

# DIEN BIEN PHU THE FINAL GAMBLE

## Introduction

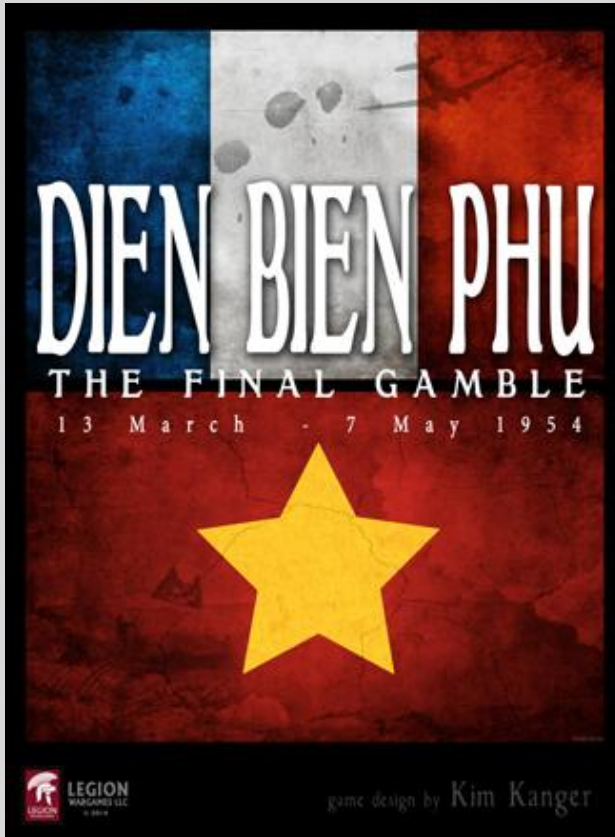
France wished to establish in late 1953 strong presences around airfields in the Viet Minh hinterland. Viet Minh had been troubled by this strategy since their failure of taking the airfield at Na San during 1952-53. When France occupied the important valley of Dien Bien Phu with a force larger than a division, the leadership of Viet Minh knew that they had to stop this development and retake the valley. But this time they had to do it right because they were about to commit half of their entire battle force in the whole of Vietnam and failure was therefore not an option. France in their turn ended up committing almost all elite units there, increasing the stakes on both sides, especially as peace talks had begun at Geneva in Switzerland. Dien Bien Phu, which started as a jumping point for infiltration among people in the western highlands, had now turned into a siege battle where the defeated side would be dealt such a blow to its prestige that it would have great difficulty continuing the war. It was indeed the final gamble.

The game starts in mid-March when Viet Minh attack commenced and ends no later than mid-May when the final assault on the central French strongpoints was planned. It is a game where Viet Minh has to a race against time. Its force will suffer decreasing morale in the face of horrendous losses and French desperate resistance. It is a game where The French force literally fights for its life, trying to keep it supplied to avoid collapse, and hopefully be the last man standing if the Viet Minh juggernaut finally runs out of steam.

*To those on both sides  
that never returned home*

**The rules are laid out in the order of the Game Turn.** Rules within the same section that start with a ① must take place before the ones that start with ② a.s.o. The extended Game Turn sequence on the back cover is also a Table of Content for this rule book. There are examples in the rules to help you. There also notes injected to give you an historical background and explanation to the ideas behind a certain rule. The victory conditions are explained in rule 4.5. **Version 2.1b includes all errata, as well as new texts (printed are red) which are changes that improves play, offers a better historical correctness, and a better balance of play.**

Enjoy the game, Kim Kanger



## RULES OF PLAY

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Game Design: Kim Kanger  
Game Development: Kim Kanger  
Game Graphics: Kim Kanger  
Producer: Randy Lein  
Assistance (playtest/research): Robert Mårtensson  
Kevin Boylan, Ewen le Picot, Roger Miller, Luc Olivier,  
Elias Nordling

# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

## 1.0 Basics

### 1.1 → The Opponents

#### A) France

One player plays the French expeditionary force. It consists of assorted Europeans, West Africans, Moroccans, Algerians, Vietnamese and Thai highlanders. They will, for simplicity, all be called "French" and the player "France". Each infantry unit is a company. Four of them, shown by the colors and designation they share, represent a battalion (except Thai co where each is independent). Tank units are platoons. Artillery units are artillery batteries, mortar platoons, or Quad 50 detachments. But they will all be called artillery units, and with the same rules (each unit, except Quad 50s, represents four guns). Each one has a Barrage Marker representing it.

*Note: 1 CEPML had twelve mortars. That is why it has three counters instead of historically two.*

#### B) Viet Minh

The other player plays the Viet Minh: the Vietnamese nationalist and communist movement. Units were based on people from different backgrounds, like coal miners, town people, highlanders etc. I will refer to them and the player as "VM". Each unit is a battalion. Three of them, shown by the designation and symbol they share (square, circle, or triangle), form a regiment. Nine battalions (three regiments) that share a color band in the header form a division. Artillery units are battalions and are represented only by their Barrage Markers. VM artillery is occasionally referred to either as regular artillery or as HW (Heavy Weapons).

*Note: There is some dispute regarding the number of VM artillery battalions. I have chosen what eye witnesses have said. I have also created an average VM artillery strength, even though some battalions were stronger than others.*

### 1.2 → The Map

#### A) Dien Bien Phu

The map covers the area around the former village of Dien Bien Phu where most of the combat took place. It will be referred to as "**DBP**". It has a hexagon grid over it to facilitate movement and range. Each hexagon is **150 meters** across and will be called hex for short. All hexes along the border of the map are mentioned in the rules as map edge hexes.

When referring to DBP, it does not include the sub-map Isabelle or any box of any kind.

#### B) Supply areas

The French central area encompassed by a pale white dashed border is the Supply area. There are two additional Supply areas: One at the central Isabelle sub-map and one in Laos 1 Box. The five hospital signs and the hexes where it's written "Fuel depot", "Food supply", "Ammo dump" and "PIM" are **Structure hexes** and have a certain effect (rule 4.5).

*Note: PIM (Prisonniers Internés Militaires): VM prisoners, extraordinary loyal to their French captors!*

It costs **5** movement points for VM units (only) to enter any hex in a **Supply area**, regardless of terrain or enemy ZoC (too many armed non-combatants). For French units, it is the terrain cost that matters (see rule 1.5-B regarding movement).

#### C) Isabelle

South of DBP (to the right on the map) is the strongpoint area Isabelle. It consists of six strongpoints and a Supply area. These strongpoints and the surrounding hexes represent zone 3 in the VM 304 division sector. The whole Isabelle sub-map will be referred to as "**3z-304**" (see rule 1.3-B). The outer surrounding hexes are considered map edge hexes as well. The hex grids over DBP and the sub-map do not connect. The maps are separate and there are special rules regarding movement between them. When the game refers to "3z-304", it excludes "DBP" and any box of any kind.

#### D) Boxes and the arrows between them

Outside Isabelle are two boxes that belong to the VM 304 division sector. There are also three boxes that are within the country of Laos (DBP borders Laos). Between all boxes are arrows showing who may move between them and in what direction. Only French units or French LoC may move across blue arrows and only VM units or VM LoC may move across red arrows. Both sides and their LoC may move across gray arrows (see rule 1.4 about LoC).

*Note: Units & LoC may only move in the arrow's direction.*

#### E) Tracks, Scales, Charts and Boxes

...surround the map. Many have the letters A, B, C, and D indicating where markers shall be set at start of a scenario. All tracks, scales, charts and boxes will be explained in their respective rules section.

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## 1.3 Strongpoints and Trench Zones

### A) Strongpoints

There are several strongpoints on the map, ranging in size from one to four hexes. Each one has a French name (facing west) used for setup. It can be a name like "Gabrielle", or a code like "E2" ("Eliane 2"). You will also find some VM names that are facing east (like A1 for the French E2, or Dôc Lâp for Gabrielle), but only as historic flavor, **not** as setup info. A strongpoint may look like several strongpoints (like "Béatrice" does). But if the trenches are connected, then they form a single strongpoint.

*Note: Some strongpoints changed names during the battle and some were constructed a few days after the battle commenced. But for the sake of simplicity, they are all there from start and have the names they were most known by.*

### B) Division sectors

There are four VM division sectors. Division 308, 312, and 316 are separated by red borders at DBP while Division 304 consists of boxes and the sub-map Isabelle. Each sector consists of alternating light and dark zones where each zone has a printed Zone number that increases in value the closer it is to the French center. A zone will be **referred** to with its "Zone number"- "sector", like "2z-308" (zone 2 - sector 308). VM units may move and fight freely in any sector and zone.

### C) Trench zones and Trench Markers

Each division sector has a Trench Marker set on one of its Zone numbers. There are four scenario letters among the Zone numbers in each sector, indicating where to set the Trench Marker at the start of each scenario. A Trench Marker means that all VM units are entrenched in any hex in that zone and in all previous zones in that sector. These zones will be called "Trench zones".

*Example: A Trench Marker at 4-312 means that zone 1, 2, 3, and 4 in that sector are Trench zones. All VM units are entrenched in these four zones, wherever they are.*

### D) The Dig Marker

...is the backside of the Trench Marker. If a Trench Marker is flipped into its Dig Marker side when moved into the next higher zone, then that specific zone is a "Dig zone" (all previous zones in the sector are still Trench zones).

The difference is that neither side may move units into a Dig zone during a Valley move (rules 2.1-A and 5.2-A), and that French LoC is **allowed** to enter a hex in a Dig zone (see rule 1.4 about LoC, and rule 7.5 about when a Trench Marker becomes a Dig Marker and vice versa).

### E) Ownership of strongpoints

In each scenario, all strongpoints in all Trench zones are controlled by VM from start and marked with VM flags. The rest are controlled by France (unless the specific scenario information says otherwise, see rule 8.0-G). You lose control of a strongpoint if...

- The enemy has at least one unit occupying any hex of the strongpoint, **and**...
- You don't have any unit present in the strongpoint

If both conditions above apply at the end of any segment, then control immediately passes over to the opponent.

- **Your strongpoint will also change control if it is isolated. No hex in it has a friendly LoC (rule 1.4) during your attrition (rules 4.1 & 7.1)**

### F) Flags and their effect

Strongpoints controlled by France at start are not marked by flags (unless the specific scenario information says otherwise, see rule 8.0-G). But, when VM takes control of one, it is marked with a VM flag (one flag is enough, even if it is a multi-hex one). If France retakes control, flip the VM flag into its French side (don't remove it). If a strongpoint has a flag (VM or French), then all wire that borders the hexes of that strongpoint will no longer be an obstacle for VM in combat. But it will still cost VM +1 movement point to cross until the condition in rule 1.5-B is fulfilled.

### G) Strongpoints Track

**Each strongpoint is worth an equal amount of points as the number of hexes it consists of.** As soon as a strongpoint becomes VM-controlled, subtract the appropriate number of points (1 to 4 points) on the Strongpoints Track. If a VM-controlled strongpoint becomes French again, then add the same points instead.

*Note: Point value on the track is less than the total value of all French strongpoints. This is correct, not an errata.*

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## H) What are the two Strongpoints Taken Markers?

Whenever a strongpoint is taken, also increase one of the two "Strongpoints Taken" Markers with the same amount of points (1 to 4 points). These two markers show how many points each player has acquired since the previous Morale Check segment. This information is used when checking French morale (rule 4.5). The red marker shows how many points VM has taken, and the blue marker shows how many points France has retaken. Flip it into its "+10" side if you pass 9, and start from "0" again.

