OPERATION RAPID EAGLE

VMA-311
DETACHMENT B

THEATER BRIEFING
11/05/11

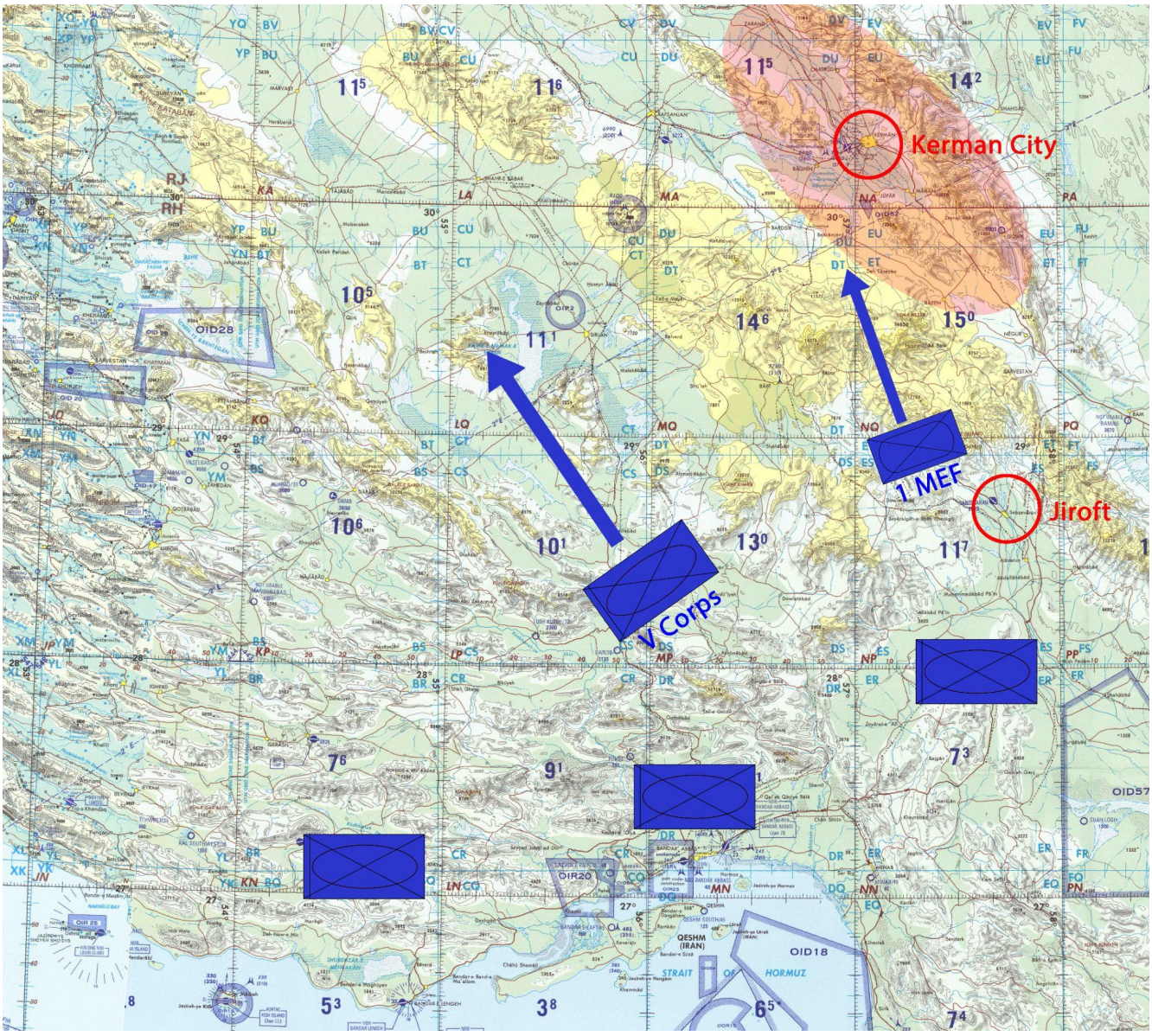
SITUATION

On the 26th October, 2011, the coalition launched the ground offensive of Operation Persian Freedom. The objective - to remove the Iranian government from control of the country following the violent and repressive crackdowns on democratic protesters earlier this year.

The ground offensive began well - coalition forces successfully crossed the Straits of Hormuz on the 26-27th of October and rapidly advanced inland through the Iranian southeast.

The UK 12th Armoured Infantry Brigade and US 2nd Cavalry Regiment secured the Halil Valley and city of Jiroft on the 1st November whilst the bulk of the US V corps began to push northwest towards Tehran.

However significant conventional and irregular Iranian forces remain in the vicinity of Kerman City. These forces pose a significant threat to the right flank and supply routes of V Corps. The USMC 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (1 MEF) has been given the task of breaking off from the main advance and securing the region.

