**Mediterranean Fury #4 – Secure the Flank**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Mar 2019**

**THE SITUATION**

A couple of days have passed on the Syrian coast, and it turns out NATO's past successes have been greatly exaggerated. The Russian fleet remains a powerful force, the SA-10 belt in Latakia has been replenished, and the Syrian air defence net is intact. We have been instructed to conduct strikes against these forces, as well as to get three vulnerable refueling ships down to the Suez Canal, in order to re-arm the incoming Nimitz group. The Israeli question hangs in the air too - can we keep them out of the war?

NATO air-forces in the region have grown, and now include Jordanian allies, three bases in southern Turkey, one in Egypt, and bases on Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily. In addition to surviving naval forces sheltering west of Cyprus, with seriously depleted magazines, I have a string of naval forces stretching from Cyprus to Sicily, including a frigate screen, the remains of the Brit carrier group, the Bainbridge (hurrying in from Spain), French and Italian carrier groups, my command ship, and finally the distant Eisenhower CVBG.

Unfortunately, I have several constraints on the carriers. High command doesn't want the Ike to come much further east, and in fact they're going to order the entire group west, into the Atlantic, in a day or so. The Ike will be distant support at best. The Italians want their carrier back ASAP, since things look ominous in the Adriatic, and it will take considerable political capital to keep it.

I have two days to accomplish my objectives. How to proceed?

**THE PLAN**

The Italian carrier group is excellent, not just for the planes (FLIR equipped Harriers, superb for finding ground targets), but for the 32 long-range Otomat ASMs they carry. My front-line ships have expended many of their missiles, and I could make good use of these while staying outside of Sunburn range. However, they're over 600 miles from the operating area, and unless I rush them at reckless speed they probably won't get there in time to contribute unless I wait far too long to attack. I reluctantly concede to Italian pressure and send them back to home waters.

My ships near Cyprus will re-organize somewhat. The depleted British ships will try to dash into Limassol, to stock up on SAMs, while the rest of the combatants join up with the Iowa group. I could send the depleted Americans back to Crete for reloads in Souda, but that's so far away they'd not be back until midway through the last day, and that's too long. They'll have to stay and fight with depleted magazines until reinforcements arrive. The Amphibs will break off, with only a Knox to provide ASW cover, and discretely head west, to get out of enemy radar cover. Until they do, they remain at risk from the Slava, which we're told has reloaded.

My frigate screen will break up, with most of them hurrying to join the Iowa, while the Andromeda heads west to meet up with the Fort Grange. The Brit group is breaking up, with one of the Type 23s heading back to the west end of Crete, while the other Type 23 and the Type 22 head for Port Said. The objective of these ASW ships is to proof the lane the oilers in Souda will follow on their way to the Suez. I'm worried about subs in the Aegean, so the oilers will be travelling around the west end of Crete, meeting up with my command group, and then heading ESE to the canal, picking up the ASW escorts as the proceed. My remaining ships (the Type 42 and Bainbridge group) will slow down and wait for the Foch to catch up, as they all proceed along a P-3 proofed corridor directly to Cyprus.



The Ike will steam to the eastern edge of its patrol zone, and immediately launch a long-range F-14 sweep, enabled by tankers out of Sigonella, to try and provoke the better enemy fighters to come up and engage, while picking on support aircraft like Badgers and Fencers without getting too deep into the SAM umbrella. Then, in the night, the Ike and Foch will launch a heavy ASM strike, along with the Iowa group, to try and sink the Russian fleet in one blow. By the time the strikers are back and reloaded it will almost be time for the Ike to head west. I may be able to squeeze some extra SEAD activity in, but probably not another alpha-strike.

My land-based air will primarily concentrate in AA activity at first, to reduce Syrian and Russian fighter numbers, before trying to tackle their SAMs directly the following day. As a result, many of the Turkish F-4s are being ordered to unload their bombs and put their Sparrows back on. I'm still undecided about the Latakia area. I don't have swarms of TLAMs to saturate the SA-10 belt, and I don't have an extra day to whittle down their fighter and SAM stockpiles if I want to combine with the Ike's Harpoon attack tonight. I don't know if I can pull off another sweep of all the Latakia defences in one strike. Staff are assigned to study the issue...

Let's see how long this plan survives the enemy!

