Custom Campaign Creation Tutorial

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Recently, there has been an incredible surge of fan campaigns released to the community. This is largely due to the abundance of tools that have been released that allow fans to edit Dune 2000 to their liking. D2K+ is the official title of the core toolkit used in the creation of these mods. It has become apparent however, that the full capability of the toolkit is not being leveraged. There are many possible changes that can be used to allow the creation of a very different gameplay experience. The purpose of this tutorial is to help users fully utilize the toolkit to create mods that have yet to be seen by the community.

In this tutorial you will learn:

- How to plan and design a campaign
- Creating a single player map (.map file)
- How to create and edit Mission Scenarios (.mis files)
- How to create custom menus
- How to load a custom mission without overwriting existing ones
- How to create a mission briefing
- Packaging a mod to easily be installed and removed

What will not be discussed, but is still possible using existing tools:

- Editing the Main Menu
- Adding custom music
- Editing existing units to create new ones
- Adding custom tilesets
- Playing custom mission briefing movies

Section 1: Planning a Campaign

When creating Dune 2000: Rise Of The Mercenaries, a great deal of thought and planning was put into the design of the entire campaign. What is the overall plot of the campaign? How will the missions develop? What enemies will the player face? How long will the campaign be? Originally, it was planned to be the same length as the Westwood campaigns, but numerous constraints such as time got in the way and ultimately it was scaled down to a series of 3 missions. Although several ideas were scrapped, a great deal were able to be incorporated into the series, reducing the effort and time spent on the overall project.

Much like a full game, creating a mod takes organised planning and testing to pull off effectively. Ideas must be polished and well thought out in order to attract and please players. Some ideas might stay, others will be pulled after they turn out to be impractical or unnecessary. Start by thinking about how you want the mod to turn out, a clear picture of your end goal will help you plan the project. For example, I wanted

to use ideas from the Ordos campaign in Rise Of The Mercenaries, such as heavy use of reinforcements and fragile allegiance to other houses and eventually have the Mercenaries take the other houses by surprise. Since I had planned on storyline in detail, it made it simple to design the starting mission, as I knew that it would involve the betrayal of an ally house.

After you have an idea of what you want the overall story to be, start designing the individual missions. Map design will heavily influence mission design, so it is recommended that you design the maps first. Pencil and paper is a good way to plan things out at this stage, later on you can start working in a map editor and begin finalizing the map design. Once map design is planned you can start working out details, like where starting units will be placed, what buildings the player and AI will start with, spice field placement etc.

Missions will usually proceed in a linear fashion, and when they do players will attempt to anticipate how the game will progress. Adding in unexpected twists to a mission will help keep the experience fresh and players satisfied. Keep in mind that many players will be looking for a challenge, and missions that are too easy will leave them bored.

Ultimately, each mod is unique, and not all will have the same creation process. Proper planning is the key behind success, and will reduce the amount of time needed to create a quality mod.

Mission 1 of the mercenary campaign forces the player to make extensive use of limited resources and reinforcements.

