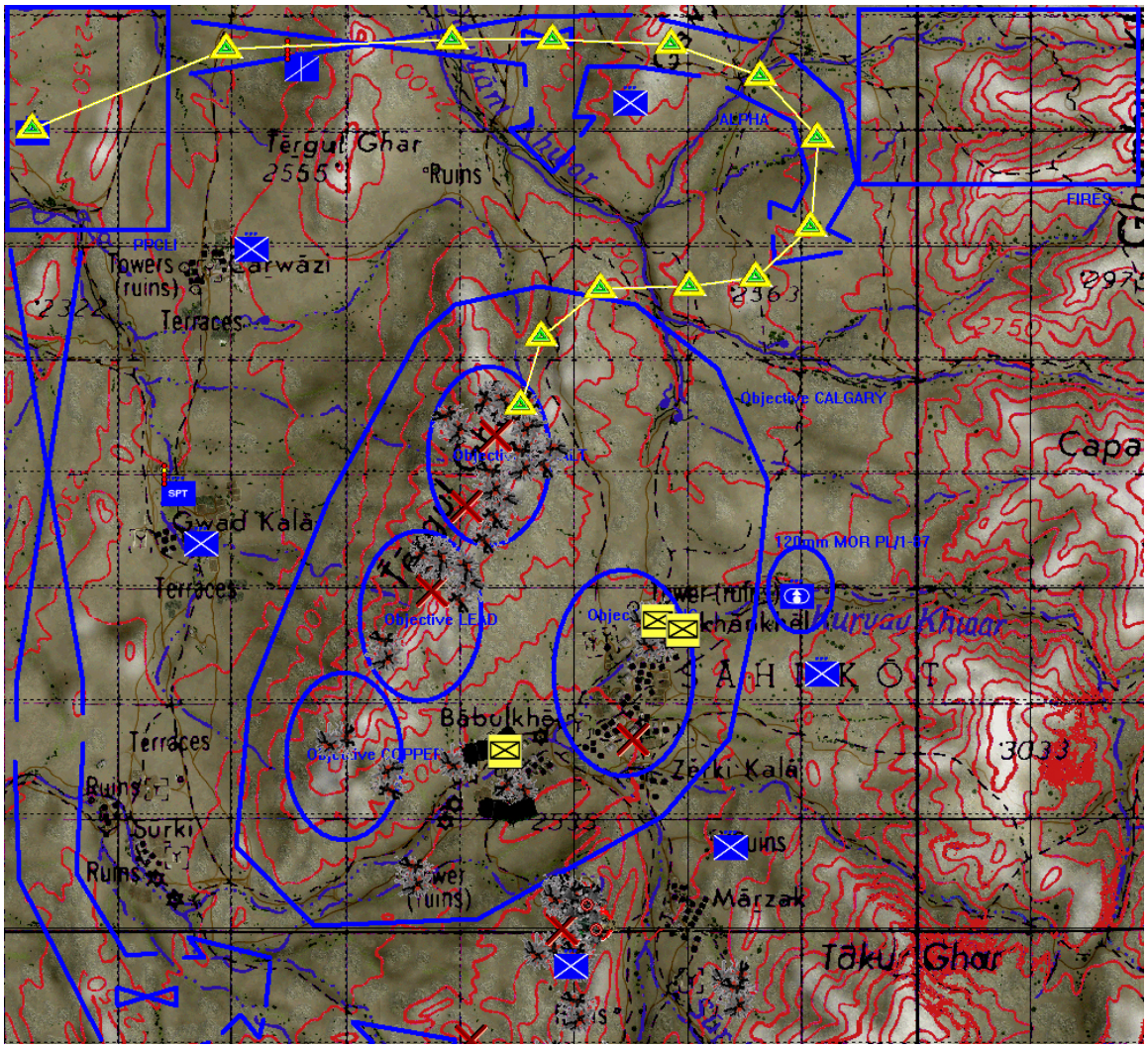
Group 1 is Mortar PL/1-87. They have 100 HE and 20 Illum.
Group 2 are the other mortars, the ones just flown in. They 50 HE, 10 smoke, and 10 illum.

Looks like I better use them mostly for suppression. Not enough ammo for much else.

But there are two infantry groups I would to clear from the village if I can get them by surprise volleys, 3 each from all tubes it would be worth it, so I will give it a try. Here goes.

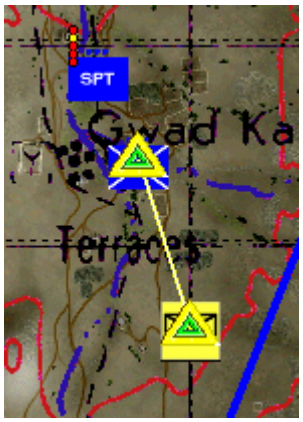


I will also plot a route for the first helicopter serial into OBJ COBALT. This will be a path for 2 Pl/3 Bn/101 Avn:



and when the helicopters get closer to the objective I'll spread them out a bit so they don't bunch up too much. I'm now playing at 2x speed to speed the game up a bit. I also set a column formation in case something goes wrong I'll only lose one helicopter and not them all. Now I'll try it and hope for the best...

