

# FROM GRUNT TO SEARCH & DESTROY

by Phil Kosnett

In March of 1971, *Strategy & Tactics 26* was published. That was the first issue to carry a game with die-cut counters, and the focus of *SPT's* first big advertising campaign. The featured game was the first contemporary game, a squad level game of combat in Vietnam. The game title was the current slang term for an American infantryman — *Grunt*.

*Grunt* was not a bad game, for 1971. But as the state of the art improved, especially in regard to tactical games, *Grunt's* popularity fell. In 1974, *SPI* decided to drop those games that had become obsolete and replace them with improved versions taking advantage of new design techniques. *Grunt* was high on the list. [After preparing eight games for alteration and publishing three, it was decided that the money would be better spent in developing all-new games.]

In January of 1975, *Search & Destroy* was made available. I already owned *Grunt* (it was my very first *SPI* game), but *S&D* sounded good. I bought it, and was pleasantly surprised. I had expected little more than reorganized rules and a couple of options. But *Search & Destroy* has a lot more.

## Physical Components

The first impression is psychological. *Grunt's* box photo is of a line of Huey helicopters descending on the treeline. *S&D's* shows a Marine squad, tired and apprehensive, slogging through the elephant grass toward a suspected enemy position deep in the jungle. The latter is much more accurate in describing the frustration of the American forces. The former smacks too much of "American technology and knowhow conquers primitive Asiatic hordes," one of the most unfortunate and misleading impressions of the war.

The map, too, is much improved. *Grunt's* map is in black-and-white, and rather ugly — the thatch huts look more like overturned oil barrels, and the patches of forest resemble sickly amoebas. *Search & Destroy's* map is in color (blue; green would have better suited the mood) and the detail is clearer, typical signs of *SPT's* steadily increasing graphic quality. Credit is due Redmond Simonsen, the driving force behind *SPT's* art — he designs almost all the graphics himself. Both maps are integrated. *Grunt's* mapsheet carries the two CRT's, Interrogation Results Table, and Victory Point value chart. *S&D's* has the CRT's, Time Record, Point Record (both done on scratch paper in *Grunt*), and the Terrain Effects Chart (typical of the old days, *Grunt* has no TEC).

The *Grunt* rules folder, one of those big confusing annoying ones, is the result of sloppy work. Most (not all) of the rules are in there someplace, but in such disorder that it can take half an hour to dig them out. *Search & Destroy*, of course comes in the standard and magnificent outline form first introduced in *S&T 35, Year of the Rat*. Even though *S&D's* rules are twice the length of *Grunt's*, you can dig up anything in a minute or so. A tremendous playing aid, especially in a complex game like *S&D*.

Undoubtedly, however, it is the counters that have been improved the most. For some reason (probably economic rather than aesthetic) the U.S. units in *Grunt* are colored gold and are positively ugly. *S&D's* are green. Again, green suits the mood. In both games, the NLF units are colored black, which is simply a stroke of genius; black suggests slinking through jungles and night raids and, of course, black pajamas. Just about everything is improved. The unit symbols are more accurate (though not *always* really superior; the medic's simple red cross is replaced with an obscure 'official' marking), the status counters are upgraded (most importantly, there are KIA and WIA counters instead of just 'Casualty'), and, for purists, the U.S. squads are marked as squads — in *Grunt* they carried the 'section' symbol. [Trivial to you, maybe, not to me!] All in all, *Search & Destroy* is a perfect example of the improvements in physical systems design over the last four years.

## Rules & Mechanics

The most obvious change in the basic mechanics is that the Movement Allowance of infantry units has been *doubled*, though the scale is unchanged. Apparently the time scale has been doubled, though nowhere is this explained. The effect is to greatly increase the fluidity of the combat, allowing for more freewheeling battles. Perhaps more importantly, it gives the invading U.S. forces a chance to cover the whole board. The primary mission of the Americans is to search the array of inverted units, including dummies, for caches of food and equipment. It took so long to cover the *Grunt* mapboard that the Americans had little chance of uncovering more than two or three caches. The *S&D* board is 133% the size of the *Grunt* map, but the doubled Movement Allowance allows the Americans, on occasion, to sweep the entire board. Very refreshing.

