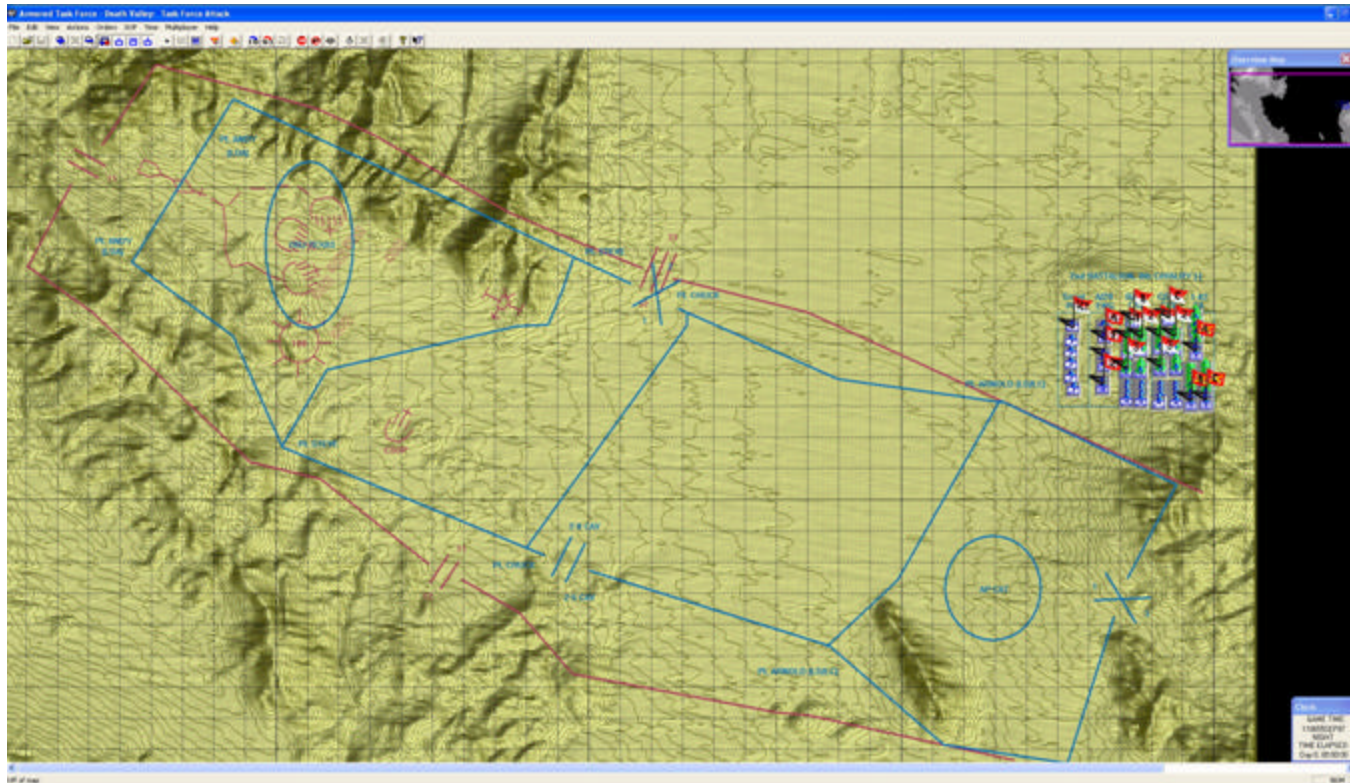# AAR - Death Valley: Task Force Attack

Scenario from ARMORED TASK FORCE

written by Maj P Proctor

You are the commander of the 2-8 CAV, 1 BCT, 1st Cavalry Division, attached to the 52nd Infantry Division for NTC Rotation 97-12. The following are excerpts from an operations order for the 1 BCT to conduct a movement to contact.

OPORD 97-35? 1

BCT (IRONHORSE)

1. SITUATION:

    A. ENEMY FORCES:

        1.   Due to recent losses, the 94th MRD has transitioned to the defense. The enemy's mission is to defend NET 110700SEP97 to prevent penetration of the first regimental echelon and, on order, counterattack to destroy the 52 ID. He is positioned with two MRR's abreast, the 33rd in the north and the 32nd in the sount. A third MRR, the 31st is positioned behind the lead MRD's. Each MRR will defend with two MRB's forward and one back. These MRB's are at apporximately 50 % strength with approximately a 8 / 12 / 10. Each MRR has a RAG consisting of 2 BN's of 2S19 at 18 tubes each. The DAG has been destroyed by fixed-wing deep strikes. The enemy is expected to have no SOKOL or fixed-wing capability.

        2.   The most likely course of action is that the enemy will defend with 2 MRB's abreast along PL MICHAEL. Each MRB will have a CAR of 3 / 0 / 3 which he will employ once the point of penetration is known. The MRD is holding one MRB in reserve. If a BCT establishes a serious breach on either flank of the 94th MRD, the reserve MRB will be used to reinforce enemy defenses. otherwise, the reserve MRB will counterattack to complete the destruction of the 52nd ID.

    B. FRIENDLY FORCES:

        1.   Higher Mission. 52nd ID conducts an attack, NET 110800SEP97, to destroy the 94th ID and facilitate the IV Mojavian Corps attack to restore the International border. o/o conduct a hasty defense to repel the counterattack of the KPA's second echelon MRD's.

        2.   To our south, 4 Mojavian ID has the mission of attacking west to destroy the 9th MRD and turn north to secure the international border. To our north, 2 BCT, 52nd ID attacks as the division main effort to destroy the 33rd MRR in order to secure the right flank of IV Mojavian Corps. To our rear the 3 BCT, 52nd ID acts as the division reserve, B/P to assume the attack of 2 BCT to secure the right flank of IV Mojavian Corps.

    C. WEATHER:

        1.   Winds are expected to be out of the west at approximately 4.5 miles per hour

        2.   The hours of daylight are as follows. Before morning nautical twilight (BMNT) will begin at 0705. Sunrise will be at 0735. Sunset will be at 1938. Early evening nautical twilight (EENT) will end at 2008.

2. MISSION.

1 BCT, 1 CAV (Ironhorse) attacks in zone NLT 110700SEP97 to destroy the first battalion echelon of the 94th MRD, seize OBJ's TEXAS and NEBRASKA **\<not shown\>**, in order to facilitate the attack of the 52nd ID to secure the right flank of IV Mojavian Corps.

3. EXECUTION:

A. COMMANDER'S INTENT.

It is my intent is to deceive the enemy as to the main effort of the IV Mojavian Corps by initially weighting our attack in the north, in 2-8 CAV's sector. Once the enemy has committed to supporting the 11th MRB in defending against this attack, we will then attack in 12th MRB's sector to complete the destruction of the first battalion echelon.

B. CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION.

1. Maneuver. This operation will be conducted in 3 phases.

a. Phase One. This phase begins at 110800SEP97. TF 2-8 CAV crosses the LD and attacks to destroy the 11 MRB. The phase ends when TF 2-8 CAV has secured OBJ TEXAS.

b. Phase Two.

\<paragraph omitted\>

c. Phase Three.

\<paragraph omitted\>

2. Fires. This operation is sequenced to allow fire support to be focused on each MRB separately as it is engaged.

a. Phase One. During this phase, priority of fires for 1-82 FA goes to TF 2-8 CAV. 3-8 FA (MLRS) will be dedicated to counterfire and suppressing the RAG. CAS will not be available during this phase. The CFL for this phase will be PL ANDY in TF 2-8's sector and PL ARNOLD in TF 2-5's sector.

b. Phase Two.

\<paragraph omitted\>

c. Phase Three.

\<paragraph omitted\>

3. Tasks to Subordinate Units. See Appendix C for Task Organization.

a. TF 2-8 CAV.
   1. Destroy 11 MRB.
   2. Secure OBJ TEXAS.?
   3. o/o Defend PL ANDY. The NO PEN line will be PL STEVE.

b. TF 2-5 CAV.

\<paragraph omitted\>

4. Coordinating instructions.

      a. Prior to 110800SEP97, the limit of advance for recon elements is PL STEVE. This applies only to brigade COLT's and Task Force Scouts. The limit of advance for all other elements prior to LD is PL ARNOLD, the LD/LC.

      b. PIR

\<paragraph omitted\>

4. SERVICE SUPPORT.

There will no resupply of any class of supply until mission completion.

5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL.

