



28/06/2013, 13:00.

Late this morning I attended a hastily assembled briefing along with Newt and the CO. The briefing was put together for a time sensitive mission Newt and me have been assigned.

But before we got to the mission detail we covered the usual basics, starting with the intelligence briefing.

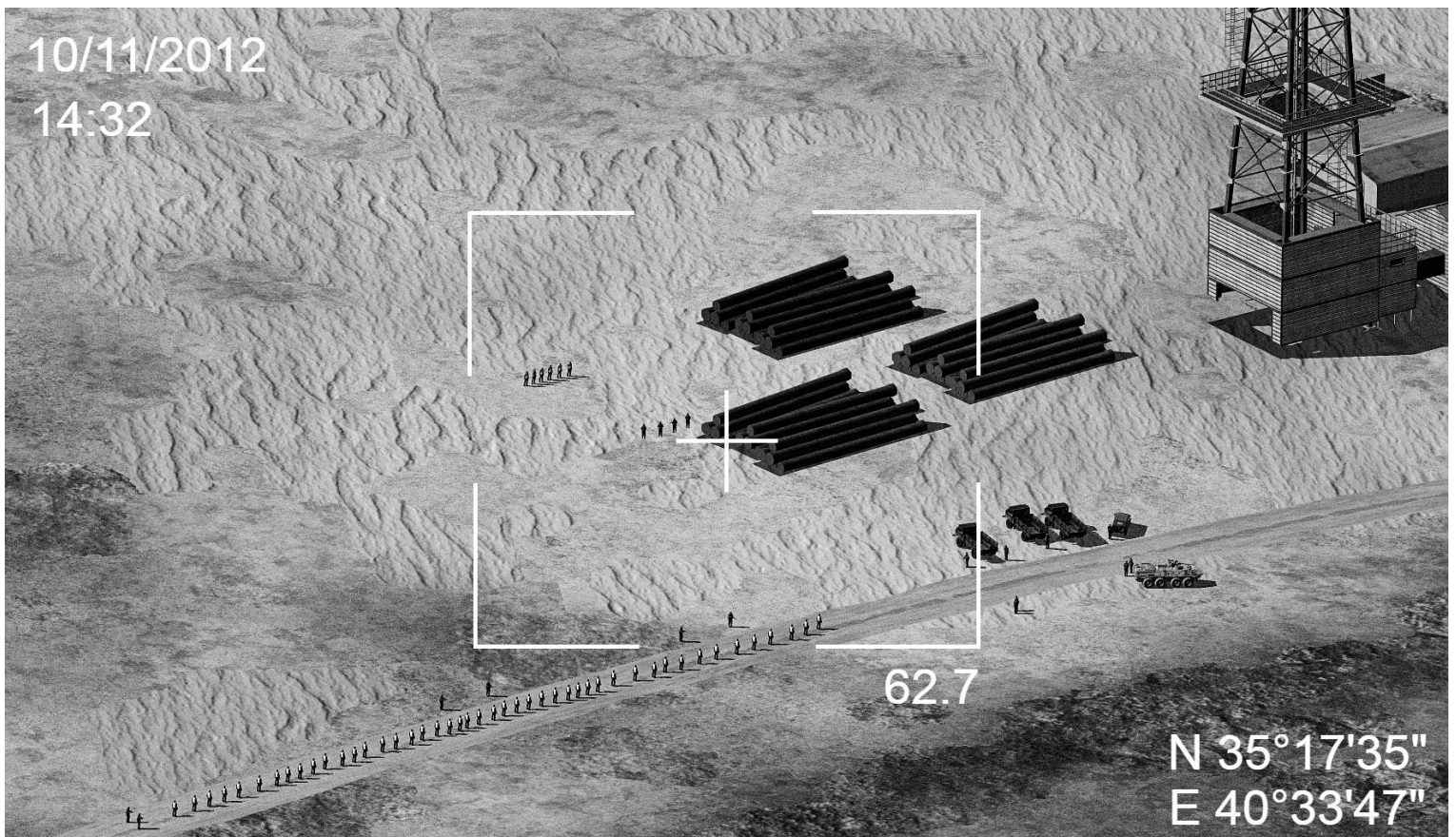
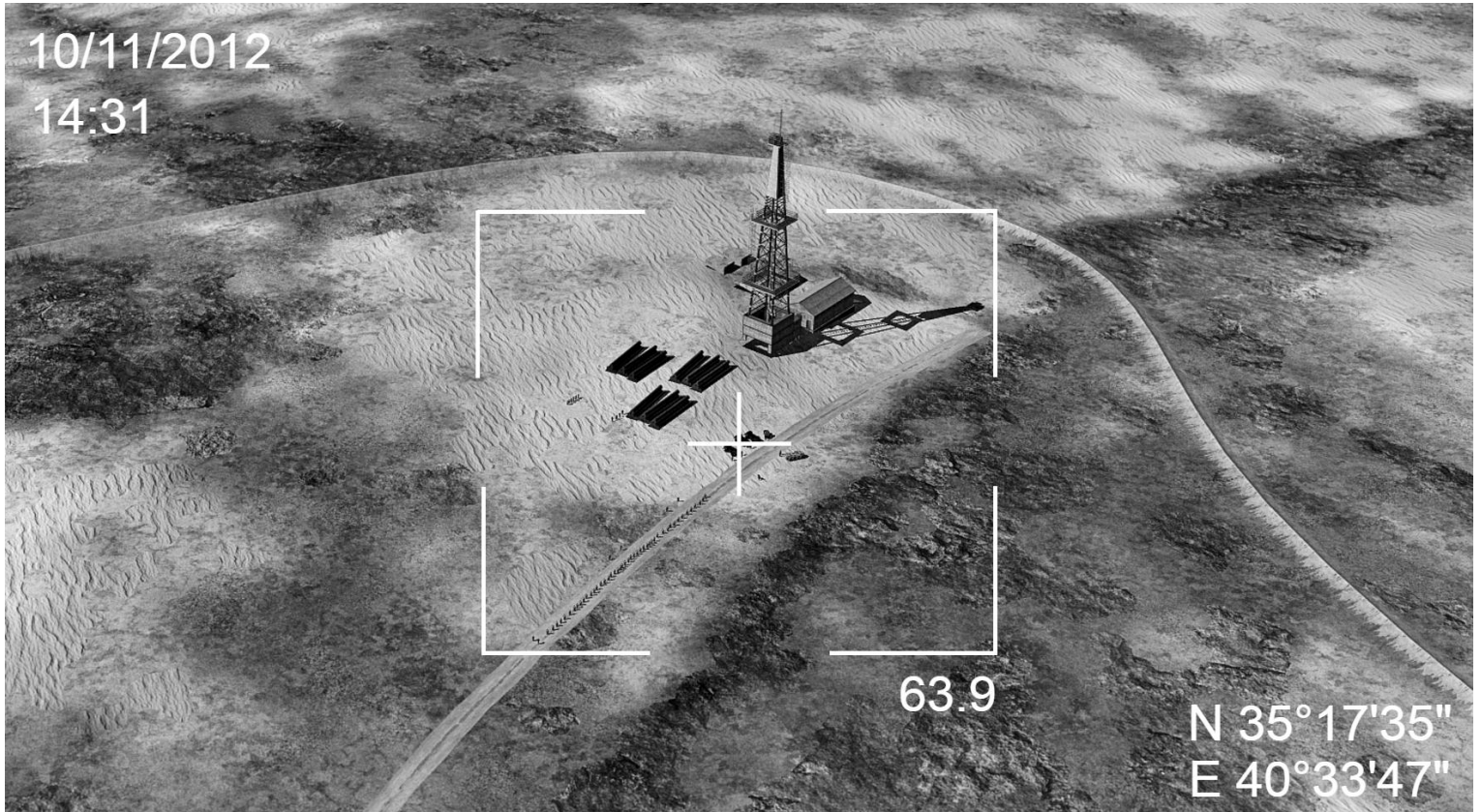
Major Daniels took the briefing today, he quickly covered all the salient details of what has been happening in the STO. Since the start of Operation Jackal the SDF and YPG have been making steady progress in pushing the SIA back towards Raqqa, with the most progress being made in the south around the Tabqa Dam. In the east of SIA territory our special operations teams have successfully taken control of a key bridge over the Euphrates and routes towards the Iraqi border. With regards to the other players within the region things have been quiet. Turkey has ceased it's attacks on targets in Syria, the presence of US and UK FACs with the YPG has no doubt had a part to play here. The Russians have continued to hit targets around Homs with air strikes but the pace has begun to drop off, intelligence has suggested the Russians are beginning to struggle to maintain a high operational tempo, given their inexperience with expeditionary operations. The Syrians have remained quiet during the first days of Operation Jackal, likely deterred by the heavy JSTF presence along the no fly zones. The final piece of information that Daniels revealed to us was that additional SA-6 sites had been detected around the point where no flies Sierra and Whiskey meet. It is possible these SAMs belong to Hezbollah and have been moved up inside Lebanon, bringing them closer to the Syrian border to bolster the air defence network there.