Another alteration is the elimination of stacking. This is done more to give the Player a break than for any other reason. If two units are stacked in the same hex, and attacked, each unit sustains casualties. In

other words, the closer you pack them, the more bullets are going to find targets. It obviously isn't worth it to stack, because in fluid battles a solid front seldom forms. There simply is no need to pour all your strength into one area. And this can be fatal for the NLF Player who forgets about U.S. artillery and puts all his men where a single battery can find them. So when you get mad at John Young (*S&D's* designer) because you can only put twelve men into a fifty meter hex, remember that it's for your own good.

One of the more useless optional rules in *Grunt* is the field-of-fire rule, which extends a 'kill zone' past a target to the firing unit's maximum range. For example, an infantry unit has a range in clear terrain of eight hexes. If that unit fires at a target two hexes away, any units in a direct line six hexes beyond the target are hit as well. In addition, a secondary kill zone extends four hexes further, with half the firepower. One squad, using this rule, could attack twelve units strung over six hundred meters! Because an American company landing by 'copter must land in a straight line in open (rice paddies) or broken (elephant grass) terrain, and helicopters are very, very vulnerable, this rule produced disproportionate losses among the landing units. I've seen entire companies wiped out by single squads of VC militia. Apparently John Kramer, in designing *Grunt*, forgot that a bullet that strikes a helicopter fifty meters away (fired at an upward angle) will continue upward. The only way to hit a line of hovering choppers is to fire from a platform hovering at the same altitude. Same thing on ground — a bullet fired at a target a hundred meters away, if it misses, will strike the ground long before its maximum range of six hundred. To hit something six hundred meters away, you have to aim high and let it arc in. No, the field-of-fire rule was a mistake. Good riddance.

Medics are treated more logically in *Search & Destroy*, but there is one important point that Kramer, Young and the playtesters all missed. A medical unit (two men) or an NLF porter (about the same) can carry any number of casualties. I can see two medics taking care of an infinite number of casualties if they are immobile, but I cannot see two medics lugging half a dozen wounded around the jungle with no decrease in Movement Allowance. Combat units can sometimes carry casualties; that is logical. Twelve men (who cannot fire while transporting casualties) can be expected to carry and/or support several bodies and wounded, including walking wounded.

**SUGGESTED RULES ALTERATION:** *U.S. medics and NLF porters can carry a maximum of four wounded or two dead. U.S. and NLF combat units can carry up to twelve wounded and/or dead.*

Another point: In *Grunt*, combat units were removed from the map after losing six casualties, a logical move — after suffering 50% casualties, a unit doesn't have much effective strength. Medics, porters, snipers and forward observers represent one to three men. In *Grunt*, they, too, could take six casualties. In *S&D* they are removed after one, but the six casualty rule was omitted. I'm sure this was an oversight — and if it was omitted purposely, I hereby violently disagree. That rule is important. Put it back! And if you're going to play *S&D* with a loophole freak, pin it down before you start. I know of one loophole freak who isolated a six-man squad and proceeded to inflict thirty-one casualties on it.

Many other rules have been clarified and slightly altered. Booby traps, once harbingers of doom, no longer can decide games, though they are quite painful. In *Grunt*, I once saw a U.S. Player probe a concealed booby trap with four squads, roll four sixes, and lose a whole platoon. No more.

The Interrogation rule is one of the unique features of the *Grunt/S&D* system. U.S. and ARVN units interrogate peasants in order to uncover hidden caches. Since the NLF Player decides which cache is revealed, and he will, of course, pick the one farthest from the U.S. Player, the Interrogation rule isn't that useful. And the Calley Syndrome is there — peasants are often killed or wounded under interrogation.

*Search & Destroy* is not just a neatened version of *Grunt*, though — the entire game system is excellent and unusual. More than anything else, it is the Leadership rule and the many optional rules that distinguish *S&D* and show how dramatic the clash in Vietnam was. America's supertechnology faced against the age-old tactics of the Oriental warrior with his own technology.

#### *Leadership*

Unlike the Command Control rules in other games, Leadership is not based on random die rolls, though there is a luck factor.

NLF command control is very simple. All NVA and VC infantry units must be within four hundred meters (eight hexes) of a cadre unit. Cadres are regular combat units, as strong as NVA squads. NVA units more than four hundred meters (maximum range at which bugles and similar devices can be heard during a battle) are halved in movement, but maintain full fire capabilities. VC units are also halved in movement and can fire only at units which fire at them. Cadre units are rather plentiful, so the NLF Player rarely finds many units out of Leadership Control.