A. Succession of command is per SOPB. Current SOI is in effect.

APPENDIX C (TASK ORGANIZATION) TO OPORD 97-55

TASK FORCE 2-8 CAV:

    HHC/2-8 CAV:

      Scout Platoon

    B/2-8 CAV

      2 X Tank Platoon?

      1 X Mech Inf Platoon

    C/2-8 CAV

      2 X Tank Platoon?

      1 X Mech Inf Platoon

    A/20 ENG

      1 X ACE Platoon?

      1 X AVLB Platoon?

      1 X MCLiC Platoon

TASK FORCE 2-5 CAV:

\<paragraph omitted\>

1-82 FA

    A/1-82 FA

      6 X M109A6 Paladin

    B/1-82 FA

      6 X M109A6 Paladin

    C/1-82 FA

      6 X M109A6 Paladin

3-8 FA (MLRS)

\<paragraph omitted

Synchronizing Fire and Maneuver
Death Valley: Task Force Attack

The key to winning any battle, offensive or defensive, is having the most combat power at the decisive point. Combat power is not just tanks and Bradleys, though. Combat power is also fire support (artillery and mortars), mobility (engineers), and all of the other components of the battlefield operating system (BOS).

Fire support is perhaps the most complicated component to synchronize into the combined arms fight, for a number of reasons. First, the flexibility of the weapon systems (numerous ammunition types, great range, engagement options) can make it hard to figure out how and where to place your fires. Also, movement, positioning, and ammunition management require careful planning and prioritization.

How it's done in the force.

When a real armored task force first receives its mission, the staff quickly analyzes it and briefs the task force commander on his mission and assets available. It is here that the commander issues his guidance to his staff, on how he wishes to accomplish the mission. A key element of this guidance is the Commander's Guidance for Fires. It describes how he wants to use fire support (artillery, mortars, close air support, and any other available assets) to help accomplish his mission.

The battalion fire support officer, a field artillery captain who is a member of the armor or infantry battalion staff, translates this guidance in to a fire support plan. The two most important components of this plan are *Essential Fire Support Tasks* and the *High Payoff Target List*. These components allow the unit to make decisions on who, what, where, when, and why to fire during the fight.

It works like this. Essential Fire Support Tasks (EFSTs) are the tasks that *must be accomplished*, or the task force course of action will have to be altered during the fight (almost always disastrous). When one or more of these tasks is triggered, they supersede all other fires. No matter what targets are being shoot, they are canceled when it is time to fire an EFST.

The high payoff target list (HPTL) is next in priority. If it is not time to fire an EFST, the next target in priority is an HPT. These are targets that you have identified which, if destroyed, will make it easier for your task force to accomplish its objective. They may or may not be HVTs (high value targets) to the enemy, things that, if destroyed, will cause him to alter *his* course of action.

Finally, if there are no EFSTs to be fired, and no HPTs have been spotted, fires go to the unit with priority of fire. That is, the unit with priority of fire can call targets of opportunity that he has identified and wants to engage. These fires will immediately stop, however, if an HPT is identified or an EFST is triggered. (Priority of fires is not simulated in **Armored Task Force**, so we ignore it in this example.)

The task force staff begins planning the fight and the battalion fire support officer is there. He continues to refine and synchronize his fire support plan with the maneuver

plan, until he has a plan which is both synchronized with maneuver and meets the task force commander's guidance.

How it looks.

For *Death Valley: Task Force Attack*, we will LD (cross the "Line of Departure") from PL ARNOLD, attack in zone to seize OBJ TEXAS and try not to get wiped out doing it!

First, I need to look at what the S-2 (intelligence officer) expects to be the enemy set for his defense (the SITTEMP, situational template).
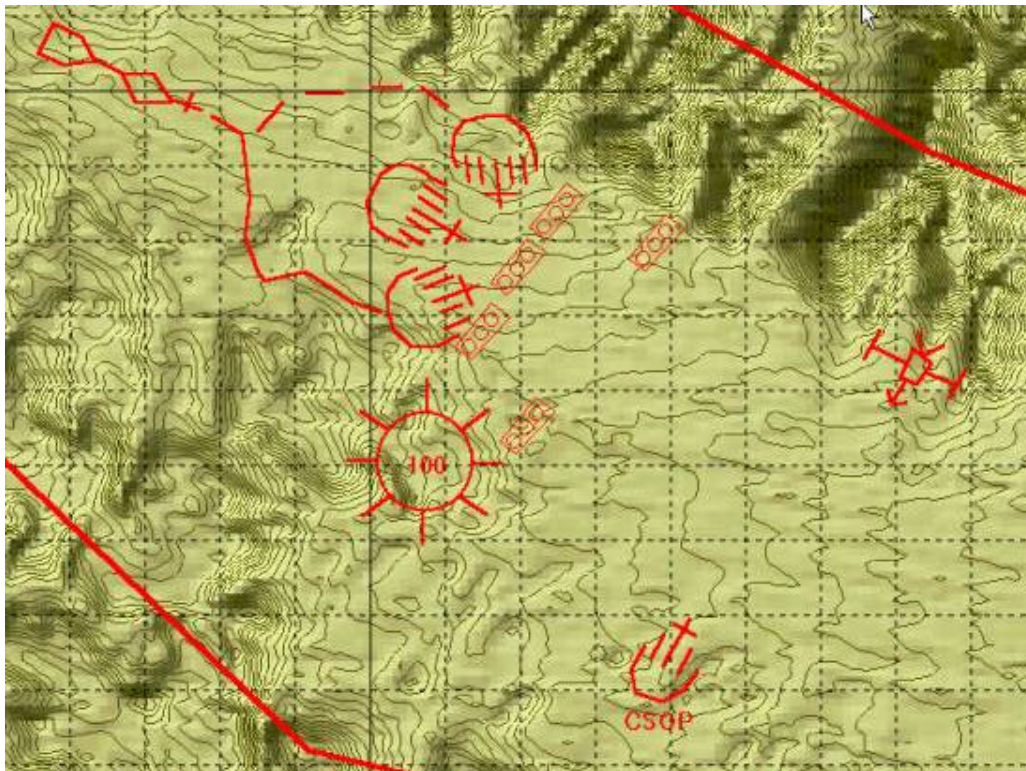
I have two armor heavy company teams, so I don't have a lot of infantry with which to take down that hundred-man strongpoint in the south, so I am going to stick to the north edge of my boundary. In order to get to a position where I can breach, though, I am going to have to destroy the AT firing line, or I will take flank and rear shots during the breaching.

This is how the operation will break down:

Phase	Activity	Begin	End
I	Counter-reconnaisance fight	Game start	NLT LD Time (0700)
II	Move in zone to operational rally point (ORP)	NLT LD Time (0700)	Battalion at ORP (east of PL STEVE)
III	Establish SBF (support by fire position)	Battalion at ORP	B / 2-8 CAV established in SBF position
IV	Breach main obstacle belt	B / 2-8 CAV established in SBF position	Breach Complete
V	Assault to seize OBJ TEXAS	Breach complete	All enemy destroyed and C / 2-8 CAV consolidated in OBJ TEXAS

Since I am my own commander (at least here) I will establish my own guidance for fires.

- ✍ I want do destroy enemy recon teams in zone to prevent him from placing indirect fire on us prior to LD and in the ORP (phase I and II)
- ✍ I want to destroy the AT Firing line in the north of my sector prior to beginning the main battle are fight (prior to beginning phase III)
- ✍ I want to use smoke and suppression to prevent the enemy from placing direct fire on us during the breach operation (phase III and IV)
- ✍ I want to destroy a platoon's-worth of combat power at the point of penetration prior to assaulting the objective (prior to beginning phase V)

Since I am also the Battalion FSO (Fire Support Officer), I am going to write my own EFSTs (Essential Fire Support Tasks). Note that real EFST's would have planned target numbers. I am not going to go to this level of detail, but everything else is doctrinally correct.

EFST 1:

Task.	Destroy enemy dismount recon teams along battalion axis of advance.
Purpose.	Prevent enemy from placing indirect fires on TF 2-8 CAV prior to PL STEVE.
Method.	1-82 FA fires a battery 1 round (6 total rounds) of HE on enemy dismount recon teams that are out of direct fire range of the axis of advance when identified.
Effects.	TF 2-8 CAV reaches PL STEVE without taking casualties to indirect fire. 3 dismount recon teams destroyed.

EFST 2:

Task.	Destroy the BRDM-2 ATGMs and AT-5 teams in the AT firing line on the axis of advance.
Purpose.	Prevent AT firing line from placing direct fire on TF 2-8 CAV as they move to the point of penetration.
Method.	1-82 FA fires a battalion 1 round (18 rounds) of DPICM on 3 enemy BRDM-2 ATGMs in the AT firing line along the axis of advance when TF 2-8 CAV crosses the LD (line of departure), PL STEVE. 1-82 FA fires a battery 1 round (6 total rounds) of DPICM on 3 enemy AT-5 teams in the AT firing line along the axis of advance when TF 2-8 CAV crosses the LD (line of departure), PL STEVE.
Effects.	TF 2-8 CAV does not take direct fire from enemy AT firing line at PL STEVE. Three BRDM-2 ATGMs and 3 AT-5 teams destroyed.

