

# The Fight for National Route One

## Introduction

This is a hypothetical "what if" scenario based on events near the city of Quang Tri during the North Vietnamese [Easter Offensive of 1972](#). The game is designed to use a large number of models, including NVA tanks. This is definitely NOT a small skirmish game!

The rules used for the game was the "[Incoming!](#)" supplement for Crossfire, which allow large numbers of models to be used without getting bogged down in trivia.

In order to make a change from the usual two sided game several extra twists were added to the game. In one case some of the NVA players are prevented from discussing the game unless they take "time out" during the game (and risk losing the initiative) to do so – this represents the poor NVA communications and forces them to consider their plan carefully before committing themselves to battle.

The other major addition to the scenario was the use of random events. This has been covered before on this web site but in this case I selected a number of "real life" events which were typical of the period and designed a system whereby they could be called into play. Not all of the events are detrimental to the players – some may even benefit them, although obviously the players have no control over which events occur. Full details of the random events are included in the [umpire's notes](#) in the scenario.

A note for those contemplating playing the scenario – an umpire is essential. I umpired this game myself and had a great time watching the players slugging it out. Due to the random events system the umpire can actually take an active role in the game and is not simply relegated to watching from the sidelines.

All of the models used were 15mm figures from my own collection although, due to a lack of T-55s (see [Barrie's Review of the Peter Pig T-55](#)) we had to resort to using model T-34/85 tanks instead!

The model aircraft are 1/144<sup>th</sup> scale plastic kits.

## General

This scenario pits a reinforced [Vietnamese Marine Corps](#) Company against advancing NVA infantry and armour during the fierce fighting in Quang Tri Province in April and May 1972.

The VNMC unit is part of the 9th Marine Battalion which has been ordered to hold the line while the VNMC 369th Brigade and the demoralised ARVN 3rd Division re-establish a defensive position along the My Chanh river, south of Quang Tri city. In particular National Route 1, the road to the Dap Dai bridge, must be held to allow free movement of ARVN troops and refugees and to deny the use of the road to the advancing NVA armour.

The Marines are supported by some ARVN stragglers but their position is complicated by the presence of numbers of casualties in a nearby aid post.

### Terrain

The terrain is undulating with small ridges and dense bush along the roadsides. The main feature is a small town (surrounded by cultivated land, tree lines and hedgerows) and the adjacent militia barracks (see [Map of AO](#)).

The militia barracks is protected by bunkers and barbed wire. An abandoned fire support base is nearby. The FSB is treated as Rough Ground and will give cover but not block line of sight.



The ARVN barracks, as seen from the direction of the NVA attack.

The terrain is generally unsuited for armour except along the main road (National Route 1).

### Weather

The weather is fine. TAC Air may be used as per the rules.

### Timings

The game will start at 0600 hours on 2nd May 1972. At the end of each ARVN turn throw 1D6. On a score of 5 or 6 half an hour will be deemed to have passed.

First Light is 0530 hours, last light is 2100 hours.

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## ARVN Player Instructions & Notes

### Mission:

You are to hold the road (National Route 1) and deny the passage of enemy troops and armour for 24 hours in order to allow friendly units to consolidate their positions along the My Chanh River in the area of the Dai Dap Bridge. Under no circumstances must the enemy open the route.

In addition, the local militia barracks (which are currently held by elements of ARVN 3rd Infantry Division) has a number of civilian and military casualties who need to be secured and evacuated. Trucks will be provided for casualty evacuation if necessary.

At the end of the 24-hour delaying period you are to fall back along Route 1 and rejoin the rest of the battalion near the Dai Dap Bridge. Any ARVN troops or stragglers are to be withdrawn with you at this point.

Your company is almost at full strength, having recently completed a period of training and refurbishment. The men are aggressive and determined, and fiercely anti-Communist (the battalion nickname "Grains of Pepper" refers to the point that when thrown in the face of the enemy the marines will make the enemy cry!). It is obvious however that the local ARVN troops are not likely to be as reliable.