U.S. and ARVN units do not have to be within a set distance of their platoon leaders,

because their communications system is based on radio. But each time a combat unit takes casualties, there is a 17% chance the radioman will be hit. A unit thus "panicked" is immobilized and loses most fire capabilities. This effect can last up to three Turns, until somebody else picks up the radio. If a platoon leader is hit [unlike NLF Cadres, U.S. platoon leaders are unarmed] a die is rolled for each subordinate squad. There's a 50% chance that the squads will panic. If a company commander is hit, the 50% chance applies to the platoon leaders, with affected leaders rolling for squads. In some scenarios there is a battalion commander. If he's hit, the U.S. Player is in big trouble.

This rule can be a lot of fun, because only your own carelessness can cause a serious loss of Leadership. The NLF Player learns not to commit his Cadres without reserve, and the U.S. Player learns to keep his commanders covering safely behind the combat units. The U.S. will still lose radiomen, but the odds are against it happening much, and there are usually enough Americans to make up for the temporary loss. An interesting point is that *Grunt* contained the same basic Leadership rule for the NLF, but no rule for the U.S. — an unfair method to say the least.

Hopefully, some of those who think Command Control, Panic, and realism are no fun will be satisfied with the slight reliance on chance in *Search & Destroy*.

#### *Improved Positions*

Any unit which sits dormant for a full Turn doubles its effective Defense Strength. One of the more unusual facets of *Grunt/S&D* is that units have no intrinsic Defense Strength. Defense depends on the terrain a unit occupies; open is the weakest, jungle is strongest. Because improving position represents going to ground and settling-in low rather than digging trenches, once the unit leaves the hex there is no remaining IP marker. The Game Notes section cautions the use of this rule, for it can have a profound effect on the game. NLF strongpoints are indeed strong, and a U.S. force in IP will be nearly invulnerable to the meager Attack Strengths the NLF can muster. The game becomes even more a practice in maneuver, and less blood is spilled. In the opinions of some, the game becomes less exciting.

#### *Ambush*

Every NVA (not VC) unit can be assigned to one ambush marker in its line of fire. When a U.S. unit ends its movement on the marker, the NVA unit may attack, adding two to the die roll. This can have a devastating effect, especially if the ambushed unit is left pinned down in clear terrain. Once the NVA unit moves, the ambush marker becomes inoperative. The only drawback to the ambush is that the firing unit is exposed. Every NLF unit is exposed when it fires, but many unnecessary attacks may be made by an NLF Player who thinks ambushes are fun. And if an ambushing unit hangs around to work over its victim, it may suffer the

combined wrath of the U.S. Infantry, Artillery, and even Air Force.

#### *Combat Results*

The *Grunt/S&D* CRT comes in two versions — point and casualty. The point system gives more points to the NLF than to the U.S. for an identical result. The casualty system inflicts the same casualty, but individual American casualties are worth more points to the NLF. In the point system units can be destroyed at any time. In the casualty system at least six must be inflicted. The casualty system is far superior, not because it is more realistic (there is little difference there), but because it is far more flexible. A plethora of interesting rules, including Body Count, Casualty Capture, Medics, and Medevac are brought into play. They all have great effect on the Victory Conditions. Body Count requires U.S. forces to either see NLF dead or capture the wounded to get Victory Points (because of oft-inflated U.S. claims, the American command and public wanted proof). Both sides can capture enemy KIA and WIA for bonus Victory Points, and there are rules for carrying casualties, dropping them when fired upon, etc. Tactics and strategy change drastically when using the casualty system, for the effectiveness of units burdened with casualties is severely limited. Nevertheless, casualties cannot be abandoned due to the possibility of having the enemy pick them up. Medics and NLF porters become decisive.

#### *Artillery and Air Strikes*

Compared to the power of a battery of 105mm howitzers or a flight of Phantoms, the infantry is gnatlike. Artillery attacks six hexes with twelve points each, Airstrikes eight hexes with nine points each. Forward Observers can pinpoint fire, but unobserved fire, subject to scatter, can be called anywhere on the board. It is the artillery which is the backbone of U.S. strength. The infantry company has more total power than a battery of 105's, but it is not concentrated. If the NLF Player attempts a head-on battle with his infantry (which is just as good as the U.S. infantry and better than the ARVN) he will find the howitzers raking him over. The debilitating thing about artillery is that the NLF receive 20 handicap points if a battery is committed. Each time an airstrike is made, the NLF receive 50 points! The handicap rule is for balance only; the American military never had any qualms about using ammo. I strongly recommend the incorporation of artillery and airpower into all your games, even if they are the only optional rules you use. There is little added complexity involved, and much added realism. The NLF goes back to hit-and-run and head-on, set-piece battles disappear.