EFST 3:

|	
Task.	Obscure and suppress BMP-2s, T-80s, and BRDM-2 ATGMs within range of the point of penetration.
Purpose.	Allow B / 2-8 CAV to establish a support by fire position and A / 20 EN to complete the breach without taking direct fire.
Method.	1-82 FA fires a 1000 m smoke screen for 30 minutes and a battery 1 round (6 total rounds) per minute for 30 minutes on BMP-2s, T-80s, and BRDM-2 ATGMs within range of the point of penetration, when B / 2-8 CAV crosses PL STEVE.
Effects.	B / 2-8 CAV establishes SBF (support by fire) position and A / 20 EN completes a breach of the main obstacle belt. 3 BMP-2s, 1 T-80, and 1 BRDM-2 ATGM suppressed.

Cont.

EFST 4:	
Task.	Destroy a platoon of BMP-2s at the point of penetration.
Purpose.	Allow C / 2-8 CAV to assault through the breach without taking direct fire.
Method.	1-82 FA fires a battalion 3 rounds (54 total rounds) per target on 3 BMP-2s at the point of penetration when B / 2-8 CAV crosses PL STEVE.
Effects.	C / 2-8 CAV successfully passes through the breach and assaults through OBJ TEXAS. 3 BMP-2's.

We will cover HPTs during each phase. Again, we will not really talk about priority of fires during this discussion, as it is difficult to simulate in **ATF**.

Setup for the fight.

This is beyond the conversation about fires, but to set the stage, here is how my forces are arrayed:
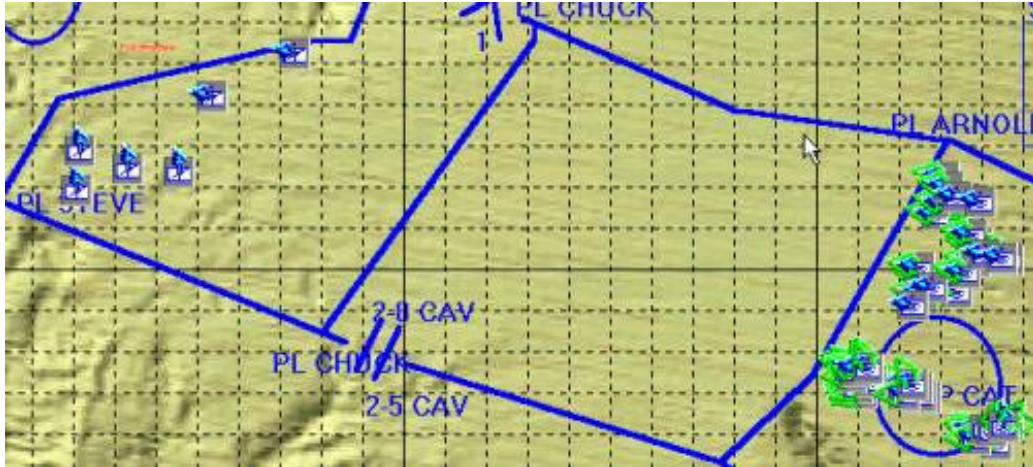
I have arrayed my scouts along PL STEVE (the recon limit of advance, according to the OPORD). They are located in order to confirm or deny the enemy SITTEMP drawn up by my S-2 (intelligence officer). Behind the LD (PL ARNOLD), I have my three paladin batteries, from 1-82 FA, in "Company Y" formations.

I have task organized my force (using the hierarchy tree window) so that C / 2-8 CAV has all of the tanks (except for the plow tanks), A / 20 EN has four attached plow tanks, and B / 2-8 CAV has two Bradley platoons. I have arrayed the three companies in a battalion column, company wedges, with the order of march being C / 2-8 CAV, A / 20 EN, B / 2-8 CAV.

B / 2-8 CAV is my support force. They will establish the SBF and suppress the point of penetration. O/O (on order) B / 2-8 CAV assumes C / 2-8 CAV's mission to assault through the breach to OBJ TEXAS.

A / 20 EN is my breach force. Once the SBF is established, they will cut a breach in the main defensive belt, through which the battalion will pass.

C / 2-8 CAV is my assault force. Once the breach is cut, they will charge through the breach, get on the flank of the enemy battle positions, and attack to seize OBJ TEXAS.

Phase I: Counter Reconnaissance

This is a really short phase. The game clock starts at 0655 and the NLT time to LD is 0700.

attacks in zone NLT 110700SEP97 to de:
R, seize OBJ's TEXAS
attack of the 52nd ID to :

Clock

GAME TIME:
110655SEP97
NIGHT
TIME ELAPSED:
Day 0, 00:00:00

We only have five minutes prior to LD. During this phase, EFST 1 (Destroy Enemy Recon Teams) is active, should we hit it's trigger by identifying a recon team.

During this phase we are vulnerable to enemy indirect fire because we are stationary. This will be reflected in our HPT's for phase I.

HPTL for Phase I:

1. Dismount Recon teams that can see our positions prior to LD
2. Dismount Recon teams that can see our axis of advance
3. Artillery FDCs
4. Artillery systems
5. BRDM-2 ATGMs in the AT firing line along our axis of advance
6. Dismount AT-5s in the AT firing line along our axis of advance

Next comes the all-important first clock start to "see what we can see" at LD. I am going to start the clock and then immediately stop it. Here's what I see.
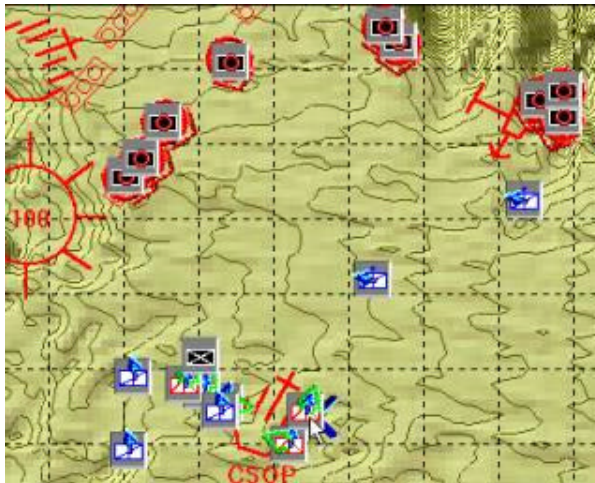
What I do see is very interesting. It appears that the S-2 was wrong on a few points. First, it appears that the CSOP (Combat Security Outpost, a forward platoon of 2-4 tanks and/or BMPs positioned to place flank fire on an attacking formation) and AT firing line have exchanged positions from those indicated on our SITTEMP. I can tell this because I see BRDM-2 ATGMs and unidentified dismounts in the south, and three unidentified, dug-in vehicles in the north.

Also, it appears that the enemy has defensive positions forward of what I anticipated. I did not spot any dismount recon teams.

Analyzing all of this, I do not see any reason to change my base maneuver plan. There is no confirmation or denial of the 100 dismounts in the southwest of the enemy defense, and this was the deciding factor for choosing the northern point of penetration.

My fire support plan will change, though. The appearance of the CSOP in the north drives a change both to my second EFST, and my high payoff targets for this phase. The commander's *intent* from his guidance for fires was that we not be interdicted by flanking fires in the north when we begin moving to the point of penetration. But these fires will now be coming from a CSOP rather than an AT firing line. So the task, but not purpose for EFST 2 will change, as will the method, since we are attacking harder targets now.

EFST 2 (revised):

<u>Task</u>.	Destroy BMP-2s and T-80s in the CSOP.
Purpose.	Prevent the CSOP from placing direct fire on TF 2-8 CAV as they move to the point of penetration.
<u>Method</u>.	1-82 FA fires a battalion 3 rounds (54 rounds) of DPICM on 3 enemy vehicle positions (BMP-2s and T-80s) when TF 2-8 CAV crosses the LD (line of departure), PL STEVE.
<u>Effects</u>.	TF 2-8 CAV does not take direct fire from CSOP. 2 BMP-2s and 1 T-80 destroyed.

My HPTL will also change to reflect this revelation.

