STUDENT HANDOUT

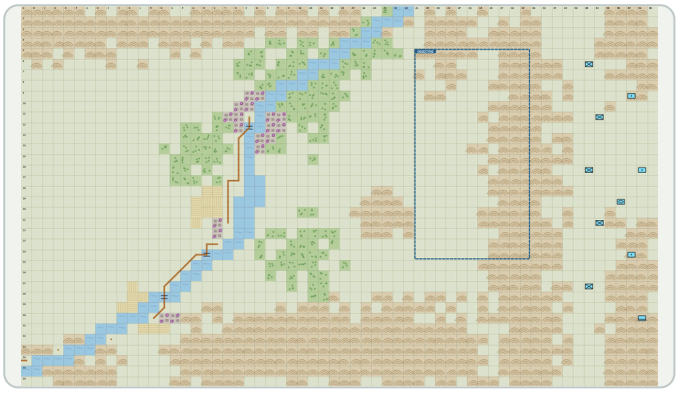
The Heights above Jermuk

Jermuk, Vayots Dzor Province, Armenia, on the border with the Kalbajar District of Azerbaijan · 13 to 14 September 2022

Information as of September 2026



Scenario illustration · AI generated



Student map · own side only · Simulation situation map · reconstructed terrain and estimated deployments; not verified historical positions.

Learning objectives

- Compare observed contacts and losses around the authored mountain and town positions, and explain the model's terrain-cover assumptions. A successful run does not establish that commanding heights determined the historical outcome.
- Compare the attacker's use of artillery, an armed drone and loitering munitions with a defender who has artillery and a little air defence but no drones.
- Separate the two governments' reported positions, equipment losses and casualties from independently verified findings. Explain the UN briefing's explicit inability to verify the reported specifics.

Run time and a good result

Default run clock: 2 minutes 50 seconds at 1×, excluding pauses, briefing and discussion. Time controls change elapsed play time.

Objective: Take the heights east of Jermuk, between the border and the town, and hold them with no Armenian unit left inside the marked zone when the ceasefire comes. Your Bayraktar TB2 can find and strike positions and guns on the slopes; keep the Harop loitering munitions for Armenian air defence. Jermuk, Kechut and Gndevaz are full of civilians, and the forests around the town catch fire, so check every target before you strike.

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zone with at least one combat unit and no opposing combat unit for 8 continuous simulation seconds. The authored limit is 170 simulation seconds across 1 stage. Compare objective progress, time, losses, drone expenditure and recorded civilian harm with a second run. A strong classroom result also explains the source evidence and reconstruction estimates; it does not verify a historical casualty count.

Atrocity notice

Human Rights Watch verified a video showing the execution of Armenian prisoners of war, apparently by Azerbaijani forces during September 2022 fighting, and called it a war crime. The report does not locate that execution on this scenario's Jermuk map.

These reports describe the wider conflict. They do not establish that every crime occurred in this modeled battle.

Studying or commanding a side does not endorse its conduct. Drone Front never lets players target civilians, hospitals, schools or places of worship. Civilian harm from simulated strikes is counted and shown in the debrief, including nonzero harm. Civilian massacres are never playable operations. Designated terrorist forces and Wagner remain computer controlled; Gaza war events remain excluded from play.

▼ Dated reports and findings

- 2022-10-14 · Human Rights Watch: video shows Azerbaijan forces executing Armenian POWs

Learn more: the laws of war

- ICRC: Geneva Conventions and commentaries
- ICRC: Customary IHL database
- UN: Genocide Convention (9 December 1948)
- UN: Rome Statute (17 July 1998), articles 6–8

Historical source notes

In mountains, height is the objective. Fighting over two days moved a border line held by companies on ridges, and each side's account of it differs: Azerbaijan said it took more than 50 positions and commanding heights, Armenia said it later regained six positions, and Wikipedia records about 200 square km of Armenian territory occupied along the whole border.

Drones let the attacker see and strike positions on steep slopes that ground observers cannot reach. The Armenian Ministry of Defence said Azerbaijan used drones as well as artillery, and Azerbaijan said it destroyed two S-300 launchers. The sources used do not say which drones flew over Jermuk; a defender with few air defence units and no drones of its own has to decide what to protect.

Shelling near a town reaches civilians and the land itself. Armenia's Emergency Situations Ministry said shelling set the forests of Jermuk on fire, Armenia's UN representative condemned strikes on the Kechut reservoir, and Armenian officials said 192 houses were damaged in three provinces. On 16 September 2022, Public Radio of Armenia reported the Human Rights Defender’s estimate of 7,600 people displaced from Gegharkunik, Syunik and Vayots Dzor. This was an attributed regional estimate, not a Jermuk-only count. Azerbaijan said two of its civilians were injured. A commander has to weigh each target against the town, the forest and the dam beside it.