**Note:** *Your marker is not adjusted when you lose a strongpoint. Your opponent's marker is increased instead.*

## I) Who is entrenched?

Both sides are entrenched in a strongpoint hex, regardless of who controls the strongpoint. Only VM units are entrenched in Trench or Dig zone hexes.

## 1.4 → **Line of Communication (LoC)**

### A) What is LoC?

Both sides often trace a Line of Communication (LoC) back to their respective "safe area". It can be a unit, a certain hex or a box that has to trace a LoC. A LoC can be of any length of hexes or boxes. The LoC includes the hex/box where it starts as well as where it ends. No hex within this LoC may be in an enemy Zone of Control - ZoC (rule 1.7). In addition, a...

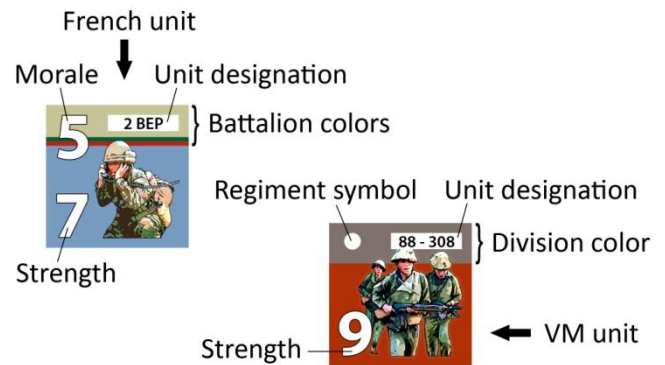
### B) VM LoC

...must trace back to **any map edge** (Trench/Dig zone or not), except in Laos or in 304 sector, from where it traces to 1z-304 instead (a unit/hex in 3z-304 must trace a LoC to a map edge hex in 3z-304 to continue to 1z-304). VM LoC may not include a **Structure hex that has no VM-flag (rule 4.5-A)**, or a hex in a French-controlled strongpoint, unless the hex in question is occupied by a VM unit. A hex/box/VM unit that fulfills the conditions above is "in VM LoC" (a unit in Off-Map Box or Pulled Back Box is always in VM LoC).

### C) French LoC

...that begins at DBP must trace back to any hex in the **DBP Supply area**. If it begins in the 304 sector it must trace to the Supply area at Isabelle instead. If it begins in Laos, it must trace to Laos 1 Box. French LoC may not include a hex in a Trench zone (Dig zone is allowed though), unless the hex is occupied by a French unit. A hex/box/French unit that fulfills the conditions above is "in French LoC".

## 1.5 → **Units and their Values and Symbols**



### A) A unit's strength and morale

Each French unit has its Morale value printed on the counter. The Morale value of a VM unit depends on where its Division Morale Marker is on the VM Division Morale Track (rule 4.6-D). Exception: the two units of 148 regiment have their Morale value printed on the counters and therefore no marker.

**Note:** *Strength value of a VM battalion is only two more than a French elite company. One reason is the narrow front of 150 meters in a hex. The strength of a battalion consists of the company leading the charge or defense. The rest is behind preparing to be the second wave. One can see the VM battalion as a company with two supporting companies in the same hex, like in rule 6.4-A.*

### B) Movement, weather, wire, terrain, and roads

**All units have a movement value of 5 movement points ("5 mp")** with which they pay for terrain costs when moving into hexes and across hexsides during move segments (see Terrain Effect Chart on the map). A unit may not in any way enter a hex containing an enemy unit.

The game Turn Track has three weather periods: Dry; Rain; and Monsoon. To the right of the track are weather characteristics.

There are two types of wire: heavy and light. Both types cost +1 mp for VM to cross. French units do not pay extra to cross any wire. Heavy wire (depicted as thick "double" wire) around strongpoints is an obstacle in combat as well (the light one is not). If any wire runs between two hexes that both are within any Trench/Dig zone and neither hex is part of a French-controlled strongpoint, then there is no longer a movement cost for VM to cross it.

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To enter up hill costs +1 mp (in addition to any other terrain). "Uphill" is when you enter/assault from a hex that is not part of the same hill.

Always pay for the most expensive terrain within a hex. But if you enter a hex along a road, then you pay the road cost instead, **except** in enemy ZoC (no road movement there). A road will always negate the hexside cost of crossing the river and any wire (even if entering an enemy ZoC). Artillery units may only cross the river across hexsides where there is a road/bridge. But the river and heavy wire are still obstacles in combat, even if a road passes.

It costs +1 mp to enter an enemy ZoC (rule 1.7). VM units pay 5 mp to enter any hex in a Supply area (not more, not less), regardless of terrain or enemy ZoC.

## 1.6 → Stacking

France may not have more than 3 units in a hex, and VM not more than 1 unit at the end of any segment. Markers, flags, Commando, and Airstrike stack for free. VM may inspect French stacks. If you overstack, then the opponent may move any unit exceeding the limit one hex away to where it does not overstack or stack with its enemy (if not possible, then closest eligible hex).

**Note:** *The stacking limit means about 450-550 men in a hex. It should be more but many non-assault troops were in the rear.*

## 1.7 → Zone of Control (ZoC)

Each unit has a Zone of Control (ZoC) that covers its six adjacent surrounding hexes. The ZoC of an opposing player's unit is an enemy ZoC. The effects of an enemy ZoC are these:

- A LoC may not exist in an enemy ZoC
- It costs **+1 mp** to enter an enemy ZoC
- Road movement is not permitted in an enemy ZoC

An enemy unit does **not** project an enemy ZoC into an adjacent hex (which means that none of the effects above apply), if...

- The enemy unit is shaken, or...
- A friendly unit occupies that adjacent hex

**Example:** *A French unit enters a VM ZoC and pays +1 mp. A second French unit will not have to pay an extra movement point since the VM ZoC is now "negated" by the first unit.*

## 1.8 → Artillery and Barrage Zones

### A) A VM Barrage Marker

...represents the barrage from an artillery or mortar battalion. Its barrage zone covers, not only the hex where the marker is but also the six surrounding hexes (the Barrage Marker's "ZoC").

### B) A French Barrage Marker

...represents the barrage from an artillery battery or mortar platoon. Its zone covers its own hex only.

## 1.9 → Unit Step Losses

### A) First step loss for both French and VM units

Flip a unit to its reduced side when it loses its first step. The reduced side has a light red band across it.

**If a French artillery unit takes a step loss, due to any reason, deduct 1 French ammo (one per step) as well.**

### B) French second step loss

If a French unit loses its second step, remove the unit and roll a die. On a result of:

- **1-4** Place it in the Wounded Box
- **5-6** Place it in the Gone Box

If a French unit in the 304 sector is moved to the Wounded Box, then place it at the "Isabelle" side of the Wounded Box. Move all units there to the Gone Box, if the Supply area at Isabelle is VM occupied during the "French Attrition" segment.

Place a unit directly into the Gone Box (without rolling a die) if it is eliminated...

- In a **Laos** Box (evacuated back to Luang Prabang)
- And is an **artillery** or **tank** unit
- Due to a **commando** raid (desertion, see rule 2.3)
- Due to **attrition** (prisoners, see rules 4.5-B, 4.7-B & C, and 7.1)
- During **retreat** (prisoners, see rule 3.5-C)

### C) French losses might trigger new reinforcements

The "Reinforcements Available" chart has a column to the right that contains all reinforcements that may be airdropped, and a scale in the middle where the HQ Marker (Christian de Castries or...Kim de Kanger) is placed according to scenario.

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Each time a French infantry unit, reduced or not, is removed to the Gone or Wounded Box, then the HQ Marker is moved up one slot (tank and artillery units do **not** affect Hanoi). When the HQ reaches the top slot - "Okay, let's see if we can" - then France immediately rolls a die to see if the HQ has convinced Hanoi to send another para battalion. Modify the die roll with any modification printed in the Box of the battalion in question (which is the one currently at the top of the remaining battalions). If the modified die roll result is...

- **1-2** "Yes, we will send one"  
Move the battalion currently at the top of the Reinforcements Column to the Hanoi Airbase Box. Those four companies are now ready to be included in any future airdrop. Reset the HQ Marker to "You have what you need" at the bottom
- **3-4** "Perhaps, we shall look into it"  
Move the HQ Marker down one slot
- **5-6** "Not now, we can't spare one"  
Move the HQ Marker down two slots

When the last battalion is sent (1 BPC) **or** if the Laos Rescue Force enters 2z-304, then the HQ Marker is set to "You have what you need" at the bottom of the scale permanently (no more reinforcements).

**Example:** HQ is one slot down from "Okay,..." and two French units are sent to Wounded Box. The HQ is moved up to "Okay,..." due to the first lost unit. A die is rolled and the result is a "3". The HQ Marker is moved down one slot. Then up to "Okay,..." again due to the second lost unit. A die is rolled again, a.s.o.

## D) VM second and third step loss

If a VM unit loses its second step, place a Cadre Marker on top of it. The Cadre will retain the morale of the unit, but the Cadre's strength will supersede the strength of the reduced unit. If a VM unit loses its third step, remove the Cadre and place the unit in the VM Eliminated Box.

**Note:** While each French step is half a company, it is a full company for VM. Losses were severe for VM due to their tactics and high density.

## 1.10 → The Game Turn

Each Game Turn (shortened as G.T. when printed on the map) represents three days. VM assaulted during nights and France during daylight. The Game Turn is divided into a set of phases, and each phase is divided into a set of segments. You will find an extended Game Turn Sequence on the back cover of this rules set.

## 2.0 VM Pre-Assault Phase

### 2.1 → VM Operational Move

Conduct movement in the order ① - ③. Some units end up moving twice with Box move as a second move.

#### A) ① Valley move

VM may move up to three units in VM LoC at DBP and/or 304 sector to any other hex or box at DBP and/or 304 sector as long as the final position is...

- In VM LoC, and...
- In a Trench zone (**not** Dig zone), and...
- Not in French ZoC

You can move all or some of the units to the VM Off-Map Box instead. Whatever destination, just lift up the units and place them in their new positions.

#### B) ② Fall back

Each VM unit that is adjacent to a French unit may move 1 hex (but you may not enter a box).

**Note:** This is handy when you wish to move out of your own coming barrage zone (next segment).

#### C) ③ Box move

VM may move up to three units that are in boxes. Each unit that moves may only do **one** of the four options below during a box move. A VM unit in...

- **2z-304** may move to any map edge hex in 3z-304 (into French ZoC is allowed)
- **Laos 3** may move to 2z-304
- **VM Off-Map Box** may move either to any...
  - a) Map edge hex at DBP (only), **Trench/Dig zone or not** (into French ZoC is allowed), or...
  - b) Hex or box in a Trench zone at DBP and/or 304 sector, that is in VM LoC and **not** in French ZoC

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**Note:** A VM unit that wishes to move to 3z-304 (where all map edge hexes are in French ZoC) must first move to 2z-304 during Valley move and then to 3z-304 during Box move. VM can only leave 304 sector through Valley move, and yes, VM can only leave 1z-304 through Valley move.

You can never deduct anything below "0" on any track. Any remaining deduction is wasted.