HPTL for Phase I (revised):

1. Dismount Recon teams that can see our positions prior to LD
2. Dismount Recon teams that can see our axis of advance
3. Artillery FDCs
4. Artillery systems
5. BMP-2s and T-80s in the CSOP

Since I can not see any dismount recon teams (the trigger for EFST 1 *and* our first two HPT's) and I cannot see any enemy artillery positions, I move to number 5 on the HPTL, BMP-2s and T-80s in the CSOP. While I cannot identify these vehicles, I know clearly where they are, so I am going to fire on these targets.

Fire Order

Munition Type
- ○ HE
- ○ HERAP
- ⊙ DPICM
- ○ BBDPICM
- ○ Smoke
- ○ Chemical
- ○ Nuclear
- ○ Illumination
- ○ FASCAM
- ○ PGM

[3] Number Of Volleys

Method Of Control
- ○ Immediate
- ⊙ WR
- ○ TOT

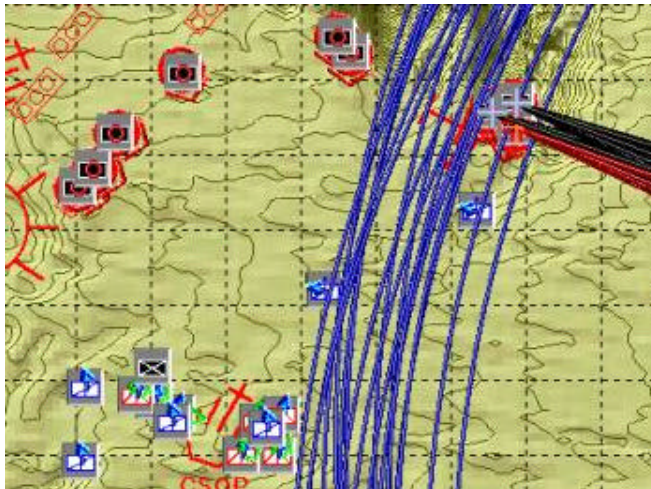HR MIN SEC
[0] [0] [0] [0]

Sheaf
- ⊙ Converged
- ○ Linear
- ○ Open

[1600] Attitude (mils)
[1000] Length (m)

OK   Cancel

I fire a battalion 3 rounds (54 total rounds) of DPICM on each target. They are just barely within range. If I could not range them, I would have to move to BBDPICM (Base Burn Dual Purpose Improved Conventional Munitions, an extended range version of DPICM).

Phase II: Attack in zone to ORP

The NLT (no later than) time to cross the LD is 0700, so, five minutes after game start, we must LD. So that our artillery is in position for the point of penetration fight, we are also going to start moving one battery forward.
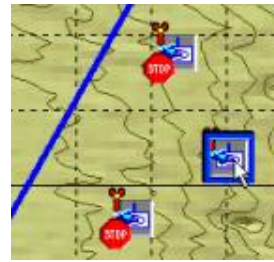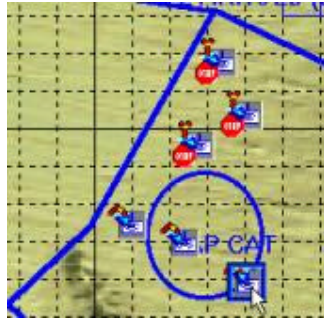
At this point, we have not yet destroyed the CSOP. EFST 1 (destroy recon teams) is still active until we reach the ORP. However, crossing the LD is also the trigger for EFST 2 (revised, destroy CSOP), so we are going to continue to fire on this target. Our HPTL for phase II will also reflect this change in active Essential Fire Support Tasks

HPTL for Phase II:

1. BMP-2s and T-80s in the CSOP
2. Dismount Recon teams that can see our axis of advance
3. Artillery FDCs
4. Artillery systems

When we destroy the CSOP, our priority is to move all of the artillery forward in order to be ready for the next EFST. As an aside, this movement is not, technically, controlled by the battalion fire support officer. The movement of batteries is controlled by the field artillery battalion S-3 (operations officer) and battalion FDO (fire direction officer). They are given the maneuver commander's intent for fires (in the form of Essential Fire Support Tasks) and are left to determine for themselves how they will accomplish them. Even the volume of fire and type of munitions in the EFSTs is just a recommendation.

We have detected an enemy dismount recon team along our axis of advance. However, this team is within direct fire range, so it does not trigger EFST 1 (the target description for this EFST is "…enemy dismount recon teams that are out of direct fire range…"). We are going to destroy it with direct fire instead. We cancel "Hold Fire" for C / 2-8 CAV and they make quick work of the dismounts.

Conversely, we later run across a dismount team that we cannot engage with direct fire. This triggers EFST 1 (destroy enemy recon teams). So, when the batteries have reached a position where they will be able to support the breaching operation (about PL CHUCK), we stop them and fire this target.
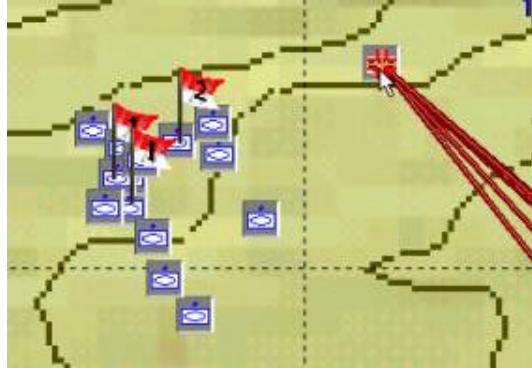
An unexpected turn of events.

My scouts, along PL STEVE, see movement in the main battle area.

It appears to be about two platoons of BMP-2s and other maneuver vehicles. They have emerged from a hide position northeast of the objective and are heading west into OBJ TEXAS.

"Hindsight is 20/20," as they say, but, in retrospect, this should have caused me to re-examine my course of action. I have planned to use all of my fires to breach the main obstacle belt and punch through on the northern edge of my boundary. But, if I were to count identified battle positions, the number of vehicles I see moving here, and compare the sum to the number of anticipated enemy vehicles in this enemy battalion, I would find that he is moving the bulk of his combat power into OBJ TEXAS.

This should have led me to a terrain analysis, trying to figure out where he was going to position these vehicles (I loose sight of them soon after this screenshot). I would have concluded that the enemy was defending in depth, with one platoon forward (the one I could see at time start, dug in) and two platoons back. His second engagement area *is OBJ TEXAS*.

If you'll remember, my plan is to assault through the main obstacle belt, right smack into OBJ TEXAS and then "roll up" the enemy defense from the flank. Had I caught the significance of this spotting, I would have realized that this course of action will cause me to assault right through the middle of his *second engagement area* . I am going to go right where he wants me to go.

As you will see later, this is a costly error.

Phase II (continued):

I have still not consolidated my task force at the ORP. I have destroyed the CRP, and see no more dismounted recon teams along my axis of advance.

This is the point where, in the absence of an EFST or HPT, I would defer to the company with "priority of fire". Of course, this is not really simulated in **Armored Task Force**, so, instead, I am going try to get a head start on EFST 4 (destroy a platoon at the point of penetration).
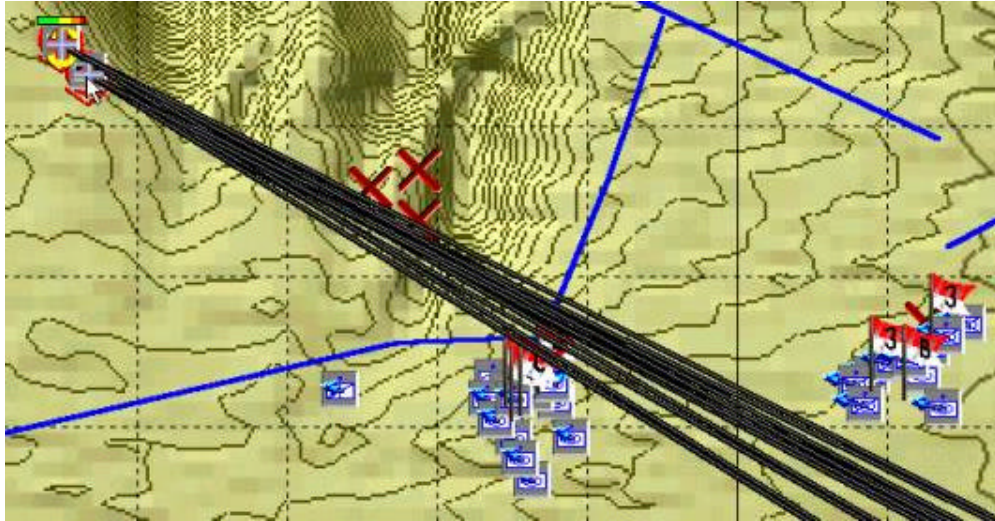
Phase III: Establish the SBF

About 45 minutes into the fight, I am consolidated at my ORP (operational rally point). It is time to start SOSR (Suppress-Obscure-Secure-Reduce) fires at the point of penetration and start B / 2-8 CAV moving toward the SBF. This is the trigger for EFST 3.