The weekend is always better with a little Command. Therefore...

**FEB 16 – FIRST AFTERNOON**

Ships courses are laid in according to the plan, aircraft loadouts are adjusted, and events get underway. Tankers launch out of Sigonella, heading east for distant Cyprus, and as the pass the Eisenhower all the F-14s (except the few remaining behind as CAP) form up to follow them on their path. The Italian carrier turns back to help in the Adriatic, and leaves our command for the moment. As the other ships settle down on their new routes, P-3s start patrolling the lane they are expected to pass through, and one of them gets a VLAD contact on an SSN of some sort. It turns out to be a newer Victor, patrolling in the path of the Foch group, and the P-3 swiftly sinks it with a couple of torpedoes. Other than that, my western forces proceed uneventfully for the moment.

Things are much more exciting in the east, where Syrian MiG-25s make an immediate dash to try and pick off my AWACS, but fortunately my fighters are able to cut it off before it can make the intercept. Radar reports from the excited AWACS crew suggest that the main Russian fleet seems to be sticking very close to its base in Latakia, with several units stationary in the port itself, presumably for missile replenishment. Combining the point defences of the fleet with the area SAMs in Latakia means this will be a very tough target. The AWACS crew also report that the fighter patrols in the area match the pattern from previous days, with Russian MiG-23MLDs over the ocean, and a combined patrol of Syrian MiG-21/23/29s a few miles inland. The jammer Fencers are back too. The ESM operators are also reporting surveillance radar emissions from multiple SA-5s. The Syrians seem to have the long-range part of their air-defence net up and operating now, which is forcing my large slow support aircraft to stay well back from the coast. Even my fighters will have to be careful of the long-range shots as they approach the mainland.

While the AWACS is keeping track of things in the upper world, my three SSNs begin closing in on Latakia, taking the time to make a careful sonar survey below the waves. The Torbay has the good fortune to make a sonar detection of a distant SSK, which is somewhat of a surprise given how quiet those targets can be. Over the next couple of hours it cautiously stalks its quiet target (which fortunately is travelling away, so the Torbay is in its baffles to begin with) and sinks the Kilo with a single torpedo.

**ATTACK ON JORDAN**

My forces include the recently allied Jordanians, and I had assumed their role in the conflict would be a minor part, primarily bombing some of the older and more vulnerable Syrian SAM sites. The Syrians disagreed however, and Jordanian radar began to detect a large strike force forming up near the Jordanian border, starting with a large number of MiG-29s, and then an alarming number of slow moving attack planes, headed for the H5 airbase. Fortunately, the size of the strike meant it took a while to form up, so the Jordanians had time to scramble their entire Mirage fleet, as well as the majority of their AAM-armed F-5s, and poise them to attack. The Mirages met the incoming raid and directed all their long range missiles (R530s) at the leading Fulcrums, managing to down enough of them and ruin the attacks of others, so the encounter went largely in our favour, and the F-5s could plunge into the mass of incoming Albatros attack planes. Normally F-5s with front-aspect missiles should absolutely dominate that engagement, but Jordanian cadets suck! They may be well intentioned, but between fumbling for switches and getting settings wrong, it took them forever to make engagements, and they'd often go hurtling past their ‘victims’ before they could get a missile off. In many cases the Mirages had to circle back around and come in from the rear with their old rear-aspect Magics in order to make the interceptions for the cadets. Fortunately, the slow-moving Albatrosses gave the Jordanians enough time to recover from their fumbles.

What the pilots couldn’t see was the flock of Scud missiles passing far overhead, towards their airbase in the rear. National assets had flashed launch warnings to high command shortly after the missiles had launched from central Syria, but the Jordanians had no effective defence against the incoming missiles. I foolishly ordered a scramble of a few more F-5s, hoping to get them into the air before the Scuds arrived, but they were still on the runway access point as the warheads started to impact, and four of them were destroyed by the fragments hurled by the massive blasts. Most of the missiles fell among the hardened shelters at the north-west end of the airport, but none of them took a direct hit, and the aircraft inside the sturdy structures remained completely unharmed. I should simply have ridden out the attack in the shelters. A second wave of missiles a few minutes later threw more dirt around, but did no damage to essential infrastructure. A few missiles landed near HAWK sites, but their inaccuracy meant no damage happened there either. Fortunately, the Syrians don’t seem to have targeted the airbase runway, or worse yet, one of the airfields on Cyprus. Those have no hardened shelters, and aircraft damage there would have been severe.

