Crisis: Korea 1995 — Targeting the Peninsula

BY CAPTAIN JON S. CLEAVES, U.S. ARMY

Part 2: The Advanced Game — **The Air Land Battle**

Introduction

All wargame (read: conflict simulation) designers want their games to be as much like 'real life' as possible. Designers of historical games ensure that, at least, the actual outcome is possible, even if not likely. Designers of modern/near-future games don't have that luxury. Their reality check is much harder to perform and must rely on the extrapolation of reality rather than direct comparison

One means of conducting such a reality check is to see if what a modern commander would actually want to do is possible within the framework of the game system. My intent is to do just that for GMT's Crisis: Korea 1995, focusing on the key aspects of its advanced game. What the advanced game has to offer is theater-level operations. The basic

game allows you to bash corps together in the unforgiving terrain of the Korean peninsula. The advanced game, on the other hand, provides all the tools available to the overall commander to bring about victory. The questions before us: Can I use these tools the way the real theater commander would, and can I get the results he would expect to get?

The main element of operational command in Air-Land Battle is deep operations. The goal of these operations is to set battlefield conditions for success on the part of the subordinate commanders.

Jon Cleaves is a Captain in the U.S. Army, Military Intelligence. He is currently assigned as a Combat Trainer at the Army's National Training Center. Ft. Irwin, CA. Before moving to the NTC, Captain Cleaves accumulated extensive experience and expertise pertaining to the Korean theater and mission as a military intelligence commander, brigade intelligence officer, and assistant operations officer for a Military Intelligence battalion, all with the 4th Mechanized Division at Ft. Carson, CO.

Once they make contact with the enemy, it will be up to them. Until then, the theater commander uses the assets under his control to disrupt, delay and disorganize enemy forces so that the corps commanders are better able to achieve decisive victory. The planning tool the theater commander and his staff use to conduct these operations is called targeting.

The targeting process is defined by three steps: decide, detect and deliver. Acting as the Allied theater commander we will apply these steps to a 'typical' game of CK:95 and examine how well the game mechanics allow us to apply them as well as look at the results our deep operations provide to our corps in contact. For our purposes, this *typical* game will be turn one of the first campaign (rule 24.1).

Decide

The decide phase of targeting operations is characterized by the commander and his staff selecting those targets that will be attacked by deep operations forces. Since we live in a world of limited resources, we cannot attack all the targets in the theater and must have a means of choosing those whose destruction will have the greatest effect. The decide process begins with the intelligence officer. From his analysis of the enemy, he determines the theater's high value targets (HVTs). HVTs are those forces and assets the enemy must have to do what HE wants to do.

The intelligence officer (represented by the player, how convenient!) determines that the enemy must secure Seoul in the minimum amount of time (3-4 turns) to be successful. In order to do this, the NKPA main effort will be in the Cheolweong-Uijongbu corridor. The HVTs associated with this operation are the following:

High Value Target List:

- GHQ and the HQs of I, II, IV, V, 815 and 820 corps.
- Koksan Tank Division
- Supply Depots in 4430, 4726, 5027
- Airbases in 3622, 2724, 5318, 3019
- Detection and SAM tracks
- Corps Light Infantry Brigades

By definition, these are the enemy forces and capabilities that are critical to the enemy plan. From this list, the friendly commander would select his High Payoff Targets (HPTs). HPTs are those HVTs that impact most severely on the *friendly* plan. In this case, the friendly plan involves preventing an early breakthrough in the CheoulweongUijongbu corridor and establishing conditions for counterattack as soon as possible. Our theater commander has selected the following HPTs:

High Payoff Target List:

- GHQ and the HQs of II, IV, V, 815, 820 Corps.
- Koksan TD
- Supply Depots in 4430 and 4726
- Detection and SAM Tracks

Note that by definition the HPT list must contain targets from the HVT list. This is because if something is not critical to the enemy plan, then it is not worth destroying. Also, the HPT list is shorter than the HVT list because the commander will only choose those targets that impact on his plan of maneuver. For example, the theater commander does not feel that destroying the depot in 5027 will affect the enemy's attack down the most threatening avenue of approach.

Now that the commander has selected the targets he wants to attack, he must determine how he is going to find them.

Detect
In the detect phase of the targeting process, the commander and his staff select the means by which they will find the targets they want to destroy. Note that in a 'real-world' military situation, the enemy's dispositions will not be so readily apparent as they are on a wargame map.

This is one of the places that CK:95 does an excellent job of creating the 'feel' of modern theater-level combat. In order to be attacked by deep operations forces, targets must be 'detected'. Even though the counter or map symbol representing the enemy asset is clearly visible to the opponent, the game mechanics require that the player uses some of his limited detection means to acquire the target. These mechanics are elegant and cleanly abstract what is a very complicated network of sensors.

