



Tactical Assault: Combat Cards™

Battle Report: The Battle of Al Haddaf

THE BATTLE

"Sir," the lieutenant snapped as he struck a sharp salute.

"At ease lieutenant," the colonel replied as he returned the salute in a relaxed fashion. "Have a seat," he added, motioning to the chair in front of his desk.

"Thank you sir," Lieutenant Smith responded as he nervously settled into the chair and removed his cap.

"Now son," the colonel began, "you are not in any trouble here. Obviously the operation at Al Haddaf ended up being a fiasco, but headquarters feels there are some real lessons to be learned from it."

The colonel leaned back in his chair while running his gnarled hand through his graying hair. He continued, "I have read your after action report - very thorough, I might add - but as we all know, the personal observations included with these are often sanitized for professional reasons.

"As the officer in charge on the scene, I want to hear your side of the story - including your thoughts on the events of that morning."

"Yes sir, thank you sir," the Lieutenant replied. "Where would you like me to begin?"

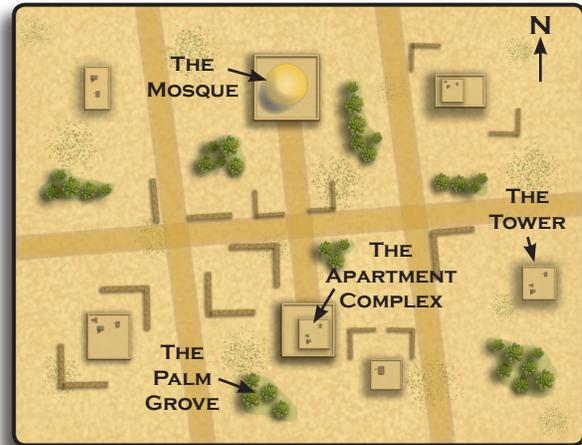
"Let's start on the morning of the 18th as your forces prepared for the sweep through the village."

"Well, as you know sir, we had been requested by the village elders in Al Haddaf to help them get rid of a particularly violent band of insurgents that had taken up residence in the village.

"In response to the request, Captain Williams formed an ad hoc task force to clear the village with myself in charge and Lieutenant Jones as my second in command. We were briefed at 0130 that morning, we had gathered the necessary equipment by 0545 and we reached the staging area by 0815.

"Lieutenant Jones and myself had decided to use an enveloping maneuver to trap and eliminate the insurgents. We split the force

VILLAGE OF AL HADDAF



KEY LANDMARKS

into two sections, with Lieutenant Jones taking the western force and I the eastern one.

"The plan was for our foot elements to demonstrate towards The Mosque in the center of the village in the hope that this would draw out the insurgents so we could fix them in place. Then our mobile forces could sweep deep around the insurgents' flanks and roll them up from behind."

"At that point, did you have a feeling that your mission had been compromised in any way? Say, by local insurgent sympathizers?" the colonel interrupted as he leaned forward intently.

"No sir, we did not feel we had been compromised in any way. We knew the insurgents would probably be ready for us - their informants are everywhere - but there were no indications the villagers themselves were aiding the insurgents. In fact almost all of the villagers had evacuated by that point, and most had left their doors and windows open to facilitate clearing out their buildings."

"Very well, go on," the colonel said as he once again relaxed back into his chair.

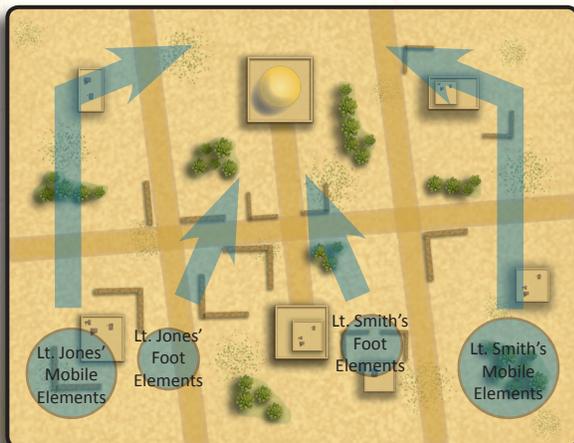
"Well sir, by 0830 all of our units had reached their step-off points. It was then that Lieutenant Jones' first foot elements began to advance cautiously towards the Mosque. The insurgents must have had spotters on the roof of a nearby building in the area, as the start of the operation drew a ferocious mortar attack on Lieutenant Jones' mobile force which was staging a little farther back.

"During the intense five minute barrage, the Bradley personnel carrier supporting Lieutenant Jones' force had a track busted and its turret jammed, and the reconnaissance Humvee near it suffered a direct hit. Both units were lost for the duration of the fight as their crews dealt with the wounded.

"Around 0840, after seeing the intensity of the incoming fire, I decided to start my mobile elements on their encircling run sooner rather than later. We were hoping they might be able to flush out the enemy's mortars and silence them.

"My recon unit lead the way, but the firing of an RPG from the

0830: THE PLAN





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position referred to as the 'Tower' quickly forced them to find a protected position. Unfortunately a second shot from the same location found the mark and eliminated the recon team from the rest of the operation.

"At this point, did you feel you could still carry out your mission?" the colonel interjected.

"Yes sir, we did. While the loss in combat capable units was higher than we expected so quick into the fight, the actual casualties were relatively light - and we were drawing the insurgents out into the open, which was part of the original plan.

"Very well, continue then..."

"Well sir, Lt. Jones decided to have his foot elements disperse a little more to present a less tempting target for the enemy's indirect fire. He was also hoping to cover more ground, as well establish firm contact with my left flank.

"It was at this point - around 0850 - that we discovered insurgents had infiltrated into the area noted as the 'Palm Grove'. After the insurgents aborted an attempt to assault the fire team which had made entry into the Grove, Lieutenant Jones decided he had to first clear the Grove before resuming his advance towards the Mosque.

"By this point I was focused on directing my mobile elements to clear out the enemy strong point we had found in the 'Tower' position. The two Bradleys assigned to my force attempted to engage the insurgents in the building with their Bushmaster cannons, but weren't having much luck in suppressing them. The return fire coming from the Tower was enough to shake the confidence of our other units in the area and keep them out of the fight for a while."

"Do you feel that the quality of these units was not up to standards, Lieutenant?" the colonel asked.

"I wouldn't characterize it that way, sir. The men were very well trained, they just didn't have a lot of practical combat experience. The NCO's with us were real veterans, as well as some of the other specialists, but the majority of the troops just hadn't had enough experience."

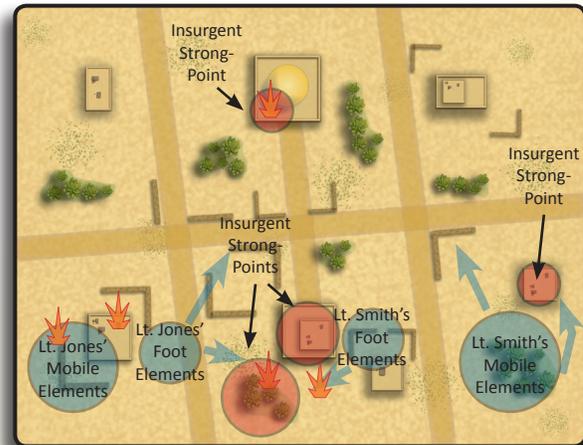
"Very well, continue..."

"At this point, after hearing the small arms fire emanating from the Grove, I decided to send a team over to investigate and lend what assistance they could. They were not able to make it all of the way to the Grove though, as they came under heavy fire from insurgents in the 'Apartment Complex'. The men became pinned down and were taken out of the fight for quite a while.

"I sent Sergeant Baker over towards the Grove to try and figure out what was going, and to get the guys moving again. He made it about as far as the Apartment Complex when he came under fire from, and was eventually jumped by, several insurgents hiding in the complex.

"Fortunately Sergeant Baker's injuries, while it eliminated him from the fight at the time, won't prevent him from rejoining the unit here in a couple of weeks.

0915: THE SITUATION



"At this point we did start to score our first successes in suppressing the enemy forces. Teams from Lieutenant Jones' force, continuing their advance towards the Mosque, drew out insurgents hiding near the dome of the Mosque. After a short burst of machine gun fire and RPG rockets, the insurgents were silenced by the sniper team. Lieutenant Jones had left in overwatch to the southwest.

"As a result of their success however, the sniper team in turn became a target of the insurgents near them. One insurgent group managed to get into the building the team was operating from and assaulted them in close quarters combat. After a fierce fight, the team was able to escape with their lives. Unfortunately their equipment had to be abandoned, which rendered them useless until we could get them new gear.

"It was now around 0915, and it was becoming obvious that we were dealing with three major insurgent strong points - the Tower, the Grove and the Apartment Complex. All of these were much closer to our staging areas than we had expected them to be."

"Excuse me lieutenant, but where was your air cover through all of this?"

"Well sir, there had been some issues in contacting the aerial units throughout the morning. Only around 0925 were we able to establish intermittent radio contact, at which point we resorted to using smoke grenades to mark areas where we wanted them to hit.