**Note:** You don't get supply hits just by placing Barrage Markers on "Dump", "Depot" etc printed on the map. Most supplies were already distributed.

## 2.2 VM Barrage

### A) VM may place VM Barrage Markers,



...but only one per hex (though barrage zones may partly overlap each other). Each Barrage Marker from regular artillery (not HW) must be placed on or adjacent to any strongpoint hex at DBP or 3z-304. Each HW Barrage Marker must be placed within 2 hexes of any unit from its own division, but it does **not** have to be close to any strongpoint. A HW Barrage Marker may not be placed at 3z-304, unless there is a VM unit there from the same division.

**Note:** VM divisional HW artillery and French artillery were used as close combat support during VM assaults, due to limited spotting during night. Regular VM artillery was pre-registered to the strongpoints and needed no spotters.

### B) Deduct 1 ammo

...on the VM Ammunition Track for each Barrage Marker that is placed (regular as well as HW).

### C) French truck and supply losses due to VM barrage

VM counts all Barrage Markers and rolls two dice. If the result is equal or less than the number of Barrage Markers placed, then France suffers a supply hit. If so, move the French Truck Marker down one slot on the Fuel & Spares Track. The end slot is "1". It cannot reach "0" (see rule 4.7-A about trucks).

**Note:** There were 73 trucks moving artillery, ammo, fuel and heavy replacement parts. VM artillery ground the number of trucks down at the end of April which made it virtually impossible to collect airdropped packages that weighted at least 100 kilos (220 pounds).

Check also what supply is lost. VM rolls another die (even if the Truck Marker is at "1") and Checks the VM Supply Hit Table. If the result is...

- 1 Deduct 1 Food & Bullets
- 2 Deduct 2 Fuel & Spares
- 3 Deduct 3 Medicine
- 4-6 Deduct 2 Ammo

### D) Barrage roll

VM rolls for each and every Barrage Marker in any wished order. Return each marker to the VM Barrage Box after its roll. For each Barrage Marker, roll two dice: a white loss die and a black shock die.

#### Any French losses?

If the result of the white loss die is equal or less than the number of French units in the barrage zone, then there is 1 step loss (in total) among those units. Count a reduced unit as a 1/2 unit, rounded down. A unit not in a strongpoint, is counted as double (a reduced unit that is not entrenched is regarded as a full unit). If VM battalions are within a VM barrage zone, do not include them when counting. Instead, VM just removes a step from each one of them (in addition to any French losses due to the die roll).

**Note:** Remove any step loss immediately, before you calculate and roll for the next Barrage Marker.

#### Who removes the French step loss?

If the white loss die roll result is an odd number (1,3,5), then VM chooses which step. If it is even (2,4,6), then France chooses which step.

#### Do the French units become shaken?

Place a Shaken Marker on each entrenched French unit in the barrage zone that has a morale value that is less than the black shock die result. Place also a Shaken Marker on each French unit with a morale value equal to or less than the shock die result, if it is either in the center hex of the VM Barrage zone, or if it is **not** entrenched, anywhere in the Barrage zone.



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**Example:** *Two Barrage Markers are placed on three French units on E2. First Barrage roll is a "1" on white loss die, and VM chooses which unit. The black shock die result is a "4" which makes all three shaken. The second Barrage roll will get a hit if the white loss die rolls a "2" or less (there are now only 2 1/2 units). A "5" is rolled and there is no hit.*

## 2.3 → VM Commando Raid

Place the Commando in any hex in VM LoC at DBP or 3z-304. It will raid and do one of two options. If it raids an adjacent...

- **French unit**, then roll a die. Remove a step from the French unit if the die roll result is **3** higher than the unit's morale value. If the French unit is eliminated, place it in Gone Box (desertion). Return the Commando to the Commando Box
- **Wire**, then flip the Commando into its "Wire Breach" side. All wires along all hexsides of the hex where the "Wire Breach" Marker is are gone for all purposes until the marker is removed at the end of the VM Assault Phase (when it is returned to the Commando Box and flipped back to its Commando side)

"Wire Breach" is not a unit and French units may retreat onto it (do not remove the marker if that happens).

## 2.4 → VM Tactical Move

Each VM unit may move up to 5 mp within DBP or within 3z-304 (no box movement). A unit may freely move across any zones and/or sector boundary.

## 3.0 VM Assault Phase

### Outline

Combat follows a procedure that is different from what many are used to in other games. I will make a quick outline of the steps here so that it will be easier for you to grasp them when you continue reading the rules in depth.

**First**, VM decides which division(s) will assault. Those that do not will rest and improve their morale.

**Second**, France may barrage some of the VM units. This is conducted as normal French barrage (reaction barrage), except if it is against assaulting VM units. That is conducted differently (support barrage).

**Third**, France may move some units as a reaction move.

**Fourth**, each defending French unit may fire at the VM unit assaulting it. The French unit's strength is adjusted by a number of factors. France rolls two dice and compares the result with the adjusted strength value to see how well it goes. France rolls again, modifies it with the result of the previous roll and checks a table to see what happens with the assaulting VM unit.

**Fifth**, each assaulting VM unit that did not abort, charges into the defending hex. The VM unit's strength is adjusted by a number of factors. VM rolls two dice and compares the result with adjusted strength value to see how well it goes. VM rolls again, modifies it with the result from the previous roll and checks a table to see what happens with the French unit(s).

## 3.1 → VM Declares Assault or Rest

VM may place Assault Markers (also referred to as Combat Markers) on units that intend to assault. Place the marker so that the arrow points at the hex being assaulted. Each defending hex must contain a French unit and may be assaulted by one VM unit only. A division will rest if none of its units declare any assaults. If it rests, move its Division Morale Marker up one slot (towards "5"). Move it up two slots, if none of its units are adjacent to any French unit.

**Note:** *The number of markers is the limit of how many assaults there may be during a phase.*



**Example:** *The "Wire Breach" is placed to cut the barbed wire. The VM units have moved closer during their tactical move. VM has then chosen three units that will assault.*



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## 3.2 → French Reaction and Support Barrage

### A) France may place French Barrage Markers

...but only one per hex. You may only place them on VM units that either have Assault Markers on them or that are able to support an assault (rule 3.5-A). If the artillery unit is reduced and/or shaken, then place its Barrage Marker with its "-1" side up. Barrage Markers on VM units with Assault Markers are support barrages. The rest are reaction barrages and are executed first.

**Note:** *The artillery unit itself can be anywhere while barraging any hex. It can be at Isabelle and barrage DBP.*

Each artillery unit and corresponding Barrage Marker has "dots" on them in order to connect a Barrage Marker with a certain unit. For each Barrage Marker that is placed, deduct 1 ammo if it is a regular barrage, or 2 ammo if it is an intense barrage (turn the marker a quarter if intense, to help you remember). Spend the ammo for all placed Barrage Markers before you start rolling dice.

### B) Reaction barrage

Roll a die and modify it with...

- **+1** If the VM unit is not entrenched
- **+1** If you fire an intense barrage
- **-1** If the French artillery unit is reduced and/or shaken (still only -1, even if both reduced and shaken)
- **-1** If the VM unit is reduced or has a Cadre on it (a smaller target)

**Note:** *You deduct the same amount of ammo even if the artillery is reduced (and therefore should spend less). But see the "extra" expenditure as ammo destroyed when the artillery unit was reduced by VM barrage.*

The VM unit loses 1 step if the modified result is a 5 or 6. Place also a Shaken Marker on it if the unit's morale is less than the modified die roll result. Return each Barrage Marker to the French Barrage Box after its roll.

### C) Support barrage

Do not roll a die for support barrage. It is instead a die roll modification for the coming Defense fire roll and it also allows France to make a Defense effect roll on a column less favourable for VM (rule 3.4).

**Note:** *The French were better at pinpointing a spot. VM laid out a barrage on a larger area and with a lower rate of fire. That is why French barrage was more efficient.*

### Artillery units in a defending hex

...may only barrage the assaulting unit, if they decide to barrage. If more than one artillery unit in the defending hex wish to barrage, then one will fire a support barrage and the others will each fire a reaction barrage against the assaulting unit. Do not place Shaken Markers. Just inflict losses, if any. This is the only exception where more than one Barrage Marker may be placed in the same hex.

**Note:** *One occasion was when a battery from 2/4 RAC in D3 repulsed a VM assault by firing point blank.*



**Example:** *France barrages all of them. Those on VM units without Assault Markers are reaction barrages. The rest are support barrages. France spends 1 Ammo on each reaction barrage and 2 ammo (to make them intense) on each support barrage. Two of the VM units become shaken. The far right one is not in a Trench zone and is more vulnerable. It ends up not only shaken, but reduced as well.*

## 3.3 → French Reaction Move

France may move up to 4 units up to 5 mp. Units that move may not be **artillery units**, or shaken or start adjacent to a VM unit (regardless if the VM unit is shaken or not). Movement into boxes is not permitted.

**Note:** *VM assaults took place at night and French units were not trained to manoeuvre at night, therefore only 4 units.*

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**Example:** *Some paras move up from E3 as a reaction move. Defense fire will be described as attack 1, 2 and 3.*

**Note:** *An artillery unit will **not** expend ammo if it has to be the defending unit or if stacked with a defending unit, since you don't make any barrage roll.*

A supporting unit will give a +1 even if it is reduced. The Defense Fire Table on French Combat Tables sheet will list these modifications above.

## B) French Defense Fire roll

France rolls two dice and compares the result with the defending French unit's adjusted strength value. France will, for the coming Effect roll, receive a modification of...

- **+1** If the result is **below** unit's strength
- **+2** If the result is **5 or more below** unit's strength
- **0** If the result is **equal** to unit's strength
- **-1** If the result is **above** unit's strength
- **-2** If the result is **5 or more above** unit's strength

Return any support Barrage Marker to the French Barrage Box after each Fire roll.

## C) French Defense Effect roll

Find the column in the Defense Effect Table that corresponds with the VM unit's current morale value, taking into account whether French support barrage has been used or not (different rows at the top). France now rolls a die and modifies it with the result from the previous Fire roll (0, or +/- 1 or 2). Cross reference the modified die roll with the column of the VM unit's morale. If the cross reference is a...

- **Surprise** - VM will roll on the Surprise column (replace Assault Marker with a Surprise Marker)
- **Step loss** - The VM unit takes a step loss and, unless eliminated, will roll on the Normal column
- **Loss & Hesitate** - VM unit takes a step loss and, unless eliminated, will roll on the Hesitate column (replace Assault Marker with a Hesitate Marker)
- **Abort** - The VM unit takes cover. There is no assault (flip the Assault Marker into its Abort side)
- **Loss & Abort** - The VM unit takes a step loss and, unless eliminated, aborts (flip Assault Marker into its Abort side)

## 3.4 → French Defense Fire

### A) Each French unit

...that has an Assault Marker pointing at it now fires against the assaulting VM unit. France chooses in each case which unit that will be **the defending unit** (if there is more than one in the defending hex), and places it at the top of the stack. An artillery unit may not be chosen if there is any other unit in the hex.

A sole artillery unit can defend itself, in addition to barrage it might have done. Its strength value is 2. A reduced artillery unit has a strength value of 1.

France may conduct defense rolls in any order. Before making a Defense Fire roll, a defending unit has its strength value adjusted by...