Captain Edwards then stepped up to give the met brief, the weather today is decent, with light clouds around 10,000 feet, light winds and high temperatures.

Lt. Colonel Lincoln then delivered the mission briefing to myself and Newt. We have been tasked to deliver a strike against an SIA high value target (HVT), the location of this target has been pinned down through a combination of SIGINT and surveillance via a UAV on ISTAR.

The HVT is a senior SIA commander, Saad Abdullah Sajid, a former Iraqi Army general who rose to prominence within the SIA. Sajid is believed to be in command of thousands of SIA fighters but is most infamous for his suspected involvement in a number of massacres of Syrian Kurds and was also believed to be in command at the notorious execution of 224 Syrian oil workers at Tayyeb Al Faall in eastern Syria. The Al Faall massacre carries a lot of notoriety in the JSTF, the event was recorded by a surveillance flight operation in western Iraq and unable to intervene, all the personnel aboard the flight could do was record and report.

Pictures from Tayyeb Al Faall made the news worldwide and during our briefing it was safe to say no-one had any concerns over the validity of our target.

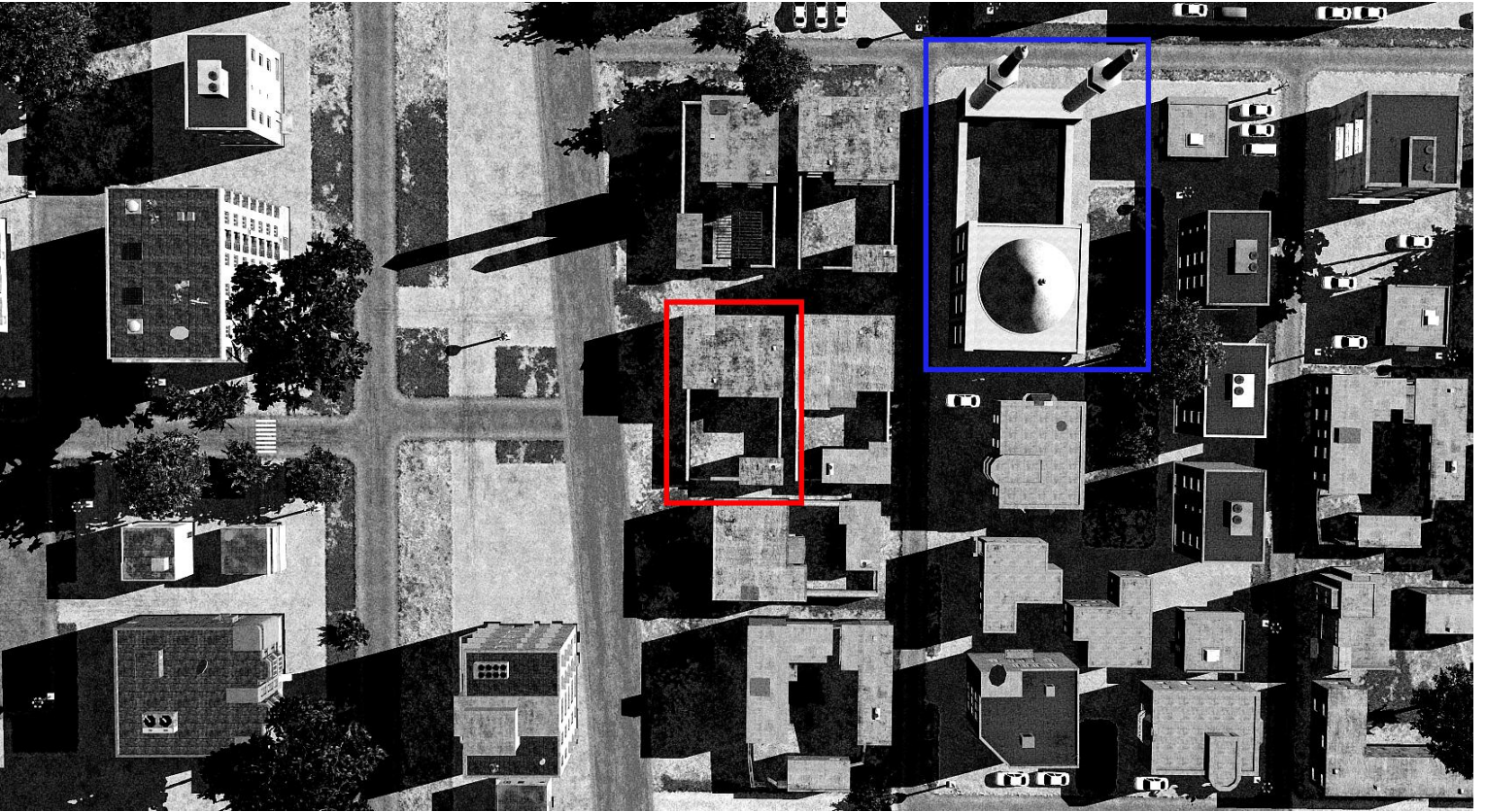


Intelligence believes that Sajid will remain at his current location for some time, at least 24 hours, they didn't reveal how they know that to be the case but we have to take it at face value. He is currently holed up in his residence in Raqqa, firmly within a residential area, fitting the common SIA strategy of utilising human shields whenever possible - although the adjoining buildings are believed to house his most loyal troops who serve as Sajid's bodyguard.

Given the location the attack will obviously need to be a precision strike, to achieve this we will be using 2000 pound GBU-31s. The strike coordinates have been provided within the briefing pack. We might not have any concerns over collateral damage in the immediately adjoining buildings but we still need to ensure this is a clean surgical strike. Along with the obvious risk to civilians from a bad drop there is a mosque just a few hundred feet from the target building. Hitting the mosque is something we would obviously rather avoid, the hope is that the buildings immediately adjacent to the target will shield the mosque from the worst of the impact. The risk from collateral damage raised a few eyebrows during the briefing but given the high level nature of the target command believes the benefits outweigh the risks.