In the aftermath of the attack the Jordanians hurried back to base, since everything except bomb-armed planes had been launched to defend against the attack. As the last couple of planes circled to land, one of my HAWK batteries suddenly reported a visual contact on low-flying planes only a few miles away. The HAWKs had briefly turned on their radars during the incoming strike, but hadn’t engaged anything, so their radars had been shut off again, which is why they didn’t spot the attackers further out. Frantically hurrying to reactivate the radar, the HAWK crew managed to shoot down a pair of attackers at extremely close range, just before the Fitters overflew them with a roar. The crew cringed, awaiting the blast, but there were no bomb bursts, so the crew shot down the remaining attackers as they flew away. Later, analysis of the wreckage showed that the Fitters had been carrying AS-9 ARMs, but by the time my crew had the radar back on again they were inside the minimum launch range, and couldn't attack. A lucky break!

**SKIRMISHING**

With that attack over, a number of skirmishing actions begin around the edges of Syria, as my pilots start trying to attrite the Syrian air force.

My AMRAAM armed F-16s out of Incirlik make a concerted effort to engage the Russian MiG-23MLDs based out of Latakia, flying in low and bagging two dozen of them, as well as making a good score against the MiG-29s patrolling in NE Syria. The Turkish F-16s also do very well against the MiG-21s in the Syrian rear, running away from the occasional MiG-25s which try to spoil their fun. The MiG-25s make several more attempts to get at the AWACS, and my AEW helicopter over Cyprus. After being chased for a second time the AWACS takes to bravely hiding behind the Patriot, so hopefully it’s fairly secure for the moment.

A few Osas venture out of the security of their SAM umbrella, heading in the direction of Tarsus. A Harrier from Cyprus gets one of them with a Sea Eagle, while his other missile fails to light its motor and falls harmlessly into the sea, and the remaining Osas turn about and head back home.

I’m not the only one shooting at Syrians, and the Israelis use their SAMs to take some shots at Syrian fighters which get too close to the border. Every plane is a help, but I hope this doesn’t lead to a wider conflict.

**ATTACK ON CYPRUS**

The Syrians aren’t content to skirmish, and AWACS starts reporting another big strike forming up out of Tiyas. We’re seeing the radar emissions of at least 8 MiG-23MLs, and there are over 40 attack planes with them, all headed for Larnaca. They aren’t plodding along like Albatrosses either. These Fitters are 140 knots faster in cruise alone, and I’ll have less time to catch them as a result. I’ve got a small hodgepodge of fighters on Cyprus, and I start launching all the ready birds I still have, but that clearly won’t be enough to stop a strike of this size.

Fortunately, the cavalry is here. The Eisenhower’s F-14s have just arrived, having tanked west of Cyprus, and they hurry in to join the fight. This isn’t why they’re here (they’re supposed to be hunting support aircraft and high-end fighters), but they’ll do just fine. The flight boss orders them to preserve Phoenixes wherever possible, but fortunately they have good long range Sparrows too, and by working with all the Cypriot planes, they manage to put down the incoming attack after heavy fighting. This is a success, but after the fighting’s over I only have one ready Tornado on Cyprus, and a pair of Harriers on the retiring Kearsarge group. For the next few hours, Cyprus won’t be able to defend itself from anything big.

**F-14s HUNTING**

Meanwhile, the F-14s regroup and advance, targeting the Badgers operating out of Damascus, and the jammer Fencers near Latakia, hitting them with Phoenixes from outside the effective SAM belt. They have to stay low, to keep out of the SA-5 radar, which eats fuel rapidly, and once the support planes are gone they head back to Cyprus to refuel. There are about a dozen Phoenixes left between them, so they return to the fight once more, hoping to pick on MiG-29s this time. They’re in a slightly peculiar situation, since they have very powerful missiles on board, but they don’t want to use them against the nimble MiG-21s which come up to challenge them, and their smaller missiles were already used defeating the Fitter raid. Observers now get to watch mighty F-14s running away from ancient MiG-21s, in order to get help from a pair of Harriers which still have dogfighting missiles on board. Having been rescued by their lowly brethren, the F-14s return to engage the MiG-29s, getting several good kills. After that, it’s back to Cyprus for a final tank-up, before the long trip back to the carrier in the deepening dusk. The tankers depart too, heading for Heraklion, rather than Sigonella, where they will ready to support tonight's attack.

In their wake, the Syrians seem to have lost all their Badger and Fencer jammers, as well as many of their ASW and targeting helicopters. Unless they’ve got another radar plane on delayed activation, they should be blind to my ships’ more distant movements later tonight.

**ATTACK ON TURKEY**

In the middle of the F-14s' back-and-forth raiding, the Syrians launch their third big strike. This one forms up out of Abu ad Dahur, and heads north towards the Malatya airbase in Turkey with a cloud of Albatros attackers escorted by MiG-23s.

Normally the Turks would be well placed to handle this on their own, since Malatya is the home of the F-4s that did such excellent air-to-air service in MF #2, but they're still switching back from bombs to AAMs. By my calculations, the strike will arrive 11 minutes before the first of the fighters are ready! I do have one ready flight of F-4s on intercept duty, but there's a MiG-25 lurking nearby, and I don't want to take off under his guns. So F-16s come rushing in from the east (with Sidewinders) and the west (with AMRAAM) to tackle the strike.

AMRAAMs outclass Apex, and the inbound attack is stopped before it can reach the target, but I'm starting to feel the logistical pressure. The F-16s at Incirlik are using up their AMRAAMs rapidly, and by the time dusk rolls around I’ve only got five left in my magazines, plus those already on my planes. I feel I’ve spent the missiles in high-odds shots on high-value targets, so hopefully the expenditure will pay off.

**NIGHT FALLS**

It's night now, and the F-14s are passing Crete as they head back to the carrier, where strike planes are readying for a night attack on the Russian fleet. The French carrier is doing the same, as are forces at Incirlik and down in Egypt. It should be quite a party...

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Hmmm... Welcome to Crete, Mr. Tango. Just checking to see if your papers are in order. Allow me to stamp your passport with this convenient Stingray!

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The weekend brought a little more time for Command, so here’s a quick update:

**POLITICAL MANEUVERS**

A few hours into the night I’m informed that a political delegation will be travelling to Israel on Air Force 2. They’re coming from the direction of Italy, and they’ve asked for an escort to make sure they’ve arrived safely. Evidently the situation with Israel is quite sensitive, and they need to conduct face-to-face negotiations. Up ‘til now my F-15s in Egypt have mostly stayed at home, but now they are tasked with this mission. One flight heads directly for the incoming airliner, settling on its wing as escort, and two more flights (and a supporting tanker) head for the Lebanese coast, just north of Israel. I figure that if the Syrians attempt to interfere, they will have to come that way, so I can cut them off long before they can threaten AF 2. Nothing happens, however, and AF 2 lands uneventfully. Somewhat disappointed, the fighter pilots fly along the coast and beat up the local Syrian CAP, before heading home.

**NAVAL ACTIVITY**

My task groups continue on their planned courses through the darkness, and AWACS keeps a constant eye on the Syrian and WP ships, but they are all staying close to home in Latakia for the moment. My three SSNs are slowly closing in on them, taking their time to be discrete, and in the small hours of the morning the LA starts getting good sonar contacts on the Krivak which is patrolling off the coast, screening the heavies from people like me. The LA’s torpedoes have a longer range than the Krivak’s sonar, and one long-range shot manages to kill the frigate without drawing any return fire. A couple of Petyas come to investigate during the next hour, and they each get torpedoed in turn. However, my attempts to close in on the heavies are foiled by the patrolling ASW helicopters. I can hear their dipping sonars, and I know they have MAD, and they’re so close together that any attempt to infiltrate further will almost certainly get me caught. My skippers reluctantly admit they aren’t going to get in, and they patrol quietly beyond the helicopters’ search area. (The heavies are stopped at the moment, so they are very quiet, and my subs don’t have a detection on them yet. As a player I could theoretically open fire with a BOL shot, since I can see the enemy on radar, but in reality, my subs wouldn’t have this information.)