I have four volleys of smoke per howitzer, and no ammo carriers. It takes a battery to fire a 1000 meter smoke screen effectively, and the EFST states that maneuver needs 30 minutes of smoke. So I need 12 battery volleys of smoke (4 volleys X 3 batteries) fired, one every 2.5 minutes to cover the required time. Conveniently, this is the time it takes to compute, load, and fire a single round mission. So we will fire four, one round missions with the first battery, then pass to the second, then the third. (This would all be figured out by the field artillery battalion fire direction officer, not the maneuver battalion fire support officer).
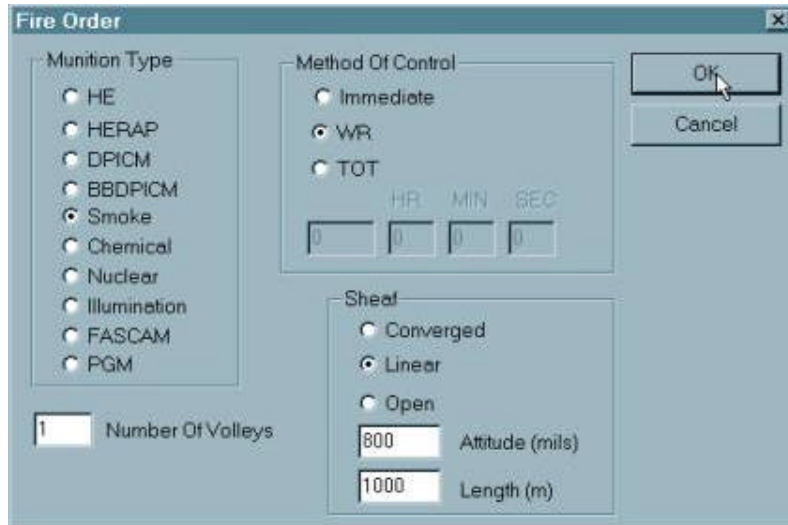
Next, we want to suppress the BMPs, tanks, and BRDM-2 ATGMs within range of the point of penetration. We seem to have a pretty good read on where all of these battle positions are, so we are going to target each one individually. Conveniently, there are six vehicle positions within range of the point of penetration, so, since our goal is to suppress, rather than to destroy, we will fire one gun per target, HE (high explosive), every 2.5 minutes.

You might ask why we are not firing a higher rate of fire, to suppress more continuously. The answer is that we still have to accomplish EFST 4 (destroy a platoon at the point of penetration) and we are running low on DPICM. We may have to resort to HE to accomplish this task. And, besides, in a few minutes, hopefully, we will have B / 2-8 CAV in position to suppress with direct fire, which will help as well.
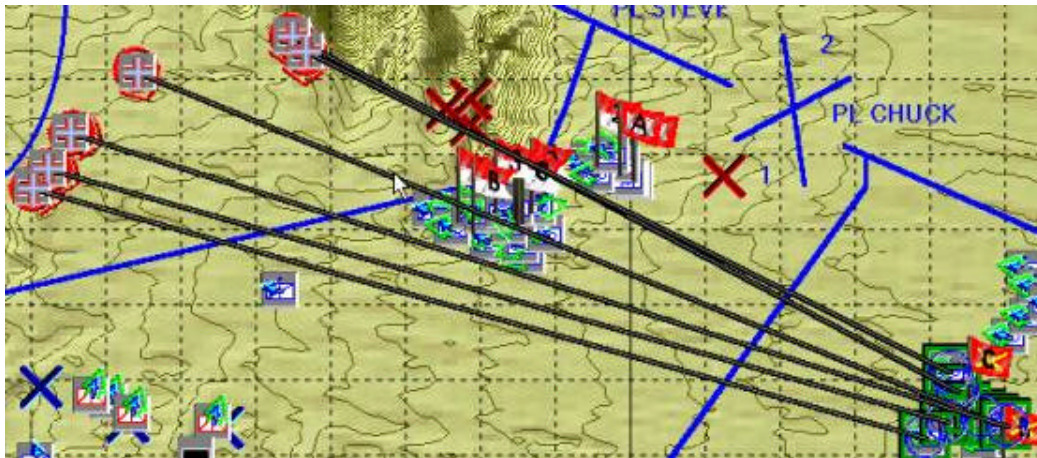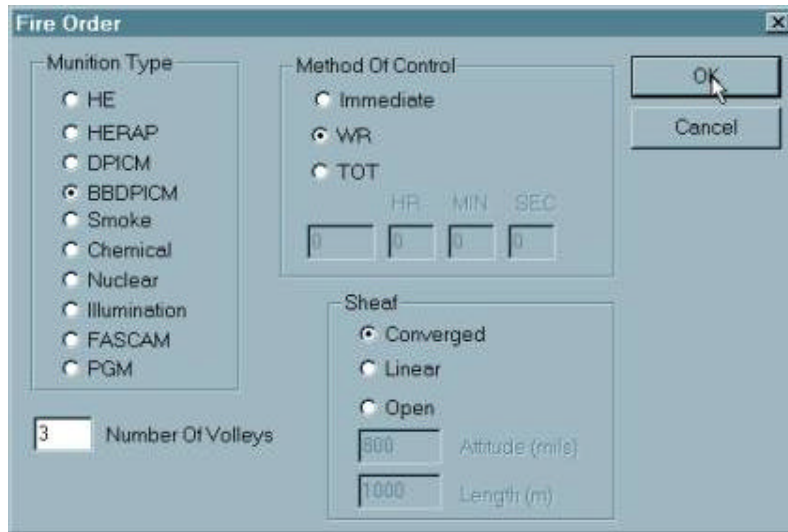
I have planned fires for the current EFST, and I still have an idle battery (B / 1-82 FA). This is where I defer to my HPTL in order to pick the next target.

HPTL for Phase II:

1. BMP-2s, BRDM-2 ATGMs, and T-80s within range of the point of penetration
2. Dismount Recon teams that can see our ORP
3. Artillery FDCs
4. Artillery systems

I am concerned that some of the BRDM-2 ATGMs in the AT firing line to my south may be within range of B / 2-8 CAV as it moves to the SBF, so I am going to try to destroy each with a battery 3 round (18 total rounds) of DPICM from B Battery. Note that this is a bit of a divergence from my plan, as these BRDMs are not, strictly, within range of the point of penetration. But, sometimes, the enemy does not cooperate with our plans.

I will then mass this battery on the vehicle positions in the point of penetration coming back to a little stricter adherence to my HPTL.
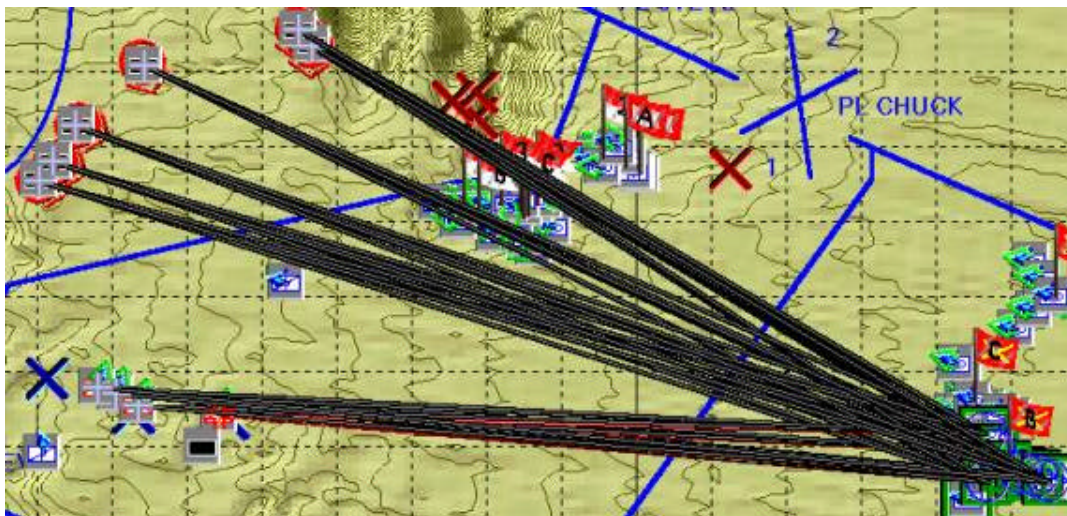
Finally, it is time to start B / 2-8 CAV moving toward the SBF. I will use the "Occupy SBF" AI Mission to accomplish this. I set the mission to move dismounted to the SBF. In retrospect, I will find that I wished I had waited until the SBF was established to dismount, as my dismounts get left behind and never get into the fight.