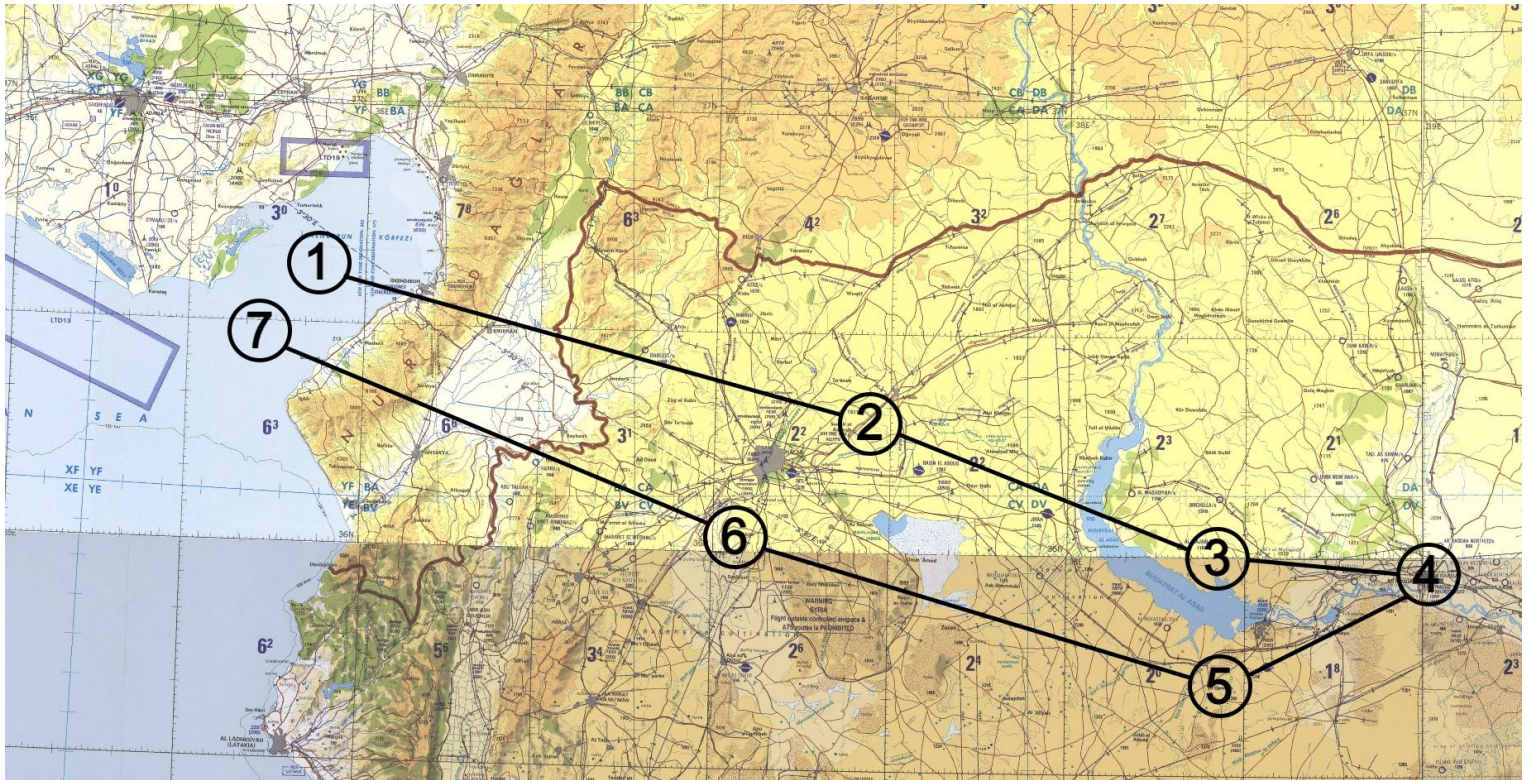
We'll also be hauling a lot of fuel for this sortie, we shouldn't need it but it'll give us loiter time over the target should we have any delay in getting authorization to strike. We'll be in a permissive environment so the loss of kinetic performance from the extra weight and drag doesn't concern me for this mission.





Mission flow should be fairly routine. We will carry out a standard departure from Incirlik and the MTCA, rendezvousing at waypoint 1. As we approach Raqqa (WP4) we will make contact with the UAV operator surveilling the target (Noble 4-2) and gain final strike authority.

Once we have destroyed the target we will clear Raqqa and return to Incirlik via the Gold corridor, following all standard return procedures.



Thanks to the recent SEAD and DEAD missions carried out we will be operating in a fairly permissive environment, certainly at high altitudes. All of the SIA SA-8 SAM systems have now been knocked out but it was pressed upon us that the SIA still pose a potent threat at lower altitudes given their ample supply of MANPADS and AAA.

Mission sounds like it should be nice and straightforward - low threat and a static target...all of which is fine by me as this whole mission was planned very rapidly. My main concern...avoiding that mosque!

Takeoff time is set for 13:50.