The NVA have been pressing hard along Route 1 and have made extensive use of armour. You have a number of troops armed with the 66mm LAW plus a couple of 106mm RCLs.

#### Friendly Forces:

- Company B, 9th Marine Battalion (Grains of Pepper)
- FO from the Battery K, 3rd Marine Artillery battalion (155mm)
- USMC Advisor (acting as an FAC)
- 8 x LAW teams
- A reduced Troop of M113s from the ARVN 3rd Infantry Division Cavalry Squadron
- Elements of 3rd Div ARVN troops holding the militia barracks and the aid post.

#### Co-ordinating Instructions:

Due to the current situation ammunition supplies for the artillery are limited. As a consequence the FO is limited to 12 Fire Missions until further notice (At 1800 hours throw 1D6. On a score of 4 or 5 another 12 FMs will be available, on a score of 6 25 FMs).

NVA AAA in the area is heavy and has taken a heavy toll on friendly air support. Helicopter resources are under considerable strain and the demand is greater than the available resources. Until further notice all casevacs will be via truck and are requested in the normal way but with a +1 delay.

The US Advisor may act as an FAC, however due to demands on aircraft and enemy AAA a modifier of +1 is applied to each request.

Civilians may be evacuated with casualties.

### Morale and Training:

- All VNMC units are Veteran Morale and move as ARVN.
- ARVN Armoured units are Regular and move as ARVN.
- Other ARVN units are Green and move as ARVN.

### Deployment:

VNMC and ARVN units may be deployed up to 2/3 of the depth of the table (but no further north than the barracks).

### Objectives:

The point at which Route 1 exits the ARVN player's table edge, and the militia barracks, are both Victory Objectives. Loss of both of these to the NVA inside the 24 hour period will automatically lose the game (Crossfire rules P32 – if NVA hold both of these objectives for 5 initiatives then they will win).

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## NVA Player Instructions & Notes

### Mission:

You are commanding elements of an infantry battalion (1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 64<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 308th NVA Division) operating in support of tanks from the 202<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade.

The armour has been ordered to strike down National Route 1 and seize a crossing over the My Chanh River at the Dai Dap bridge. Your infantry is to support the armour in this mission. The road must be opened as soon as possible in order to maintain the advance and keep the enemy off balance.

To date the advance has been going well, the tanks have provided considerable firepower which has made up for the fact that some of your heavy weapons (in the combat support platoons) have fallen behind. The enemy 3rd Infantry Division has all but collapsed and all that is holding up the advance are US air attacks and the difficulty of moving the armour away from the main road. Intelligence reports however suggest that elements of the South Vietnamese Marine Corps are now deployed in front of you – this is not good news. Although your troops are steady and well trained the Marines have a fearsome reputation and are known to be staunchly anti-Communist. However, it is expected that the tanks will prove decisive in any clash, as the ARVN armour has been conspicuous by its absence so far.



A general view of the town. The edge of the barracks can be seen in the top right hand corner.

Shortly after dawn your leading troops report enemy resistance in the small town to the front. The enemy resistance must be crushed quickly and the advance continued. However, reports indicate the presence of a barracks that may provide some much needed food and munitions for your troops.

#### Friendly Forces:

- Battalion HQ
- 2 companies of NVA regulars (including the combat support platoons)
- 1 x combat support platoon from the support company.
- FO from Divisional artillery battalion (130mm guns)
- Elements of 202nd Independent Tank Brigade (T-55)

#### Co-ordinating Instructions:

**Armour** - Due to the relatively inexperienced tank crews the NVA Armour must operate as a complete unit. Each vehicle must retain LoS to the Platoon Commander's vehicle at all times.

**Armour-Infantry Communications** - To represent the non-existent infantry/tank communications the armour and infantry should be played by separate players. The players may discuss tactics etc prior to starting the game (but without looking at the playing area) but may not do so during the game unless the relevant command stands are in base to base contact, in which case each discussion is treated as an action. If the players decide to have such a discussion they must throw 1D6 at the end of the discussion. They will lose the initiative on a score of 4 or more, representing the loss of momentum while the commanders confer.