- **+1** For each obstacle the VM unit must assault across/into. The three obstacles for VM are: across heavy wire (not light); across river; and up hill (forest is not an obstacle for VM)
- **+1** For each supporting French infantry unit from the same battalion, not in the same hex as the defender, but still adjacent to the assaulting unit. It may not be shaken or have a Combat Marker pointing at it (Thai co cannot do this). One unit may support several defending units from the same battalion
- **+1** For each supporting French unit of any kind (incl. Artillery), **that is not shaken**, and that is stacked with defending unit. **+2** if a Tank unit.
- **+1** If the defending French unit brings in support barrage (+0 if the artillery is shaken and/or reduced). **+2** if it is intense support barrage (+1 if intense, but also shaken and/or reduced)
- **-2** If the defending French unit is shaken

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Assault-, Surprise-, and Hesitate Markers (but not Abort) will all be referred to as Combat Markers. **All** defense rolls are done before VM rolls for assaults.



**Example:** France fires at the onrushing VM soldiers. Current morale value of VM 316 division is 4. France has spent 2 ammo on each support barrage to make them intense.

**Attack 1:** French strength is 6, adjusted to 8 (+2 for uphill and wire, +2 for intense barrage, -2 for being shaken). 7 is rolled and France will get a +1 modification in the coming Effect roll. 2 is rolled for effect, modified to 3. The result is a "Step loss" for VM. VM assault is still on, though.

**Attack 2:** 1 BEP is the defending unit. French strength is 7, adjusted to 11 (+1 for uphill, no wire due to "Wire Breach", +2 for intense barrage, +1 for supporting unit). 11 is rolled and France gets no modification for the coming Effect roll. The effect roll is a 6 and VM takes a loss and aborts.

**Attack 3:** French strength is 6, adjusted to 8 (like Attack 1). 10 is rolled and France gets a -1 modification. The effect roll is a 2, modified to 1. VM receives a Surprise and the Assault Marker is replaced with a Surprise Marker.

## B) VM Assault Fire roll

VM rolls two dice and compares the result with the assaulting VM unit's adjusted strength value. VM will, for the coming Effect roll, receive a modifier of...

- **+1** If the result is **below** unit's strength
- **+2** If the result is **5 or more below** unit's strength
- **0** If the result is **equal** to unit's strength
- **-1** If the result is **above** unit's strength
- **-2** If the result is **5 or more above** unit's strength

## C) VM Assault Effect roll

Find the column in the Assault Effect Table that corresponds with the defending French unit's morale value, taking into account whether it is shaken or not (different rows at the top). VM then finds the correct Attack Die roll column (Hesitate, Normal, or Surprise) and rolls a die. Modify it with the result from the previous Fire roll (0, or +/- 1 or 2).

The modified Effect die roll can never become more than "6" or less than "1". Cross reference the modified die roll with the column of French unit's morale. If the cross reference is a...

- **No effect** - Nothing happens. The assault fails
- **Choice** - France may choose one option:  
  - Option 1:* Take 2 step losses  
(Take **only 1 step loss**, if there are no more than **two** steps in the hex)
  - Option 2:* Retreat all units one hex
- **Loss & Retreat** - Take 1 step loss and retreat all units one hex
- **2 x Loss & Retreat** - Take 2 step losses and retreat all units one hex

### France chooses where to retreat

...and which step losses to take among units in the defending hex (units in other hexes never take losses or retreat). The defending unit must take the first step loss. You **may** retreat into enemy ZoC, and units in a stack may retreat into different hexes. Do not retreat into a hex violating the stacking limit. But if forced to, continue until you reach first eligible hex. If a unit retreats into another defending hex, it will be part of the result of that combat. If you retreat across a map edge from a hex **not** in a Trench zone, then place the unit in the closest eligible map edge hex not in Trench zone (France chooses which one).

## 3.5 → VM Assaults

A) VM units with Combat Markers now charge ...into the French defending units in any order. An assaulting unit has its strength value adjusted by...

- **+1** For each supporting VM unit from the same regiment, adjacent to the defending unit. It may not be shaken, or have a Combat- or an Abort Marker. A unit may support several assaulting units from the same regiment
- **-2** If the defending French unit is entrenched

A supporting unit will give a +1 even if it is reduced or has a Cadre on it. A unit may also support after its own assault is done (unless it has an Abort Marker). The Assault Fire Table on the Viet Minh Combat Tables will list these modifications above.

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A French unit will be eliminated and placed directly into the Gone Box if it retreats...

- And is an artillery unit
- Across a map edge, from a hex in a Trench zone
- Onto a VM unit

## Advance after combat

If the defending hex is vacated, the assaulting VM unit must advance into it. VM units that supported an assaulting unit that advances may also advance one hex. Supporting units may not enter the original assaulting hex, and they must end their advance adjacent to the original defending hex. Remove the Combat Marker after each assault. But do not remove any Abort Markers until all assaults and advances have been made.



**Example:** VM now assaults with the remaining attacks.

**Attack 1:** VM strength is 7, adjusted to 5 (-2 for trench). 8 is rolled. VM gets a -1 modification for the Effect roll. Effect roll is a 3, adjusted to 2 on Normal Attack Die roll column. French unit has morale 3 and is shaken, so result becomes a "Choice". The French unit decides to stay and take the loss.

**Attack 3:** VM strength is 9, adjusted to 8 (+1 for one supporting unit, -2 for trench). 3 is rolled and VM gets a +2. Effect roll is a 1, adjusted to 3 on the Surprise Attack Die roll column. French unit's morale is 3 and is shaken, so result is "Loss & Retreat". French unit takes a step loss and must retreat. The assaulting VM unit advances into the defending hex. The supporting VM unit may also advance, but it can't.



## 4.0 VM Post-Assault Phase

### 4.1 VM Attrition

Each VM unit **and/or VM strongpoint** that cannot trace a VM LoC **and** has an Isolation Marker, surrenders and becomes French controlled. Place the unit in the VM Eliminated Box (to be recreated) and flip the VM flag into its French side. But if able to trace a VM LoC, remove any Isolation Markers and, if VM wishes, **evacuate the units**. If so, place the units in the VM Off-Map Box.

**Note:** Only units that were formerly isolated but now can trace VM LoC may evacuate.

### 4.2 VM After-Combat Move

Any VM unit that is **not entrenched** may choose one of two alternatives below. If one is chosen, then it must end its move either in a VM-controlled strongpoint or in a hex in a Trench/Dig zone (although it does not have to stop in the first possible entrenched hex if you choose "Alt 2"). If unable to end its move entrenched, then it may not move. Each unit moves individually and checks its LoC and enemy ZoC the moment it starts moving.

- **Alt 1:** Move 1 hex, regardless of any LoC and ZoC
- **Alt 2:** Move 5 mp, but do not **enter** French ZoC

You can move across the map edge at 3z-304 into the 2z-304 box, choosing "Alt 1", if 2z-304 is a Trench zone (and, of course, if 3z-304 is not a Dig zone).

### 4.3 Remove/Add Shaken Markers

- ① Remove all Shaken Markers on both sides.
- ② Place a Shaken Marker on each VM unit that is not entrenched and that is adjacent to any French unit.

Flip French Barrage Markers to their front side, except those with an artillery unit that is reduced.

**Note:** VM units did not want to be caught in the open in broad daylight close to French units.

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**Example:** *VM decides to move back those units that are not entrenched. All Shaken Markers are removed. Those VM units adjacent to French units do not become shaken since they are entrenched (the darker zone at top is a Trench zone).*

## 4.4 → Mark all Isolated French Units

Each French unit that cannot trace a French LoC, **and/or each entire French controlled strongpoint where none of its hexes can trace a French LoC**, receives an Isolation Marker.

## 4.5 → Morale Check

### A) Calculate the Surrender Number

① Deduct 1 on the Strongpoints Track and increase the red Strongpoints Taken Marker by 1 for each VM-occupied Structure hex (see rule 1.2-B) that has no VM flag. Also, deduct 1 from the appropriate track (Medicine if a Hospital sign, Fuel & Spares if a Fuel depot a.s.o. If PIM is occupied, France chooses which French track to deduct). Then place a VM flag on each VM-occupied Structure hex that has no flag.

**Note:** *Units are not removed from the Wounded Box if a hospital is VM occupied. They would be ignored (with the exception of Isabelle during the French attrition segment). VM wished wounded to remain a burden to the French.*

② The two Strongpoints Taken Markers will indicate a number each. Subtract the blue Marker from the red one to get a net sum. Then subtract this net sum (or add it, if the net sum is a negative number) from the current value of the Strongpoints Track (don't move any markers, just calculate). The end result is the Surrender Number (SN).

**Example:** *The blue Strongpoints taken Marker is set on "2" which is subtracted from the red one which is set on "5". The net sum of "3" is then subtracted from the current value of the Strongpoints Track, which is "11". The SN (Surrender Number) is therefore "8".*

### B) Will the French garrison surrender?

France rolls two dice and modifies the result with...

- **+1** If Food & Bullets Track is at "2" or less
- **+1** If Medicine Track is at "2" or less
- **-1** If the Laos rescue force is in Laos 3 Box
- **-2** If Laos rescue force is in DBP and/or 3z-304

If the modified die roll result is equal to...

- **SN -3, or lower** All French units fight on!
- **SN -2** Each French unit with a morale 2 takes a step loss
- **SN -1** Remove all French units with a morale 2
- **SN** Remove all French units with a morale 2, then each French unit with a morale 3 will take a step loss
- **SN +1** Remove all French units with a morale 3 or less
- **SN +2** France surrenders. **VM victory!**

**Example:** *The SN is 8 and the Laos rescue force is in Laos 3 Box. 10 is rolled, modified to 9 which equals the result "SN +1". The game continues but all units with morale 3 or less are removed.*

**Note:** *You will quickly notice that you will not get an SN worth rolling until late in the game.*

Place any removed units in the Gone Box (attrition due to desertion/surrender). Units of the Laos rescue force are **never** removed due to a surrender roll (they have not yet reached that level of fatigue and despair). If France does not surrender during this segment in the "12-14 May" Game Turn (when VM planned to have done their final offensive), then the game ends with a **French victory!**

**Note:** *Historically, DBP was overrun in "6-8 May". Game wise, there would have been a red VM Strongpoints Taken Marker set on "12" and a blue French one set on "0". The current value of the Strongpoints Track would have been "19". The SN was therefore "7" and VM rolled a "9" or higher with no modifications to the die roll.*

If the game continues, then the rest of the Game Turn is always played, starting with the VM morale check.

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## C) Will VM troops despair?

Compare the Surrender Number with this Game Turn's VM Check Number (red squares with white numbers on the Game Turn Track). If the VM Check number is **lower**, then move **all** Division Morale Markers on the VM Division Morale Track down one slot in the arrow's direction.

## D) First, reset both Strongpoint Taken Markers

...to "0". Then, if any strongpoint has become VM-controlled due to French unit removals (as a result of the surrender roll), VM will adjust both the Strongpoints Track and the red Strongpoints Taken Marker with the new points gained.

Each reduced unit with a Cadre Marker **must** either replace one step or be withdrawn to the VM Pulled Back Box (148 rgt and units in the VM Pulled Back box are never forced to replace). For each replacement taken, deduct one on the VM Replacement Track and adjust the VM Division Morale Track (rule 4.6-D).

A replacing VM unit that happens to be in the...

