

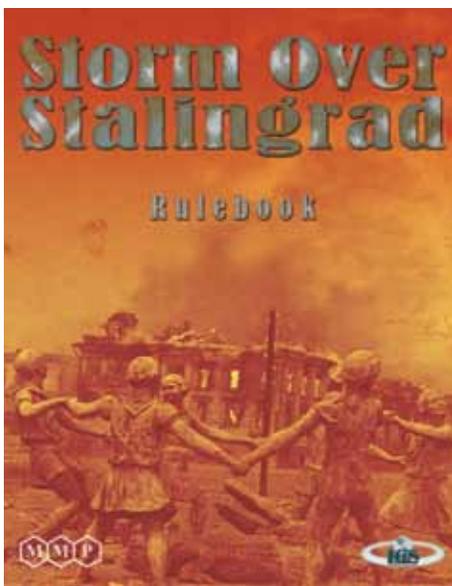
# Storm over Dien Bien Phu Preview

**Multi-Man Publishing** is proud to have several fantastic games currently available for pre-order. To help promote two of these games, one of the designers has written this short overview on one of the games. Although design and development of the game is complete, the map artwork is still subject to change and the final artwork for the cards has yet to be completed, so mere playtest versions are included here.

The game is available for pre-order for \$33, or if pre-ordered with *Storm over Normandy*, both games are \$57 instead of \$66. To pre-order this, or any other MMP game, please visit <http://www.multimanpublishing.com/>



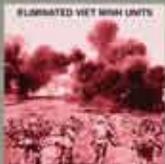
*Storm over Dien Bien Phu (SoDBP)* and its sister game, *Storm over Normandy*, both are derived from MMP's area movement game *Storm over Stalingrad (SoS)*. That game has been very successful—giving a fast, fun experience in a solid game that takes about three hours to play. Brian Youse, Ken Dunn, and I have been very happy with the system and decided to use it for the two new games.



The game mechanics for *SoS* are very simple. Each turn involves the two players taking alternate impulses. Players use an impulse either to move units from one area to another or to attack enemy units in the same area or in an adjacent area, after which activated units are flipped from their fresh side to their spent side. It costs one movement point to enter a new area, increased by one if

the area being left contains enemy units or is enemy controlled, and increased again by one if the area being entered contains enemy units or is enemy controlled. The combat mechanics are also very simple, with the attacker adding up his total attack strength, rolling two dice, and adding all that to give the final attack strength. Then the defense value of the best defender is added to the terrain modifier for a final defense strength. Subtracting this defense strength from the final attack strength provides the number of “hits” the attacker causes on the defender. Hits cause fresh units to flip to their spent side, spent units to retreat, and retreating units to be eliminated. Each fresh unit can perform a single action per turn, and flips to its spent side when the action is over. These very basic mechanics are augmented with cards, which add extra details. Some cards are played instead of an action; for example, an Artillery card attacks an area containing enemy units. Other cards modify the rules temporarily during an impulse, improving the terrain modifier for example, or canceling a card just played by your opponent.

The battle of Dien Bien Phu takes place between March and May of 1954 and is the climax of the French Indochina war, pitting the communist Viet Minh forces against the colonial French. The French thought that Dien Bien Phu would be a good location to force this final battle; they thought that they could supply the position and that the surrounding terrain was too difficult for the Viet Minh to get their artillery pieces into place. Both of these assumptions turned out to be fatally flawed. The French force is composed of the French Foreign Legion 13 DBLE (featured in *No Question of Surrender*, also published by MMP), colonial forces, and reinforced by parachute battalions. There were also a small number of M24 Chaffee tanks and an M55 quad 50. The Viet Minh forces were numerous, featuring the 304 Division, the 308 Division, the 312 Division, and the 316 Division. The French created a series of strongholds around the perimeter given such codenames as “Anne-Marie,” “Beatrice,” “Claudine,” “Dominique,” “Eliane,” “Huguette,” and “Gabrielle.” At the start of the battle, the Viet Minh forces attacked Anne-Marie, Beatrice, and Gabrielle, taking control of all three. Over the next few weeks, further attacks take place, and the Viet Minh start digging trenches, which they use to launch assaults from. Eventually, after weeks of attacks and counterattacks, the French are outnumbered 8 to 1



