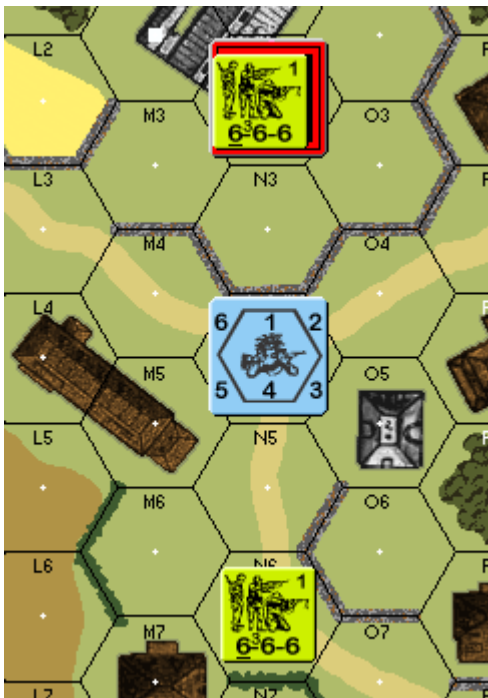# Sniper: Alternate Target Selection

Description

A recent discussion took place in the Advanced Squad Leader Group on Facebook. A user asked an interesting question which proves to be difficult to answer with clarity. What follows is my answer to this question and how I think the answer has muddied over time.

The Problem

Refer to the image on the left. The Germans have just activated their SAN by rolling a dr of 1. Random Location DR brings the Sniper to N4. Since there is no eligible unit/Sniper

Counter (A14.22) in N4, the Alternate Target Selection Rules (A14.21) are triggered. The unit in N6 has ZERO in-hex TEM while the unit in N2 also has zero in-hex TEM. Per A14.21, the Sniper player may choose which of those equidistant hexes to attack.

The astute amongst you can probably already see what's about to happen. Notice the last sentence of A14.21 uses the word "hex" rather than "Location". This predilection to use "hex" and "Location" interchangeably will plague us throughout this article.

Imagine now that N2 level 1 also has a 6-6-6 in the Location. Everything else is equal. Who gets attacked by the Sniper now? Again, the Sniper player may choose between the lowest in hex TEM and the ZERO TEM still applies to the unit on the roof. If the Sniper player attacks N2, can the Sniper affect the imaginary unit in +3 TEM? Sadly, this isn't so clear.

Let's look at some different cases to clarify what happens when a Sniper attacks.

Case One
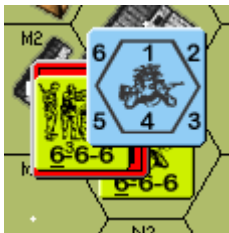
This is by far the easiest case. The Sniper lands directly on a target hex. In this situation, the Sniper player may freely choose to attack either the unit in the Rooftop Location OR the unit in the building Location. Rule A14.2 clearly defines this. If your 10-3 is trying to hide from a Sniper, having a unit in the same hex with a lower in-hex TEM will not help.

Case Two

Situation 2 is also fairly easy. Here, the Sniper has not landed directly on N2 so Alternate Target Selection kicks in. Since there is a clear "closest" hex with eligible targets, TEM is irrelevant to selection. Place the Sniper counter in N2. Then, per A14.2, the Sniper player is free to choose which eligible Location in that hex is attacked by the Sniper just like in Case One.

So far everything is pretty straightforward. All of that is about to change.

Case Three

This brings us back to the situation I first mentioned above. What happens now? By far, the easiest solution is the Sniper player attacks the unit in N6. This is easy and clean. But our opponents rarely seek to do us any favors. He really needs to break the unit in the Ground Level of N2. But can he?

It pays to excerpt A14.21 here: ... *Should ≥ two such hexes be equidistant, the Location with the lowest TEM is the target. Only the lowest (to a minimum of zero) in-hex TEM/SMOKE DRM applicable to any eligible target currently occupying that hex, regardless of LOS, is considered in the comparison ... If the target hex is still undetermined, the Sniper player chooses which of those equidistant hexes to attack.* I have simplified this some so I encourage you to take a moment to read the rule.

Here is where confusion arrives. We meet the first requirement. We have two equidistant Locations, each with the same TEM. The first sentence suggests we pick whichever one we want and move on. But from that point on, all hell breaks loose. The next sentence says only the *lowest* TEM applicable to any eligible target applies to the consideration. Here, "consideration" is regarding selecting the target hex. The last sentence reinforces this is about a tie between hexes based on TEM. If the Sniper player chooses a hex with multiple units, this seems a repeat of Case Two now.

This is **NOT** the case and we need some Q&A to clear this up.

The Q&A

The first Q&A is a restatement of Case Two. That firms up our understanding of Case Two. The second Q&A gets us past Case Three. This second Q&A affirms the first sentence of A14.21 carries the day. The units with the lowest TEM are the only potential targets under consideration when choosing between multiple Locations. You can't push your Sniper to one of those Locations and then select which unit to attack per Case Two. You must attack the unit with the lowest TEM no matter which hex you attack.

History

I am lucky enough to have a pristine rulebook from 1987. The rulebook has no errata or replacement pages in it. I also have a fully patched v1 rule book. It is helpful here. Replacement pages updated A14.x in 1992. The v2 rulebook updated it again to its current form. I believe the v2 rule book incorporated the first Q&A. The second Q&A is from 2005. This Gamesquad thread contains the original Q&A posted in 2005. It is interesting that back then I believed this was a Case Two until someone pointed out "Location" to me. On the FB post, I said I think this is a Case Two situation but for the Q&A so it is nice to see my thinking is consistent.

14.21 *ALTERNATE TARGET:* If the target hex is devoid of an enemy unit(s) and the enemy Sniper Target Selection counter, or is occupied only by ineligible enemy unit(s) (14.22), the Sniper attack will occur against the hex closest (in hexes) to that target hex which contains an eligible-target enemy unit (14.22)/Sniper Target Selection counter (14.31). Should two or more such hexes be equidistant, the Location with the lowest TEM is the target. (Only in-hex TEM applicable to any/all occupants, regardless of LOS, is considered.) If the target hex is still undetermined, the Sniper player chooses which equidistant Location is to be attacked.

Looking back at the v1 paragraph is also informative. Notice how the last sentence says the Sniper player chooses which equidistant **Location** to attack. This is far clearer and consistent with the second Q&A. It makes the intent of Case Three perfectly clear. It isalso another example of where using hex and Location interchangeably is a bad idea.Sadly, the rewrite changed a perfectly clear sentence into the land of confusion.

Conclusion

Anyone looking at the early GS thread can easily see my thinking on this changed back in 2005. I was clearly a Case Two player. You can also see that I also understand the argument for Case Two even today from my Facebook post. But it should also be clear that I accept and abide by the validity of Case Three as supported by the Q&A. I have long said we as players have to accept the Q&A as our only means of resolving differences. It's nice for me to see that I have internalized this one.

Keep in mind, this is how I see it. I think I am on firm ground based on the rules, the Q&A, and the historical context gleaned from the v1 ASLRB. That doesn't mean I am right though. It would take a rewrite of the existing rule to make it perfectly clear in my opinion. Until next time.