Section 2: Creating the Map

The map is the second most important part of a mission. The map is where you decide the layout of everything the player sees in the mission, and all the actions they can take are based on this layout. The map will let you place starting structures and units for the player, and will allow you to direct the flow of the game. It also allows you to place spice blooms and sandworms, as well as obstacles to impede the player.
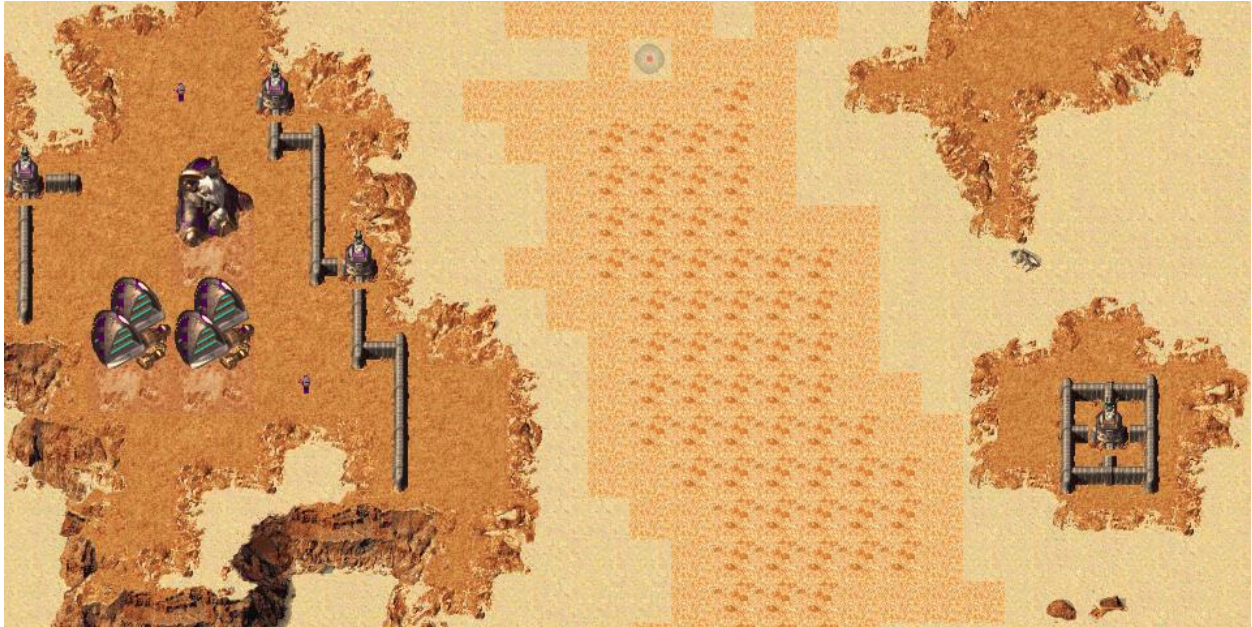
Placement of turrets and a small base by the player's base in Ordos mission 5 deters player advance, and encourages the player to remain at their base

Before anything else, you should place the terrain for the map. Although the campaign map editor in D2K+ can place terrain, Shai-Halud 2000 is better at this task. Select a tileset based on which scenery you think would best fit in your mission. Then start constructing player bases. Fill out pieces of land between those bases, then start placing details like sand dunes, spice and worm spawns.

Shai-Halud is rather useless at placing campaign structures and units (it cannot natively place them, and it displays them with random images). When you are done placing the base terrain in Shai-Halud, open up the Campaign Map Editor. This map editor is designed to place the unique units and structures.
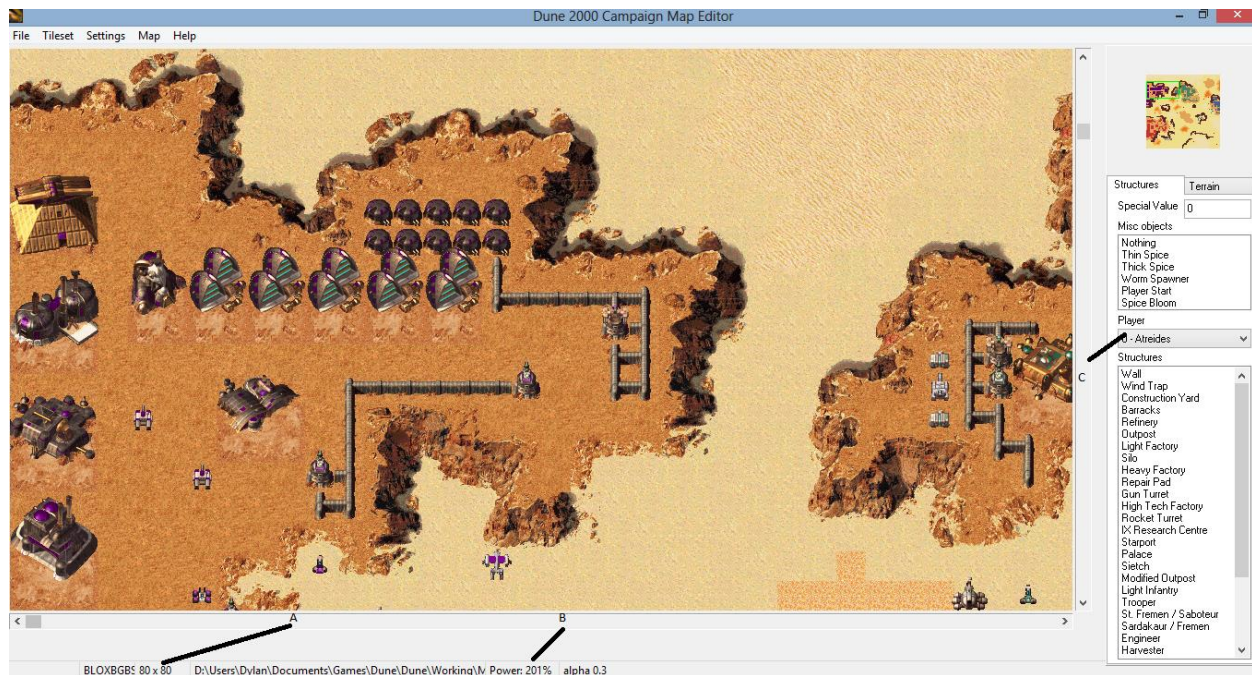
A: The X and Y coordinates the mouse is positioned at