TURF TRACK

March 15	March 20	March 27	April 3	April 9	April 16	April 23	May 1
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

VIET MINH CARDS

6	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
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FRENCH CARDS

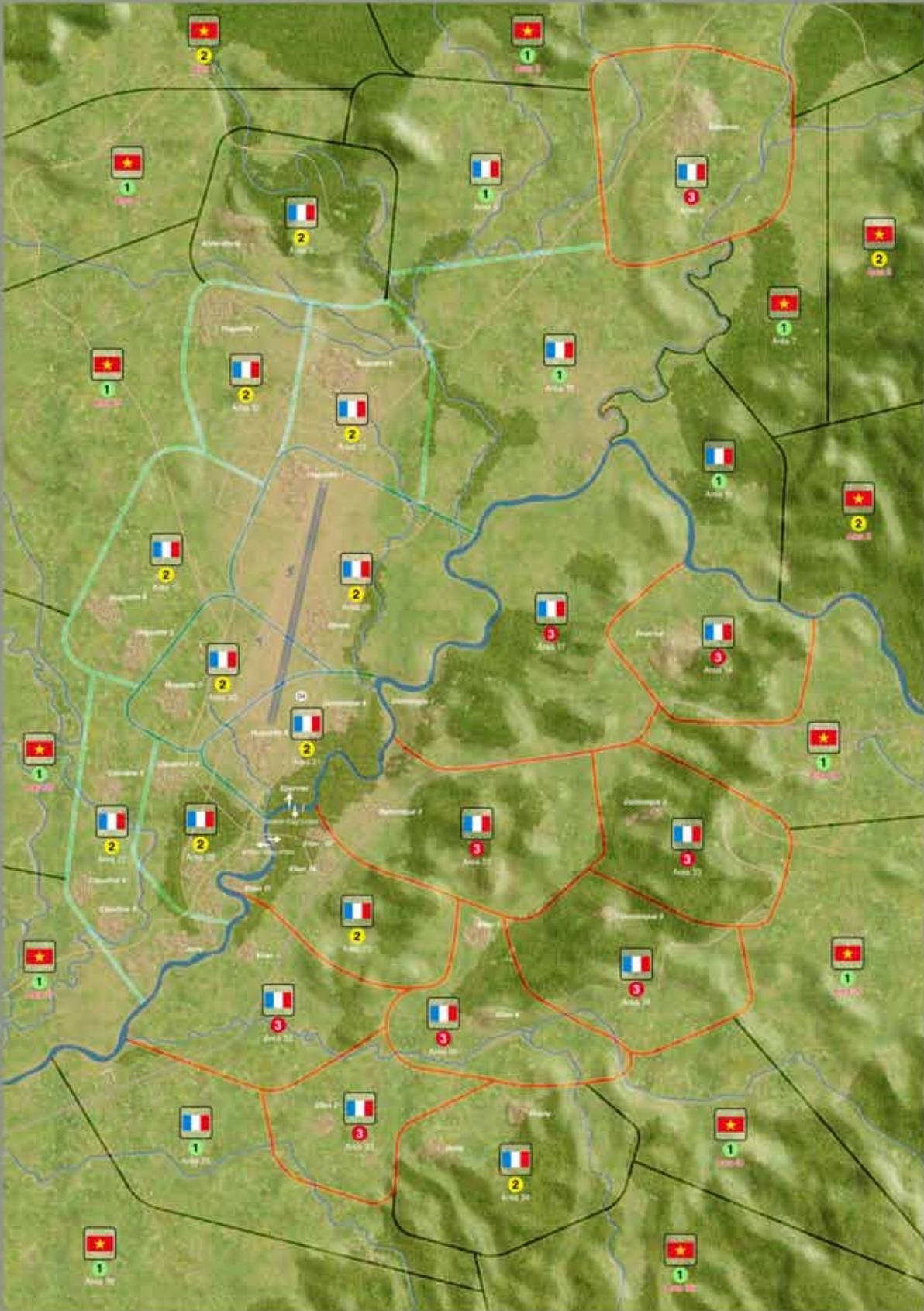
4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
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# STORM OVER DIEN BIEN PHU