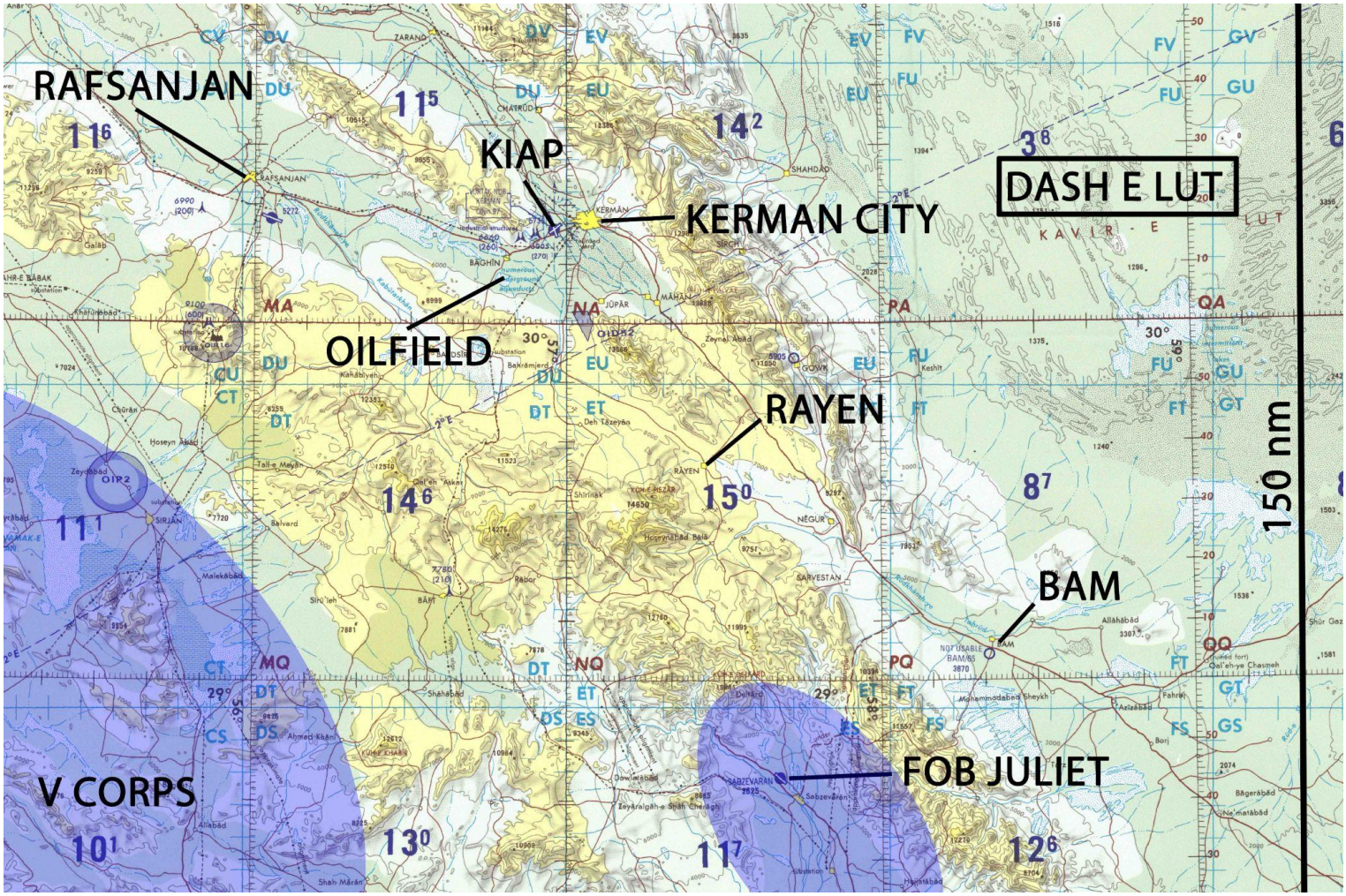


OPERATION RAPID EAGLE

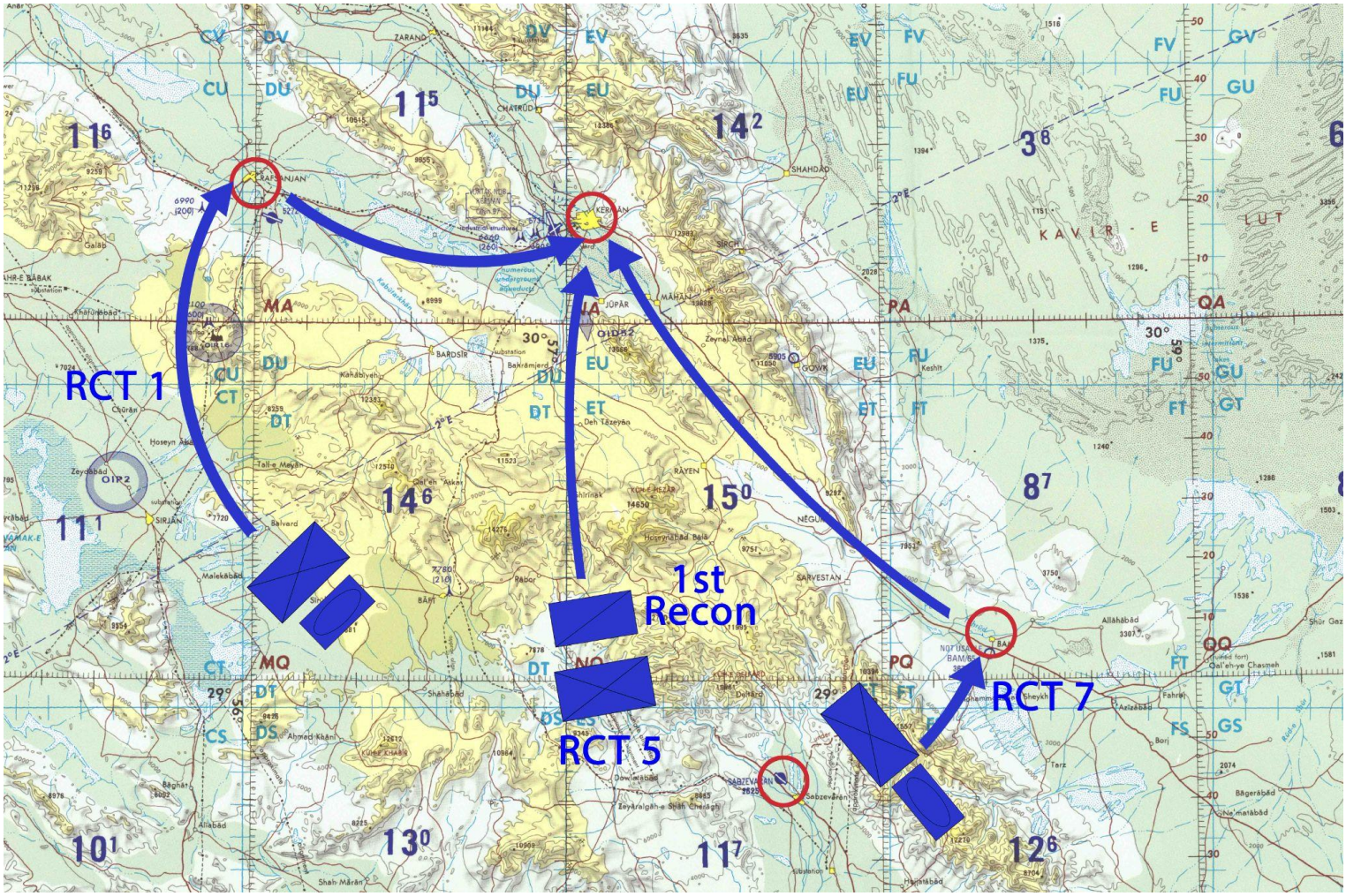
The objective of Operation Rapid Eagle (ORE) is to secure the remainder of Kerman province and protect the right flank of V Corps' advance into Iran.