- **VM Eliminated Box** is placed reduced in the VM Pulled Back Box with a Cadre Marker on it
- **VM Pulled Back Box** removes the Cadre Marker and is placed in the VM Off-Map Box
- **VM Off-Map Box** is not moved at all. It either removes the Cadre Marker or is flipped into its full strength side, depending on what state it was in before replacing

## 4.6 → VM Replacements and Reinforcements

### A) VM Ammo replenishment

Add 5 Ammo to the VM Ammunition Track. Add only 3 Ammo during Monsoon Game Turns.

*Note: This rate of ammo replenishment seems impressive since 5 VM ammo seem to equal 7,5 French plane loads. But it is not quite true. VM artillery had a much lower rate of fire. So, 5 VM ammo equals rather 2,5 plane loads.*

### B) Is the Monsoon healthy?

VM must deduct 2 replacements points on the VM Replacement Track each Monsoon Game Turn (malaria and living in drenched trenches), before replacing any units. VM takes a step loss instead from any VM unit (except 148 regiment) for each replacement point failed to be deducted.

### C) VM replacements

VM units that have taken step losses may receive replacements if they are in VM LoC (or in any kind of box) and if there are still replacement points left on the VM Replacement Track. VM may spend any number of replacement points, but each unit may **only** receive 1 replacement per Game Turn. VM either removes the Cadre Marker from a unit that receives its replacement or, if there is none, flips the unit from its reduced side to its full strength side. 148 regiment may not receive replacements (they were locally recruited Thai).

*Note: See replacements also as a form of "VM reaction move". After VM assaults, rear echelons are rushed forward to fill the front ranks.*

### D) Will replacements affect VM morale?

For each replacement that units receive, move their Division Morale Marker down one slot (in the arrow's direction) in the VM Division Morale Track. The track is divided into colors, each one starting with a number. If a Division Morale Marker reaches a number/color, then the Morale value of all units of that division is changed into that number which they will retain until another color span is reached.

If the marker moves upwards (towards "5") and enters a previous color, then all units of that division regain that higher Morale value (it does **not** have to reach a previous number, just the color). 148 rgt has no marker. It always has a morale value of 5.

*Example: 308 Division Morale Marker has reached slot "M". All units of that division will now have a morale value of 3. It then climbs back up to slot "L". All units of that division have now regained a morale value of 4.*

*Note: A Division Morale Marker is not moved when loss incurs. Despair does not strike in the heat of battle. Lowering of morale was usually a result of feelings that losses were in vain (like in rule 4.5-C) and of filling ranks with newly mobilized peasants with no battle experience.*

If a Division Morale Marker reaches "Shut down", then all units of that division are totally demoralised. No unit may assault as long as the marker stays in that slot.

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## E) Any VM reinforcements?

After replacements, check for VM reinforcements. If the VM Replacement Track is at 50 or less, then the three battalions of 9-304 (9 rgt/304 div) in VM Reinforcement Box may be released, now or at any future Game Turn during this segment. If VM decides to release them, place them in VM Off-Map Box, available as any other VM units in play. But, if released, then VM will receive one less Ammo each Game Turn for the rest of the game (starting with the same Game Turn as when they are released).

*Note: 9 regiment was summoned from the delta to protect the area between the siege ring and the major ammo dump from pro-French Thai guerrilla. VM could have chosen to bring them into the battle instead, which they did in the final assault.*

If the Replacement Track is at 30 or less, then add 6 extra Ammo to the VM Ammunition Track (Soviet rocket launchers and the huge mine). This will only happen once.

## 4.7 → Deduct French Supply

### A) Deduct Fuel & Spares

France must deduct 4 on the Fuel & Spares Track, except that France can **never** deduct more than the number where the French Truck Marker is.

*Example: If the Truck Marker is at "2", then no more than 2 will be deducted on the Fuel & Spares Track this Game Turn (instead of the normal 4).*

If it is only possible to deduct...

- **3 Fuel & Spares**, move Shortage Marker to "3" on Fuel Shortage Track. No more than 6 Ammo may be added to French Ammunition Track (= 3 Ammo Markers) during airdrop segment
- **2 Fuel & Spares**, move Shortage Marker to "2" on Fuel Shortage Track. No more than 4 Ammo may be added to French Ammunition Track (= 2 Ammo Markers) during airdrop segment
- **1 Fuel & Spares**, move Shortage Marker to "1" on Fuel shortage Track. This means...
  - No more than 2 Ammo may be added to the French Ammunition Track (= 1 Ammo Marker) during airdrop segment
  - Tanks and artillery units may not replace
  - Artillery units may not move

- **0 Fuel & Spares**, move Shortage Marker to "0" on Fuel Shortage Track. This means...
  - No ammo at all may be added to French Ammunition Track during airdrop segment
  - Tanks and artillery units may not replace
  - Artillery and Tank units may not move

The limitations above do not affect how many Ammo Markers you may load (rule 4.8). It only says how many you may add to the French Ammunition Track, regardless of how many actually arrive. Units that may not move, suffer this until this segment, next Game Turn. Tanks that may not move, may still assault, advance and retreat. Shortage is not changed if Fuel & Spares are dropped during the coming airdrop. Those dropped this Game Turn will be the Fuel & Spares that is deducted during next Game Turn.

### B) Deduct Food & Bullets

Deduct 3 on the Food & Bullets Track.

*Note: Deduct 3 until the very end. While there were a decreasing number of soldiers, there were an increasing number of wounded, internal deserters and Vietnamese prisoners of war. There were also a few thousand non-combatant army personnel in the camp.*

France must take 3 step losses of infantry as attrition (not artillery or Tanks) for each Food & Bullets that France fails to deduct. France removes these steps immediately from any units at DBP and/or 3z-304.

*Note: There were an increasing numbers of internal deserters. Thai units usually left, hoping to get home. Others lived along the banks of river Nam Youm in burrows where they grabbed anything worth having to survive. They were called the "Rats of Nam Youm" and were about 2,000 men (20% of the garrison when it fell).*

### C) Deduct Medicine

Deduct 1 on the Medicine Track. Deduct 2 if during the Monsoon (malaria and drenched trenches). Then deduct 1 extra for every five units in Wounded Box, rounded up. France must take 1 step loss as attrition (not artillery or Tanks) at DBP or 3z-304 for every two Medicine, rounded up, failed to be deducted.

*Examples: 1) During Monsoon, deduct 2, plus 2 extra if there are eight wounded. You can have the wounded in piles of five, to make it easier to count. 2) Three medicine failed to be deducted means 2 step losses.*

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**Notes:** 1) *France calculated on 300 casualties each day that could be evacuated. But the airstrip was shut down after two weeks and all wounded had to stay in the valley and be cared for there. This became an increasing strain.*  
2) *Some wounded units should be gone as prisoners and not counted for medicine. But then again, there are many not in the Wounded Box that need medicine.*

After spending Medicine, France may spend another 6 Medicine and bring back one unit from the Wounded Box (but only one unit per Game Turn). It returns reduced and is placed on any hospital hex at DBP. If a unit from the "Isabelle side" of the Wounded Box is returned, then place it on the hospital at Isabelle (the hospital sign in question may not be occupied by a VM unit, of course).

## 4.8 → French Airdrops

### A) Plane loads with stuff

France may bring in supplies and reinforcements by filling the matrix of the Airdrop Chart with any mix of units (reinforcements and replacements) and Supply Markers (Ammunition, Food & Bullets, Medicine, and Fuel & Spares) from the Hanoi Airbase Box. France is not forced to include any specific unit or marker. When placed on the Airdrop Chart, they will all be referred to as "plane loads". There may only be **one** single counter per slot, except reinforcements of which there may be **two** units per slot.

**Note:** *Each slot represents what four C-47 Dakotas or two C-119 Flying Boxcars delivered during three days: 30 tons.*

### VM Trench/Dig zones affect airdrops

France may not fill a "T/D zones" slot in the Airdrop Chart that has a printed number that is equal to or lower than the sum of all Trench and Dig zones.

**Note:** *This represents the shrinking area where many supplies were dropped out of reach for the French.*

### Rain and Monsoon affect airdrops as well

The "Rain" slot may not be filled during rain and monsoon Game Turns. The three "Monsoon" slots may not be filled during monsoon Game Turns.

### The Laos rescue force will certainly affect airdrops

If French units are in the Laos 2 or Laos 3 Box, then the five "Sent to Laos" slots may not be filled. This limitation is removed as soon as French units are no longer in the Laos 2 or Laos 3 Box (see rule 5.2-B).

**Note:** *The rescue force needed 50 tons a day. The idea was to strip all of Indochina of every transport plane to be able to do this and supply DBP at the same time. But there was no surge of planes, so the rescue force had to be supplied from the same pool of aircrafts that were flying to DBP. Historically, they could not do that.*

### B) Weather decides how many plane loads that arrive

France then rolls a die and checks the Weather Table, after all eligible slots have been filled with plane loads. The result tells how many plane loads that abort back to the Hanoi Airbase (the effect of "weather" includes VM anti-aircraft fire).

### Aborting back to Hanoi

France now rolls two dice a number of times equal to the result of the Weather Table. Use the black die to show which row and the white die to show which column on the Airdrop Chart. By rolling both of them you will get a cross reference to a certain slot. After each roll, return the plane load in that slot to Hanoi Airbase Box. If you get a slot that is already empty, then you are lucky (it is still counted as a roll).

### C) Adjust supply tracks

When all Abort rolls are done, adjust any tracks accordingly, based on what supplies that have arrived. Eventual Fuel shortage will affect the amount of Ammo that may be added. Each Food & Bullets Marker will increase the track by one. Each Fuel & Spares and Ammo Marker will increase their respective track by two. A Medicine Marker will increase its track by six. Return the markers to Hanoi Airbase Box after all adjustments.

### D) Reinforcements

...are placed in any hex in within the Supply area at DBP and/or Isabelle (read rule 1.6 if you are forced to overstack).

**Note:** *Yes, you cannot airdrop units at Isabelle if the Supply area there is VM-occupied.*

### E) Replacement unit

If it arrives, then flip one reduced Infantry unit and one reduced Artillery or Tank unit back into their full strength sides (replacement for Artillery and Tank is called "equipment" replacement). Return the replacement unit to the Hanoi Airbase Box afterwards.



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These units may **not** be replaced:

- Thai units (Thai co, 2 Thai, 3 Thai)
- Units in a Laos Box
- Isolated French units

**Note:** *A replacement unit will not give you two infantry or two equipment replacements. Do not return units from the Wounded Box through the replacement unit.*

## F) VM patrols

VM rolls on the VM Supply Hit Table to see what French supply fell into VM hands. Modify the die roll by a "-1" for each slot that the Fuel Shortage Marker has moved (so, if the marker is in the "1" space, then there is a "-3" to the die roll). Deduct the appropriate French Track. You can never deduct anything below "0" on any track. Any remaining deduction is wasted.

But also: If France deducts any ammo, then VM adds 1 VM ammo. If France deducts anything of something else, then VM moves one single Division Morale Marker up one slot.

**Note:** *Stolen ammo worked nicely, both sides used the same American guns. Medicine, a hot meal, and fuel to bring stuff forward improve morale. If VM rolls a supply that was not airdropped, regard it as left behind supply from previous turns.*

A French unit may move directly between DBP and 3z-304 if there is no VM unit or Trench zone at 2z-304. It must also be able to reach and enter any map edge hex at both DBP and 3z-304 without breaking the rules of French Valley move above.

