

The Campaign for Fort Monroe
in Victory Games' The Civil War
John B. Gilmer Jr.

Fort Monroe, at the mouth of the James River near Norfolk, is a fortress of unsurpassed importance. It prevents use by the Confederates of 6 points worth of ports (Norfolk and Petersburg). It also unhinges the Virginia seacoast flank, leaving Norfolk vulnerable to amphibious assault, and threatening all points along the James River including Richmond and the important rail junction at Petersburg. It was exploitation of this opening by Grant in 1864 that ended the war of maneuver in Virginia and ultimately led to Appomattox.

The fortress is a formidable edifice, protected by a difficult overland approach through swamps, and by impassable hex sides on its flanks. A defending force gains an incredible four column shifts. Fort Monroe was never threatened during the War Between the States, and the unwary Union player is unlikely to take any threat to it seriously until, very likely, it is too late. The possibility of capturing Fort Monroe presents a tremendous, if risky, opportunity to the enterprising Confederate player.

Early 1861, the first turn, provides the first and best opportunity to capture the fort. During the first turn the Confederacy gains the services of several excellent leaders who give the South an important if transitory superiority in the Eastern theater. Furthermore, Union sealift is limited to only two strength points, and the Union Navy is almost absent. This limits the reinforcement of the fort. The fortress is initially protected by only two strength points, commanded by Butler, a general rivaled only by Fremont for inefficiency within the game system. Finally, the Union player will likely be preoccupied with other things like the protection of Springfield, capturing West Virginia, rounding up some Western theater armies, and sorting out his leaders.

Capture of Fort Monroe is possible for a force of as few as four strength points commanded by Beauregard. Possible, but not probable. During the second half of an action phase with three or more command points (C.P.'s), Beauregard takes his force to hex 6209, just East of Richmond, from which he can attack the fort on the next action phase. And if the next action phase has a dice difference of three or more and the Confederates have the initiative, Beauregard throws his force into an attack on the surprised Butler, capturing the fort with a $1/3$ chance (with 4 S.P.'s) or $1/2$ (with 6 S.P.'s). One problem with this approach is that the odds of success are not great. The second problem is that there is only about a $1/4$ chance of the Confederates getting that immediate 3 C.P. initiative action phase. If they do not, Butler receives reinforcements given a reasonably prudent Union Commander in Chief. The chance is then lost, since no attack by Beauregard can eliminate the Yankees. (Alternatively, the Union player can pull Butler out of Fort Monroe and send him to a more securely obscure post at, say, Fort Pickens.

Better chances can be achieved if the Confederates send an adequate force, the entire Army of Northern Virginia. It requires considerable effort, and time, to mass this force. But the key move to hex 6209 can still be a last minute surprise. Even with a few action phases, the Union player may not be able to prevent the fort's capture. Consider the following campaign plan:

Action	C.P. cost	A.P. cost
Move J. Johnston from 4905 to 5006	1	1
Form Army of Northern Virginia in 5006 (J. Johnston commanding, Beauregard, 4 S.P.'s)	2	2
Reinforce J. Johnston with 4 S.P.'s (3 East, 1 Discr.)	-	4
Reinforce J. Johnston with 2 S.P.'s from the West (via RR from Mobile, Memphis)	2 (West)	2
Move 2 S.P.'s from 4905 to Army of Northern Virginia	2	2
Add all leaders from pool to Army of Northern Virginia	-	6
Move Army of Northern Virginia to hex 6209 (East of (Richmond) Drop Stuart of in Fredericksburg-5108	3	3
Assault Fort Monroe	3	3
Return Army of Northern Virginia (-garrison) to Richmond-5110 or 5109	3	3
	<u>16</u> (14 East)	<u>26</u>

When Johnston makes his move to the Peninsula, the Union player is left with a dilemma. He can reinforce the garrison. Or, he can use the Army of the Potomac to so threaten Richmond, and the communications of the Army of Northern Virginia, that Johnston does not dare attack the fortress. We will consider the passive reinforcement of Fort Monroe first. Assuming the Union has the C.P.'s (East, Naval, or Discretionary), two S.P.'s can be moved immediately to the fort from, say, Philadelphia. With two Naval C.P.'s the initial Naval forces can be brought in, and with one more C.P. the ocean transport can carry in another strength point and contribute its own firepower, bringing the garrison to a total of 6 S.P.'s. (This is the reason the Army of Northern Virginia ought to have at least 12 S.P.'s.) Bringing in more reinforcements means ferrying them in with the ocean transport, which requires two action phases (and C.P.'s) per strength point, and hence is slow and of doubtful utility. Also, when the transport is away, its strength is missed.

Assuming the Union does have the opportunity to reinforce, Johnston cannot capture the fortress with one attack. But, with sufficient Confederate subordinate leaders and perhaps an assist from Butler, he will get a d3 result. And with his reroll option, the chance of a Confederate 'd' result is only 55%. A second attack will surely succeed, unless those ferry boats get diesel engines, McDowell poses too much of a threat, or the Confederates run out of time or C.P.'s.