"I think the flyboys may have been a little over eager to make up for lost time though, as their first couple of passes struck home a bit short of the intended target"

"A bit short you say? Your report indicates your own troops took casualties from a couple of the passes made by the Apache helicopters. Is that true?" the colonel asked as he slowly flipped through the file on his desk.

"Yes sir, we did take a few casualties. But the heat those helos rained down on the Grove really bought us some time to regroup over there.

"Unfortunately, it was at about this time that more insurgents started popping up in and around the Apartment Complex. The



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balance of my foot elements were now taking fire from a couple of different directions - though I have to say they were dishing it back pretty good themselves too.

"It was around this time, about 0930, that I received the report that one of the Bradleys trying to suppress the insurgents in the Tower had been set on fire by an insurgent team infiltrating out of the Tower. The vehicle had to be abandon by the crew, but a few of the infiltrators were at least wounded by the initial blasts of their grenades."

"Hardly a fair exchange, a Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicle for a couple of wounded insurgents, wouldn't you say?" interrupted the colonel coolly.

"Yes sir," Lieutenant Smith replied. "Sorry sir. I didn't mean for it to sound fair; I was only trying to find something positive in the loss of the Bradley."

"Continue lieutenant..." the colonel said as he gestured for more information.

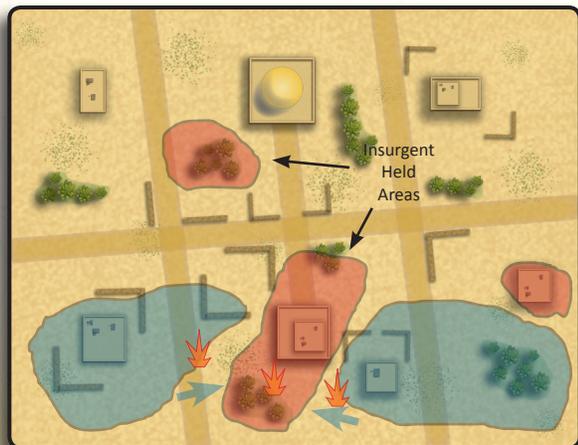
"Well sir, at this point things were getting pretty desperate. Lieutenant Jones' force and my own had pretty much been cut-off from one another. We each formed a perimeter of sorts around our current positions, but with our rapidly dwindling resources - and mounting numbers of wounded - it was getting pretty hard to really hold anything.

"After talking to Lieutenant Jones on the radio, I decided to make one last push to pinch out the insurgent positions in the Grove. We figured if we could reestablish a continuous perimeter line, and thereby mutually support each other's force, we may still have a chance to reduce the insurgent's other positions.

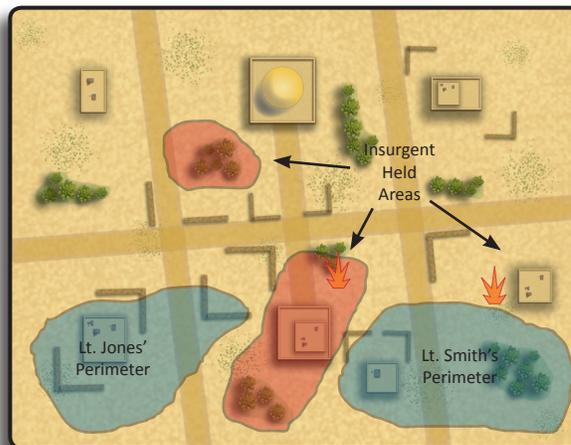
"Both our forces made a tremendous surge towards the insurgents in the Grove, but the volume of return fire was absolutely horrendous. These insurgents were just too good for us to get the upper hand on them with the limited resources we had at hand. The enemy was definitely very experienced veterans who knew what they were doing.

"After several long minutes of intense firefight and no progress,

0950: THE FINAL PUSH



0930: THE SITUATION



we decided to pull our forces back to go for one last Hail Mary play.

"At about about 0950 we called for a danger close pass from the Apaches on the Grove and the Apartment Complex to try and suppress the volume of fire we were taking from there. Unfortunately the wind had shifted and the marking smoke blew back towards our perimeter a little. While the insurgent positions did receive the worst of the heat, some ordinance fell a little short of the target and into our positions. This resulted in only a couple of minor injuries for us, but it really seemed to demoralize the troops.

"I finally decided that we didn't have much of a chance of accomplishing of our mission any more, given our remaining assets and the the enemy's dispositions. I radioed Lieutenant Jones and ordered him to fall back to the rally point about two clicks south of our current position.

"He acknowledged the order and began his withdrawal. I then and went and got my folks organized - policing up our wounded, equipment and so forth - and began our phased movement to the south.