1 MEF has been tasked with the destruction/removal of Iranian military and paramilitary forces from the Kerman area.

1 MEF AOR (The Kerman AOR):



The attack through Kerman will take place in two phases. Phase 1 will see Regimental Combat Team 1 (supported By M1A1s of the 1st Tank Battalion) push west of the Hezar mountain range and initially seize the city of Rafsanjan before pushing on to take Kerman International airport and secure the northern perimeter of Kerman City. As this is happening, RCT 7 will take control of Bam before pushing up the main highway and securing the southern perimeter of Kerman City. 1st Recon Battalion will secure the high ground between the two pincers and clear the route for RCT 5 to move forwards.



Close air support for Operation Rapid Eagle will be provided primarily by Marine AH-1W Cobras and AV-8B Harrier IIs, with Marine F/A-18Cs also providing additional strike, CAS and FAC(A) support.

Additional CAS, strike, SEAD and EW assets from the wider Persian Freedom air tasking order (ATO) will also be allocated when required.

US Order of Battle for Operation Rapid Eagle

1 MEF

GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT

1ST MARINE DIVISION

1st MARINE REGIMENT (RCT 1)

3 BTNS INFANTRY
1 BTN AAV (15 x AAV-7)
CALLSIGN "ICEMAN"

5th MARINE REGIMENT (RCT 5)

3 BTNS INFANTRY
1 BTN AAV (15 x AAV-7)
CALLSIGN "FIXER"

7th MARINE REGIMENT (RCT 7)

3 BTNS INFANTRY
1 BTN AAV (15 x AAV-7)
CALLSIGN "MADMAN"

11th MARINE REGIMENT
2 BTNS MLRS M270
2 BTNS M109 PALADIN

1st RECON BATTALION

SOF

1st MARINE RAIDER BATTALION

1st COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

1st TANK BATTALION

4 companies M1 Abrams (50 Tanks)

AIR COMBAT ELEMENT

3RD MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 11

VMFA-323
F/A-18C (USS NIMITZ)
CALLSIGN "REAPER"

VMA-311
'Det B' 6 x AV-8B (FOB JULIET)
12 x AV-8B (USS TARAWA)
CALLSIGN "HELLCAT"

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 13

VMFA-122
F/A-18C (USS JOHN C STENNIS)
CALLSIGN "WOLF"

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 16

HMH-361
CH-53E (USS PELELIU)

HMH-462
CH-53E (USS PELELIU)

HMH-465
CH-53 (USS PELELIU)

MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 39

HMLA-267
AH-1W (USS PELELIU)
CALLSIGN "STINGER"

HMLA-169
AH-1W (USS TARAWA)
CALLSIGN "VIPER"

VMA-311 'Det B' Orders

Alongside the 12 Harriers embarked aboard USS Tarawa, VMA-311 has been ordered to deploy 6 AV-8B Harrier IIs to 'FOB Juliet' in support of Operation Rapid Eagle (ORE), this deployment will be known as VMA-311 'Detachment B'.

'Det B' will deploy to FOB Juliet (formerly Jiroft Airport) no later than November 7th, 2012. Once deployed Det B is to prepare for combat operations to commence on 9th November, 2012 and to then maintain a high tempo of operations for the duration of Rapid Eagle, anticipated to be 3-4 weeks.

Det B (callsign 'Hellcat') will be one of several air assets supporting ORE. FOB Juliet will also be housing 2 squadrons of AH-1s and 2 Marine squadrons of F/A-18s will also be deploying from the USS Nimitz and USS John C Stennis.

FOB Juliet has been built around a small regional airport and thus has limited ramp space. To make space for the substantial rotary assets being deployed to ORE, large sections of the main runway have been converted into ramp space, leaving just a 3000 foot usable runway. As a result only STOVL aircraft will be suitable for basing at Juliet. The deployment of our Harrier force to Juliet will allow far greater response times to CAS requests and increased loiter times than the F/A-18s or ship based Harriers will be able to offer. In conclusion Det B will be the primary fast air CAS asset for ORE and forms an essential element of the ground support plan.

Personnel assigned to Det B:

- Major Nick Drucker (commanding),
- Captain Brian Lyndon,
- Captain Mitch Mickleson,
- Lt. Kevin O'Brian,
- Lt. Amy Taylor,
- Lt Tobias Meyer (exchange from Luftwaffe).

Aircraft assigned to Det B:

6 x AV-8B N/A Harrier II, BuNos:

- 163650
- 163751
- 163510
- 163101
- 163105
- 163053

KERMAN PROVINCE

General Information

The Iranian province of Kerman is geographically the largest of the country's 31 provinces, it lies within the southeast of the country and is home to over 3 million people.