B: The estimated amount of power the selected house will have in game (fairly accurate)

C: The selected House. Units and structures placed will belong to this house.

If you are planning on using sub houses, keep in mind that certain behavior that is changed in the mission scenario is not loaded instantly. If player 1 is the Atredies, and you edit them to be the Mercenaries in the mission scenario, all units spawned on the map (such as combat tanks) will be the Atredies version. To get around this, you can have the unit appear at the mission start through an event (more details in the mission scenario section). This will also apply to the palace for the Mercenary Smuggler and Fremen houses, as they do not have a unique palace.

When placing buildings, keep in mind each building needs a certain amount of free space to exist in game. Wind traps for example, require two squares below the wind trap to be free. If you have a building occupying the same space as a unit, another building or terrain, the building will load with graphical glitches, and will be missing the proper collision. If a building goes off the map, the map will not load.

When designing a player's base, keep your idea in mind. Is the player starting with a non-standard objective like protecting the starport? Is there a special unit they need to destroy? Are they building a base, or capturing one? If they are capturing one, is it well defended? Generally, the player only starts

with a construction yard and a few basic buildings at most. AI bases are usually completely furnished with buildings, and the AI will usually not build any structures that it does not start with. AI bases are also usually closed off with only a few routes for attack, whereas player bases are usually open on multiple sides, in order to increase difficulty.

No matter how you design your mission, you need to ensure that there is at least 1 worm spawn on the map, and around 6 spice blooms, or the game will not load. Ideally, there will also be units placed inside the AI bases, which the AI will dedicate to defending the base (they will be treated as under "guard mode" for almost all intents and purposes). If you place units for a faction and do not give it AI in the mission scenario, it will not do anything but guard. Player spawn markers are ignored in single player. If a faction starts with low power, rocket turrets will not function, and everything will build at a drastically reduced rate.


AI bases usually utilize walls in addition to the natural terrain to restrict entry. Keep in mind that walls can be destroyed, and the AI will attempt to rebuild them.

Scenery is very important in order to prevent your map from looking bland. Placing scenery is especially important on large plains of sand, as these areas are often the most repetitive. Done right, scenery can add a feeling of immersion to a map.
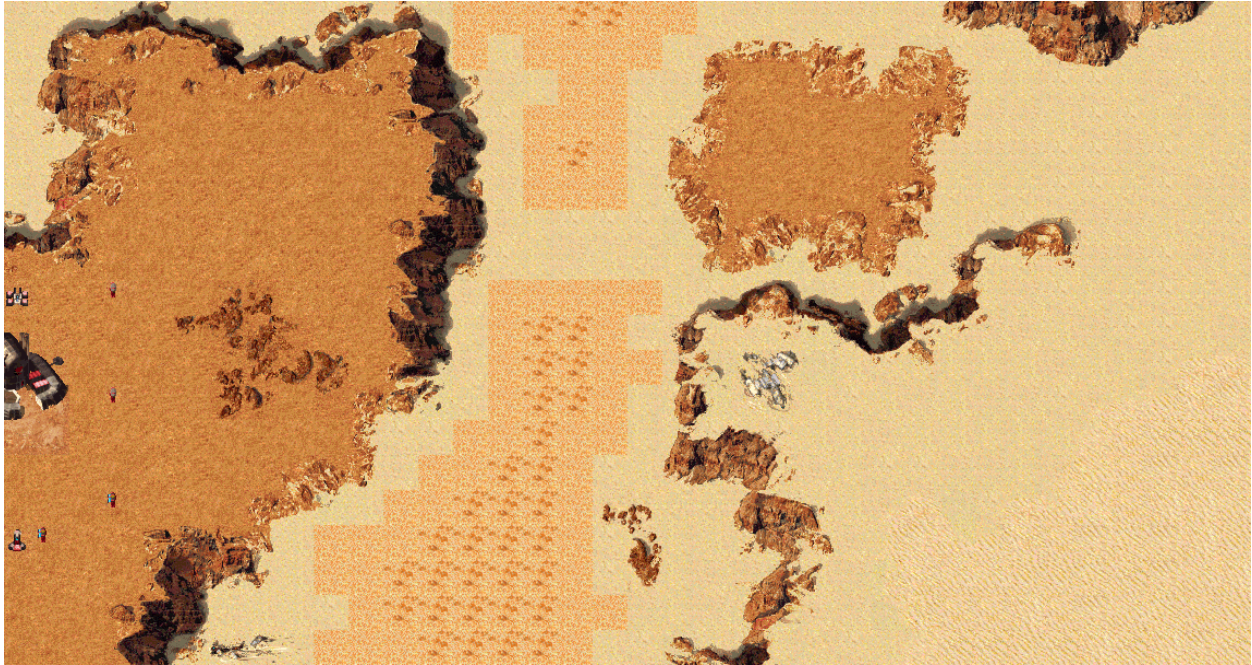
Placement of this destroyed carryall suggests that the Ordos and Atredies were in large scale combat before they allied against the Harkonnen.