Civilian harm

Armenia's Emergency Situations Ministry said Azerbaijani shelling caused forest fires in Jermuk. Armenia's UN representative Mher Margaryan said the resort town had absolutely no military targets and called its shelling a war crime. No independent investigation of the Jermuk strikes was found in the sources used.

Armenia's UN representative said strikes against the Kechut water reservoir risked a catastrophic human toll and environmental impact. The sources used give no independent assessment of damage to the dam.

The secondary account attributes preliminary housing-damage figures to Armenia's deputy minister. The original ministerial statement was not verified here; the UN meeting's account of allegations does not independently confirm these figures.

On 16 September 2022, Public Radio of Armenia reported the Human Rights Defender’s estimate of 7,600 people displaced from Gegharkunik, Syunik and Vayots Dzor. This is a dated attributed estimate across three provinces, not a count for Jermuk alone.

The two governments reported civilian injuries. This lesson does not combine the first-day injury reports and a later reported hospital death into a verified total; categories, dates and reporting parties must be checked separately.

Heads of diplomatic missions and international organisations accredited in Armenia visited Jermuk to see the consequences of the shelling (Wikipedia, citing CivilNet).

Evidence for learning objectives

Panorama reports Kocharyan's claim that six positions were regained and his warning that the figure could change. The UN record of15 September explicitly states that it could not verify reported specifics.

The UN briefing reports fighting involving drones but leaves specifics unverified. The scenario's chosen types, numbers and observation effects are teaching assumptions rather than independently established local facts.

At the UN meeting, Armenia's representative alleged shelling of Jermuk and strikes against Kechut reservoir with human and environmental risks. The UN briefer explicitly said reported specifics could not be verified.

Timings

For 60 minutes, brief for 15, run it once as Azerbaijan for 25 and review for 20; for 90 minutes, add a second run in which the class commands Armenia and compare where each side's drones and guns made the difference; for 180 minutes, give syndicates different plans for both sides, run them, then spend the last hour comparing each government's public claims in the sources with what happened in the runs.

Session	Plan
45 minutes	Brief: 10 min; Run: 15 min; Collect: 5 min; Review: 15 min
60 minutes	Before questions: 5 min; Brief: 10 min; Run: 20 min; Collect: 5 min; Debrief and after questions: 15 min; Discussion: 5 min
90 minutes	Before questions: 5 min; Brief: 10 min; Run 1: with drones: 20 min; Run 2: without drones: 15 min; Collect: 5 min; Compare and discuss: 25 min; After questions: 10 min
180 minutes	Before questions: 10 min; Brief and staff roles: 15 min; Run 1: with drones: 25 min; Run 2: without drones: 20 min; Break: 10 min; Run 3: syndicates: 30 min; Collect: 10 min; Seminar replay and debrief: 40 min; After questions: 10 min; Close: 10 min

Staff roles

commander
Set the pre-run posture and available standing orders, allocate drone observation and strikes, and report progress in the authored heights zone and remaining time. Individual infantry and armoured-group movement is automatic.

intelligence
Track which Armenian positions, guns and air defence units have been found, and keep a separate list of each side's claims that the run does not confirm.

fires
Observe artillery engagements and ammunition, recommend available standing orders, and flag drone launches near the authored towns, reservoir or forest. Individual gun-target assignments are unavailable.

droneOps
Plan the TB2 search over the slopes and the Harop strikes on air defence, and report every drone lost.

Opposing staff objective

Hold at least one position on the heights east of Jermuk until the ceasefire on 14 September. Your companies are spread thin across steep ground; use your artillery near Jermuk and Kechut against attackers on the slopes, and keep your air defence alive, because it is the only answer you have to the drones overhead. You have no drones of your own in this scenario.

Decision points

- Before the first move on the night of 12 to 13 September: do you send the TB2 to find the Armenian positions on the heights, or to find the air defence and guns near Jermuk first?
- When your infantry is on the slopes and Armenian artillery near Kechut opens fire: do you spend a Harop on the air defence or use the TB2 against the guns, knowing both sit close to villages and forest?
- Near the end of the authored scenario, compare remaining drone stocks, observed defenders and progress toward the heights take zone. Which available launches and standing orders do you change? Individual ground advances and withdrawal are automatic.