I have better luck near the west end of Crete, where the Cumberland (one of the good British ASW ships) is heading to meet up with the two oilers which are currently making preparations to get underway in Souda. Sonar operators report a good contact ahead, and as the Cumberland slows to 2 knots to listen, they assess it as a confirmed SS. I doubt it’s a Kilo, or I probably wouldn’t have detected it so far away, but I could easily see one of the lesser subs coming down from the Black Sea – possibly a Tango or the like. The Cumberland’s helicopter heads out, and shortly radios back the news of a good hit and breakup sounds, so they hurry home to paint a sub on their nose. (Postwar records show this was actually a Foxtrot, not a Tango, but the latter sounds better in the record books. When in doubt, overclaim!)

**THE MAIN ATTACK ON LATAKIA**

The major strike against the Latakia area starts getting underway long before dawn. Slow-moving support aircraft start taking off to preposition themselves, and F-14s head out to screen, while attack planes from the Ike, Foch, Souda, Egypt, and Incirlik all converge in a perfectly coordinate precision operation, designed to eliminate land and sea based targets with surgical efficiency. Hah! What really happens is a haphazard mess of miscommunication (no, go to those tankers!), forgotten orders (Sir, didn’t you want the F-18s at Souda to attack too?), and botched timings that results in a jumbled 300 mile long string of aircraft trying to sort out their positions and sequences. Even the navy’s not immune, as I cleverly poise my consolidated Iowa battlegroup just within attack range, only to realize that I’ve been looking at the range ring for the four long-range Otomats. The dozens of Harpoons on board are still 25 nm out of range! It takes a sudden flank-speed dash to try and get into position in time, while planes refuelling off the Cypriot coast straggle in to their loiter positions. Finally, everything’s sort of ready in the growing light of dawn.

My previous attack on Latakia (MF #2) made use of a large number of TLAMs, and I don’t have so many this time, but I have far more HARMs than before, so they will make up the balance. First blood goes to the Etendards, coming in low with short-ranged Exocets to engage patrol boats and draw enemy SAM fire. Once the SA-10s start opening up the wave of HARMs is fired in reply, crippling many of the land-based SAMs, and then the Harpoons and TLAMs (and my four problem-causing Otomats) arrive en-masse. Plenty get shot down, but enough make it through to sink the Russian heavies and destroy one of the runways and the aircraft in open parking at Latakia.

With the major defences down, and almost no response from the Syrian air-force, attack planes are able to engage the remains of the lesser air-defence units, using LGBs and Mavericks from beyond their envelope. It’s the turn of the squadron of F-5s in Cyprus to arrive in the morning light, and attack radars, broken SAM sites, and Styx batteries all along the coast. (Speaking of Styxes, they never fired at me, nor did any of the enemy ships. My task group kept its radars and jammers off this time, and always had a good jammer plane orbiting overhead, so I suspect the enemy never had a good fix on me, even though I was in OTH radar range.) With little opposition in the north, some of my F-14s focus southward, and start lobbing Phoenixes at the MiG-25s orbiting on the far side of the southern SAM belt in the Damascus area. Under their protection, attackers with SLAMs are able to engage some of the SA-5s around Homs, damaging their radars even if they don’t destroy the site entirely. (The SA-5s were a real pest earlier in the afternoon but seem to have used most of their missiles by now.)

**SECONDARY ATTACKS**

As the main body of Latakia attackers begins straggling home, pausing to refuel before the long flight back home (over 800 miles to the Ike!), the Turks launch their attack on the Aleppo area. Recce flights over the northern Syrian air bases haven’t drawn any response, so the mix of F-5s, F-104s, and F-4s proceeds in reasonable confidence. The Turks don’t have any HARMs for this attack, and the Americans at Incirlik used all of theirs at Latakia, so there won’t be any SAM suppression. The Turks have to come in low. Fortunately, they’re only facing older SA-3s and SA-2s, not anything modern, and they rush in with rockets and bombs of all types, and soon they’ve left the Aleppo SAM defences in ruins.

Not to be outdone, the Jordanians follow up with their own strike. They don’t want to get deep into dense belt of low-level SAMs near Damascus itself, but there is one set of three SA-2s and an SA-5 exposed without low-level cover near Dumayr, and those are a worthwhile target. Like the Turks, the Jordanians have to attack without the benefit of ARMs, but their concentrated attack swiftly flattens their objectives, and they turn to retire. The Syrian fighters here haven’t been hit as severely as the ones up north, however, and two flights of MiG-25s scramble to intercept their retreat. Fortunately, two flights of American F-15s have flown in from Egypt, coming in from the south via Saudi airspace, and they manage to shoot down the MiGs before they can get into the retiring attack planes.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

It’s now noon, and the last few planes from the morning strike have landed and begun to re-arm. Only a modest CAP is up to protect the AEW and ELINT craft near Incirlik and Akrotiri.

The distant Ike has turned and is steaming towards the western end of its patrol zone, ready to head for the Atlantic when its patrol time is finished. The Foch, now grouped with the Bainbridge, continues to close on Cyprus, ready to support further attacks. My resupply ships in Souda have left port, and joined up with my command group and the Cumberland to steam for the canal. The Kearsarge amphibious group has met up with the few remaining unassigned Brits (their oiler, the Type 42, and the Andromeda), and they are now turning SE to escort their supply ship to the canal as well. P-3s are screening these transits, looking for lurking subs, and the Nimrods are patrolling the canal zone, but so far nothing has turned up yet.

The LA did find the second Kilo, just east of Cyprus, and sank it. They now have one FF, two ASW patrol boats, and an SSK to their credit, which isn’t bad for half a day’s work. It, and the other two subs, continue to patrol.

Syria's northern air defences are gone now, and their only remaining SA-5s are down with destroyed radars. This means I should have freedom to operate at high altitude, provided I stay out of SA-2 range. With more HARMs reloading for an afternoon strike, I think the writing is on the wall for the Syrian air defence network.

Progress resumes...

**AFTERNOON ATTACKS**

By mid afternoon, most of my aircraft are ready again, and the reduction of the Syrian air-defences recommences. Aircraft on the Ike, which is now sailing west, are not part of this attack, but F-18s and A-7s from Souda, F-18s and Super Etendards on the Foch, as well as attackers from Turkey and Egypt are ready to go. (The Jordanians, with their long ready times, won’t be ready again before the fading light of evening, so they will not be part of these strikes.)

I have plenty of HARM-carrying attackers, and they have enough missiles to devote two to every known battery of the SAM net. The aging system of SA-2s and SA-3s is essentially defenceless against them, and even the few SA-6s don’t manage to knock down the incoming missiles, and that leaves the network open to low-level attack by cluster bombs, iron bombs, and rockets. By late afternoon the known SAM sites have all been struck, and it’s safe to consider them out-of-service for at least a day or two.

A few of the lesser Syrian fighters make it into the air, but they don’t last long in the face of numerous American strikers, each carrying a pair of AMRAAMs. Aircraft bombing the air-defences near the Syrian airfields spot a few MiG-23s in outdoor parking at Marj Rhayill , and large numbers of Su-24s at the T-4 Airbase at Tiyas, but overflights by RF-4s and other planes find little at the remaining airfields. The aircraft parked outside can be hit easily enough (and some strikers are diverted to start doing that), but the problem is that the Syrians have numerous hardened shelters, and we have no way to know what’s lurking inside them. There could be surprises almost anywhere. I could start trying to plink shelters, but I could be hitting empties as easily as hitting full ones, so that may be a waste of ordnance. Instead, F-15Es and other aircraft with heavy LGBs, and F-4s with 2,000 lb iron bombs, begin bombing the runways of the major bases, hoping to throttle any remaining air activity that way. By the time night falls, all the military airfields are shut.

**NAVAL TRANSIT OPERATIONS**

There's little left to bomb in Syria at this point, so after putting up a modest CAP, the remainder of my pilots are given a chance to rest. No further Syrian air activity is observed.

At sea, my ships continue to advance towards their destinations. P-3s and Nimrods are working near the Suez Canal, and P-3s and S-3s are covering the path of the retiring Eisenhower. Despite the presence of numerous biologicals and false contacts between Sicily and Libya, no enemy submarines turn up there, and the Eisenhower makes its way to the rendezvous zone without interference.

My logistical ships also arrive at the Suez uneventfully, to await the arrival of the Nimitz. A few hours after they arrive ASW operators report a very faint contact at the northern edge of the Suez sonobuoy field, but it happens just as the plane is heading home to refuel, and by the time the next plane can get there the contact has faded out, and the new plane isn't able to recover it. The mystery contact (a Tango, it turns out) remains at large when the scenario ends shortly afterwards.