In CK:95, there are four means of acquiring a target: automatic detection (AD), electronic detection (ED), special forces recon (SFR) and units in contact. For our purposes, we will be focusing on the first three because once a unit is in contact, it is no longer the object of theater-level (read: deep) operations.

AD (rule 22.31) reflects theater-level and tactical air reconnaissance efforts. It is represented by a range from friendly air bases and airfields. If an enemy non-HQ/supply depot is in this range in a hex not containing woods, highland, mountain or urban terrain, it is detected. The range of AD is tied to the current air superiority level.

ED (rule 22.32) reflects electronic warfare capabilities and is used to detect (non-supreme) HQs. Each side gets a certain number of 'rolls' on the ED table per turn. For each roll, the player selects an enemy HQ as the target and if the result is a 'D', the HQ is detected. The only modifier to the table is for a high level of US AWACS advantage.

SFR (rule 21.22) reflects the use of theater-level special operations forces to conduct reconnaissance of a target and report on its disposition. SFR is one of several missions that a player can give to his SF assets. A player allocates an SF point to a target and rolls on the SF recon table. The only modifiers to the roll are column shifts for terrain types. A result of 'D' means the target is detected.

As in reality, these three detection modes represent a limited resource. A real commander executes the detect function of targeting by first identifying those detection assets that CAN acquire each target type. In the following matrix, called a 'collection plan', each of our HPT is compared to each of the detection modes. If a given detection mode can acquire a given target type, an X is placed in the appropriate spot.

Collection Plan

	Detection Means		
Targets	Auto	Electronic	SF Recon
Supreme HQ	–	–	X
Corps HQ	–	X	X
Koksan TD	X	–	X
Depots	–	–	X

Some obvious things fall out here.

For the Koksan TD, it is clearly optimal to find him with AD, since there is no cost in limited resources. The TD starts over six hexes from the nearest friendly airfield, therefore the Air Superiority level must be at least US/ROK *Friendly Advantage*. Noticing this, the player- commander can order his theater air commander (again conveniently represented by the player!) to achieve this.

Corps HQ pose a slightly different problem. They can be detected by ED, but per 22.32 the player will only get three rolls on the table. The AWACS advantage will not be 3 or 4 on the first turn, so this operation only has a 50% chance of success. The player will acquire one, maybe two targets this way. However, there are five corps HQs on our HPT list. To accommodate this, we will expand our collection plan in a moment to deal with each corps HQ individually so that the commander can prioritize which ones will be subject to ED.

As depots and supreme HQs can only be detected by SF recon, the choice of systems in this case is obvious. The trick here is that SF can do more than recon missions and any recon mission assigned takes away from our ability to do raids, targeting and detection track attack missions. Also, the SF recon boys are the only way to target the corps HQs that are not located by ED. We have nine US/ROK mission counters available. If we relied solely upon ED for three of the corps HQ, we would still need five missions for recon: one for GHQ, two for the remaining corps HQ and two for the depots. Note that this plan hits each target only once: there are no redundant detection systems. If ED fails to find an HQ, it will stay undetected this turn; there is no backup plan. Also, this plan uses over half of the SF missions for recon.

Based on this, our illustrious player-commander bursts into the command post: 'Boys, we've gotta back off of some of these targets. We are spreading ourselves too thin. I don't want to use more than four SF missions for recon. I want your recommendation in an hour.'

The staff reviews the HPT list to determine which targets must fall off. The Koksan TD can stay on the list because the theater air commander assures us that we will have advantage in air superiority (from our games a realistic goal). GHQ must stay, because its deep strike capabilities have to be addressed. This brings it down to corps HQs and depots. Upon further analysis, the staff decides to drop depots off of the HPT list. Striking depots affects the enemy's supply capability, but striking corps HQs affects supply ability, strike ability and support to combat ability.

You may argue that this analysis should have occurred during the Decide phase, and technically you would be right. However, the commander and his staff are only human. In addition, conditions in combat are constantly changing. Therefore, the decide-detect-deliver system is cyclical. Commanders must be flexible enough to constantly review the plan to take into consideration new constraints and altered assumptions. As an example, the commander will have to reevaluate the use of SF recon missions if something goes badly wrong in the air phase and the air superiority level is contested or worse, because the Koksan TD will be out of AD range.