Before and after questions

1. **How should a student handle the conflicting national accounts recorded in the UN's15 September 2022 briefing?**

   A. Present both figures as independently confirmed territorial changes
   B. Interpret the figures as showing no Armenian losses
   C. Interpret the figures as describing the entire frontier
   D. Attribute conflicting figures and state verification limits clearly

2. **What information and engagement contribution do drones add in this classroom model?**

   A. Substituting aerial observation for information about ground supply capacity
   B. Drones add modeled visibility and conditional strikes against positions difficult to observe from the ground
   C. Inferring artillery survivability from its currently observed ground positions
   D. Establishing target identity from observation without comparing available evidence

3. **What allocation problem does the model illustrate for a defender with few air-defence units?**

   A. Prioritise protection among exposed positions
   B. Allocate resources using distance alone
   C. Treat concealment as adequate protection
   D. Preserve coverage at earlier positions

4. **Why did Armenia's representative describe the Kechut reservoir allegation as a wider civilian concern?**

   A. Reservoir capacity established limited consequences from the reported strike locations
   B. Distance from housing justified excluding wider environmental effects from assessment
   C. The alleged strikes raised human and environmental harm concerns
   D. Reported departures justified assuming negligible exposure around the affected infrastructure

5. **What did the UN briefer say about verifying the parties' reports at the15 September 2022 meeting?**

   A. The briefing treated national reports as independently corroborated incident findings
   B. The United Nations could not verify the reported specifics
   C. The briefing used agreement between casualty reports as sufficient confirmation
   D. The briefing resolved the allegations using a completed legal assessment

Discussion

- Armenia called the fighting an attack on its territory; Azerbaijan said it responded to provocations and mines. How should a staff officer present two such accounts in a briefing, and what evidence would settle them?
- At the UN Security Council meeting, Armenia alleged shelling of Jermuk and strikes against the Kechut reservoir. The UN did not verify the reported specifics. How should a briefing distinguish those allegations from confirmed damage, and address civilian and environmental risk?
- The defender had no drones in this scenario. What did that cost them, and what could a defender in the mountains do instead?
- AP reported that an earlier Russia-brokered ceasefire quickly failed and that an Armenian official announced a new truce effective on 14 September 2022. How would you distinguish an announced agreement from observed cessation of fighting, and what can a run's ending establish?

Debrief rubric

Strong
Meets the objective or explains why it was not met; uses the published sources and run evidence, separates known facts from assumptions, compares both sides' losses and cost exchange, and evaluates precautions against civilian harm.

Adequate
Describes the objective and main decisions, identifies at least one source and model limitation, reports losses and harm, and gives a reasoned change for a second run.

Weak
Reports only victory or points, treats teaching settings as real performance, gives unsupported historical claims, or omits uncertainty and civilian harm.

Published readings

1. Eurasianet: Azerbaijan launches wide ranging attacks against Armenia (Joshua Kucera and Ani Mejlumyan, 13 September 2022)
2. Carnegie Europe: More Storm Clouds Gather Over Armenia, Azerbaijan (Thomas de Waal, 22 September 2022)
3. The Jerusalem Post: Attacks on Armenia represent dangerous escalation (Seth J. Frantzman, 13 September 2022)

Complete source list

Wikipedia: September 2022 Armenia-Azerbaijan clashes
Wikipedia: Jermuk
Wikipedia: Kechut
Wikipedia: Gndevaz
Wikipedia: Gndevank
Wikipedia: Vayots Dzor Province
Wikipedia: Arpa River
Wikipedia: Kalbajar District
Wikipedia: Bayraktar TB2
Wikipedia: IAI Harop
Wikipedia: S-300 missile system
Eurasianet: Azerbaijan launches wide ranging attacks against Armenia (Joshua Kucera and Ani Mejlumyan, 13 September 2022)
Carnegie Europe: More Storm Clouds Gather Over Armenia, Azerbaijan (Thomas de Waal, 22 September 2022)
The Jerusalem Post: Attacks on Armenia represent dangerous escalation (Seth J. Frantzman, 13 September 2022)
Deseret News: Why is Azerbaijan attacking Armenia?
CNN: Russia claims ceasefire reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan after fighting erupts along border (13 September 2022)
Reuters: Azerbaijan and Armenia ceasefire fails within minutes, media (13 September 2022)
Reuters: Armenia's PM says 49 soldiers died in clashes with Azerbaijan (13 September 2022)
AP: Armenian security official says Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed on a cease fire to end two days of fighting (14 September 2022)
AP: Armenia, Azerbaijan agree on cease fire to end fighting (Avet Demourian, 15 September 2022)
European Parliament Think Tank: Armenia and Azerbaijan, between war and peace (2023)
Journal of International Criminal Justice: Justice for the Victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (Sheila Paylan and Sareta Ashraph, 13 January 2026)

UN Security Council: S/PV.9132, verbatim meeting record (15 September 2022; speaker claims and UN verification limits)

Armenia Human Rights Defender: Ad hoc report on attacks of 13–15 September 2022 (published 16 September; paragraph 19, regional displacement)

Public Radio of Armenia: 7,600 persons displaced in Armenia, Human Rights Defender reports (16 September 2022)