

DOWNTOWN: Linebacker III

Alternate History Scenario for 1975

by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood and Karl Mueller

The Last Campaign in a Long War

The involvement of U.S. air power in the final defense of South Vietnam was inevitable: the United States had promised to protect South Vietnam if North Vietnam attacked again following America's 1973 withdrawal, and Richard Nixon was determined not to go down in history as the first U.S. president to lose a war.

When North Vietnam launched its invasion in March 1975, it was not an easy choice for a war-weary Washington to commit forces once again to defend an ally that appeared terminally weak and whose leaders were both incompetent and corrupt.

Many Congressional leaders favored washing America's hands of Indochina entirely in the wake of the communist takeover in Cambodia. But the popular President prevailed, and U.S. fighters and bombers once again were sent "Downtown".

It might not have come to pass. Had South Vietnam not been able to mount a credible defense against the invaders for the long weeks that it took U.S. leaders to decide to intervene, there would have been no question of sending American help.

And what if the *Watergate* crimes had been discovered soon afterwards instead of coming to light in the late '70s? A major scandal could have weakened Nixon to the point that he would not have kept his promises to come to Saigon's aid. It might also have opened the door for Congress to slash military assistance to South Vietnam prior to the final invasion, making a swift ARVN collapse all the more likely.

The *Linebacker III* strikes in the Red River valley — initially by the air wing of the *USS Enterprise* and *Midway* and by USAF F-4s and A-7s based in Thailand, later reinforced by additional carriers and SAC forces — were a relatively small part of the overall air effort. As with the

North Vietnamese Easter Offensive of 1972, more sorties were flown and far more bombs were dropped in support of the hard-pressed ARVN troops defending the slowly collapsing Republic of Vietnam. This resistance enabled more than a million South Vietnamese refugees to flee the country before Saigon finally fell, but ultimately proved insufficient to stem the tide.

Linebacker III Special Rules

15.54 SA-3s

DESIGN NOTE: In 1973 improved SA-3 'Goa' (S-125) missile systems were deployed to Vietnam. Batteries were emplaced around the capital in time for the 1975 invasion.

The DRV player may convert up to five regular SAM units into SA-3s. (Note this secretly on the unit's logsheet.) SA-3s are treated as SAM units except with the following changes:

1. Acquisition & attack modifiers for targets on the deck do not apply to SA-3s.
2. Add a +1 modifier to all attack rolls on the SAM Attack Table (due to the missile's advanced performance).
3. Beacon Jamming [19.54] has no effect on SA-3s.
4. SA-3 units have just two shots of ammo [15.44].

Because the DRV's priority is the defense of Haiphong and the capital, all SA-3 units must be deployed within 4 hexes of downtown Hanoi (hex 2028) or Haiphong (hex 2410).

28.32 SA-7s

DESIGN NOTE: By 1975 the employment of shoulder-launched infrared SAMs had become widespread in the North Vietnamese Army. Small arms flak barrages projected by NVA units have a +1 modifier on the Flak Damage Table [14.31].

USN Aircraft Data Chart

New Aircraft. Use the new values for the F-14A, RF-4B and F-4N.

A6B Intruder. The A-6B note [r] refers to TIAS (or Target Identification and Acquisition System). TIAS functions exactly like PAT-ARM [17.59] but does not require the flight to carry Standard ARM ordnance as a prerequisite.

USAF Aircraft Data Charts

New Aircraft. Use the new values for the F-105G.

USAF AirtoAir Weapon Charts

AIM-9J Notes. AIM-9J's are considered *post war* and have a rating of 3 for 1975 scenarios.

Order of Battle Table B

For 1975 scenarios, make changes as follows:

- Carrier information for the *Enterprise* and *Midway* is included in the tables.
- F-14s cannot fly Armed Escort. Instead, the Armed Escort units are tasked with CAP.
- There is no Marine jamming support.

Order of Battle Table D

For 1975 scenarios, make changes as follows:

Jamming Mission. *The Air Force's EB-66 fleet was retired in 1974, leaving no ELINT or Electronic Warfare coverage for the Air Force. However, the Marine Corps could provide limited protection from a detachment of EA-6As aboard the USS Midway.* For 1975 scenarios, the USAF Jamming Mission is:

?x {11 [Marine Jamming], Jamming Roll 1 die: on a 5-10 add one EA-6A Marine jamming flight. On any other result there is no Marine jamming support.

Chaff Mission. *Because of the race to deploy to Thailand there were insufficient air and tanking assets in-theater to permit the Air Force to lay chaff corridors.*

Delete the Chaff Mission from the order of battle.

Bombing Tasks. All strikes attacking with PGM use F-4E. All Conventional Strikes use A-7D.

CAP Tasks. All CAP use F-4E.