When it has been decided which specific assets will be used against each target, the X is marked in some way (circled,

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underlined, new color if the collection plan is automated) to indicate that not only can that asset *see* that target, but that it has been directed to look for it. Our final plan would look something like this:

Revised Collection Plan

	Detection Means		
Targets	AD	ED	SF Recon
GHQ	–	–	X
II Corps HQ	–	X	X
IV Corps HQ	–	X	X
V Corps HQ	–	X	X
815 Cps. HQ	–	X	X
820 Cps. HQ	–	X	X
Koksan TD	X	–	X

Some final notes on the plan:

1. ED was selected against the V Corps and IV Corps HQ because they are in highland terrain, and terrain has no effect on ED. Both ED and SFR were selected against II Corps HQ because it is the corps most threatening on the first turn.

2. The Koksan TD starts in a wooded hex, but is on a road, so may be acquired by AD.

3. SAM and detection tracks are not listed here because, although they are HPT's, they do not need to be detected to be attacked.

Deliver

Now it's time to do some killin'.

The deliver phase is executed much like the detect phase. A matrix is prepared comparing targets to those systems capable of destroying them. Our first pass at the problem looks like this:

This 'first pass' does not take into account the particulars of the current state of affairs (game-turn and situation on the map). We would keep this matrix as a reference for future planning, but we will remove those capabilities that do not currently apply:

1. As there is no CVN or BB unit in an all-sea hex during the first strike phase of 24.1, there will be no cruise strikes.

2. For non-supreme HQ strikes, the range is 5 hexes for US HQs and 3 hexes for ROK HQs. Since none of these targets is within range of a Corps HQ, we will change that column to CFC HQ.

Attack Matrix

	Attack Means: Strikes					
Targets	Raid	Air	WW	Attk Helo	Cruise	HQ
GHQ	X	X	–	X	X	X
Corps HQ	X	X	–	X	–	X
Koksan TD	–	X	–	X	–	X
SAM Track	–	X	X	–	–	–
Detection Track	X	X	X	–	–	–

3. The player-commander has decided to use his attack helicopters for ground support and so we will drop that column off this turn.

Revised Attack Matrix

	Attack Means: Strikes				
Targets	Raid	Air	WW	CFC HQ	
GHQ	X	X	–	X	
Corps HQ	X	X	–	X	
Koksan TD	–	X	–	X	
SAM Track	–	X	X	–	
Detection Track	X	X	X	–	

Notice here that in CK:95 SF missions will be resolved before strikes so that the player can see the results before allocating air and HQ units. He plans to use SF heavily against the enemy detection track so that if successful, he can use air and WW in other roles. Other SF missions will be dependent on the results of air combat and ED. At this point, all the decision tools are in place to assist the player in conducting the electronic detection, special forces and strike phases. Let's see how the system holds up to actual play of these phases.

After air combat, the Air Superiority level is found to be 'Friendly Advantage' for the US/ROK. In our games, this is a realistic result if the US/ROK player wants it. Based on this, the Koksan TD is detected under AD (22.31).

The US/ROK player makes three ED (22.32) attempts against the II, IV and V Corps HQ and succeeds against the IV Corps.

The US/ROK player allocates four SF recon missions against

GHQ and II, 820 and 815 Corps HQ. He allocates a raid and a targeting mission against IV Corps HQ, a targeting mission against the Koksan TD and two missions to attack the NKPA detection track.

Going into the strike phase the targeting situation is as follows:

- II Corps: Detected (SFR)
- IV Corps: Detected (ED), Strike 1 (Raid), Target -2
- 820 Corps: Detected (SFR)
- Koksan TD: Detected (AD)
- Detection Track: -1

In the first strike phase, the commander takes a hard look at his aircraft situation and determines that he can only put three strikes in the air. This plus the CFC HQ strike allows him to attack four targets and he chooses to ignore the Koksan TD for now, sending a WW strike in against the dreaded NKPA SAM track, two other air strikes in on II and 820 Corps and the CFC HQ against the IV Corps.

Now, that wasn't so hard was it.

As someone who does targeting for a living, I found the technique to be very useful. Certainly I did not prepare a lot of formal matrices, but the thought process helped me keep things in perspective. What is important is that the game allowed me to use the process in a way that reflects the doctrine currently in use in the theater. Any player of the game will come up with his or her own way of deciding which enemy units to target. Notice that our example commander did not attack any airfields, depots or other targets. Deep operations is about resources and effects. If killing depots produces the effects you want and killing HQs does not, then that is what you will try to do with your limited resources.

In sum, I feel that CK:95 does an excellent job of portraying the environment of modern combat in Korea. Let's just hope it stays a game.

Note: Part 1, the first-half of this article appeared in the last issue (Nr.4) of C3i. Part 1 was an overview of the game's major systems and mechanics.