Use of C.P.'s is a crucial part of the campaign. The Confederates can expect to get 15.6 C.P.'s in the East (Primary theater) and 5.4 discretionary C.P.'s assuming the turn does not end before the C.P.'s are spent. There is, of course, a sizeable chance that the turn will end early, but there is little that can be done about that. (It may still be possible to pull off a successful attack on turn 2.) The "budget" of 16 C.P.'s for the campaign outlined earlier is fairly safe, but there is little to spare. If a second attack is needed, or the first one results in demoralization, Johnston may run out of C.P.'s before the fortress is secured. Or, he may be left in the fort rather than safely back in Richmond. The use of two West C.P.'s to bring in reinforcements by rail shifts some of the burden, giving more of a C.P. or strength point cushion, at the expense of time. One could rail in 4 S.P.'s from the West and leave the 2 S.P.'s in 4905. (This has the side benefit of tempting the Army of the Potomac to attack them, safely away from Richmond, rather than threaten the Confederate capitol and Johnston's communications.) Another

option is to move to the peninsula early with as few as 10 S.P.'s or less than a full complement of leaders. (Ten S.P.'s is a good working minimum to qualify as a 'large' force, ensuring a chance for a d3 result.) If Butler is not reinforced, this force should be sufficient. If he is, more reinforcements can be added before the assault is launched. (Hex 5209 is, conveniently, on a rail line.)

The Union response of threatening Richmond is the more difficult one. On the way to the Peninsula, dropping Stuart off in Fredericksburg (where there is a strength point waiting for him) will block the most direct route, assuming the Army of the Potomac is still in Washington. If the Union army gets to 5109, Johnston is in trouble, since the base hex of the peninsula, 5209, is in its reaction radius. (Johnston can leave a single S.P. in 5209 to mitigate this.) If the Union player is very aggressive, moving the Army of the Potomac far enough South while Johnston is at 5209 or (after the first attack on the fort) 5310, Johnston may be able to attack with a decent chance of destroying the invaders. The Union player will no doubt have left a garrison in Washington, will probably have sent some reinforcements to the fort, and likely will not have collected all of the various units scattered about North of the Potomac. Very possibly the Army of Northern Virginia will be equal or superior. And with the Confederate leadership superiority, any battle is almost bound to leave the Army of the Potomac demoralized. Small detachments of one S.P. (requiring only one C.P. to move) can cut off the supply line to Washington, perhaps, forcing a retreat to the Bay or the Potomac, and perhaps uncovering Washington. Thus, such a Union response may offer an even greater opportunity than the capture of Fort Monroe.

A 'safe' counter by the Union army leaves it within striking range of Richmond, but out of danger of destruction. A move to 5107 or, better, 5007 (along the railroad) does this, since the route to Richmond is no longer easily blocked, but there is little chance of being isolated. Johnston may move up from the peninsula, attack, and win, but the tactical loss would be a strategic victory in that the threat to Fort Monroe would be eliminated. There is little chance another threat to the fort could be mounted given such a diversion. The Army of the Potomac, even if beaten, could still fall back on Washington and secure supplies. Another possibility is a move to, say, 5006 after the first attack on the fort (and Johnston is at 5310). This is outside Johnston's range, but still threatens Richmond.

The Union player should beware that, even if he captures the Confederate capitol he does so at some risk. A prudent Confederate player may well respond to the threat with a garrison of 4 to 6 S.P.'s and a decent leader. If in the attack the Army of the Potomac is demoralized, even if in possession of Richmond, they will be in deep trouble if Johnston is nearby with a fresh army. Such a campaign is likely to decide the outcome of the war very early. It is not for the faint of heart.

The Confederates' risk can be mitigated if the Union player can be encouraged to use up his East C.P.'s. Just building up the Army of Northern Virginia may encourage the construction of a fortress in Washington, and use of C.P.'s to collect units there. Movement of the one Confederate unit at 4507 to Grafton may provoke a massing of Union strength in West Virginia and a counterattack, requiring four or so Union East C.P.'s. Movement by rail of a unit from the West to 4311 (using a West C.P.) will likely provoke Union occupation of Charleston, requiring a Union East C.P. Perhaps the Union player will expend

discretionary C.P.'s in the West and trans-Mississippi, if Price maintains a threatening presence in Missouri. It is not inconceivable that the Union will have too few C.P.'s to seriously threaten the Confederate rear.

This campaign illustrates the principal of 'interior lines'. From a central position at the base of the Peninsula, the Confederate army can threaten two different targets. The only good long term defense of the fort is a counter threat, which provides the second target. The best hope for the Union is to delay the assault, or its successful culmination, until time runs out. Once in turn two, sufficient forces can be sent to Fort Monroe to keep it safe from any conceivable assault. Then the principal of 'exterior lines' applies: the Confederates will have a hard time defending both the Potomac and Bay flanks of Virginia. Attention to one will allow Union advances in the other.

A last word of caution to the Confederate player: Be very careful how you try this against the same Union player a second time. He is not likely to have forgotten.

