

November 18th, 2011.

It's been a difficult, busy night so far.

The IRGC rocket position in the mountains north of Rafsanjan was a tough nut to crack, well shielded by the terrain, well defended and with a very effective bolt hole located close by for the TELs to try and escape through.

Our landing at Romeo wasn't much easier, the high elevation of the FARP and small strip size meant our landings had to be right on the money. We got it done, but it wasn't easy that's for sure. We've been on the ground here less than an hour, sat in the dark, while our Marines are pulling out all the stops to get us refuelled and rearmed as quickly as they can. I can imagine this place looks spectacular in the day, sat in the shadow of Rayan castle and Mount Hezar, but tonight it's all black, except for just the FARPS few lights and the distant lights of Rayan.

As the ground crews were preparing our aircraft to go back out again, a Marine Major from the FARP's command post came to see us and gave us a rapid briefing. We have received news from Chieftain that ISR assets located between Rafsanjan and Kerman have made contact with high value Iranian military targets moving through a valley. Our loadouts are being changed at the request of the DASC and as soon as we are airborne we are to make contact with Chieftain, who will re-task us.

The Major then left, leaving us with very little to go on. We noted with interest the weapons being uploaded on our aircraft, with Chief receiving 8 GBU-12s and myself receiving 6 Mk-20s and 2 laser Mavericks. That's a lot of firepower crammed onto two small jets, yet another testament to the Harrier's ability to haul lots of weapons close to the frontline when using a FARP.

As the crews finished up on our aircraft, Chief and myself prepared ourselves, taking on fluids, food and fresh piddle packs. Once the crews signalled their work was complete, our jets were positioned ready for takeoff. Chief will get airborne first followed by myself. Landing was difficult, takeoff will be equally so. It's still dark and I'm going to need to wring all the performance out of the jet that I can at this elevation, I'll definitely need the water on this one.