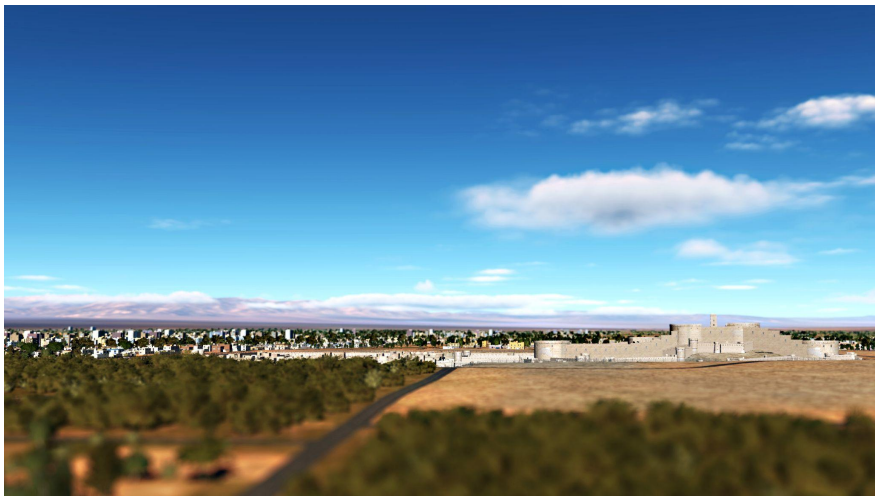
Kerman province consists of 20 separate counties, spread across 183,000 sq Km. Kerman county, in the northeast of the province, is the largest and highest populated of all of the province's counties and contains the provincial capital - Kerman City.

Kerman (both the province and county) have a strong cultural heritage and are rich with history. The region contains numerous historically significant sites, many historic mosques and a UNESCO world heritage site in Bam Citadel. The preservation of these historical sites must be a critical element of planning within ORE.

Notable Population Centers

Bam:

North 29°05'50", East 58°21'13".
Elevation - 3540 feet MSL.
Population approx 100,000.
Notable features - *Bam Citadel is a world renowned historical site and a UNESCO World Heritage site.*



Jiroft:

North 28°40'50", East 57°44'55".
Elevation - 2221 feet MSL.
Population approx 120,000.
Notable features - *FOB Juliett is located adjacent to the city at the site of Jiroft Airfield.*

Kerman City:

North 30°17’04”, East 57°04’10”.
Elevation - 5779 feet MSL.
Population - approx 800,000
Notable features - *Kerman International Airport lies 3 miles west of the city and houses a small IRAF detachment.*

Rayen:

North 29°35’58”, East 57°26’11”.
Elevation - 7217 feet MSL.
Population approx 15,000.
Notable features - *Rayen Castle is an important historical site.*

Rafsanjan:

North 30°24’17”, East 55°59’30”.
Elevation - 4968 feet MSL.
Population approx 160,000.
Notable features - *Important economic center with a major role in pistachio cultivation and carpet production as well as being located close to the Sarcheshmeh copper mine.*

Terrain

The terrain in Kerman is mostly steppe or desert, but with mountain ranges featured throughout the province. A number of mountain ranges with altitudes typically in the 4000-4500 meter (13,100-14,700 feet) range are situated within the Kerman AOR.

The Hezar massif is the highest of Kerman's mountain ranges. Located approximately 45 nm northwest of FOB Juliet it lies on the approach to Kerman City. Hezar peaks at 4426m (14,500 feet).

The majority of the province is located at higher altitudes, typically in the 1500 to 1800 meter (5000 - 6000 feet) range.

The Dash e Lut desert lies to the north east of the province. This large, expansive and distinctive desert has been shaped by the wind to form many distinctive ridges and furrows. The world's hottest ever surface temperature was recorded in Dash e Lut with a recorded temperature of almost 71°C.

Economy

The economy in Kerman has several facets to it. The city of Kerman has large parts of Iran's automotive industry present. Across the wider area, Kerman is the world's biggest pistachio producer, with major growing sites around Rafsanjan. The region has a significant farming industry with both large agricultural and livestock sites throughout the province. Kerman province also contains mining interests, with the world's second biggest copper mine (Sarcheshmeh - approx 5% of the world's copper) located close to Rafsanjan. There is also limited oil production in the area with a significant oil field located south of Kerman City.

Climate

The Kerman AOR has a cool desert climate. It can have very hot summers but will be a lot cooler in winter. Winter nights can be especially cold.

During ORE we can expect to see daytime temperatures of around +13 to +20°C and night time temperatures of around -5 to +5°C.

The area is mostly dry but sporadic light rain is possible throughout November and December. Fog can also appear at this time of year.

THREATS

Intelligence on the precise composition of the forces facing 1 MEF within Kerman is scarce, however broadly speaking the opposing forces within Iran fall into three categories; the conventional Iranian military, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the paramilitary militia - the Basij. All three are expected to be present within the Kerman AOR and are detailed below.

Conventional Forces

Iranian Army:

The Iranian Army forms the largest branch of the Iranian military. It's total strength (pre war) was estimated at approximately 350,000, however the vast majority of this force are conscripts with no more than 18 months service. As a result the Iranian Army has been assessed to be relatively poorly trained in comparison to professional western militaries.

Current strength within the Kerman AOR is estimated to be in the region of 1 division of infantry supported by 2 brigades of armor,

The Iranian Army is generally equipped with less advanced weapons systems, the most common equipment in use are; T-55 and Chieftain Mk3 MBTs, BMP-1 IFVs, M113 APCs and Gvozdika and Grad artillery systems.

Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force:

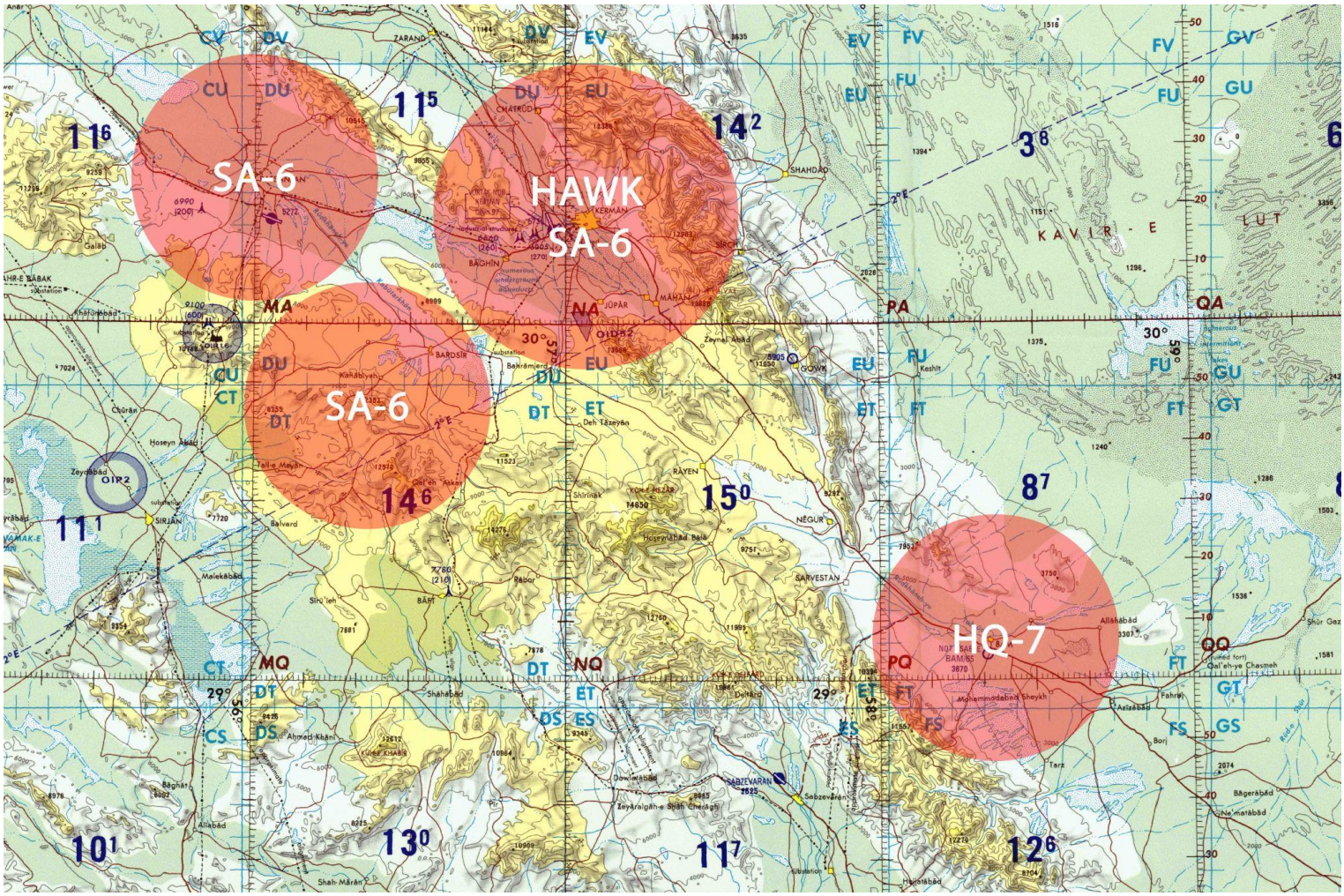
The IRIAF maintains a sizable fleet of military aircraft, the force is generally well trained and has battle experience within it's recent history. The IRIAF operates primarily 4 types of fighters; Mig-29As, F-5E Tiger IIs, Mig-21s and of course the infamous Iranian operated fleet of F-14As.

Intelligence has shown only F-5s operating from KIAP within the Kerman AOR, although the possibility of other types making the journey south from Iranian bases in the north remains.

Islamic Republic of Iran Air Defenses:

The IRIAD operates a variety of Russian and Chinese made SAM systems. Within the Kerman AOR emissions have been detected from SA-6, SA-8, SA-15 and HQ-7. All these systems are mobile - the believed areas of operation are marked on the accompanying map.

Although not strictly speaking a part of the IRIAD, Iran also operates a variety of AAA systems (S-60, ZU-23, ZU-57 and ZSU-23-4), SA-9 IR systems and MANPAD systems (SA-18). These systems should be anticipated to be present in all major Iranian towns and cities and adjacent to all major Iranian force deployments.



Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

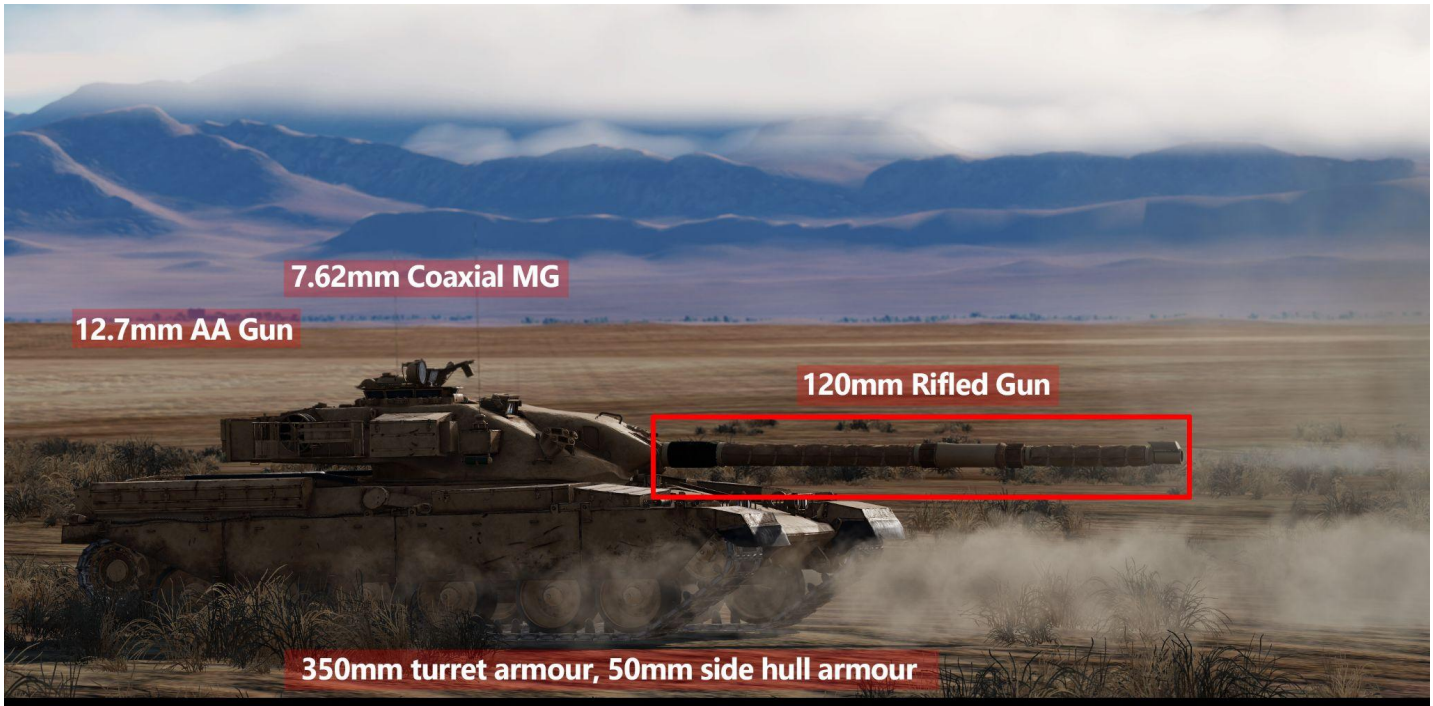
The IRGC is a significant and powerful military force in Iran. Tasked with the defense of the Islamic Republic political system, IRGC soldiers are longer serving, more highly trained and have more advanced equipment than their conventional Iranian Army counterparts. The IRGC is also fanatically loyal to it's cause.

As well as it's significant conventional military prowess, the IRGC also specializes in asymmetric warfare - designed to delay and attrit a larger, more powerful force such as the US military and sap it's will to fight a protracted, costly war. The IRGC is believed to be around 200,000 in strength and also has direct command of the 40-50,000 members of the Iranian paramilitary militia - the Basij.

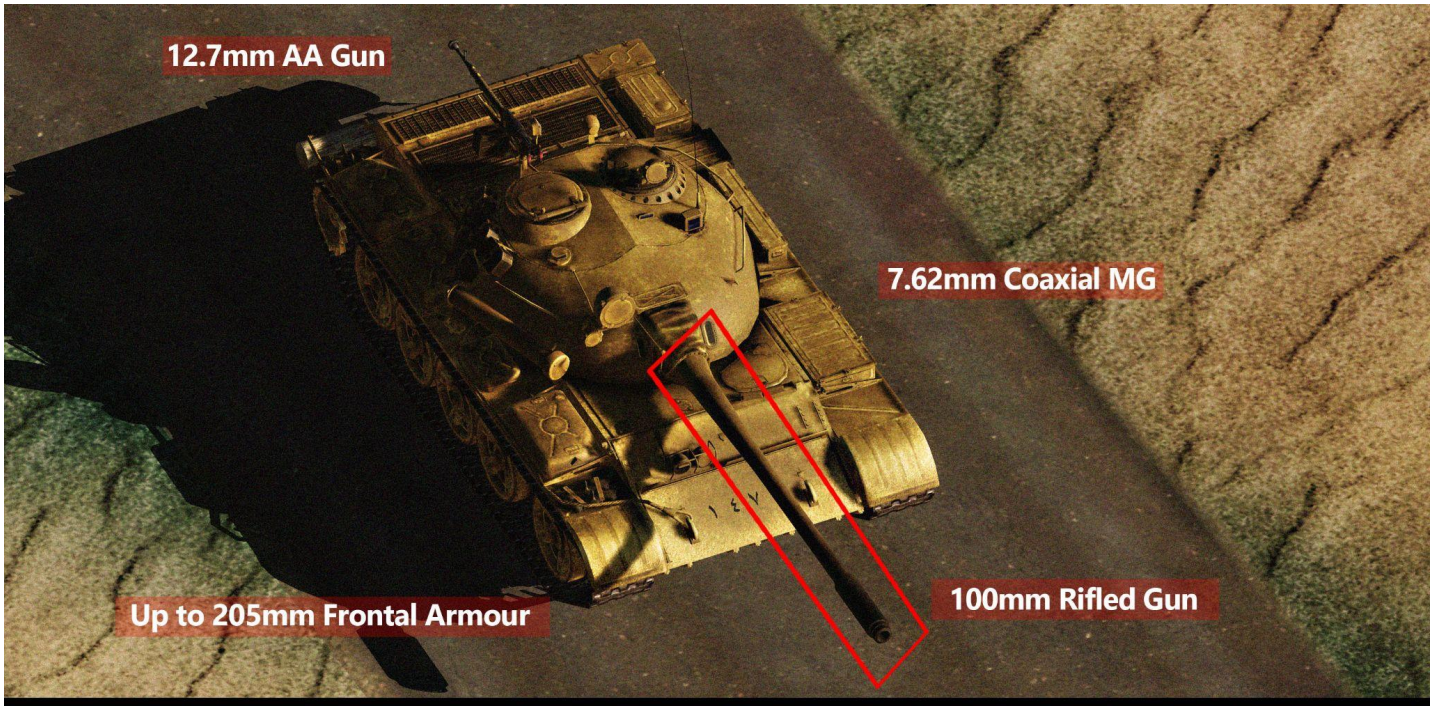
The IRGC is split into provincial commands, with the remnants of the Kerman provincial command believed to be in the vicinity of Kerman city and Rafsanjan. Estimates put this force at around 1 brigade of armor, 1 brigade of infantry, 1 battalion of artillery and an unknown number of Basij militia.