**NVA Artillery FO** - Has 25 fire missions for the 130mm guns (off-table). The ammunition will be replenished overnight and will recommence at 25 FMs from 0600 on the following morning.

#### Morale and Training:

- All NVA infantry are Regular morale and move as NVA.

- NVA armour uses the NVA armour rules in the Incoming Supplement (page 2). Morale is Green.

### Deployment:

All NVA units deploy within 6" of the NVA table edge (or in any terrain item which crosses the 6" line). Units may be kept off table if desired. Moving on to the table is treated as one activity.

### Victory Conditions:

The NVA will win the game when the South Vietnamese can no longer prevent NVA troops moving south through the town and exiting the playing area on National Route 1. Anything else will be considered a defeat.

## Umpires Instructions & Notes

(Umpire's Eyes Only – Not for Players!)

*LAW shock* - The NVA armoured units, although well trained and drilled, were not used to combat and the effects of the shoulder fired 66mm LAW frequently unnerved the tank crews. The first time a LAW knocks out an NVA tank, dice (1D6) for each other tank in LoS of the destroyed vehicle. On a score of 5 the tank is pinned and must pass a morale test in order to move again, but on a score of 6 the crew panic at the effect of the LAW and abandon the vehicle! The vehicles may not be re-used unless a crew from another tank takes over. ARVN troops may not use the abandoned tanks but may set fire to them if desired. Any stand which spends one action in base to base contact with the tank may set fire to it.

*ARVN Aid Post* - One part of the barracks must be nominated as an Aid Post and will contain 1D6+5 casualty markers. These represent casualties wounded earlier in the fighting and must be saved from falling into Communist hands.

*ARVN Ammunition Bunker* - One of the bunkers/buildings within the barracks area must be nominated as an ammunition store (see miscellaneous events #1 below and map showing the bunker used in the game).

### Miscellaneous Events:

The following miscellaneous events may occur at any time during the battle and are designed to add a little spice and interest to the game without being too silly. Each initiative the umpire will draw a card from a pack. If the ace of spades is drawn one random event is picked from the list. Each time the ace of spades is drawn the pack is reshuffled. In addition, each side may call for a miscellaneous event twice during the game. They may do so at any point even if they do not have the initiative. The events may affect friendly as well as enemy troops and should be used with caution! Once an event has occurred it is removed from the list.

- *Ammunition store explosion at Militia Barracks*: An ammunition bunker at the militia barracks explodes. Any stands within 2 base widths of the bunker are immediately suppressed and must dice, being killed on a score of 5 or 6.
- *Downed Aircrew need rescuing*: Hold a piece of paper approx 3' above the table and release it. Place a downed pilot stand at the point where it lands.
- *Downed helicopter*: As above but replace the marker with a crashed helicopter and crew stand.
- *Incorrect orders to Fall Back*: One randomly chosen enemy unit (platoon sized) misunderstands an order or misjudges the situation and falls back 18" away from the most dangerous enemy threat and, as far as possible, towards its own baseline. If the unit leaves the table then it may not return until the side next has the initiative.
- *Short Round (either side)*: One randomly chosen unit comes under fire from a short round. Treat as an artillery attack and dice to see which stand is affected.
- *Lost Comms*: The communications fall into confusion at a critical moment – the side with the initiative lose it and play passes to the opposition.
- *Broken Arrow artillery mission (Either side)*: All friendly off table artillery (and air if ARVN) is being diverted to assist another friendly unit (which is in trouble if ARVN or is advancing heroically if NVA). No further off table support is permitted until the player throws a score 5 or 6 at the start on any subsequent initiative.
- *Breakdown (NVA only)*: A randomly chosen NVA tank breaks down and remains immobile for the remainder of the game.
- *Dust Off (ARVN only)*: Helicopter resources are available for casualty evacuation for a period of two hours.
- *Lull in the fighting*: Everything slows down for half an hour as the troops pause and get themselves sorted out. All Pinned and Suppressed units recover. Pinned or Suppressed units currently in the open may withdraw to the nearest safe cover. Add half an hour to the game clock and dice to see which side starts with the next initiative.