The number of units that France may move is either:

- Four units, anywhere at DBP and/or 3z-304, or...
- Six units that all start in the Supply area at DBP

## B) ② Box move

France may move any number of French units, but each unit that moves may only do **one** of the four options below during a box move. A French unit in...

- **3z-304** may move to 2z-304, if, before moving, there is a "route" to a map edge hex in 3z-304 that does not enter VM ZoC
- **Any map edge** hex at DBP that is not in a Trench/Dig zone, may move to 2z-304
- **Laos 3 Box** may move to 2z-304
- **Any Laos Box** may move to the next higher or lower Laos Box. But **only if** the Laos rescue force has been released

**Note:** *Any movement from 2z-304 is done during the French After-Combat Move, see rule 7.2*

The **Laos rescue force** in Laos 1 Box is released and may move if the Strongpoints Track is at 34 or less (it remains released even if it climbs above 34). All four battalions must move together when in a Laos Box. The Laos rescue force will take 1 step loss, in total (fighting Pathet Lao guerrillas), each time it is in Laos 2 Box or Laos 3 Box at the end of Box move and eventual Box combat.

## C) Box Combat

If France intends to enter 2z-304 or Laos 3 Box and it contains VM units, then there is immediate combat (terrain in box does not matter). France must declare what units that intend to enter. It must be at least as many as the VM units in the target box. **Those that take any losses must have a Morale value of 3 or more** (France must therefore enter units with a mix of Moral values to be able to cover that).

Do **not** move French units from any map edge hex or box until a combat is resolved. Complete any combat and retreat in 2z-304 before you attack in Laos 3 Box. Roll a die for each VM unit in the target box.

## 5.0 French Pre-Assault Phase

### 5.1 → **Airstrike**

Place the Airstrike unit on any VM unit anywhere at DBP or 304 sector. The airstrike is conducted as a French barrage roll. It has a die roll modification of "-1" (no ammo is used). Return it to the Airstrike Box afterwards.

**Note:** *The airforce accomplished very little during this battle. But sometimes they managed to catch VM out in the open.*

### 5.2 → **French Operational Move**

Conduct French movement in the order ① -> ②. Some units may end up moving twice.

#### A) ① Valley move

France may move units in French LoC, to any hexes in French LoC. The route may be of any length but may not enter VM ZoC or any Trench/Dig zone. Also: Artillery can only cross the river by road/bridge.

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If the die roll result for a VM unit is...

- **1** Nothing happens
- **2** France removes a French step
- **3-5** The VM unit and a French unit take a step loss each (France chooses which French step)
- **6** The VM unit takes a step loss

**Equal to or greater** than the VM unit's morale, then it wishes to retreat, in addition to any step loss

Will all VM units in a box retreat?

If a **majority (half is not enough)** of the VM units are eliminated or wish to retreat after Combat, then all VM units will retreat. Retreat VM units in 2z-304 to 1z-304. Those in Laos 3 to 2z-304 (or to VM Off-Map Box if 2z-304 is French-occupied). Move the attacking French units into the box. If half, or less than half in a box wish to retreat, then all VM units there will stay. The attacking French units may not enter the box and must stay where they are.

## 5.3 → French Barrage

A) France may place French Barrage Markers  
...on VM units anywhere in DBP and/or 304 sector, but only one Barrage Marker per hex.

B) Barrage roll



For each Barrage Marker, deduct 1 Ammo on the French Ammunition Track if it is a regular barrage. Deduct 2 Ammo if it is an intense barrage (turn the Barrage marker a quarter to remember). Deduct all Ammo before rolling any dice. Then roll a die for each Barrage Marker and modify it with...

- **+1** If the VM unit is not entrenched
- **+1** If you fire an intense barrage
- **-1** If the French Artillery is reduced and/or shaken (still only -1, even if both reduced and shaken)
- **-1** If the VM unit is reduced or has a Cadre (**only when checking step loss, not to see if shaken**)
- **-1** If the target is 3 or more hexes away from any French unit, or is in 1z-304 or 2z-304

**Note:** *Range was unlimited (game wise) during daytime (spotting from "Morane 500 Criquet" aircrafts), but with lower efficiency. No, you can't barrage units in Laos 3 Box.*

What are the barrage results?

If the modified die roll result is 5 or 6, then the VM unit loses 1 step. Place also a Shaken Marker on the VM unit (unless already shaken), if its Morale value is less than the modified die roll result. Return each Barrage Marker to French Barrage Box after its roll.

## 5.4 → French Tactical Move

Each French unit may move 5 mp within DBP or within 3z-304 (no box movement). Artillery units may only cross the river by road/bridge.

## 6.0 French Assault Phase

### 6.1 → France Declares Assaults

France may place Assault Markers on units that intend to assault. France chooses in each hex which unit that will be the assaulting unit (only one may be chosen), and places it at the top of the stack. Artillery may never be chosen. Place the Assault Marker so that the arrow points at the hex being assaulted. Each defending hex must contain a VM unit and it may only be attacked by one assaulting unit.

### 6.2 → VM Support Barrage

VM may offer support barrage and does so to all nine units of an entire division. Do not place any Barrage Markers, just deduct 1 Ammo on the VM Ammunition Track for each division that receives support barrage. No dice are rolled and it will give no modification on the Defense Fire roll (VM support HW barrage was less effective), but it will allow VM to make a Defense Effect roll on a column less favourable for France.

### 6.3 → VM Defense Fire

A) Each defending VM unit  
...that has an Assault Marker pointing at it, now fires against the assaulting French unit. Before making a Defense Fire roll, a defending unit has its strength value adjusted by...

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- **+1** For each obstacle the French unit must charge across/into. The three possible obstacles for France are: across river; up hill; into forest (wire is not an obstacle for the French)
- **+1** For each supporting VM unit from the same regiment, adjacent to the assaulting unit. It may not be shaken or have a Combat Marker pointing at it. One unit may support several defending units from the same regiment
- **-2** If the defending VM unit is shaken

A supporting unit will give a +1 even if it is reduced or has a Cadre on it. Defense Fire Table on Viet Minh Combat Tables will list these modifications above.

## B) VM Defense Fire roll

Conduct the Fire rolls as described in rule 3.4-B, but with VM as defender.

## C) VM Defense Effect roll

Conduct the Effect rolls as described in rule 3.4-C, but with VM as defender. Any loss for France is taken from the chosen assaulting unit. If the assaulting unit is eliminated, and the result is not an Abort, then France must choose another assaulting unit, if any, from the same hex (but not artillery). **All** defense rolls are done before France rolls for assaults.

## 6.4 → French Assaults

### A) French units with Combat Markers now charges

...into the VM defenders in any order. The assaulting unit has its strength value adjusted by...

- **+1** For each supporting French infantry unit from the same battalion, not in the same hex as the assaulting unit (Thai co cannot do this)  
The supporting unit must be adjacent to the defending hex, and not have a Combat- or an Abort Marker on it (such marker only affects the top unit in a stack, not other units stacked with it). A supporting unit may support several assaults from same battalion
- **+1** For each supporting French unit of any kind, stacked with assaulting unit. **+2** if it's a Tank unit. **+0** if it's an artillery unit
- **-2** If the defending unit is entrenched
- **-3** If the Medicine Track is at "0"

A supporting unit will give a +1 even if it is reduced. A unit may also support after its own assault is done (it no longer has a Combat Marker on it). The Assault Fire Table on the French Combat Tables will list these modifications above.

## B) French Assault Fire roll

Conduct the Fire rolls as described in rule 3.5-B, but with VM as defender.

## C) French Assault Effect roll

Conduct the Effect rolls as described in rule 3.5-C, but with VM as defender.

### If a VM unit retreats onto a French unit,

...it is eliminated and placed in VM Eliminated Box. You **may** retreat into enemy ZoC. Do not retreat onto another VM unit. But if forced to, continue until you reach the first eligible hex (a retreat may be across several friendly occupied hexes. Same thing for retreating French units). VM chooses eligible hex, if there are many in equal distance. A VM unit retreating across the map edge at...

- **3z-304** is placed in 2z-304 (or in VM Off-Map Box if 2z-304 is French occupied)
- **DBP** is placed in VM Off-Map Box

### Advance after combat

If defending hex is vacated, the assaulting French unit must advance into it. French units (not artillery) that supported an assaulting unit that advances may also advance one hex. They must end in or adjacent to the original defending hex. Adjacent supporting units may not end their move in the original assaulting hex. Remove the Combat Marker after each assault. But do not remove any Abort Markers until all assaults and advances have been made.

## 7.0 French Post-Assault Phase

### 7.1 → French Attrition

① Each French unit **and/or strongpoint** that cannot trace a French LoC **and** has an Isolation Marker, surrenders and becomes VM controlled. Place the unit directly into the Gone Box, and place a VM flag at the strongpoint (or flip an existing French one). If all French units at 3z-304 surrender, then move all units at Isabelle side of Wounded Box to the Gone Box.

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If able to trace a French LoC, remove any Isolation Markers and, if France wishes, **evacuate the units**. If so, place the units in any hexes in the local Supply area, not in VM ZoC.

**Note:** "Local" = To Isabelle Supply area if at 3z-304; to DBP Supply area if at DBP. Only units that were formerly isolated but now can trace French LoC may evacuate.

② **Rats of Nam Youm or the wrong stuff in the boxes**  
Some supplies were simply stolen by the internal deserters at DBP, the "Rats of Nam Youm", or destroyed by a stray VM artillery shot. Some boxes contained supply, but different from the four main categories in this game.

France rolls on the VM Supply Hit Table, to see what is missing from their stockpiles. **Modify the die roll with -2** (a result below "1" is considered a "1"). Deduct the appropriate track. You can never deduct anything below "0" on any track. Any remaining deduction is wasted (in any case, nothing is added to any VM track).

## 7.2 → French After-Combat move

① A unit in **2z-304** must move, either to any map edge hex at 3z-304 (but only if there already is a French unit at 3z-304. Reconquering an empty Isabelle would be of no use), or to any map edge hex at DBP as close as possible to the French entry hex (moving to a hex in VM ZoC is permitted in both cases). A unit doing this move may also do a second move, as described below.

② Any unit **not entrenched** may choose one of three alternatives below. If any alternative is chosen, then it must end its move in a French-controlled strongpoint. If unable to fulfill this precondition, then it may not move. Each unit moves individually and checks its LoC and enemy ZoC the moment it starts moving.

The alternatives for each unit are...

- **Alt 1:** Move 1 hex, regardless of any LoC and ZoC
- **Alt 2:** Move 5 mp, but may not **enter** VM ZoC
- **Alt 3:** Relocate to any strongpoint in the Supply area but not into VM ZoC. You must **start your move in French LoC** at DBP

You are not forced to stop in the first possible strongpoint hex if you choose "Alt 2".

## 7.3 → Remove/Add Shaken Markers

- ① Remove all Shaken Markers on both sides.
- ② Place a Shaken Marker on each French unit that is not entrenched and that is adjacent to any VM unit.

**Note:** French units did not want to be caught in the open during night close to VM units.

## 7.4 → Mark all Isolated VM Units

Each VM unit that cannot trace a VM LoC, **and/or each entire VM controlled strongpoint where none of its hexes can trace a VM LoC**, receives an Isolation Marker. VM units in any boxes are always in VM LoC.