The IRGC primarily operates T-72 and (Chinese made) ZTZ-96B MBTs, BMP-2 IFVs and Urugan rocket systems.

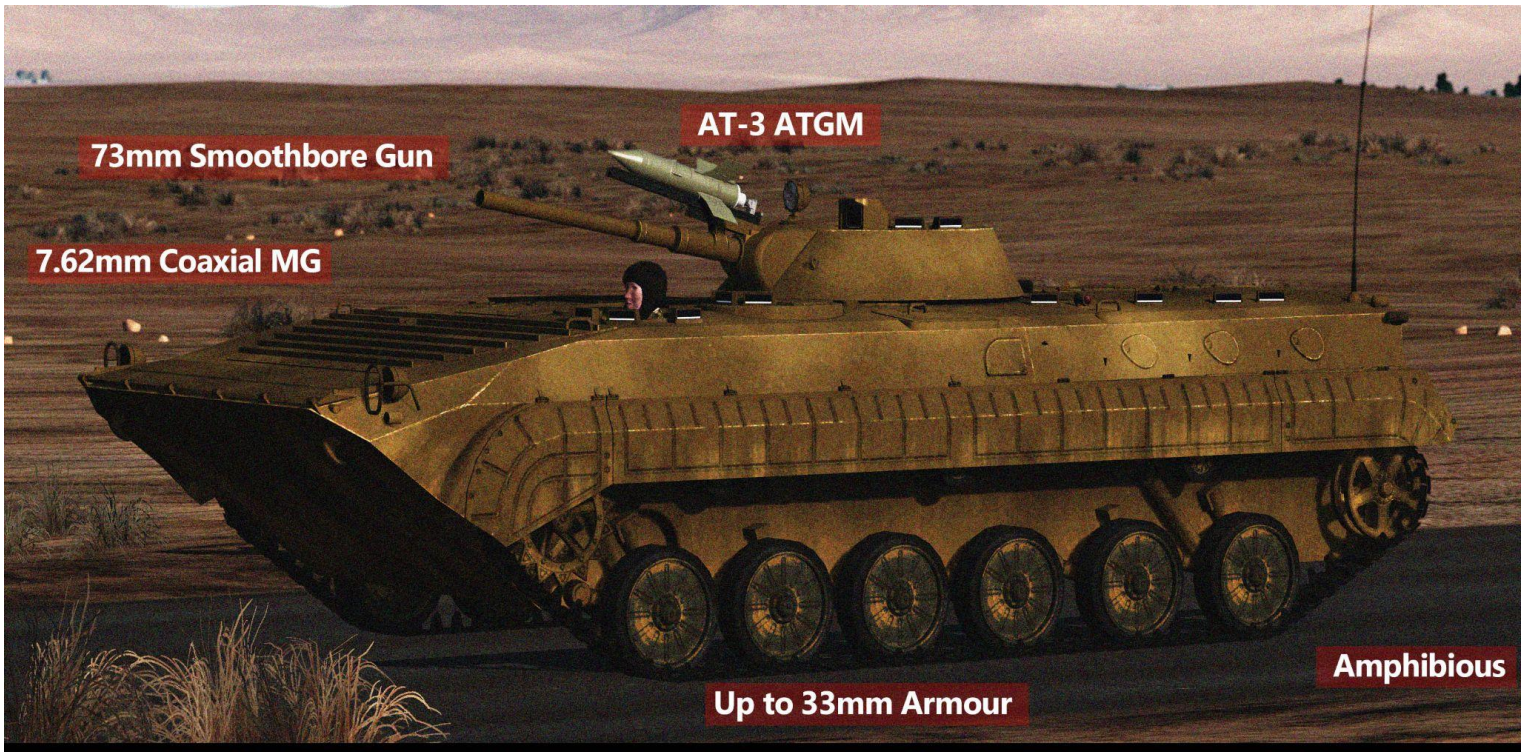
Military Equipment in Iranian Use



Chieftain Mk3 Main Battle Tank — British built MBT, crew of 4, operated by Iranian Army



T-55 Main Battle Tank — Russian built MBT, crew of 4, operated by Iranian Army



BMP-1 Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Russian built IFV, crew of 3 +8 passengers, operated by Iranian Army

