V27 FALLING FOR NATASHA

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HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
LOCATION: Muong Thanh, French Indochina
DATE: 20 November 1953
COMMENTARY: General Henri Navarre, leader of the French forces in Indochina, had made the decision to occupy the valley of Dien Bien Phu so as to interdict and harass the Viet Minh supply lines into northern Laos. Operation ‘Castor’ was set in motion to assault the valley from the air, utilising the cream of the French forces to capture the objective by surprise, in the largest airborne operation since WWII. First to land on Drop Zone ‘Natasha’ was Commander Bigeard’s 6th BPC, tasked to capture an old Japanese airstrip just north of Muong Thanh village and assault the enemy’s H.Q. units in the settlement.

Unbeknownst to the French, a company of Viet Minh from the 320th Division was training near the old Japanese airstrip, resulting in a surprise for both sides. The Vietnamese Nationalists fought staunchly against the attacking French, but were instructed by their commander to break contact and withdraw to the south. The French were left holding the field, with all their objectives captured, and very light casualties for a parachute operation. The French now faced the difficult task of holding the broad, hill-ringed valley.

TURN RECORD CHART

THE BATTLEFIELD AND CONDITIONS

EC are mild, with no wind at start (Wind is blowing to the North/West for scatter purposes).
PTO terrain is in effect, including light jungle (EC: treat brush hexes as brush, all buildings are huts, and all hedges and walls are cactus hedges [F13.3, representing bamboo thickets]).
Place Overlay RR1 on hexes 33R6-R5. Overlay RR1 represents a dirt Runway (treat as an unpaved Road, EXC: Dash is N/A).

Elements of the 910th Battalion and HQ of the 148th Independent Infantry Regiment set up on whole hexes of mapboard 70.

ELR: 4/3
SAN: 3

 автомобиль

Cadre and training units of the 48th Regiment, 320th Division set up on mapboard 33 and/or mapboard 69 as per SSR 4.

ELR: 5
SAN: 2

Counter artwork taken from Virtual ASL (VASL) and used with the permission of Rodney Kinney (programmer) and Carl Fung (artist).