#### *Ammunition Supply/Increased Fire Rate*

One of the most difficult and confusing options, this rule requires extensive record keeping. Basically, U.S. squads have six units of fire, NLF squads, four. Each Turn's firing expends one unit, or a squad can

double its Attack Strength by expending two units. Reloading is done by sitting dormant for a Turn on an Ammo Cache or U.S. Ammo Supply counter. While this rule is certainly realistic, I do not recommend it. The bookkeeping takes a long time, and the game is made much bloodier; more units are wiped out. More importantly, the artillery becomes much less crucial — definitely unrealistic, despite the seeming logic of the ammo rules.

#### Tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers

Unlike most other tactical games, vehicles in *Search & Destroy* are not more mobile than the infantry. Oh, they have more Movement Points, but there is only one road and woefully little clear terrain. The clear terrain is soggy rice paddy, and even there the infantry is faster. If you have any visions of an Asiatic blitzkrieg, forget it. Those vehicles are there for infantry support. They do have fire power: APC's have six points and tanks, eighteen. Those tanks can really mess up an NLF unit foolish enough to get spotted where a tank can get at it.

Unfortunately for the tankers, the NLF is very well supplied with anti-tank weapons. In every scenario U.S. armor appears, the NLF gets four mines to hide and an AT missile (RPG-7, the good one) for each Cadre. The M-113 APC's are easy meat for RPG-7's, and the M-48 Pattons are vulnerable as well. If a tank is destroyed, the NLF gains no points (the tankers presumably run away from their disabled vehicles), and the same applies to empty APC's. However, a squad being transported by APC is subjected to a high odds attack. I have serious doubts about the availability of AT missiles in 1965. Certainly, the NLF had plenty of mines, but in 1965 the Soviet Union had not yet sent many anti-armor missiles to the VC. Perhaps the NVA had them. In any event, the American tankers would be aware of the *possibility* of facing AT missiles. If the NLF in a particular scenario lacked AT weapons, the tankers would operate with impunity, taking risks no sane commander would. So I suppose the rule is best the way it is, for the threat is present.

#### Helicopter Gun Support

With this rule, the Huey transport 'copters lay down a barrage as they bring in the company, and Cobra gunships escort subsequent landings of Medevac and ammo-supply 'copters. The Hueys have three attack points, the Cobras five, both rather small (but certainly useful) figures. The drawback is in additional vulnerability. With this rule, 'copters may be fired on three times: as they come in shooting, as they disembark their passengers, and as they leave. Previously, they could be fired on only once. Generally, this rule is advantageous to the NLF, because 'copters are more vulnerable than the NLF men firing from the treeline. I usually discourage its use, because the rules are plentiful and this one just clutters play; the addition in realism is relatively minor.

#### Review

With the exceptions of Leadership, Tanks and APC's, all these rules are descended from earlier versions in *Grunt*. Another option which I spoke of earlier, Interrogation, was standard in *Grunt* and should always be used in *S&D*. The Game Notes section of *S&D* warns against the use of too many optional rules, stressing that complexity doesn't necessarily equal realism. It especially warns against flagrantly using

Improved Positions and the Increased Fire Rate. I agree with that, but think that certain other options should always be used. Artillery, Air Strikes, the Casualty Combat Results Table, and Tanks and APC's — those are the important rules that tell why the Vietnam War was what it was. Certainly, the novice should start out slowly, and those of us who play for fun may not wish extreme complexity. It is the flexibility of *Search & Destroy* that makes it such an easy game to

#### ORDER OF BATTLE CHART

	Mobile Base Camp	Mobile Training Camp	Day-to-Day	Supply Depot	Inf. Company	NLF Held Area
Peasants	12	12	12	12	12	12
Rice	4	8	8	8	6	6
Records	1	1	—	1	—	—
Radio	1	1	—	1	—	1
Ammunition	2	4	—	4	4	4
Arms	1	4	—	3	—	—
Sniper	—	2	—	3	—	—
VC Militia	6	6	—	3	3	6
Hard Core VC	3	6	—	—	9	9
Porter	6	6	6	3	4	2
Commander	2	3	—	1	3	3
Booby-traps	—	2	—	4	—	4
Dummy	26	12	42	23	20	14
Points to US	60	60	—	—	50	100