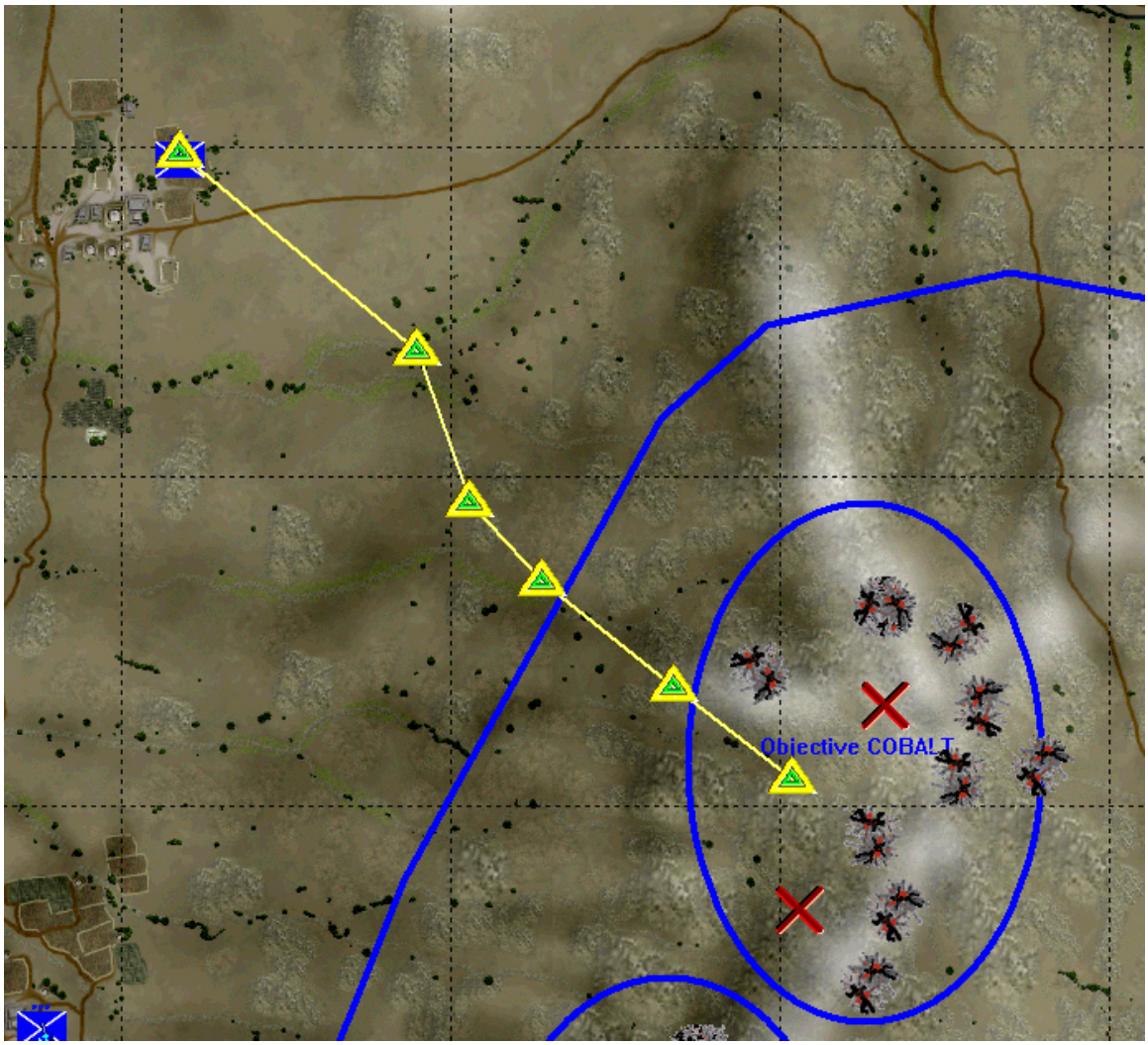
While this is happening I'm also going to move my platoon of Afghan fire team members Alpha-4 to take out the dismount observed here:



We don’t know what they are but we’ll get rid of them to be safe.

I’ll also have 3 PL attack the dismounts left in front of them:

I’ll have 2 PL/A Coy/1-87 attack into the village of OBJ ZINC. And Alpha-3 just descend into OBJ Cobalt by walking:



I note that I'll have to fire on the mortar team to suppress them as the helicopters land otherwise I'll take mortar rounds on my helicopters.

I'll also give TF-64 an attack by fire mission when their Afghan cohorts get closer to lend a hand.

I've changed the helicopters to land at 4 different locations on OBJ Cobalt. I've also give the 4 mortars I've flown in individual fire missions of 1 volley each rotating among the 4 mortars. The idea is just to suppress the AQ mortar team, nothing more, and to keep it up for as long as possible by not firing all tubes at once but rather one at a time. I'm hoping to get at least 20 minutes of suppression this way.

This is Whaleback COA 10. We are 21:34 minutes into the attack. The first places I attempt to land don't work. I suppose they are too steep. I try off to the side and some of the helicopters can now dismount so I unload those and reposition the others until I can unload all of them: