

HARVEST MOON

December 8-20, 1965
Battlefront Nam Scenario



BACKGROUND

Operation Harvest Moon was the last large-scale conventional military operation of 1965. It was the largest combined operation between U.S. Marine units and the South Vietnamese military to date. The operation revealed a number of problems in how the Marines coordinated counter guerrilla operations and its use of helicopters to lift formations into combat zones. Nicholas Schlosser writes: "Though not as decisive as Operation Starlite or later battles like Hue City, Harvest Moon was arguably more representative of the American experience in Vietnam."

Operating as part of Operation Harvest Moon, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines was marching towards the town of Thon Hai. Their route took them through the village of Ky Phu on the 18th of December. The village was eerily quiet and in the words of Major Alvin J. Doublet, "particularly devoid of civilian activity." The area around the village was mostly rice paddies and hedgerows with a small ridge to the south. The Marine companies marched in column along a road that was little more than a narrow paddy dike. G Company was on point advancing in a V formation with Company F following behind. The Headquarters & Service Company was still to the west of the village and Company H, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines served as the rear guard. By 1330, Company F and G, having passed through Ky Phu, came under heavy fire from Vietnamese machine guns and recoilless rifles. This was the beginning of a large-scale ambush by the 80th Viet Cong Battalion, designed to destroy the Marine battalion. When a gap developed between the two lead companies and the Headquarters & Service Company, two Viet Cong companies attacked from the north and south, seeking to exploit and split the American battalion. The extremely wet ground absorbed the impacts of the enemy mortars, lessening casualties. Still, the VC were able to advance into the gap and set up 12.7mm machine guns, enfilading the company.

Company F turned and headed back to Ky Phu to help while Colonel Utter requested support from Task Force Delta's provisional artillery units. Battery M, 4th Battalion, 11th Marines responded with fire from its 155mm howitzers. Company F engaged the enemy with one platoon and was able to flank the enemy with its other two platoons, breaking up the VC attack. The Headquarters and Service armed with flamethrowers destroyed two machine gun positions. Things were looking better for the Americans and then Company H was ambushed.

The opening stages of the ambush were devastating. Company commander Captain Paul L. Gormley, Jr. and his radio operator were killed by 57mm recoilless rifle fire. Command of the company fell to First Lieutenant Harvey C. Barnum, an artillery observer from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines. Although he had only been with the unit for a week, Barnum strapped on an AN/PRC-25 radio and took charge. (Schlosser, 44) For four hours, Barnum's company held off VC attacks while securing a landing zone to evacuate wounded Marines. One platoon secured the LZ while the rest of the company engaged the VC company to the south. Their efforts were aided by three UH-1E Iroquois gunships that arrived for close air support. Barnum personally directed their fire while two UH-34 Seahorses evacuated the wounded. Once the wounded were evacuated, Company H fought its way east and linked up with the rest of the battalion.

The action at Ky Phu was the last major engagement of Operation Harvest Moon. For his initiative and heroic conduct, Captain Harvey C. Barnum was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Total casualties for the Marine battalion was 14 KIA and 73 wounded.

Schlosser, Nicholas J., PHD. *In Persistent Battle: U.S. Marines in Operation Harvest Moon, 8 December To 20 December 1965*. U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2017.

SETTING UP

Water logged rice paddies cover most of the board. Open areas are considered to have waist-high elephant grass. The "elevated" road offers concealment and cover for troops as a linear object. Hills are sparsely wooded. Ky Phu can be represented by a few buildings clustered together.

Marine deployment boxes are 6"x8" and straddle the road. Company H's deployment box is 3" from the western board edge. The H&S Company box is centered on the road 2' from the western board edge. Company F's box leading edge is 4' from the western board edge. Company G's box leading edge is 5' from the western board edge.

DEPLOYMENT

The Marine player must deploy his four companies within each of the designated boxes. Teams marked with an * may be detached from the H&S Company and function as independent units. The Artillery Battery, Huey Gunship, and Medevac are placed in Delayed Reserve.

The Viet Cong player deploys all of his companies and battalion HQ units in Ambush as per the rules. The Viet Cong have the first turn.

SPECIAL RULES IN EFFECT

Ambush- Nationalist player (Page 187)

Delayed Reserve- Free World player (Page 189)

Triage & Medevac- Free World player (Page 200)

Battalion Scale- Units that start with only team* are considered in "Good Spirits" do not have to make Last Stand tests if fielded independently.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

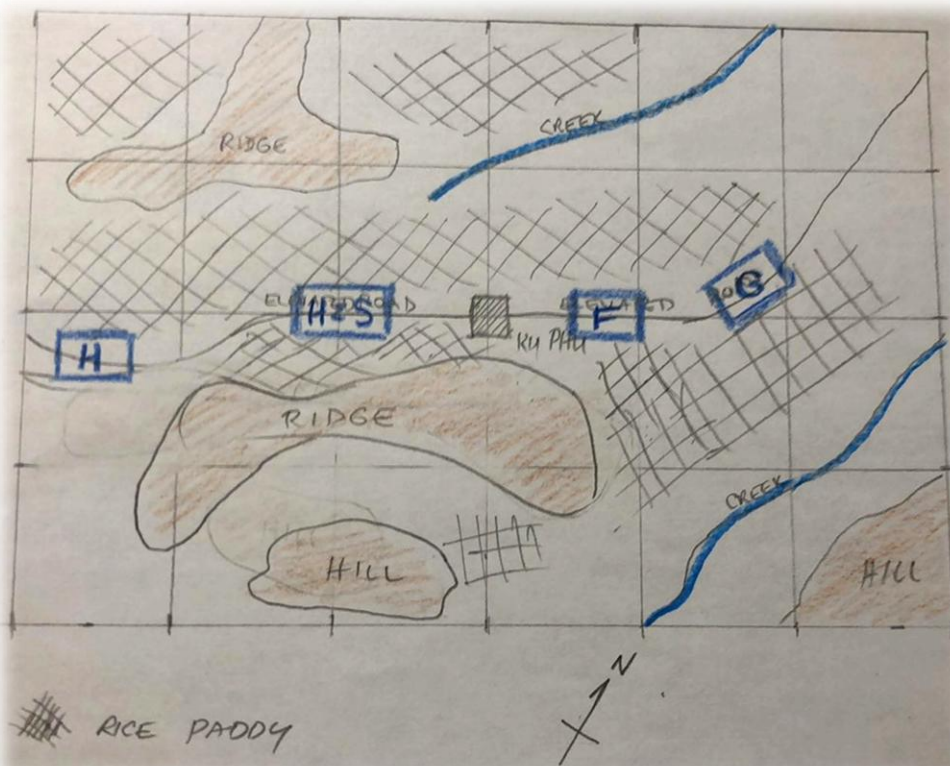
The game lasts 12 turns. After which, night sets in and the Viet Cong withdraw.

The Marines earn a Minor Victory if they can exit all of their companies off the eastern edge of the board. They score a Major Victory if they can break the Vietnamese formation.

The Viet Cong earn a Minor Victory if they can eliminate 50% of the Marine force. They score a Major Victory if they can break the Marine formation.

Any other outcome (including if both sides earn Minor Victories) is considered a draw.

MAP



FORCES

<p>2nd Battalion, 7th Marines Headquarters & Service Company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1x M14 Command team• 3x M14 teams• 1x Flamethrower team• 1x 81mm Mortar team*• 1x Medic team* <p>Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7x M14 teams <p>Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7x M14 teams <p>Company H, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1x MoH team• 6x M14 teams <p>Battery M, 4th Battalion, 11th Marines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2x M114 155mm teams <p>Air Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1x UH-1E Gunship• 1x Medevac UH-34 Seahorse	<p>80th Viet Cong Battalion Battalion HQ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1x SKS/AK-47 Command team• 1x Mortar team*• (2) 1x 57mm Recoilless team*• (2) 1x HMG team* <p>Company A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5x SKS/AK-47 teams• 1x B40 RPG team• 1x LMG team <p>Company B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5x SKS/AK-47 teams• 1x B40 RPG team• 1x LMG team <p>Company C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5x SKS/AK-47 teams• 1x B40 RPG team• 1x LMG team
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Notes:

1. Flamethrower team uses the weapon stats from the ANZAC Pioneer Platoon (Page 150)
2. M14 teams use the weapon stats from the ANZAC Rifle Platoon SLR & M60 (Page 151)
3. Medal of Honor team (MoH) counts as a unit leader and observer team, with a 2+ save.
4. UH-1E Gunship uses the stats for the Gunship Aeroweapons Platoon (Page 83)
5. UH-34 Seahorse Medevac uses the stats for the Medevac Helicopter (Page 116)