#### [24.1] US AND ARVN ORGANIZATIONS

unit type	US Platoon	US Company	Tank Platoon [-]	APC Platoon	ARVN Elite Company	ARVN Platoon
Infantry Squad (Strength: 2)	4	12	—	—	12	3
Infantry Squad (Strength: 1)	—	2	—	—	1	—
ARVN Intelligence Team	—	1	—	—	2	1
Medical Team	—	3	—	—	1	—
Forward Observer	—	2	—	—	—	—
Platoon Commander	1	4	—	1	3	1
Company Commander	—	1	—	—	1	—
M-48 tank	—	—	4	—	—	—
M-113 APC	—	—	—	6	—	—

#### [24.2] NORTH VIETNAMESE [NVA] AND VIET CONG ORGANIZATION

unit type	NVA Battalion	NVA Company	NVA Platoon	VC Company	VC Platoon	Mixed Company
NLF Leader (cadre)	10	3	1	2	1	3
Hard-Core Squad	27	9	3	3	1	5
VC Militia Squad	9	3	1	6	2	5
Sniper	—	—	—	3	1	2

get into; you can have as much or as little complexity as you want. There is even an optional Simultaneous Movement System. It would be great if every tactical game could have this kind of flexibility. Hopefully *S&D*'s sales will prompt consideration of a flexible rules format in future *SPI* games, or at least an expansion of the option policy already in general use.

#### Scenario Formation

*S&D*'s Standard Game is based upon three NLF Orders of Battle and a stripped down U.S. company. *Grunt* is based upon six NLF OB's. In both cases, the U.S. Player doesn't know which OB he faces, and the NLF Player never knows where the airmobile company is going to land.

In *S&D*'s eleven optional scenarios, both sides know what they are facing and the NLF Player usually knows where the Americans are coming from, acknowledged faults. But they are the most fun, and teach the most. After all, most of us buy these games to learn as well as to have fun. And the historical scenarios are best for solitaire play.

But when you want considerable uncertainty, it is best for the NLF to have many OB's to choose from. I believe it was an error to reduce the number of standard scenarios, but nobody asked me. Anyway, the standard scenarios from both *S&D* and *Grunt* are included here for comparison, as well as the *S&D* Organization Chart for the optional scenarios.

As is readily apparent, the *S&D* mapboard is a lot less crowded than *Grunt*'s. Not only are there fewer civilians, fewer caches (on the average) and fewer troops, there are far fewer

dummies. Again, it's a lot easier for the Americans to uncover a substantial portion of the board.

Perhaps the stupidest mistake ever made by *SPI* — if you add up the total counters for *Grunt*'s OB's, you will see that only the Infantry Company and NLF Held Area have the same number of counters. All the U.S. Player has to do is total them up and he has, instantly, done half his intelligence work — something the developer apparently lacked. Indeed, in the case of the Day-to-Day OB, the American can win the game before it starts, for that Scenario is based upon a special Victory Condition — he must realize he has invaded an empty area by Game-Turn Four or he loses.

Fortunately, in the three years between *Grunt*'s publication and the decision to revise it, somebody noticed the error and such clumsiness was corrected in the new OB's. To fix the old *Grunt* scenarios, just even out with dummies.

With these nine scenarios and the variability provided by the Optional Organization Chart, there is plenty of room for uncertainty and frustration. If you wish to build your own scenarios, *S&D* is one of the games most suited to such revision. The NLF certainly didn't always find itself in strict organization; there were plenty of detachments, attachments, and stragglers. The counter mix should be sufficient, if not there are plenty of blanks (though painting black blanks is far from a simple task for most people).

#### Strategy & Tactics, NLF

The first thing you must realize, as the NLF Player, is that you are the underdog. Don't charge out to the landing zone as the Yankees come in and expect to slaughter them as they deploy. You don't (in most scenarios) have anything like the strength needed to tackle the Americans head on. Stay in the jungle! If you move out in the open, those howitzers are going to be coming down all over you. If you're using the Helicopter Gun Support rule and you have three Turns to shoot 'copters, then you might consider setting up at the treeline, where you can get at him and still be in good defensive terrain. But be ready to run once you're spotted.