The net result of initiating the fires at the same time I initiate movement, rather than crossing the LD first, is that smoke and suppression are established prior to exposing B / 2-8 CAV to fire. In fact, I have gotten lucky and killed one enemy vehicle on the far west of the defensive line.

I make sure that, as vehicles are destroyed in the defensive line, I am adjusting suppression guns, so that I am not wasting rounds shooting at flaming hulks. Also, I keep a close eye on my smoke ammunition, so that I am switching batteries as soon as one battery is out of ammunition.

We have encountered a small disrupting obstacle placed in front of the CSOP position. I will have to move around this obstacle manually, exposing my flank to the enemy. But, luckily, I have a nice, thick smoke screen to cover my movement. Suppression is also effective.

Note in the below picture that our dismounts were dismounted *way* too far back to be up to the SBF in time to support the breach.
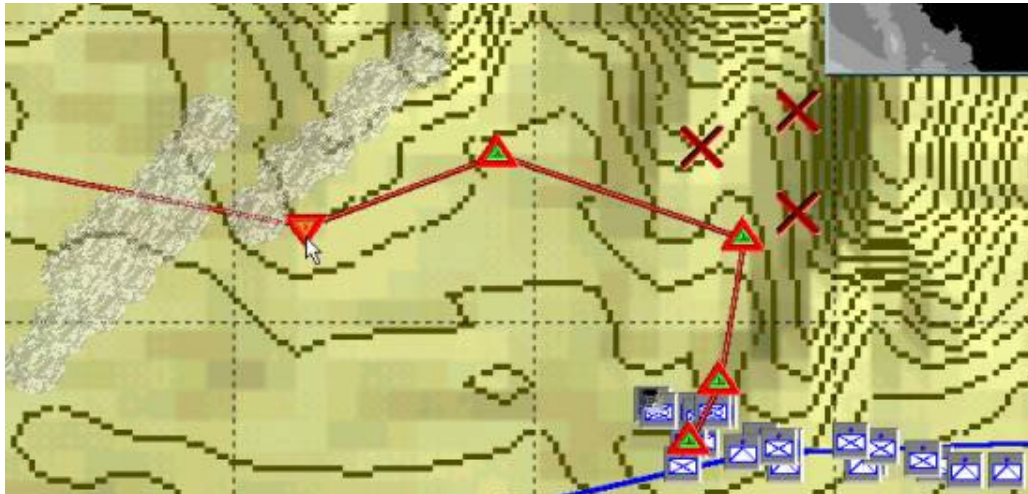
With the SBF established, we are going to initiate direct fire suppression at the point of penetration

**Phase IV: Breach the main obstacle belt**

The SBF is established and it is time to cut the breach. I am going to start moving my engineer company (A / 20 EN) forward. Because of the complexity of the terrain, I choose to plan this breach manually, using no formation, and "copy path" and "paste path" from the toolbar.
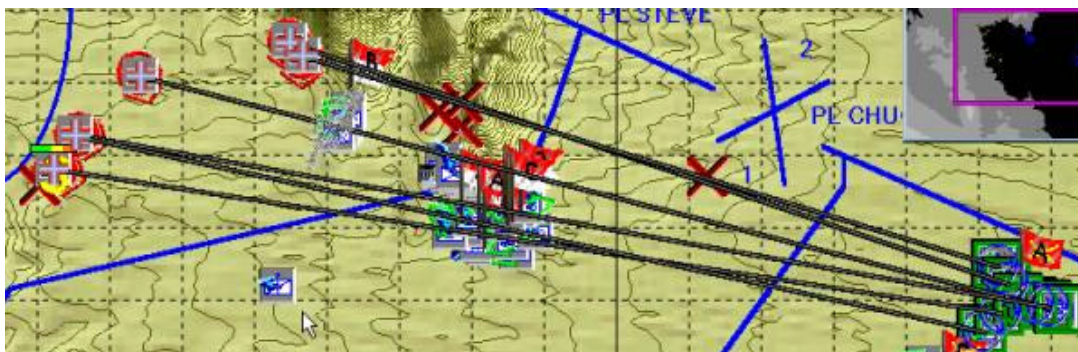
A / 1-82 FA is out of smoke. We need to get the next battery (C / 1-82 FA) firing so we do not loose our smoke and expose our breach force.
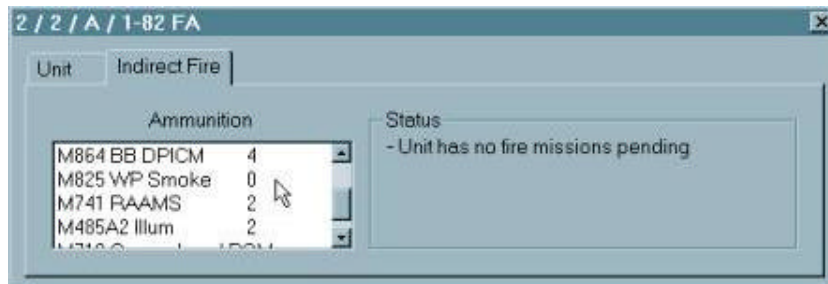
C Battery will pick up the smoke…
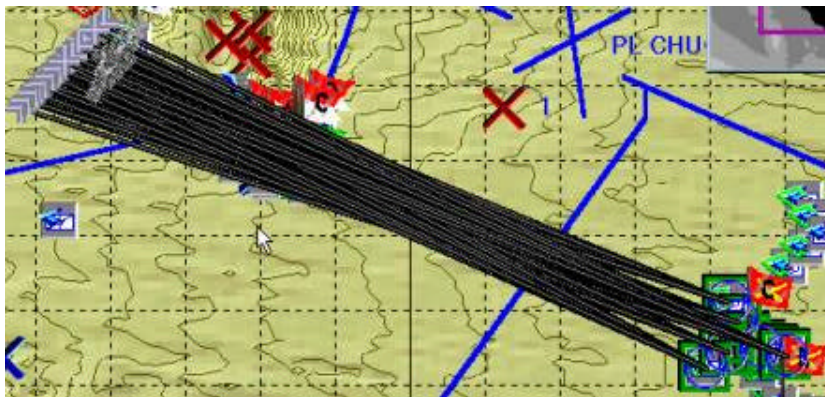
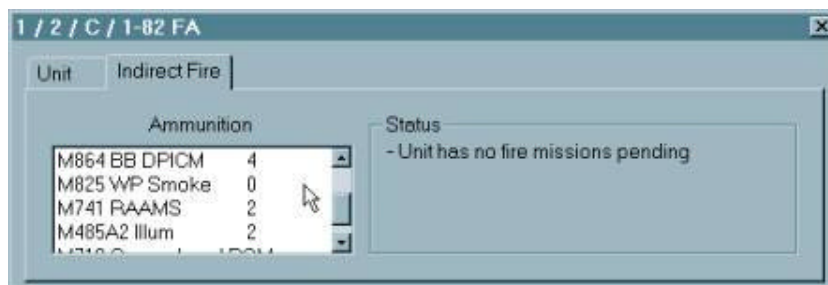…A Battery will pick up the suppression…

... and B Battery will continue to mass on the enemy platoon at the point of penetration.

As B / 2-8 CAV begins to have success at the point of penetration, we adjust direct fire suppression to continue to augment our indirect fire suppression.