Begin at Position - End at End - End at End - End at End



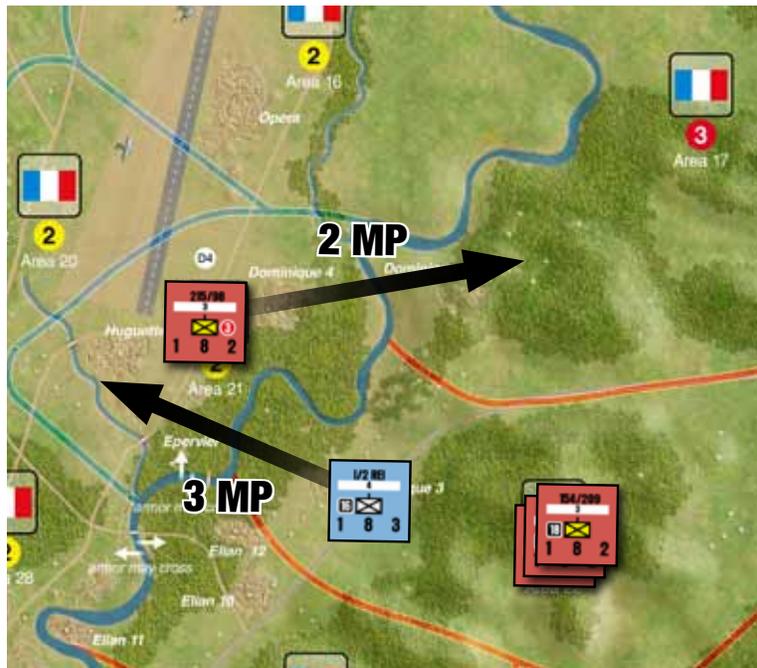
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and the central positions are overrun. There are multiple books on the subject, but my two favorite ones are the classic *Hell in a Very Small Place* by Bernard Fall, and the more recent *The Last Valley* by Martin Windrow.

In looking to move the *SoS* system to Dien Bien Phu, we wanted to add more to the game than just a simple shoehorning of the *SoS* game into different battle. We wanted a game that built upon *SoS* and gave the player a new experience. Above all, it needed to be able to model the battle to give an appropriate historical feel. Competing with these interests was the desire to keep the game simple and short. We didn't want to expand the rules by adding more and more chrome at the cost of what we really enjoyed about *SoS*.

Let's first look at what has stayed the same. The combat mechanics are the same, with no changes. The movement mechanics have two changes. The first is that moving into an area that is enemy controlled, contains an enemy unit, and/or *over the river* adds one to the movement cost (non-cumulative). The second change is that Viet Minh units may not ordinarily enter French-controlled areas that contain French units.



*Movement example: The Viet Minh unit on the left could move into the area on the right for 2 movement points, assuming it is Viet Minh controlled. It costs 1 point to move into the area plus 1 for moving over the river. If the French unit moved instead, it could do so for 3 movement points. 1 point to move into the new area plus 1 point for leaving an area containing an enemy unit plus 1 point for entering an area with an enemy unit and/or over the river. The increased cost for entering an area containing both an enemy unit and over the river are non-cumulative. If one of those situations exists it adds 1 point, if both exists it still only add 1 point.*

The victory conditions remain similar. The Viet Minh player must capture and control by game end a number of high value defensive areas. The number of cards each player may play each turn is determined similarly to *SoS*, with each player getting a fixed number of cards, plus the possibility of extra cards for control of key areas.

In addition to these two impulses, we conceived two new types of impulse for use by the Viet Minh player. The first is sapping. Each area that is Viet Minh control can have trenches built in it. For every two Viet Minh units that are flipped from fresh to spent, the trench level increases by 1, up to a maximum of 3. The Viet Minh player can also discard cards to help increase the trench level. To counter all this trench building, the French player can either try to take control of the area or use an artillery card to reduce the trench level to zero. The trench level improves the defensive value of the area, but more importantly is allows another new impulse to be performed...the assault.

Assaulting allows fresh Viet Minh units to attack a French-controlled and French-occupied area and immediately move into it if successful. On turn 1, assaults can take place into any adjacent area, but on later turns assaults can only take place from areas with a trench level of 3. Once the assault is completed, if there are no French units left in the area, the assaulting Viet Minh units move into the area, become spent, and one of the Viet Minh units is eliminated. If unsuccessful, the Viet Minh units remain in their current area, become spent, and one of the Viet Minh units eliminated. Both of these new impulses have a direct impact on the flow and feel of the game and give a sense of how much carnage the Viet Minh assaults against the French positions created.

There are a couple of other new rules that add to the feeling of desperation for both sides. The first to examine is French supply. At the end of each turn, a dice roll is made, modified by the number of runway areas and areas adjacent to runway areas that the Viet Minh control. Depending on the results, zero, one, or two French areas (chosen by the Viet Minh player) are out of supply, and French units in those areas do not get to flip to their fresh side. This forces the French player to defend not just his victory areas but the airfield as well.

Additionally, at the end of each turn the Viet Minh player receives reinforcements (generally of lower quality) based on a die roll to help replace the units lost due to assaults. How reinforcements are placed has changed in a subtle but important way. The Viet Minh player places reinforcements first, and he can place them in any



*Assault example: The Viet Minh stack is going to assault the French unit in Area 17. The Viet Minh unit can assault, as the trench level is 3. The total firepower of the assault is a 4, and the total defense is an 8 (the terrain is negated on an assault). The Viet Minh player then uses his “Night Assault” card which will add 3 to the dice roll. If the French player had the “Flares” card, he could negate the “Night Assault” card. He does not, so the Viet Minh player rolls the dice and gets a 4 for a final attack strength of 11 (4+3+4). This gives a total of 3 hits (11-8), which is exactly what is needed to eliminate the French unit. The Viet Minh units are now placed, spent, into Area 17, and one of them is eliminated.*

area he controls or in an adjacent area that contains no French units (even if French-controlled). He places his reinforcements one at a time –allowing him to grab a series of French-controlled areas if the French player is careless in how he maintains his perimeter.

Let’s turn to the cards included in the game. Cards are played at any time during the game when it is appropriate. Some are played at the start of an attack or assault, to either add or subtract from the attack, whereas others are as an entire impulse, or during the end phase of a turn.

The French cards cover a variety of actions and events. Some examples of the cards include “*Command Coordination*” which allows the French player to reroll dice; “*Bigeard Refuses to Leave*” where the French player can ignore damage points when played after a Viet Minh attack; “*Débouchez à Zéro!*” performs an attack on assaulting Viet Minh units before they attack; and “*Flamethrowers*” which negates any defensive terrain modifier when attacking a Viet Minh-controlled area.

A number of these cards are also used to negate Viet Minh cards, such as “*Flares*” that can be used to counter the effects of the Viet Minh “*Night Assault*” card.

The Viet Minh cards include “*Rats of the Nam Yum*” which causes French units to become spent; “*Emergency Replacements*” which brings in two replacement units immediately; “*Surprise Assault*” which allows an assault to be performed from an area at any trench level not just a 3; and “*Detonate Mineshaft*” where the French player gets to retreat units from a selected area before a die roll of damage points are assigned to the area. One of our favorite cards is “*Giap Demands Success*” which allows the Viet Minh player to reroll the dice on an assault impulse to try and get a better result. He can keep rerolling, but each roll causes an extra Viet Minh unit to be eliminated. Just how badly do you need to take the area?

Each Viet Minh card also has a number on the card. This is how much the card can be used in order to increase the trench level in an area.

The cards have another use, one that at first doesn’t seem significant, but it has a huge impact on gameplay. The Viet Minh player controls the tempo of the battle, and when he “passes” as his impulse, the turn ends unless the French player discards a card. If the French player has no cards left in his hand, then he can do nothing to prevent the turn from ending. Combine this with the updated reinforcement rules, and if the French player leaves a hole in his perimeter, he may not be able to stop the Viet Minh player from ending the turn and taking advantage of the situation.

## Giap Demands Success 3

After an Assault dice roll has been made, roll the the dice again and keep the higher result. Lose 1 extra assaulting unit. You may keep re-rolling the dice, but each re-roll costs 1 additional assaulting unit.

That pretty much summarizes the game. We hope this brief introduction gives you a glimpse into the nature of the game. We are very pleased with how SoDBP has evolved during its development process. We think that this is a great game, providing a good simulation of an interesting conflict within a fun and easy-to-play game system.