Never try to defend the whole board; you have neither the units nor the need. Try to concentrate (*loosely*, don't bunch up) around two or three of the big forest patches. Try to position your infantry so that they are almost in range of the two Cadres. Remember, without Cadres your VC are practically worthless.

Always have dummies somewhere near your combat units, so that once you reveal them, they have a chance to hide again. Play the shell game — move one squad and two dummies through a hex and make him guess where the real unit came out. Protect your caches, but don't fight for them unless they're really important (like if a special rule

triples their value in a certain scenario). Have porters around the good caches; you can forget about the semi-worthless rice. Remember that his primary mission is cache-hunting, but be aware of your opponent. If he's a hot dog, he'll go after your soldiers instead. Never let him isolate a unit where he can be sure of getting a body count. Remember that in the advanced game he has to prove inflicted casualties and that those inflicted by artillery or airstrike only count if he walks through them later.

If you ever get a good shot at a platoon leader or company commander, take it. Even if you have to sacrifice somebody — but if he immobilizes half the company, he'll probably escape. Look for the openings. Shoot medics. Inflict casualties any way you can. If it's safe, try to capture enemy casualties.

Another good trick is to place your booby traps in the villages. Americans have this thing about villages; they love to liberate them. The Yankees will walk right into the trap. Work your snipers around behind the American lines to where he keeps his medics and platoon leaders. Even if he notices and zaps your sniper, you haven't sacrificed much, and the sniper can do a lot of damage if he goes unnoticed. At the very least, it'll create a diversion while your regular troops either hit-and-run or slip away from the advancing Americans; it might give your porters a chance to pick up threatened soldiers.

Whatever you do, don't forget the artillery. And pray the Yankees kill some peasants; it does wonders for your political situation.

#### Strategy & Tactics, US/ARVN

Forget the propaganda about elusive-communist-troops slipping away from lumbering American patrols. You're just as fast as the Reds and you have more units; you can win a battle of maneuver. Don't worry too much about piecemeal destruction; even if he has the power in a certain scenario, his psychology isn't set up for offense. You have to fan out fast and search every hex you can, but don't spread so far that your units can't support each other. You should try to space them so a platoon can be rapidly transferred to any trouble spot. Use your weak infantry as a reserve and to guard your leader units. Put a medic behind each platoon. Deploy your forward observers as you see fit, depending on terrain and enemy concentration. Keep moving! You aren't out to pacify the area; this is a raid. Look for caches, not the enemy. The Reds have plenty of manpower; the size of their army is limited by equipment shortage. Go after the porters; there are bound to be caches near them. Remember that you get more points for capturing than for destroying caches, but that a squad lugging a cache is close to useless. It is generally better to destroy them and be sure of your points than take the risk of dropping them when you come under fire.

If you're going after the enemy directly, it's best to land in separate platoons and

#### VARIABLE NLF ORDER OF BATTLE

Units	Die Result		
	1,2	3,4	5,6
Peasants	10	3	9
Rice	3	2	2
Records	1	2	2
Radio	1	1	1
Ammunition	2	1	2
Arms	1	1	1
Sniper	1	2	1
VC Militia	1	5	2
Hard-Core Guerrilla	3	1	5
Porters	—	2	2
Commander	1	2	1
Booby Traps	4	5	2
Dummies	7	8	5
<b>Total Counters</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Total Firepower</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>

converge on one of the NLF concentrations. That's the only way you're likely to corner him; he isn't any faster but he *is* inverted, he can usually decoy you with dummies while his troops escape.

A useful technique is to call artillery fire on a suspected (inverted) enemy position. The danger here is that the arty might kill a few peasants. Remember that peasants cannot be placed in forest. It is generally best to let your Americans interrogate peasants twice (the maximum number of times), but be judicious with your ARVN — they're hotheads and they don't mind torturing and killing civilians.

Tanks are a mixed blessing — they can do a remarkable amount of damage to the enemy, but they are vulnerable. It is best to let them lay back where it's safe and lob in low-velocity HE fire (12 attack points). Never use vehicles on the road, it's sure to be mined. And seldom should you mount infantry in APC's; they're probably safer hugging the terrain than sitting behind armor.