"Around 1025 hours both forces had reached the rally point without further incident. Apparently the insurgents were not in the mood for a running gun battle.

"From that point on it was a pretty standard operation putting together security teams, med-evac'ing the wounded and making our way back to base."

"Very well, lieutenant. Now, what are your thoughts and observations concerning the events of that day - and don't hold anything back. That's an order," the colonel stated very plainly.

"Well sir, in hindsight we probably did not have the right mix of units for the assault. The heavily armored mechanized and mobile recon units were nice in theory, but I would have preferred another squad or two of men instead. Especially a couple of units with some real battle experience.

"While the Apaches did offer some ground attack support, a few batteries of artillery or a mortar platoon to call on would have been very helpful too.



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"And while I hate to admit it, our initial deployment - and probably our whole plan - was flawed from the outset," his voice trailed off as he gathered his thoughts.

"When facing an experienced foe like the insurgents in Al Haddaf, we should have made sure our units could provide mutual support to one another at all times. We should have never split up our forces like that and then tried to rely on our speed and firepower to get us out of any jams.

"I can tell you, sir, I will never make that mistake again," Smith finished, with his voice filled with a new found determination.

"Very well Lieutenant. I will include your observations in my final report to headquarters," the colonel said as he leaned forward again.

"I do want to make it clear to you son, that I think you did a bang up job under some pretty tough circumstances. You should be proud of what your people managed to do that day. Just make sure to always remember the lessons you learned out there, so the efforts of you and your men will not have been in vain," he finished while looking the lieutenant dead in the eyes.

After a pause, the colonel continued, "Is there anything else lieutenant?"

"No sir," he replied.

"Then you are dismissed lieutenant."

Snapping to his feet in a full salute, the lieutenant replied, "Thank you for taking the time to listen, sir."

The colonel returned the young man's salute, "Carry on."

GAME NOTES

FORCES INVOLVED

INSURGENTS (Total Force Value 190 Points)

- 3x Guerilla Teams (Proven Infantry Units)
- 3x Infiltration Teams (Veteran Infiltrator Units)
- 3x LMG Teams (Veteran Heavy Weapon Units)
- 3x 60mm Mortar Teams (Proven Fire Support Units)
- 3x Insurgent Leaders (Veteran Command Units)
- 2x RPG-7 Teams (Proven Anti Armor Units)
- 2x RPG-29 Teams (Veteran Anti Armor Units)

US ARMY (Total Force Value 190 Points)

- 3x Fire Teams (Trained Infantry Units)
- 2x Recon Humvees (Trained Recon Units)
- 1x Sniper Team (Veteran Heavy Weapon Unit)
- 3x Bradley APC's (Trained Mechanized Units)
- 3x NCO's (Veteran Command Units)
- 2x TOW Equipped Humvees (Proven Anti Armor Units)
- 1x AT-4 Team (Proven Anti Armor Unit)
- 3x Apaches AH-64 Attack Helos (Proven Aerial Unit)

Core Rules Used:

Tactical Assault: Combat Cards™

Expansion Sets Used:

Tactical Assault: Experience Cards™

Playtest Material Used:

Tactical Assault: Technology Cards™, Project-CC 5D Solitaire Rules

PLAYER OBSERVATIONS

(From the players commanding the US forces...)

This game was a very fast paced, extremely tense and very enjoyable affair. From the outset insurgent forces started appearing where we least expected them, creating all sorts of headaches. At times during the battle, the tension reached a point where you were afraid to move any of your units for fear of discovering another rat's nest of the enemy.

With all of this tension and fog of war being a result of the new solitaire rules, we would have to say they work very well - even when used in a cooperative fashion as in this case.

While it seemed like a good plan on paper, being split up like that did not make things any easier. With the insurgents getting the lucky break of knocking out a Bradley and a recon Humvee with their mortars early in the battle, our plan for speed and mobility went right out of the window.

It would have been nice to have a few more units, rather than the more powerful and mobile units. As we did not know the complete extent of the enemy's dispositions (*again due to the mechanics of the solitaire rules*), more units in general to respond to threats rather than fewer, more powerful units would probably have proven more beneficial.

It also didn't help that the insurgents had more experience than most of our troops which made any head-to-head slugging matches very dangerous for us. Once the insurgents had driven a wedge between our two groups, it became even harder to get a good position from which to attack them. Everything from that point on was pretty much just a reaction to the enemy's latest move.

PLAYER ADVICE FROM THE BATTLE

Never direct your Aerial units to attack anywhere near your own troops, no matter how desperate you are!

When facing Infiltrators, be sure to have a rear guard watching your six!

Never hold cards you can't use - discard, discard, discard!

Never attack a more experienced defending force that is entrenched!