Placing a neutral faction can have an interesting effect on gameplay. The player can exploit the resources of said faction by utilizing an engineer and capturing the neutral structures, or they can be used as a trigger for specific events like in Atredies mission 5.
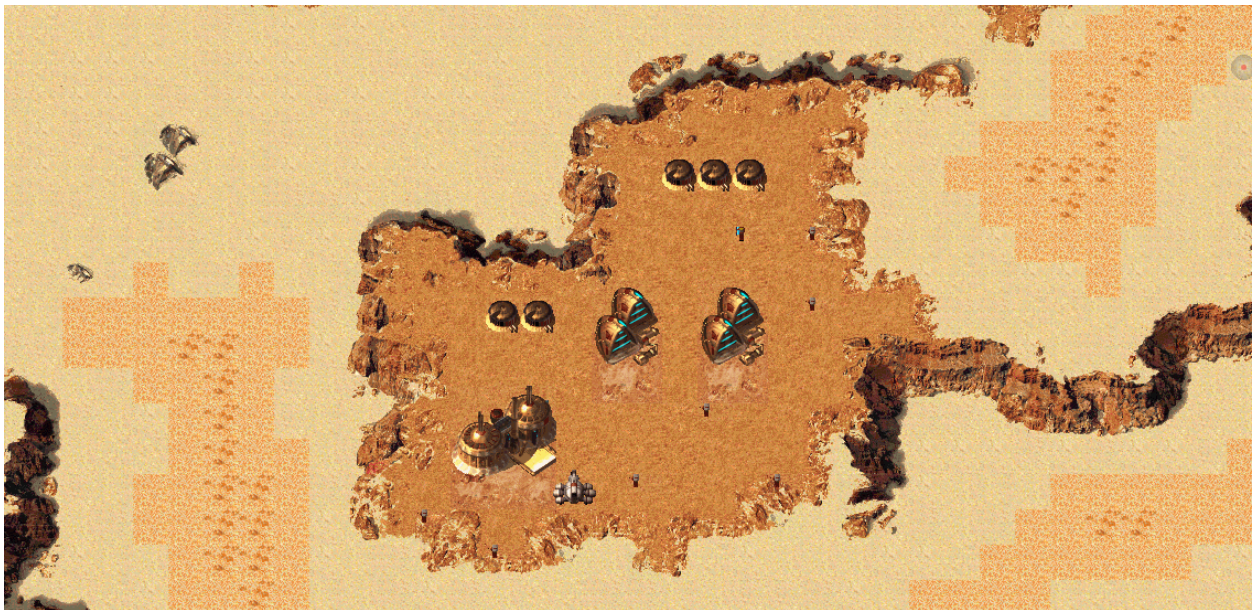
The smuggler base provides an easy way for the player to get additional spice and possibly a harvester early in the game.

Look forward to the full release of this guide alongside the completed version of Dune 2000: Rise of the Mercenaries!