When you search a hex, try to have a backup squad where it can fire on a revealed unit even if the searching squad is pinned by a surprise attack. If you suspect a booby trap, it might be better to bypass — this applies especially to villages, where you can expect traps. Look out for ambushes in small clearings and around roads. Try to kill Cadres; if he's spread thin it will hurt him. Above all, protect your platoon leaders! You can survive the loss of radiomen, but if your units are immobilized en masse you'll never recover. If you're fool enough to risk a company or platoon commander I have no sympathy for you.

Two more points: it is a great temptation to use every airstrike you are allocated. Don't. It costs fifty handicap Victory Points, and there are seldom NLF concentrations strong enough to warrant the use. And be confident in the might of the United States Army. Now go teach those commies a lesson they'll never forget.

### Conclusion

*Search & Destroy* is a significant step forward in the art of conflict simulation. The revolutionary step-by-step rules system, whereby the Players decide the precise amount of complexity desired, is a logical and excellently developed sequel to the Optional Rules system long in use. In addition, many ideas developed for *Grunt* and expanded and improved for *Search & Destroy* are quite unknown elsewhere and accurately tell the tactical tale of what is probably the most unusual — and certainly the most tragic — war of the 20th Century.

In short, *Search & Destroy* is well worth buying, even if you own *Grunt*. It is an important addition to any gamer's library, and I predict high retail sales, due to the relevance of the topic to the general public. *Search & Destroy* is a winner.

## SCENARIOS

### The Mechanized Sweep

In the later stages of the war, heavy mechanized sweeps were made of lightly held NLF areas in the hope of flushing troops and (with lesser emphasis) discovering supplies. The NLF responded by deploying three-man teams armed with anti-armor missiles, who were to hide in the treeline or in the elephant grass, taking shots and running away. The mechanized sweep was rarely successful, and rarely took casualties.

**ARVN Player Forces:** Two tanks, five APC's carrying an ARVN elite platoon.

**Deployment:** Enter on any edge on Game-Turn One.

**Additional ARVN Firepower:** None. (Option: Five Cobra strikes, 5 Attack Points, no delayed arrival).

**NLF Player Forces:** Three Missile Teams; armed with RPG-7's, represented by VC units, but fully mobile without Cadres; One Ammo Cache, 20 dummies.

**Deployment:** Missile teams in treeline or broken, ammo and dummies anywhere.

**Victory Conditions:** Standard, with the following additions:

- A) Each destroyed APC: 2 Victory Points
- B) Each destroyed tank: 4 Victory Points
- C) Each revealed NLF team: 10 Victory Points (plus any inflicted casualties).
- D) Ammo Cache is worth 40 Victory Points if captured.

**Game Length:** 15 Game-Turns.

**Special Rule:** ARVN infantry may not dismount until NLF fire or are revealed.

*Note that this scenario hasn't been adequately playtested; feel free to alter Victory Points scale.*

### Pilot Rescue

Often American pilots would be shot down in enemy territory. Rescue 'copters raced NLF troops to reach him, as other U.S. planes protected the downed pilot.

**U.S. Player Forces:** One Pilot in clear or broken terrain; represented by leader unit.

**Additional U.S. Firepower:** 10 Airstrikes.

**NLF Player Forces:** Eight VC squads (need no Cadre).

**Deployment:** Two squads enter on each map edge on Game-Turn One.

**Special Rules:** Two Hueys (unarmed) and two Cobras enter on the East edge on Turn Six. Only Hueys can pick up the Pilot; this takes one Turn. Use Additional Vulnerability rule. If both Hueys are downed, two more enter on Turn Twelve. Downed 'copters do *not* produce more Pilots (presumed killed).

**Victory Conditions:** If Pilot is rescued by Turn Twenty, U.S. wins. If not, NLF wins.

### River Ambush

Often NLF units would ambush American patrol boats on backwater streams. In such

cases, the armored boats usually tried to escape.

**U.S. Player Forces:** Four patrol boats.

**Deployment:** Enter on any stream, on Turn One, in line.

**NLF Player Forces:** Two NVA platoons.

**Deployment:** Anywhere.

**Victory Conditions:** Standard, plus 30 Victory Points for each destroyed patrol boat. If no casualties are inflicted and boats escape, U.S. wins.

**Game Length:** Ten Game-Turns.

**Special Rules:** Each patrol boat has 12 Attack Points, which can be split in half to attack two hexes. Boats move along hexsides, at the rate of forty hexsides per Turn. Boats defend with three Points regardless of terrain. Boats may only exit the map on the opposite edge from their entrance point.



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