**Company Commander**

I first encountered Jason Oates Games and Company Commander as a PBM game in the early noughties. I played a game based in Madagascar and another based in East Africa before work caught up with me and I was unable to continue. One of the last things Jason asked me as I left was if there were any improvements that could be made to the game. I told him that a way of training Infantry units rather than buying them would be a positive improvement.

Late last year I was looking for a new game to play as time had returned to my life. I found an internet site for Company Commander and decided to give it another go. The setup cost includes your first 3 turns and a Monthly Adjustment and all the rules and unit books can be downloaded from the site. As there are X, it takes a few days just to read everything and get up to date with the available units and understand the basics of this complex simulation of small scale war in the Third World, The game I was joining [CC19] is based in Indonesia so the need to use Air, Sea and Land units if you were to be successful was immediately clear.

You play an ex-Special Forces soldier leading a faction of mainly local troops trying to gain control of an Indonesia that has fallen apart politically. The game runs at the individual land vehicle, boat, plane level with squads of infantry at 10 men being the largest units. Your troops are based in villages and these are the key to the game.

Each village has Resource Potentials for some, or all, of Oil, Copper, Lumber and Tobacco and each month they produce up to their potential depending on whether or not the village contains the correct production unit. So a village with a Copper Potential and a Copper Mine produces up to 15 Copper per turn depending on your faction’s efficiency and popularity. Producing goods creates Political Influence (PI) as well which is vital in attracting the attention of other nations outside the area who are willing to sell you technology or otherwise support your faction. You then need to move the goods you have produced to a Port, or large airstrip, where it can be sold to buyers from across the world producing money and yet more PI.

With PI and money you can buy in a wide range of support weapons, vehicles, boats and planes for your faction, bring in Combat Supplies (CS) and train infantry. To buy a weapon you have to pay PI once to get the technology and then Money to buy each unit. Items to buy run from coils of wire to Hawk jets, ZSU 23-4 antiaircraft guns to Abbott SP guns and some specialist infantry units like maintenance sections and officers. To train new infantry units, you raise recruits in your villages, move them to a training camp then train them from Recruits to Militia or an HQ, Medic or Pioneer Section. You can improve some of these initial types to get Recon Sections [Special Forces], Combat Engineers or more advanced TAC HQ’s. Training is expensive as it takes PI, Money and CS but well worthwhile.as training improves the weaponry as well as the ability of the troops themselves.

As the key to your economy, villages need to be defended. To aid you in this task you can build, or deploy a wide range of defences from wire entanglements and mines to Weapon Pits and Airstrips. To do this you need Pioneer Sections, or Combat Engineer squads, Excavators and Defence Stores. (DS). DS are created by Pioneers and Combat Engineers when they do nothing else for a turn so are easy to obtain but one key tip is to have as many Pioneers and Combat Engineers as you can. They are always needed, and you will always find something for them to do.

Combat supplies – that is ammunition, food, fuel and all the sundry items needed to keep a modern army in action. Each unit has a CS value, and each mission type [Move, Recon, Assault for example] has a modifier which multiplies the CS needed by the unit. So a Recon Section moving from one village to another uses no CS at all, whilst a BAe Hawk carrying out an Air Assault uses 30 CS as well as any other munitions [bombs, missiles etc.] to complete it’s mission. Making sure you always have enough CS in a village for all the units there to fight is one of the trickiest parts of the game especially if you have vehicles there which may break down and need CS to repair

There are two types of move action – moves which allow you to move units from village to village and carry out missions and convoy moves which allow trucks and ships to move from village to village collecting the product of industrial units and moving them to ports for sale. 8 moves and 3 convoy moves a turn mean that you have to be careful to use all of them you need each turn and if your faction got particularly large would mean that you would have to plan very carefully. You also get a special action each turn which allows you to do some lateral thinking and pick up small percentile increases in things like ‘Troop Morale’ or ‘Copper Extraction Efficiency’ or respond to the DM’s Special Encounters.

