



DISTRICT COMMANDER SERIES **ERRATA, FAQ, CLARIFICATIONS, COMMENTS**

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- by Brian Train and James Buckley

OVERVIEW

District Commander is a wargame system designed to model operational-level irregular warfare.

Four volumes in the series have been published by Hollandspiele:

- *Maracas*: combat in an imaginary large city, 2019
- *Binh Dinh*: Central Coast of Vietnam, 1969
- *Kandahar*: southern Afghanistan, 2009
- *Zone Nord Oranais (ZNO)*: western Algeria, 1959

It takes a slightly different approach from many 'standard' wargames:

- an area movement map
- interactive operations phase
- asymmetric menus of actions governed by Task Points
- diceless conflict and mission resolution
- varied and variable strategy cards that provide different paths to victory

To be successful players must learn some new rules and unlearn some old practices. The purpose of this document is to provide support and clarity in doing so.

A long interview at the Players Aid blog published in June 2019 is a good introduction to the *District Commander* system and its first volume *Maracas*:

<https://theplayersaid.com/2019/07/22/interview-with-brian-train-designer-of-district-commander-maracas-from-hollandspiele/>

VERSIONS AND ERRATA

STANDARD RULES

After *District Commander: Maracas* was published in 2019, some revisions were made to the Standard rules. Please make sure that you have the revised standard rules book, marked '(Revised May 2020)'. A PDF version is available free at

<https://boardgamegeek.com/filepage/187296/district-commander-series-rulebook>

Changes and additions from 2019 version standard rules (shaded rules also apply to Revised May 2020 rules book).

- add a revision date to cover ('May 2020')
- 6.1 first bullet: exception noted that Ambush must be done by a concealed stack.
- 5.3 third bullet: Insurgent IUs are placed "at large" in an Area but, like Government IUs, may not be reduced until all other Insurgent Combat Units (either "at large" or in the UG Box) in the Area have performed missions or been disrupted (see 6.16).
- 6.0 and 9.2: added option to flip Tactical Initiative by using an Intelligence Advantage chit
- 6.11 Amend as follows. "Patrol: A stack may Patrol against any ONE stack of Insurgent units in its Area, including in the UG box".
- 6.13: Ambush section rewritten, including examples
- 6.13 first para: correct mistaken term "Attack"; should be "mission"
- 6.13 second para: "they are all revealed in the act of performing the Ambush."
- 6.16 first bullet: correct mistaken term "Attack"; should be "mission"
- 6.17 third bullet: correct mistaken term "Attack"; should be "mission"
- 6.18: Intimidation mission amended (clarified Insurgent stack must be concealed to conduct, and Hits = Insurgent CMR superiority, not absolute difference of totals), including correcting example.
- 6.18 first bullet "they are all revealed in the act of performing the mission"
- 6.19: corrected mistaken term "Attack" in 1st bullet; should be "mission"
- 6.2 and other places (6.12, 6.18): disrupting a Militia unit does not cost the owner a Task Point
- 6.3 last line of second para should read "see 6.19" not 6.18.
- 7.11: clarification in 2nd bullet that TP Allotment cannot go below 0 (to forestall repetition of a question fielded on BGG about infinite deficit spending)
- 11.0: addendum to No Chit Sherlock option that using a d6 instead of chits is personally not recommended by designer (who has opinions, and look what happens...)

EXCLUSIVE VOLUME RULES CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Maracas

Updated (May 2020) versions of the player aids are available at

<https://boardgamegeek.com/filepage/208737/updated-charts-and-play-aids-dc-maracas>

6.13 Ambush

- The player aid card notes for Ambush say that the Government player's Ambushed unit takes 1 Hit if the Government total is also less than Insurgent total TR + TR Assets; the rules say "equal to or less than" - the rules are correct.

6.14 Moving from the QRF Section of the Unit Box

- The Government player may move a stack from the QRF section of the Unit Box to any Area on the map (but not vice versa) as a Move mission. The player may do this *any time* they have an opportunity to perform missions with a stack in an Area, instead of choosing a stack in the currently active Area.
- If the stack moves from the QRF to the currently Active Area, the Government player may continue to perform Tactical missions with the stack; if it moves to a different Area on the map, the Government player stops with that stack and the phasing player may now choose a stack in the currently active Area.

Binh Dinh

6.13 Ambush

- The player aid card notes for Ambush say that the Government player's Ambushed unit takes 1 Hit if the Government total is also less than Insurgent total TR + TR Assets; the rules say "equal to or less than" - the rules are correct.

Kandahar

6.13 Ambush

- The player aid card notes for Ambush say that the Government player's Ambushed unit takes 1 Hit if the Government total is also less than Insurgent total TR + TR Assets; the rules say "equal to or less than" - the rules are correct.

6.14 Move

- Kandahar Airfield (KAF) performs the same function in this volume as the QRF section of the Unit Box in *Maracas*. See above.

ZNO

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

2.1 Notes on Secrecy

When a player declares a mission for a stack, all Combat Units and Assets in a stack that can be used to affect the mission must be used and will act in unison. So it may sometimes happen that an Insurgent stack has a mix of face-up and face-down units in it if a Combat Unit or Asset was not used in a mission because it could not have affected the mission... but anything that can contribute to a mission, does contribute and is revealed in the course of doing so if it is at large in the Area.

For example: if you had an Insurgent stack with a Cadre Asset in it (which is useful only for Missions where you use the Civil-Military Rating), you could conduct an Attack with the stack but the Cadre would remain concealed; if that stack were building Militia while “at large” in an Area and included a Combat unit with a CMR of 0, the unit could not contribute to the mission so it would stay concealed.

Exceptions:

- Dummies. In any situation where any Assets or Combat Units in a stack are revealed, all Dummies in the stack are also revealed at that time (and removed to the Available Box).
- Ambush (6.13) and Intimidation (6.18) missions. The rules explicitly say that all units in the stack conducting one of those missions must be concealed to conduct it, and they are all revealed in conducting the mission.
- Insurgent stacks conducting the non-Tactical missions Build IU, Recruit/Promote Militia, or Remove Terror while in the UG box of an Area are not revealed.

6.0 How does the Operations Phase work, again?

This interactive part of the turn often seems to give people pause. Player James Buckley has a suggested rewording for 6.0 that puts it a bit differently:

The player who currently has the higher number of Task Points has Tactical Initiative (Insurgent player wins ties) and so is the phasing player. The phasing player may EITHER perform missions with one stack of their units in the Area, expending TP as they go, until they wish to stop, OR they may pass. If the phasing player chooses to perform missions, once they have finished all the missions they wish to undertake with the chosen stack, both players check again to see who has the Tactical Initiative. The player that now has the higher Tactical Initiative becomes the phasing player (this may be the player that just acted) and may either perform missions with another stack in the area, or they may pass. If they pass, the other player now automatically becomes the phasing player (irrespective of each player's TPs), and the process is repeated, until both players consecutively pass.

Some other things to remember here:

- The Insurgent player is the only one who knows both sides' current TP levels; they must tell the Government player the truth about who has Tactical Initiative, but they do not tell them the current TP levels.
- A stack conducting Tactical missions may keep expending TP until done; a stack conducting a non-Tactical mission will conduct only one mission, expend only 1 TP, and then be done.
- Be careful how and when you pass, if you are playing a waiting game in an Area – the other player may unexpectedly pass immediately after you do, and you may be left with one or more stacks in the Area that do not get activated at all.

9.1 Assets

Global Effect Assets

- Some Assets have a Global Effect, marked by a “!” on the counter. This means they affect all missions of a certain type performed in their Area – that is, they have an effect outside of their stack. For example, Insurgent Double Agents and Government Sensors or Informers assets affect all Patrols in an area, not just Patrols impacting or carried out by their stack.
- Global Effect Assets are always effective, regardless – in the case of the Insurgent – of if the asset is revealed or not (eg, if the Double Agent is revealed as part of a stack that conducts an Ambush, its modifier to all Patrols in the Area still applies).
- Note that the Double Agent also affects the Terrain Modifier if it is part of a stack that undertakes an Ambush. This effect only applies to that stack, and so this secondary modifier is not a Global-Effect.

Dummies

- In any situation where any Assets or Combat Units in a stack are revealed, all Dummies in the stack are also revealed at that time (and removed to the Available Box).
- The only mission a stack of nothing but Dummies may perform is Move (this still costs the Insurgent 1 TP).
- If the Government player Patrols against a stack of only Dummies, the Insurgent Intelligence Rating used is 0 (zero); the Insurgent total would then consist of the Chance Chit played and the Area’s Terrain Modifier (so yes, it is possible to fail to find nothing!).

10.0 Setting up the game

Drawing the Strategy Card

- When getting ready for play players draw their Strategy card as the last step of setting up, to give both players an extra challenge to satisfy the mysterious priorities of their superiors and possibly an early priority to seek a change in Strategy!

Placing initial units

- The players’ initial placement of units when setting up the scenario cannot break the rules of the game. That is, players could not set up Militia or Infrastructure in an area with Population 0 because they are never allowed there, nor could they place more Militia or Infrastructure units in an Area than its Population Number (because they could never have built them up that far).
- However, the Insurgent player does not have to abide by the restrictions in 5.3 second bullet (the priorities to follow in the Deployment Segment) in setting up initial units.

General

How suitable is this game for solitaire play?

- Not very, but not impossible. Two things, mainly:
 - It’s an insurgency situation, so fog of war is important. Insurgent units are hidden and must be discovered by Patrols, or reveal themselves by doing something, before they can be engaged by the security forces. Game parameters like Task Points available and Victory Points accrued should be hidden as well (or at least, known only to the Insurgent player).
 - It’s diceless. Players hold racks of chits that have different strengths depending on how they are used - the chits arrive randomly but are expended during play by choice, so it’s a bit like choosing some of your die rolls in advance. Players play these chits during play, and combat

losses/disruptions partially depend on which chits were played, so it's better to have these be a secret.

- Now, having said that, this game is not impossible to play solitaire... just less satisfying. You can play solo, with all information known to you, and just play chits as best you can in accordance with your plans for both sides, the way people normally play solo - or you could choose the chit for the side you're playing at the moment, and choose the other side's chit at random.
- There is also an optional rule called "No Chit, Sherlock" where you can dispense with the Chance Chits and just roll a six-sided die whenever you would play a chit. However, this is not recommended: it yields a completely different game because the chit ratings have different probability distributions (rated 1-5 along different schemes, when a die is always equally probably 1-6), the unlimited number of die rolls is counter to the choices forced on the player by the limited number and varied nature of the chits, and the randomness paradoxically leaves no one guessing or thinking much about what they should be choosing or doing. So, not as much fun, and certainly not what the designer intended.

What are the distributions of Chance Chit values?

	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligence Rating	10	10	8	10	10
Troop Rating	4	8	12	16	8
Civil-Military Rating	4	8	12	16	8

Sums of 3 Ratings:	7	8	9	10	11	12
	10	4	4	10	14	6

Help me decipher the text on these Strategy cards!

Population Control VP (7.21):

- Players examine each Area on the map, counting Infrastructure Units (IUs). The player with the larger number of effective IUs in the Area will gain VP as described in their current Strategy:
 - If the card says "+1", you get just 1 VP for just having more, or
 - If the card says "+1/IU", you get 1 VP per friendly Infrastructure Unit present, or
 - If the card says "+PN" you get VP equal to the Population Number.
 - If the card says "0" the player gets 0, zero, nothing.

Remember the limitations on IUs:

- each side can only have as many IUs in an Area as its Population (so there's a limit on how many VP you can get out of an Area).
- an Area that is Terrorized gives no Population Control VP to anyone.
- Special to the *Maracas* module (see 7.21, 9.4 and 9.5 in the *Maracas* exclusive rules):
 - Sabotaged Government IUs don't count for Population Control VP (so fix your infrastructure).
 - Government can't get Population VP for an Area that has Criminal units in it, and Insurgent can't get Population VP for an Area that has Non-State Militia (NSM) in it (so get those guys).

Terror penalty:

- If the card says “- PN” you lose VP equal to the area’s Population Number. Note the penalty is applied only in the turn that the Terror is inflicted.

Help! I’m ready to set up but I don’t know what to do!

First, examine your Strategy and compose your stacks during the Deployment phase with a view to getting maximum VP for that Strategy. Try to think it through to the second or third step of how to do that. Remember that you can change that card later in the game, and that there are different ways to get those VP... and if you can figure out what the other player is trying to do, you can act to frustrate them as well.

So let's say in *DC Binh Dinh*, you are the Insurgent and your Strategy card is ‘Binh Van’ (action among enemy military). This gives you:

- More VP than some other strategies for disrupting enemy paramilitary and regular combat units, especially foreign forces,
- Less than others for disrupting enemy IU.
- No VP for Population Control or LOC Control (unless it's a Highway), and no penalty for causing Terror in an area.
- A VP penalty if you do not conduct any Attacks or Ambushes (so don't sit on your hands!).

Under this scheme you would array yourself to do some damage to the enemy, and not worry about your presence among the population to the same extent you would if, say, your strategy was ‘Dan Van’ (action among own people).

Think about what you have to do to successfully attack the Government but avoid taking damage yourself. So Ambush, Intimidate and Ambush some more, as these are no-risk activities for the Insurgent. Choose and deploy your Assets with stacks that can use their benefits the best.

Initial deployments of Infrastructure Units are also important and are related to your Strategy. Remember what IUs are for:

- You need them to build or promote Militia.
- They help to remove Terror.
- The Insurgent needs them to deploy their forces from the Available Box.
- IUs are the only things that give you Population Control VP, and you only get them if your IUs outnumber the enemy's.

To continue in the case of the ‘Binh Van’ Strategy above, you don't care much about Population Control, but you do care about raising forces (and remember, Guerrillas come from promoted Militia) and maximum flexibility to have your forces appear in many places on the map... so take whatever IU you have and disperse them widely, instead of clustered in one or two areas.

OTHER SUPPORT MATERIAL

VASSAL modules

Maracas:

[http://www.vassalengine.org/wiki/Module:District Commander Maracas: Virtualia 2019](http://www.vassalengine.org/wiki/Module:District_Commander_Maracas:_Virtualia_2019)

Hollandspiele does not create VASSAL modules for the games they publish, but players are welcome to create them for themselves and others. If you want to be one of these industrious souls, contact them for the necessary artwork to build the module. And thank you for doing that!

BGG files

Player James Buckley has made an extended Example of Play for the *Maracas* volume that some may find helpful, not just for *Maracas*, but for the system in general:

<https://boardgamegeek.com/filepage/220322/dc-maracas-example-play>