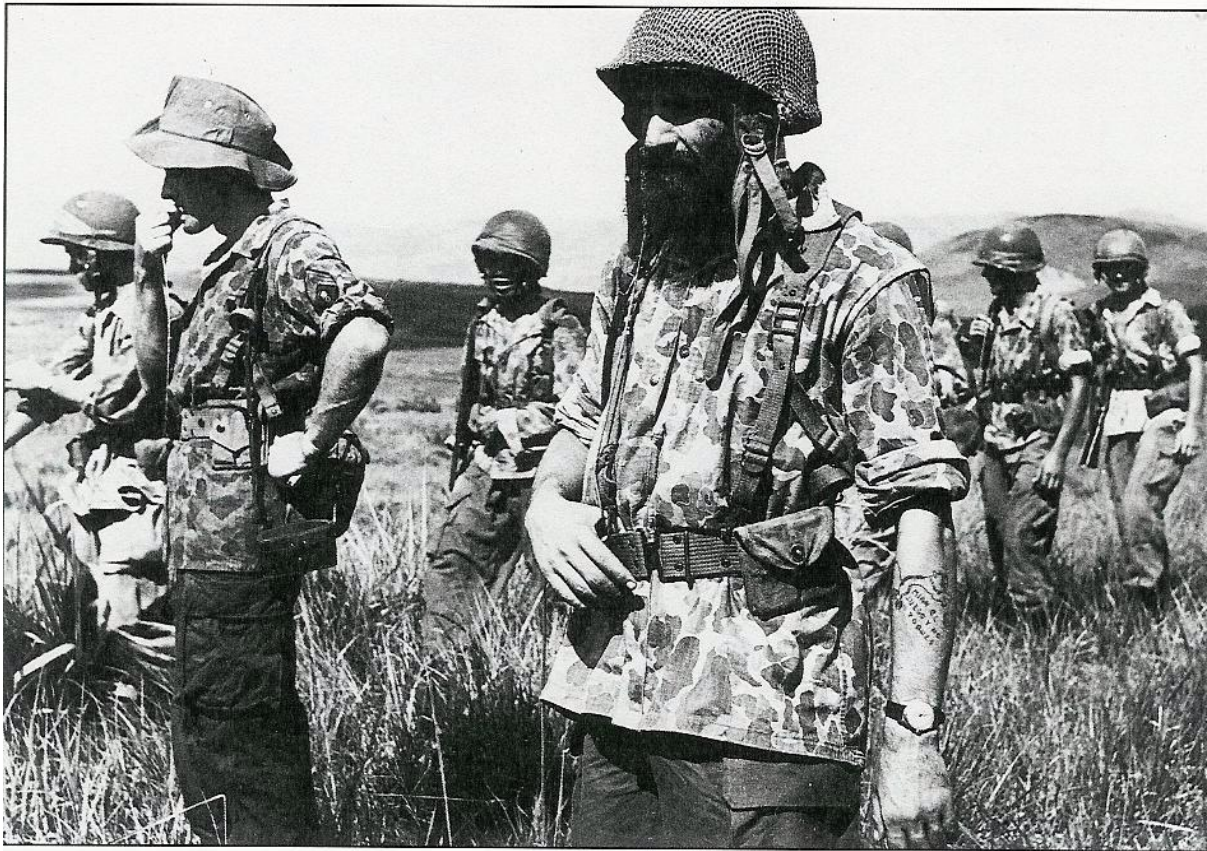


# Scenarios



Five scenarios are available to players of Tonkin. Each recreates key military situations from the war and presents each side with an array of challenges:

## Cao Bang

The French troops garrisoning the Chinese border along the road Route Coloniale 4 were taken by surprise by the newly built Viet Minh regiments. Thanks to the new Chinese communist government the Viet Minh now had a powerful neighbour to supply them. Late in 1950 the Viet Minh took one of the posts along the road isolating the French troops to the north and shaking the troops to the south. France responded by sending in reinforcements. Viet Minh flanked the post immediately to the south which put the newly arrived French units there in a dire situation. The units to the north decided to evacuate by moving southwards and hoping to fight through the Viet Minh barrier.

They failed and many tried to pass by through the forest with disastrous results. At the same time as the troops in the post to the south were also crushed. France panicked and evacuated all troops in the highlands east of Red River back to the delta. It was an overwhelming Viet Minh victory.

## Hanoi



Flushed by their victory the Viet Minh decided to go for the delta and take Hanoi. The slogan was "Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi for the Têt". Ho Chi Minh was the political leader and Têt was the New Year holiday between January and February in 1951. France had now received a date for the Viet Minh attack. To get a grip on the feeling of panic that was spreading among both military and civilians Jean Marie de Lattre de Tassigny was made the new commander in Hanoi. He stopped the evacuation of women and children to make the soldiers stand and fight. He also constructed a line of fortifications around the delta to create a barrier against the Viet Minh regular forces (smaller Viet Minh units were already inside the delta).

The attack came in January when two Viet Minh divisions attacked a post north of Hanoi manned by the Foreign Legion. Thanks to a fierce defence, aided by artillery and the airforce using napalm, the French managed to repulse the attack.

In March the Viet Minh attacked the delta again, this time north of the harbour Haiphong and with three divisions. Once again the French succeeded in defending their position. This time the navy came close in to shore to give artillery support.

The Viet Minh tried a third time in May south of Nam Dinh. Units first infiltrated in order to attack from the rear at the same time as two divisions made a frontal attack. Once again the French managed to throw them back thanks to overwhelming firepower. The Viet Minh lost about 20,000 dead and many more wounded but the lesson was not lost to the Viet Minh leadership: Don't attack entrenched French troops if you don't have the terrain and firepower in your favour.

## Hoa Binh

Viet Minh forces had received heavy casualties after their attempt to overrun the delta. The French commander de Lattre, although victorious, knew it was just a temporary setback for the enemy. He decided to grab the initiative and try to sever the connection between the Viet Minh forces in Tonkin and those in Annam to the south by occupying Hoa Binh in November 1951. This village was not just close to Viet Minh transport routes, it was also a central community for the minority people in that part of the highlands. These people were natural opponents to the Viet Minh since the Viet Minh was mainly composed by the Viets living in the lowlands.

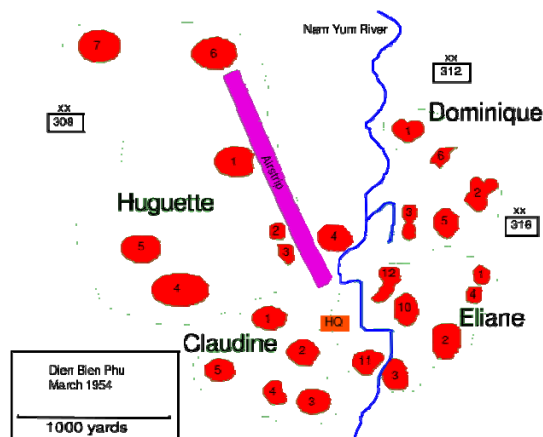
Occupying Hoa Binh was not the main problem, keeping the supply route to Hoa Binh was. France had contact with Hoa Binh by road and along Black River. The Viet Minh decided to try to isolate the garrison at Hoa Binh by cutting these two routes. The battle raged along the road and the river where the Viet Minh kept cutting them and French mobile forces kept opening them up. Finally, in mid February 1952, de Lattre withdrew from Hoa Binh. He understood that there was no way Hoa Binh could be kept without constant fighting along the supply routes. Even though losses were once again heavy for the Viet Minh, they won strategically because they managed to make it untenable for the French to hold a position outside the delta.

## Na San

The leadership within the Viet Minh knew they could not attack the delta head on so they decided to go westwards instead; into the highlands. The campaign started in October 1952 when several divisions pushed up into the hills. The new French commander Raoul Salan quickly reinforced a village called Na San which occupied a central position. From here the roads from Tonkin met and continued onwards into the highlands as well as into Laos. Salan also tried a "chicken race" by mounting a campaign along Red River, trying to make the Viet Minh battle force turn back eastwards. Giap, the Viet Minh military leader was a cool cat though. He did not hesitate despite knowing a large part of his supply was in danger. Eventually Salan had to order his troops back to the delta since it was becoming increasingly difficult keeping his force that far north along the Red River. Salan had greater luck with Na San. It was made into a hedgehog and the Viet Minh simply repeated their experience from the delta battles two years earlier.

In April 1953 Giap decided to leave Na San and bypass it into Laos, putting the Laotian royal capital of Luang Prabang in danger. The French, seeing the danger, reinforced the city and planned to meet the Viet Minh at a plain called Plaine des Jarres, east of Luang Prabang. Giap, watching the French troops flying in and with the rainy season coming closer, pulled back to safer terrain in the highlands where he also could shorten his line of supply.

## Dien Bien Phu



Na San proved a lesson to both sides. The new French commander, Navarre, saw that well supported hedgehogs like Na San could stop the Viet Minh and cause them heavy casualties. Giap saw the same thing but knew now what he needed when the next occasion arrived; Artillery...and lots of it. In December 1953 French forces re-occupied Dien Bien Phu which was a valley farther west close to the Laotian border. A large number of French units flew there and started to improve the airfield and create strongholds. Even tanks, artillery and aircraft were stationed there. The idea was to make this a centre for French anti-Viet Minh guerrilla incursions into the highland around them.

Giap saw the build-up at Dien Bien Phu and took the challenge. This was a high stake situation. If Giap could defeat that garrison where the cream of French military were, then the will to continue fighting would surely be lost among the French. If Giap failed he would probably have spent a major part of his battle force which could mean that Ho Chi Minh could be forced to make a political settlement with the French.

The French refused to believe that it was possible to get artillery close to Dien Bien Phu since the valley was surrounded by mountains and thick forest. The French were not to blame since it was impossible to transport artillery by land to Dien Bien Phu...but the Viet Minh did it anyway. This is a major feat in military history. The Viets literally dragged the canons up through the hills by hand! The major difference for the French between Na San and Dien Bien Phu was that Dien Bien Phu was much farther away from the delta and at the end of the range for the air support. Aircraft could not stay and linger but had to turn around quickly and fly back.

After a siege, which was horrific for both sides, the Viet Minh finally overran Dien Bien Phu. This, combined with the fact that France had to evacuate the southern part of the delta due to a lack of troops, made the French call it a day and start to negotiate a peace deal.