## 7.5 → VM Trench Digging

- A) ① **Dig -> Trench Marker?**  
Flip each Dig Marker onto its Trench Marker side in each Dig zone where there are no longer any French-controlled strongpoints in any Trench/Dig zone of that divisional sector. A Dig Marker that is not flipped may not move into a new zone.
- B) ② **Moving Trench Marker**  
VM may then move one (and only one) of the Trench Markers forward into the next higher zone within the same division sector and place it on the Zone number there. If there are French controlled strongpoints in the new zone, then the Trench Marker is flipped into its Dig Marker side after moving there (rule 1.3-D explains the difference between Trench and Dig zones). France can never move a Trench/Dig Marker and "untrench" a zone.

**Note:** French units had a limited effect on VM trench digging. They tried to raid and fill approaching trenches, but the trenches were simply dug up again during night.

## 7.6 → New Game Turn

Move the Game Turn Marker to the next slot on the Game Turn Track. Note the increased movement cost for field when you enter the Rain period and onwards. Note the limitations on airdrops when you enter the Rain period, and then worse when you enter the Monsoon period. Note the "attrition" on French medicine and VM replacements when you enter the Monsoon period.

# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

## 8.0 Scenarios

### A) Who wins?

This is a cage fight to the bitter end. France will either surrender during a Morale Check Phase (rule 4.5) which will result in a VM victory, or win simply by not having surrendered during that phase by the last Game Turn.

### B) Scenarios

There are four scenarios, each with a letter as an ID. The letters are: A, B, C, and D. You will find them on the top of the Scenario card; on the map; in boxes; and close by all tracks. These letters indicate what units will set up and where. They also indicate where markers of all kinds shall be set at the start of each scenario. Regardless of which scenario you choose, it continues until either player wins.

**Note:** *The French Ammo Track should be set on a higher number from start in most scenarios. But a lot of Ammo was spent on fruitless counter battery fire (about two per Game Turn). So, I have disregarded those extra points, and no, you can't have them. No French artillery commander knows from start what works and what does not work.*

### C) French unit setup

Set up the French units on the Scenario Card by placing them in the formation boxes that you see there along the sides. Each formation box has a unit symbol and a unit designation. Boxes to the left have their setup information in a blue row to the right. Boxes to the right have their setup information in a gray row to the left. The scenario ID letters are shown at the top. Each one creates a column that contains all setup information for that scenario. By cross-referencing a formation box with a scenario column you will get a setup section showing where all units of that formation shall be set up.

A setup section contains an equal amount of setup info as the number of units that formation has (usually four units). Formations with less than four units have their excess setup info replaced by a diagonal stroke (like 2 CMMLE which has two units and therefore two setup info and two strokes). Setup info will sometimes be replaced by a dot. In those cases, the left over units from that formation are moved down to the box on the Scenario Card where it is printed "Wounded" (lower right corner).

Each setup info corresponds with the French name of a strongpoint, like "E2" (rule 1.3-A), where a single unit is set up (it does not matter which unit from the formation that you take). A unit may be placed in any hex within that strongpoint (within stacking limits). "Gone" as setup info means the Gone Box on the map. Some units have "Reinforcement" or "Laos 1 Box" printed in their setup section. Those units are set up on that scale and in that box respectively. If there is a red band across the setup info, then that unit is set up reduced.

**Example:** *The four units that belong to 1/4 RTM are set up as follows in scenario "C": one full strength unit in any hex at H4; one reduced unit also at H4; one full strength unit at C1; one unit, shown by the dot, is moved to the box on the Scenario Card where it is printed "Wounded".*

**Note:** *The three Thai co boxes represent four independent Thai co units each. There is no common insignia for them. So, one used by an auxiliary unit will represent them all.*

### D) Wounded and Gone

The box that has "Wounded" printed in it should have a pile of units (except in scenario A). To the left, there is printed within each scenario column how many of these units that shall be moved and placed into the actual Wounded Box on the map. France and VM will now alternate choosing units from that pile and placing them into the DBP side of the Wounded Box until that number is reached (France starts). The units that remain are then placed in the Gone Box on the map (which shall correspond with the number written in the "Gone box row" below).

### E) French Markers

Place all French Barrage Markers in the French Barrage Box, except those whose artillery units are in the Gone Box (their Barrage Markers are kept off map). Flip Barrage Markers whose artillery units are reduced. Place the Replacement unit and all Supply Markers in the Hanoi Airbase Box, and the Airstrike unit in the Airstrike Box.

### F) How VM units are set up

VM units are set up with their full strength side up. Those units that are printed in some of the boxes are set up there according to scenario. Remaining VM units are set up in any Trench zone (**not** Dig zone) within their respective division sector at DBP (exceptions are mentioned in the specific scenario information, rule 8.0-G).

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Do **not** set up in French ZoC. Place all VM Barrage Markers in the VM Barrage Box. Place the Commando unit in the Commando Box.

**Example:** *In scenario B, all units from 312 division are set up anywhere in Trench zone 1, 2, or 3 in the 312 division sector, but not in French ZoC from units at D1 or D2.*

## G) Specific scenario information

### Scenario A

- Set markers to "A" at tracks and boxes
- No strongpoints are controlled by VM, and there are no flags at any of them
- France sets up all French units first, according to Scenario "A" on the Scenario Card
- VM sets up afterwards according to rule 8.0-F

### Scenario B

- Set markers to "B" at tracks and boxes
- All strongpoints in Trench Zones are controlled by VM as well as strongpoint Anne-Marie. Put VM flags at them
- France sets up all French units first, according to Scenario "B" on the Scenario Card
- VM sets up afterwards according to rule 8.0-F. VM may also set up in Anne-Marie

### Scenario C

- Set markers to "C" at tracks and boxes
- Zone 5-308 is a Dig Zone. All strongpoints in Trench Zones are controlled by VM as well as strongpoints Francoise, D5 and D6. Put VM flags at them (note that H6 is still French). Put a French flag at strongpoint E1
- France sets up all French units first, according to Scenario "C" on the Scenario Card
- VM sets up afterwards according to rule 8.0-F. VM may also set up in Francoise, D5 and D6. Remove 4 steps from two units belonging to 316 division

### Scenario D:

- Set markers to "D" at tracks and boxes
- Zone 6-308 is a Dig Zone. All strongpoints in Trench Zones are controlled by VM as well as strongpoint H1. Put VM flags at them. Put a French flag at strongpoint E1
- France sets up all French units first, according to Scenario "D" on the Scenario Card
- VM sets up afterwards according to rule 8.0-F. VM may also set up in H1. Remove 1 step from a unit belonging to 308 division

## Designer's Notes

**How can one create games** about French modern colonial wars without doing one about Dien Bien Phu, perhaps the most iconic battle for the French since Verdun? So, of course I had to do one.

**Thank You!** My main source is Martin Windrow's "The Last Valley" and Bernard Fall's "Hell in a Very Small Place". I wish to thank Kevin Boylan for supplying me with info from all maps and books I haven't had the chance to see and read. A big thanks goes to Ewen le Picot and Luc Olivier for sharing their research done in French military archives. So, if the setup doesn't correspond with Windrow's book, then French military archives are the culprits. I also wish to thank Ewen as well as Roger Miller and Robert Mårtensson for taking time and energy to play and test the game. **Finally, I wish to thank Elias Nordling and Mats Eden for assisting me in my development of the current version of the rules.** Hopefully, the end result will please you all!

**Dien Bien Phu** was a battle where either side may have lost. Historically, the French broke first but it could well have been the Viet Minh. VM took horrendous losses but felt that it was worth it since it broke the French will to fight. If VM would have taken such losses and failed, then that would have had severe implications for VM. Not only would a large part of veteran VM troops have been wiped out, but the nucleus of all French elite battalions would have survived and been rebuilt.

# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

What made VM victory possible was their artillery. Not because it was better than the French counterpart (it wasn't); not because its greater amount of guns fired more shots in total than the French guns (it didn't), but because it was there at all. VM artillery gave their divisions a fighting chance to take the French strongpoints one by one.

I faced three major issues when I started: How would I depict the approaching VM trenches? How would I simulate combat where a small unit sometimes could prevail over a larger opponent in both defense and offense? How would I show unit interaction and the way units moved both short and long distances?

I quickly decided against having trench markers all over the map and instead chose to have zones depicting the approaching VM. Some may feel it unrealistic that each hex in a Trench- or Dig zone would contain a VM trench. But game-wise it doesn't really matter. The only hexes that matter are the ones bordering strongpoints, where the heads of the VM trenches are. The reason why French supply can't enter a hex in a Trench zone is simply because there were too many VM patrols for unarmed porters to get through.

Combat, yes - how would that work? This was a battle where combat was almost semi-tactic and sometimes with strange results. I solved this by creating a double-roll where the first roll would have a certain chance of success and its outcome would then affect the second roll. Then by connecting the effects of artillery/mortar barrage with these two rolls it became a system that was impossible to precalculate. Of course you increase your chances by sending a tough unit supported by auxiliary units and support barrage into battle, but you can't be sure. Any roll in this chain of rolls may fail: Barrage, the first roll (that show how well the unit does) and the second roll (that show what the result is). The system became realistic and exciting as well.

Units that are shaken may not support, even in the same hex as the defending unit. This will weaken French defenders more than VM defenders and it shows the difficulty of stopping an assaulting VM wave. But then again, French defenders are able to have as many as six steps in a hex, compared to the three step that VM can have, which shows the resilience of French defence.

Movement...well, historically units moved long distance to get into combat while sometimes failing to reach the fighting close by. I needed an "operational" move as well as a "tactic" one.

But I didn't want to have a situation where units would swish around the map at their pleasure and attack from wherever. So, it all turned out to be a delicate balanced system of a Valley move, Tactical move and an After-Combat move where ZoC, LoC and Trench zones are important. I believe and hope I have constructed a correct balance between operational movement of redeployment and tactical movement into and out of fierce battle situations.

In the game, both sides will experience periods of despair when nothing seems to work. But this will change, several times. If you feel like giving up, then suddenly your opponent will fail miserably in a few attacks and you are back in lucky street again. Fight to the end. It's not over until it's over.

After many additional play sessions, many felt that the campaign game was too difficult for VM to win. Now, by adding adjusting some rules, the play balance has improved a lot. These are not tweaks taken out of the blue, but rather adjustments that will make the game battle more exciting, but also more correct and therefore more historical. They address certain strange game effects and will lead players to act as the real commanders were forced to act, or found it wise to act. The game with rule version 2.1a has become a much better game.

## Playing Viet Minh

This will not be easy. VM may have won historically but you may not. Patience is your most important ally. If you play wisely you will probably get to roll a Surrender roll once or twice.

You have to conquer Béatrice and Gabrielle in order to advance the trenches beyond zone 2 in these two sectors. You also need them to keep your troops happy. Capturing these strongpoints will keep your soldiers in good mood for four game turns. Your main problem is not lack of replacements but the state of morale among your units. The divisions start with an excellent morale 5 but will soon linger on the border of morale 4. Avoid letting a division slide down to morale 3 where its assaulting ability will be severely limited. The French can always stack a tough para unit together with feeble morale 2 or 3 units, but you can't. Don't wreck all main divisions at the same time. If all three main ones have a lot of step losses and morale 4, then you have no division that can attack while the others rest.

# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

90 replacements seem to be a lot. But it only means, after deducting 12 that will disappear during monsoon, 4 replacements per game turn in average. If you wish to keep your army strong, try to keep your losses around that level. In other words, allow your self calm periods after major assaults.

If you face too strong French resistance at some place and you are too weak and can't surround the French units, consider moving away, even from hexes that you occupy in French controlled strongpoints. The division will rest better if none of its units are adjacent to French units. What VM learned historically after their massive assaults on the eastern hills was to encircle and isolate strongpoints with trenches and units. This will force the French to fight their way through to open up a route for supply and eventually an evacuation of the units there. By encircling and not assaulting you will be able to rest while causing the French to take losses assaulting you.

Save your ammunition. Use it to deplete and shake French defenders just before an assault. You may also want to shake French units that are close by and that you fear will move in as extra defense during reaction move. Save ammo so that you can fire away grand barrages with 10 or more barrage markers. This will grind the number of French trucks down, and destroying trucks is the best way of decreasing the threat from French artillery. Grind them down as soon as possible. You can ill afford having step losses from French artillery shots from midgame onwards when your morale will start falling due to probable lack of VM controlled strongpoints.

Consider at a certain point to choose artillery units as step losses when you barrage. For each French artillery step loss, there is also a French ammo loss.

When the French force is weak enough and French artillery lacks ammo, then consider moving a regiment via the VM Off-Map Box to the south map edge. From there it will be able to attack E3 and/or the Claudine strongpoints. Another prize is to attack Isabelle when 3z-304 becomes a Dig zone. If you take one of the strongpoints there, then go for the supply area in the centre. If you can hold on to it through whatever ferocious counterattack the French will throw at you, then all French units there will surrender.

If France rolls the Surrender roll in any Game Turn before the last one, then try to occupy the same multi-hex strongpoint as any weak French units.

If the roll causes them to surrender and they are alone in the strongpoint then they will be removed and you will take over their strongpoint.

Play wisely and you will prevail.

## Playing France

While VM has to play with patience, you have to play with a plan. Don't let the first half of the game fool you.

First part of the game usually feels like a piece of cake, even though some large strongpoints are lost. There is a lot left on the Strongpoints Track, abundant supply is arriving and you usually have two new para battalions to compensate the losses. The remaining strongpoints are now within reaction move distance.

But beware! By the time the first rain comes, you will notice that three slots on the Airdrop Chart may not be used due to rain and Trench zones, your trucks are halfway gone and many of your units are gone, wounded or reduced. What you need to do is to save ammo. New ammo will appear as a trickle when all your trucks are gone, and if you lack ammo you will soon have VM troops despising you by not bothering to stay in the trenches.

Not only do you need to save ammo in order to have any ammo later on. You need to save ammo in order to not be desperate to load ammo aboard your flights, because you may very well be in a dire strait regarding other supply as well. Remember that supply will be stolen by both VM and your deserters. Sooner or later, it will be felt.

Your paras are your best friends. A full para company together with an auxiliary company and tanks is a strong stack indeed. Much of your time will be spent on relieving isolated strongpoints, either to evacuate the units therein or just to bring supply to them. A decision that you will have to make repeatedly is whether to hold on to a strongpoint or not. If you reckon that you will lose a strongpoint no matter what, then you might as well evacuate the units there, unless of course the step losses that VM usually gets in assaults are more worth to you than the strongpoint itself. VM has a Check Number each Game Turn which may force all VM Division Morale Markers to move one step down. Try to keep on to strongpoints just so that VM always end up on the wrong side of this check number.



# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

If VM wrecks one of the divisions without achieving results, then you can expect that front to be quiet for awhile while the other divisions attack to catch up with the VM Check Number. Place some good units against those other divisions, but not too many to become fat targets for the VM artillery.

Position some paras in reserve in one or two strongpoints just behind the front where they can rush forward during Reaction move. If the assault ability of all divisions has stalled, then they will withdraw, rest and slowly rebuild their units. Expect a barrage fury for two game turns, thanks to accumulated VM Ammo, when they finally attack again.

Save Ammo and supplies to avoid being at the mercy of the VM when the monsoon comes. Remember that you win just by denying VM the victory. It is better to save troops than holding on to strongpoints at whatever cost. VM will increase the chance of victory if a lot of strongpoints can be taken in a row.

Therefore, don't kill yourself holding on to strongpoints just to collapse afterwards, resulting in a VM sweep. Keep strongpoints long enough so that VM fails the morale check and then fall back when you are too weak to defend them. Replace your para units, if possible, and hope for the arrival of all reinforcements. If you have saved ammo during the mid period, then see to it that VM has to pay in losses whenever they assault and advance.

Don't play with the Medicine Track and the Food Track. Try to have in stock a full game turn's expenditure. You don't want to experience a situation where no food or medicine gets dropped and your stocks are empty. That will mean step losses and a worse Surrender roll, if any, during next game turn.

If you fear that you might start rolling for surrender before the last game turn, try to avoid having units that are weaker in morale alone in important positions. You don't want to lose strongpoints due to surrender. If it happens, it might create such holes in your line that you might not survive your next Surrender roll.

Try to save units late in the game. Losing strongpoints is really only serious if the losses create a possible Surrender roll. But this is a hard decision since you also want to slow down the movement of the Trench Markers. What you must plan for is to avoid a last game turn with too few units which will allow VM to swarm into the central supply area forcing your collapse.

Don't ever give up.

## French unit designations

Metropolitan: **1 RCC, 2/1 RCP**

Foreign Legion: *1/2 REI, 2/2 REI, 3/3 REI, 1/13 DBLE, 3/13 DBLE, 1 **BEP**, 2 **BEP**, 1 *CMMLE*, 2 *CMMLE*, 1 *CEPML**

Colonial: **1 BPC, 6 BPC, 8 BPC, 4/4 RAC, 3/10 RAC, GAACEO**

Algerian: *2/1 RTA, 3/3 RTA, 5/7 RTA*

Moroccan: *1/4 RTM, 31 BG, RICM*

West African: *2/4 RAC*

Vietnamese: **5 BPVN** (a lot of Vietnamese also served in many of the colonial units)

Laotian: **1 BPL, 4 BCL, 5 BCL**

Thai (highlanders): *2 Thai, 3 Thai, Thai co*

Artillery units are printed in *italics*. Para units are printed in **bold**.

# DIEN BIEN PHU - The Final Gamble

## VM Pre-Assault Phase

### 2.1 VM Operational Move Segment

- p 6**
- A) Valley move
  - B) Fall back
  - C) Box move

### 2.2 VM Barrage Segment

- p 7**
- A) VM may place Barrage Markers
  - B) Deduct 1 Ammo per marker
  - C) Check French truck and supply losses
  - D) Roll for step loss and/or if shaken

### 2.3 VM Commando Raid Segment

- p 8** Choose between raiding a French unit or wire

### 2.4 VM Tactical Move Segment

All VM units may move 5 mp

## VM Assault Phase

### 3.1 VM Declares Assault or Rest Segment

Place Assault Markers, and adjust the VM Morale Track for divisions that rest

### 3.2 French Reaction and Support Barrage S.

- p 9**
- A) France places Barrage Markers and deduct 1 Ammo per marker, or 2 Ammo if intense barrage
  - B) Conduct reaction barrage
  - C) Support barrage: included in French defense fire

### 3.3 French Reaction Move Segment

France may move 4 units 5 mp

### 3.4 French Defense Fire Segment

- p 10**
- A) Calculate the defending strength
  - B) Conduct Defense Fire roll
  - C) Conduct Defense Effect roll

### 3.5 VM Assaults Segment

- p 11**
- A) Calculate the assaulting strength
  - B) Conduct Assault Fire roll
  - C) Conduct Assault Effect roll

## VM Post-Assault Phase

### 4.1 VM Attrition Segment

- p 12** Isolated VM units not in VM LoC are eliminated  
Those in LoC remove Isolation Markers / may evacuate

### 4.2 VM After-Combat Move Segment

Any VM unit not entrenched may either move:

- 1) 1 hex, regardless of any LoC and ZoC
- 2) 5 mp if it does not enter French ZoC

### 4.3 Remove/Add Shaken Markers Segm.

Remove all Shaken Markers. Then place a Shaken Marker on each VM unit not entrenched and adjacent to a French unit

### 4.4 Mark all Isol. French Units Segm. **p 13**

### 4.5 Morale Check Segment

- A) Calculate surrender number
- B) Check for French surrender
- p 14** C) Check VM morale
- D) Reset both Strongpoint Taken Markers to "0"

### 4.6 VM Replacements and Reinforcements S.

- A) Add 5 Ammo (3 Ammo during monsoon)
- B) Deduct 2 replacements during monsoon
- C) Take replacements, adjust Replacement Track
- D) If replacements, adjust Division Morale Track
- p 15** E) Check for VM reinforcement

### 4.7 Deduct French Supply Segment

- A) Deduct Fuel & Spares
- B) Deduct Food & Bullets
- C) Deduct Medicine, get extra replacement

### 4.8 French Airdrops Segment

- p 16**
- A) Fill eligible slots on the Airdrop Chart with plane loads
  - B) Check weather and roll for aborts
  - C) Adjust supply tracks
  - D) Place any reinforcements
  - E) Use replacements, if any
  - p 17** F) Roll on Supply Hit Table. Deduct French, add VM

## French Pre-Assault Phase

### 5.1 Airstrike Segment

### 5.2 French Operational Move Segment

- A) Valley move
- B) Box move
- C) Box Combat

### 5.3 French Barrage Segment

- p 18**
- A) France may place Barrage Markers
  - B) Deduct 1 Ammo per marker, or 2 Ammo if intense barrage. Conduct Barrage rolls

### 5.4 French Tactical Move Segment

All French units may move 5 mp

## French Assault Phase

### 6.1 France Declares Assaults Segment

### 6.2 VM Support Barrage Segment

### 6.3 VM Defense Fire Segment

- A) Calculate the defending strength
- p 19** B) Conduct Defense Fire roll
- C) Conduct Defense Effect roll

### 6.4 French Assaults Segment

- A) Calculate the Assaulting strength
- B) Conduct Assault Fire roll
- C) Conduct Assault Effect roll

## French Post-Assault Phase

### 7.1 French Attrition Segment

Isolated French units not in French LoC are eliminated.  
Those in LoC remove Isolation Markers / may evacuate.  
**p 20** Rats of Nam Youm. Roll on Supply Hit Table (-2 drm).

### 7.2 French After-Combat move Segment

French unit in 2z-304 must move to map edge hex at 3z-304 or DBP. Any French unit not entrenched may either move:

- 1) 1 hex, regardless of any LoC and ZoC
- 2) 5 mp if it does not enter VM ZoC
- 3) To any strongpoint in Supply area, not in VM ZoC. Unit must start at DBP

### 7.3 Remove/Add Shaken Markers Segm.

Remove all Shaken Markers. Then place a Shaken Marker on each French unit not entrenched and adjacent to a VM unit

### 7.4 Mark all Isolated VM Units Segment

### 7.5 VM Trench Digging Segment

- A) Flip Dig Markers into Trench Markers if no French controlled strongpoints in Trench/Dig zones in sector
- B) Move one single Trench Marker. Flip it into Dig Marker if there is French controlled Strongpoint in new zone

### 7.6 New Game Turn Segment