And as C Battery runs out of smoke…

… we have to shift the fires around again, to continue to fire EFST 3. B Battery picks up the smoke, A Battery picks up suppression, and we fire HPTs with C Battery.
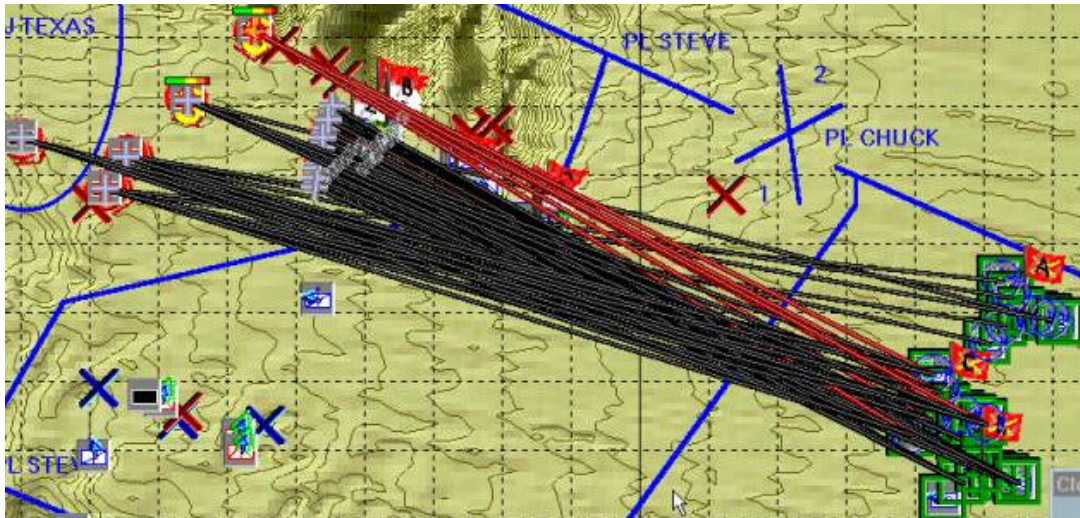
Phase V: Assault through breach to OBJ TEXAS

The breach is complete and we are continuing to fire EFST 3. Here are the HPTs.

HPTL for Phase V:

1. BMP-2s and T-80s in the counter-attack force
2. BMP-2s and T-80s in battle positions in the MBA (main battle area) defense
3. Dismounted AT-5 teams in the enemy strong point

These high payoff targets reflect our concerns in order. Our biggest concern is a counter attack on our flank. Once we assault through the breach, our battalion will be split on both sides of the obstacle belt and our assault force will be turned southwest, "rolling up" the enemy defense from east to west. We will be very vulnerable to an attack force rolling down from the north, and the S-2's SITTEMP tells us to expect this.

Our next concern is right in front of us. We no longer have smoke to obscure our (hopefully) fast moving assault force or HE to suppress effectively, we have to be concerned about BMPs and T-80s that can fire at us from a stand-off, before we are within direct fire range.

Finally, as we complete the "roll-up" of the enemy defense, we must be concerned about the infantry strong point on the high ground to the southwest. With AT-5's, they can range our assault force once it moves far enough west.

We begin our move north while we still have smoke for cover. We have to move rapidly through two breach lines, so I am going to use a formation of "none" and plan a company path. I will then adjust the stop point of vehicles individually, to

maximize their use of cover. I choose to do this manually, because this move will be conducted under fire, and needs to be quick and precise.

As my assault force comes through the breach, and begins to emerge from the smoke, I begin taking fire from unidentified (and in some cases unseen) enemy positions on the other side of OBJ Texas…

The entire plan falls apart

I manage to eek out a spot on the far side of the breach, but it is now obvious I will not just be "rolling-up" the objective.

OK. That's the end of the AAR. You can stop reading now.

Well, it was worth a try.

This is the point where I start counting red Xs and realize my error. There is only a reinforced platoon of combat power in front of OBJ TEXAS (dead and live vehicles). There are two unidentified, dug-in vehicles in the objective, and, if the S-2 was right about the OPFOR's combat power, I still have not accounted for six to eight combat vehicles.

It is now obvious to me that I have expended all of my artillery ammunition in the wrong place. I have managed to put myself on the wrong side of a four-kilometer kill sack. There are almost certainly six vehicles on the opposite side of OBJ TEXAS, waiting for me to emerge from my meager cover.

Well, I don't like not knowing where the enemy is, and I don't like sitting in one spot waiting to get pummeled by artillery, so I decide to try to skirt OBJ TEXAS to the north. I think that, if I can get to the open ground north of the objective, I can do some broken field running and get behind the enemy's defensive positions (*I hope he doesn't have ANOTHER obstacle belt*).

I still have a hodgepodge of HE, HERAP, and BBDPICM, so I plan targets on the enemy I can see, hoping to destroy a vehicle or two, and, to some extent, suppress as well. And I'm off…
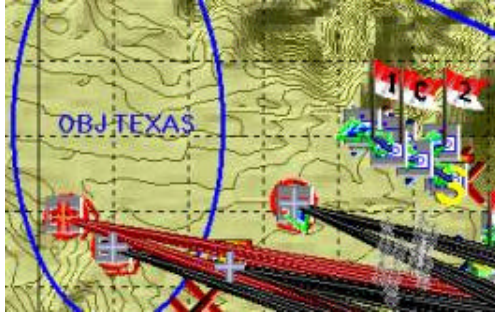
Well, that doesn't work very well. I manage to make it a kilometer farther northwest, but it costs me a platoon of tanks. It is now painfully obvious to me that I am going to need some more combat power forward.

I still have two mech platoons in the support by fire position, and two dismount platoons lumbering to the support by fire position. I decide to pull up the mech platoon.

That move was even costlier than the last. I lost an entire platoon of Bradleys and the company commander and XO (executive officer).

Perhaps the only bright spot is that my indirect fires has destroyed three of the four vehicles I could see in the vicinity of the objective. The final vehicle will be destroyed by this target.

But, just when I think I am in the clear, I spot three more enemy vehicles. In the ensuing bloodbath, I loose another platoon's-worth of combat power. I place my last three volleys on these targets, hoping to suppress them while I scramble for more concealed positions.
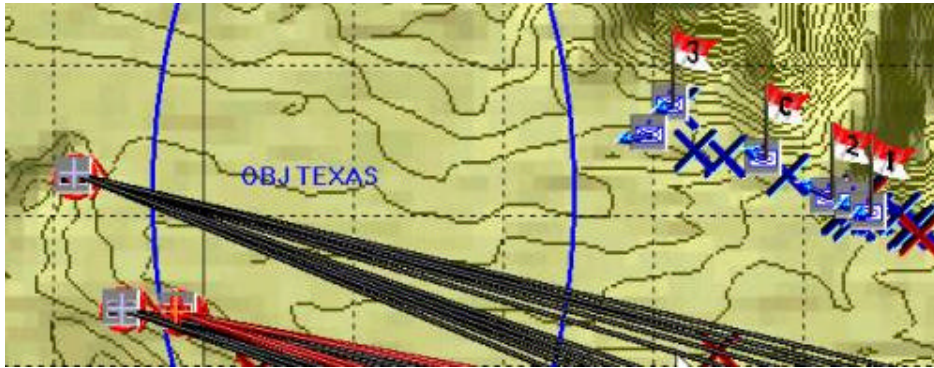
I am out of artillery ammo now, so, if you were just reading this to learn about fire support, you can stop now. No, really, you can stop reading.

Still here?
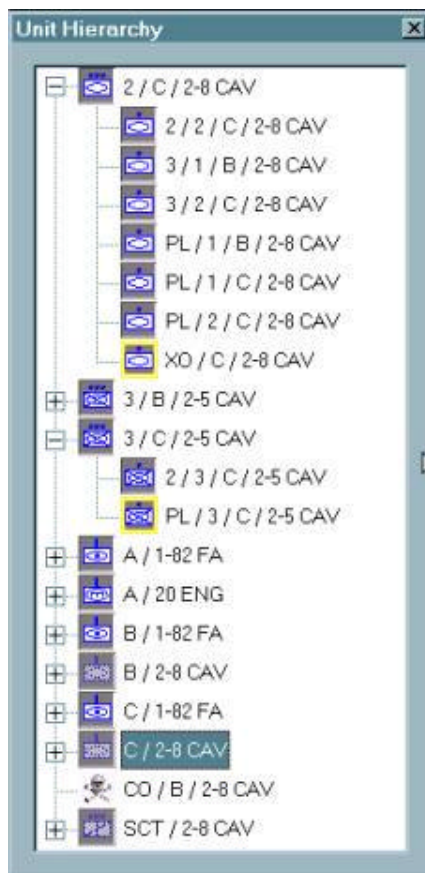
Back into covered positions, it is time to count my losses and formulate a new plan. The first step is to regain command and control of the forces I have remaining.

- ✍ I consolidate my tardy dismounts (I wish I had them forward, in the fight, but there *ain't no way* I'm going back to get them) in 3 / B / 2-5 CAV and pull it out of its leaderless company.
- ✍ I consolidate all of my tanks in 2 / C / 2-8 CAV. I only have 7 of my original 20 remaining.
- ✍ I consolidate all of my Bradleys under 3 / C / 2-5 CAV (I only have 2 of 8 remaining).

Those losses were racked up in the five minutes, beginning when C / 2-8 CAV emerged from the dying smoke and finishing with B / 2-8 CAV's aborted attempt to reinforce.

But that is not the worst part. The worst part is that I am stuck. I can not go back and try to attack from the other side because a) I have no artillery with which to attempt another breach, b) I have only two M9 ACEs remaining, and c) I would be wiped out by long before I made it back to the breach.