My faction, Teshimbowla-Ha, started with 5 villages and very quickly took a sixth to control Madura Island by contacting the garrison and persuading them to come over to the faction, whilst scouting the village for an attack if they refused. After a Commander had visited the new village and carried out a resource recon, I knew that it produced Tobacco which I was short of, but not Oil which I could not produce anywhere. As Tobacco is labour intensive – a Tobacco Farm need 3 labour rather than the 2 needed for other resources, I decided to build it up as big as I could. Combat Engineers improved its defences and then moved on to improve defences at the nearby village with a harbour, which would be the local HQ. At the other end of the island, I had a group of Pioneers building a Special Forces base with a bunker, an revetment for a helicopter and a system of camouflage nets on timber to conceal the base from casual view. This took a month or so to realise as I fell foul of the fact that the ZIL trucks I was relying on kept breaking down so work stopped. I solved that problem by packing the village with trucks so that there were always enough for work to continue, and the M-820 Mobile Workshop there could fix them as fast as they broke down. I then kept the Pioneers in the village to develop the defences of my new base.

At the same time, I was moving militia to my capital to train them as infantry, moving two Vice Areas (which produce lots of money but have a horrible effect on the production of PI and local morale) from my capital to a nearby village, and slowly adding to my forces. I got an Allouette III via a Special Encounter, closely followed by 4 URAL heavy trucks to supplement the ZILs. I improved my air defences and started to explore the local area by Air Recon and by using a TAC HQ to monitor the radar reports from my freighters moving around the island delivering and collecting material. It soon became obvious that what I really needed was a bigger port so I started saving as much money as I could to do this. Madura Island was getting to where I wanted it, and I had moved the Pioneers to a new village to start construction of a major airstrip (once they reach Level 6 they act as a port an sell of small amounts of goods) when a new Special Encounter arrived. A fishing boat from a nearby island, where there is only one village, had arrived in my capital carrying local leaders. They had requested our aid – the Government forces holding the village were oppressing them and they would welcome liberation. This was too good an opportunity to miss but… we really did not have much equipment suitable for an armed landing on a hostile shore. We had a PBR-III River Patrol boat, a BAV-485 Russian DUKW copy and fishing boats. We sent the PBR-III and a Recon section over to the village straight away on a recon mission, whilst carrying out Electronic surveillance from home, and gathered intelligence. We formulated a plan and then held an exercise to practice the mission before launching the assault. That turn was a labour of love. Three separate missions, all tied together with a special action were needed to make it work.

Mission 1 was for the PBR-III to land the Recon Section to the north of the village and then return south and wait for dawn. The Recon Section, carrying a Saggar AT missile, advanced to the edge of the village and opened up at dawn using the Saggar to take out the main defensive position in the village and then sniping at officers and squad commanders. The PBR-III swept in and opened up with all it had to cover the approaching forces.

Mission 2 was the BAV-485. This approached the village at dawn carrying an Officer, an HQ section, a Marine squad and a Combat Engineer squad. It drove straight up the beach in the harbour and unloaded its troops under the cover of the PBR’s fire. They moved inland and worked with the Recon section to take out the defenders.

Mission 3 was a Fishing boat carrying an Infantry squad and Combat Supplies. This landed once the BAV has quit the beach to hold the harbour area and resupply the troops fighting in the village.

As a Special Action a Commander and TAC HQ in my capital coordinated the attack and provided electronic support. It would have been better if they had also been part of the attack but, luckily, all went well and we managed to take the village with very few casualties.

With the village taken, we consolidated, digging in and laying mines and wire. Just down the coast was a beached LCM-8 so the next month was spent using Special Actions to refloat and recover this vessel then put it back into working order. Finally having a vessel that can carry vehicles was a major improvement for the faction and will allow much more effective attacks to be put in place in future.