SEAD Tasks. Use only F-105G WW.

1:117: Never Can Say Goodbye

Scenario D17.

Scenario by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

Background

America's response to the March invasion was to race two carriers back to Yankee Station: the *USS Enterprise* with its complement of new F-14 Tomcat fighters, and the *Midway*, which carried a number of Marine air assets. The *Coral Sea* and *Hancock* occupied Dixie Station providing support for the beleaguered ARVN in the south.

The Air Force presence in Thailand had been significantly reduced since 1973 and permissions to base there were slow in coming from the Thai government.

However, Operation Swift Guard managed to rapidly deploy wings of F-4Es

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and A-7s from Korea and the US. Within a week the first strikes into the upper Route Packages were being launched.

Operating under liberal rules of engagement, the priority was to hit the supply network. Rail yards and bridges were once again targeted and Haiphong mined.

However, the Vietnamese were more prepared than they had ever been and had the SA-3 missile to face the Americans. For the first weeks they also had the advantage of weather on their side, making strike opportunities few and far between.

Targets

The US player secretly rolls a die to determine their target.

Roll	Target	Hex	Profile	Organization
1	Trung Quan rail yard	1726	C	USAF
2	Phuc Yen rail bridge (1 span)	1431	B	USAF
3-4	Dap Cau railroad and highway bridge (1 span)	1523	B	USAF or USN
5	Hanoi rail yard and repair shop	2028	C	USAF
6	Canal des Rapides bypass (2 spans)	1927	B	USAF or USN
7	Hai Duong bridge	2117	A	USN
8	Gia Lam POL Storage	1928	D	USAF or USN
9	Haiphong rail and road bridge (1 span)	2411	A	USN
10	Kien An airfield runway	2612	B	USN
	Kien An control tower		C	
	Kien An aircraft revetments		B	

Scenario Conditions

Date	April 1975
Time of Day	Day, 14:00 hrs
Detection Level	US: B; DRV: A
GCI Level	4
Weather	Northeast Monsoon, Clear
Open DRV Airfields	Phuc Yen, 1529 (MiG-21); Gia Lam, 2027 (MiG-21); Yen Bai, 0248 (MiG-19); Kien An, 2612 (MiG-17, MiG-21)



US Order of Battle

Use Table D for an Air Force raid or Table B for a USN raid. Carrier ID: choose from yyy – Enterprise or zzz – Midway.

US Pilot Quality

USAF: Iron Hand units – Veteran; other units – Regular

USN: CAP/Armed Escort units – Top Gun; other units – Regular



F-14 Tomcat

Downtown

Air War over Hanoi, 1965-1972

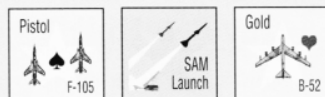
Published: 2004 **Awards:** Charles S. Roberts

Game Design: Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan

Map & Counters: Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

Rulebook Layout: Mark Simonitch



Contents: Two counters sheets; One 22x34 inch Map; Rule & Scenario books; Player Aid Cards; Log Sheets; Bookcase Box

Time Scale: One minute per turn

Map Scale: Hex = 2.5 miles

Players: 1-2

DRV Order of Battle

Air Units

Basic MAPS: 15

Dummy flights: 4

Available aircraft types: MiG-17F, MiG-19S, MiG-21PFM; MiG-21MF

Reinforcements

VP	1	2	3	5	8
MAPS	+5	+11	+15	+28	+35

Ground Units

SAM Battalions: 23 (up to 5 SA-3; set up 7 located)

Dummy SAMs: 5

Dummy Radars: 2

AAA Points: 10

Fire Can: 12

DRV Pilot Quality

MiG-17 and MiG-19 units — Trained;

MiG-21 units — Veteran

Scenario Special Rules

1. F-4Es tasked with CAP may use IFF interrogators.
2. Half of all USN flights tasked with bombing may use EOGB.
3. USAF raids on the Trung Quan rail yard, Hanoi rail yard and repair shop or Gia Lam POL storage are Conventional Strikes (see order of battle variants). In all other USAF raids the bombing flights use LGB.
4. The DRV player may not purchase more than one flight of two MiG-17Fs. No such restrictions apply to the purchase of MiG-19S and MiG-21 flights.

Victory Conditions

Standard Victory conditions apply [27.8]. In addition, the DRV player scores 2 VP if one or more F-14A aircraft are lost over land. (Score the 2 VP only once, not per aircraft shot down.) Double this award to 4 VP if the flight the aircraft was lost from has undepleted AIM-54A missiles at the moment of shodown.

DESIGN NOTE: The Vietnamese and Soviets would have dearly liked to have been able to examine the wreckage of an advanced F-MA and to capture a Phoenix missile intact.