So I decide to go forward.

If you look closely, you will see that I am making the same mistake again that got me in this mess in the first place. I am not counting bad guys. If you count all of the unidentified vehicles and all of the red Xs in and around OBJ TEXAS, you will find that I still have not identified 2-4 vehicles. I am about to find them.
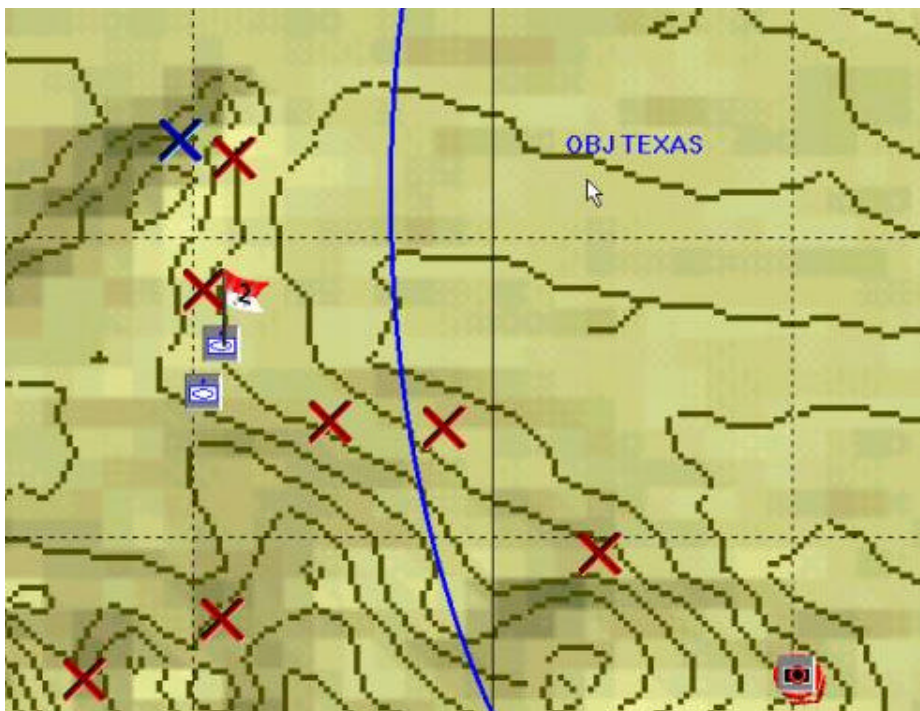
There's two of them…
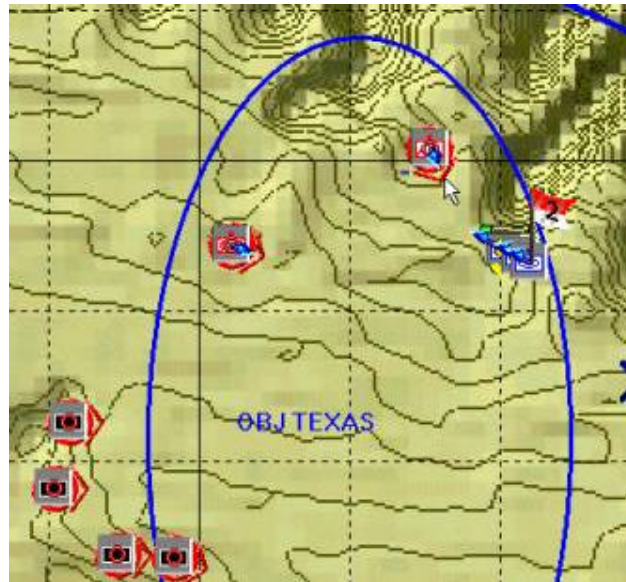
…and here are the others. I end up destroying this platoon on the northern end of OBJ Texas, but it costs me three tanks and both Bradleys.
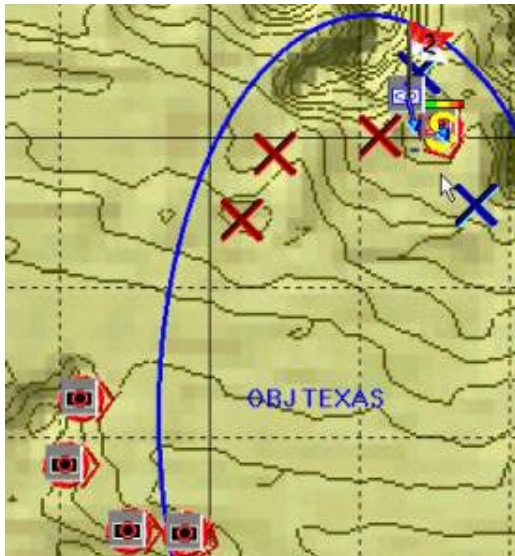
Eventually, I get my four remaining tanks behind the battle position in the southwest corner of the previous picture. I loose two of them in the ensuing firefight…

…and, with two tanks remaining, I move to complete the seizure of OBJ TEXAS by destroying the last tank in the objective.
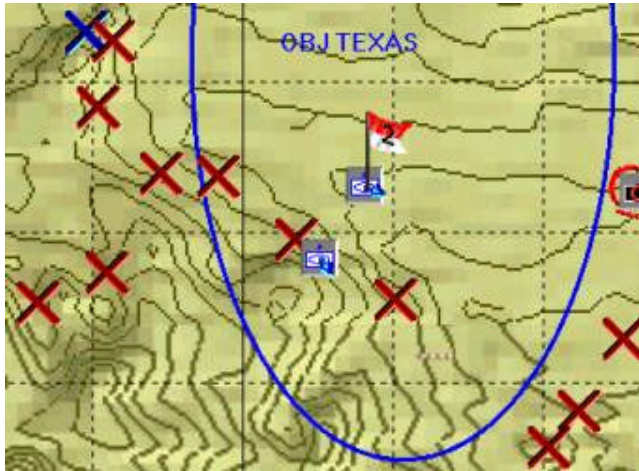
After seizing the objective, I am still two vehicles shy of meeting the enemy destruction victory conditions. I am too "chicken" to take on the remaining combat vehicle (is it a tank?) in the main battle area, just east of OBJ TEXAS, so…

…out of pride, and in a moment of pure **Armored Task Force** unreality, I "bum rush" the enemy AT firing line with a scout and B / 1-82 FA. The scout dies, as do several of my howitzers, but my pride is spared, as I am handed a "mercy victory" by **ATF**.

Here are the numbers (remember, I told you to stop reading several pages ago).

MISSION COMPLETE

All mission objectives completed.

Good work, colonel! The enemy took the bait and committed to your sector. This has set the conditions for 2-5 CAV to succeed in the south. Now, just sit tight and wait for 3 BCT to back you up. Ironhorse 6, out.

Mission Objectives:
1. Attrit the enemy to 66 enemy vehicles or teams.
2. Eliminate all enemy vehicles or teams in OBJ TEXAS and occupy it with at least 1 friendly vehicle or team.

Results:
1. The enemy has 65 vehicles or teams remaining.
2. No enemy vehicles or teams remain in the objective, OBJ TEXAS. The objective is occupied by 2 friendly vehicles or teams.

Enemy Starting and Ending Combat Power:

Vehicle Type	Starting	Ending
BMP-2 IFV	11	0
T-80B MBT	8	0
BRDM-2 with ATGM	9	5
AT-5 Team	8	8
Enemy Fire Team	8	4
2B11 120 mm Mortar	3	0
2S19 152 mm SP Howitzer	36	36
ACRV (MT-LBu 1V13)	12	12

Friendly Starting and Ending Combat Power:

Vehicle Type	Starting	Ending
M1025 Scout HMMWV	6	2
M9 ACE	3	1
M60 AVLB	2	0
M113A3 with MCLiC	3	3
M1A2 MBT	16	2
M1A2 MBT with Mine Plow	4	0
M2A2 Bradley IFV	8	0
Javelin Team	8	8
Fire Team	8	8
M109A6 Paladin 155 mm SP How.	18	15
M1068 Fire Direction Center	6	5

Allied Starting and Ending Combat Power:

No allied vehicles in this scenario.

Synchronizing fires with maneuver.

Though **ATF** *calls* this a victory, it is an unqualified defeat. Two tanks and a few dismounts of combat power remaining, I am, essentially, wiped out. The brigade commander would have halted our attack well before we got to this point.

But, despite the problems I had with this scenario, the fire support methodology was sound. I stuck to my EFSTs (Essential Fire Support Tasks) and HPTs (High Payoff Targets), and adjusted when necessary. The results were fires that were very focused at (what I intended) to be the decisive point in the battle.