M113 APC

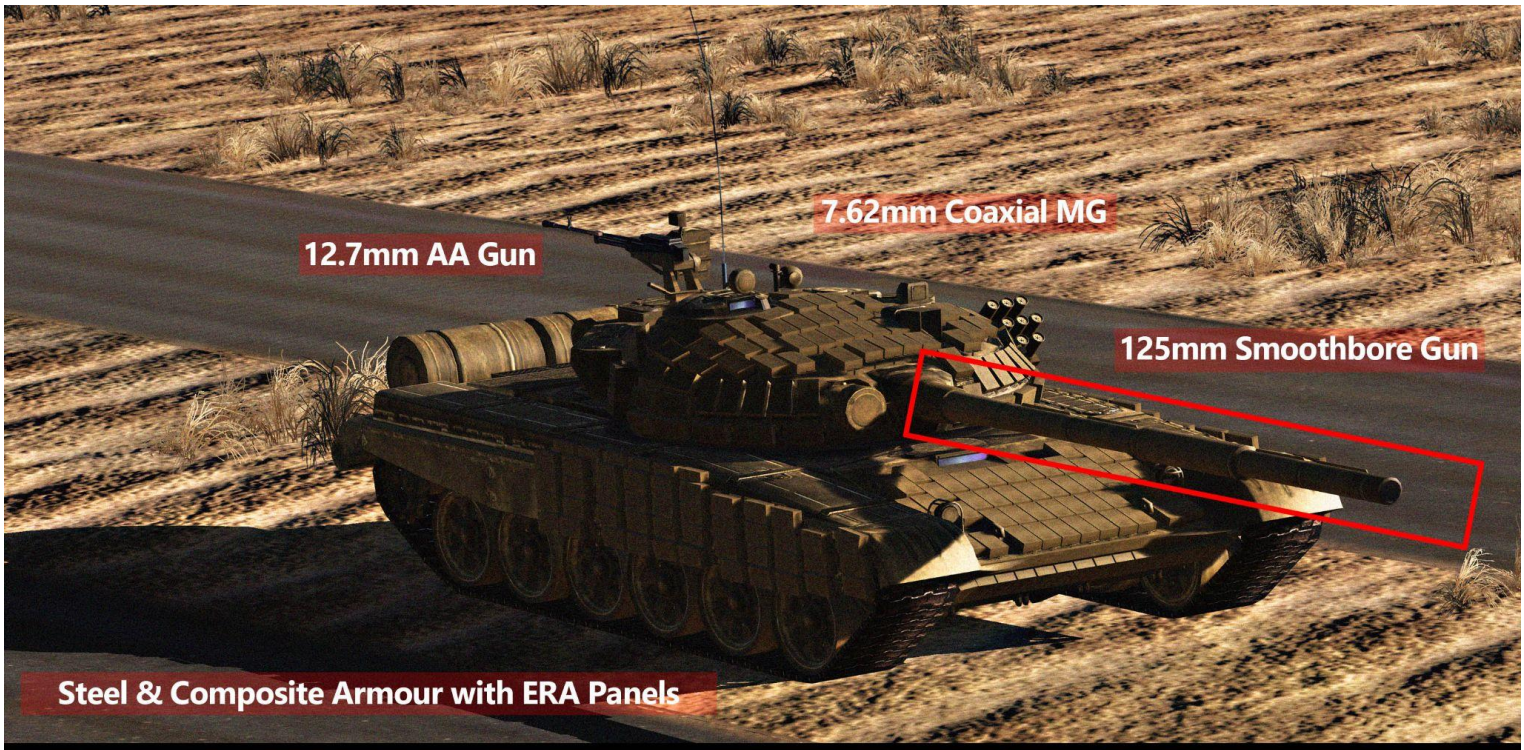
US built APC, crew of 2 + up to 15 passengers, operated by Iranian Army

2S1 Gvozdika SP Artillery

Russian built Self-Propelled Artillery, crew of 4, operated by Iranian Army

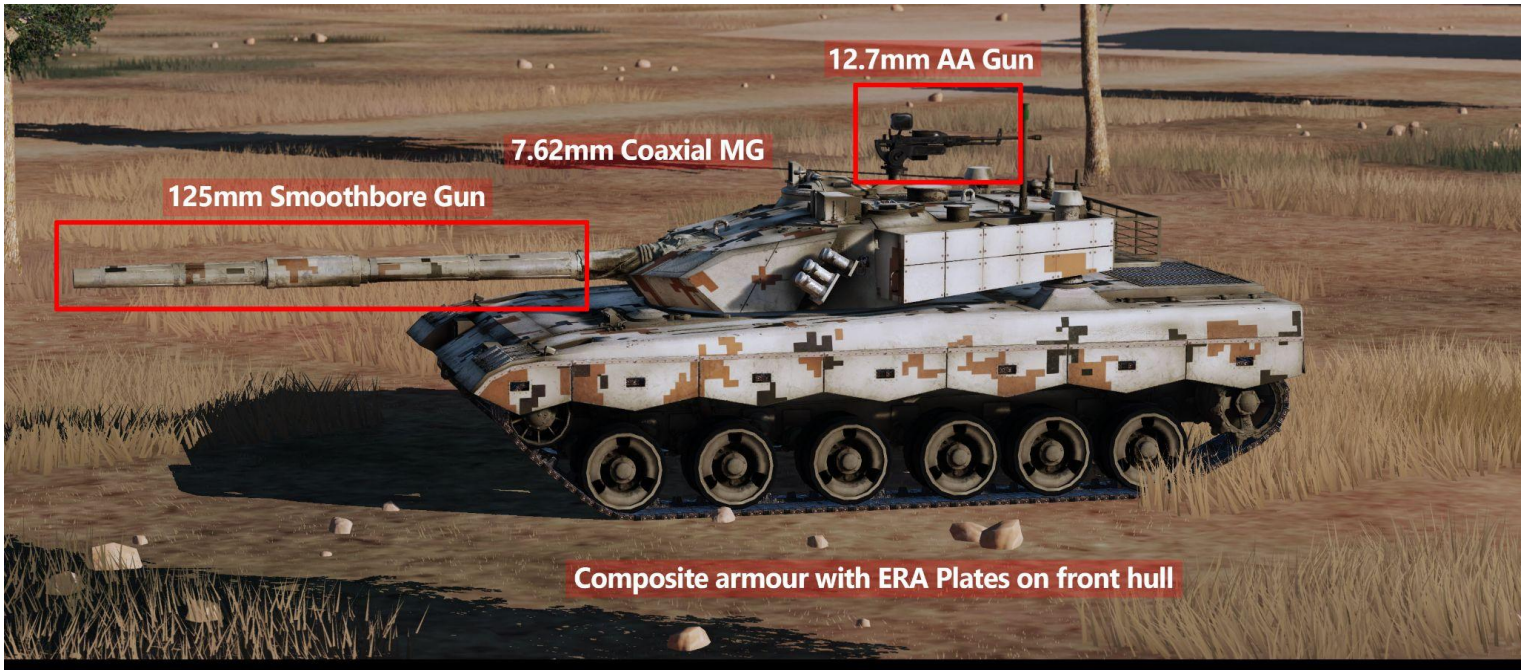
BM-21 Grad MLRS

Russian built MLRS, crew of 3, operated by Iranian Army



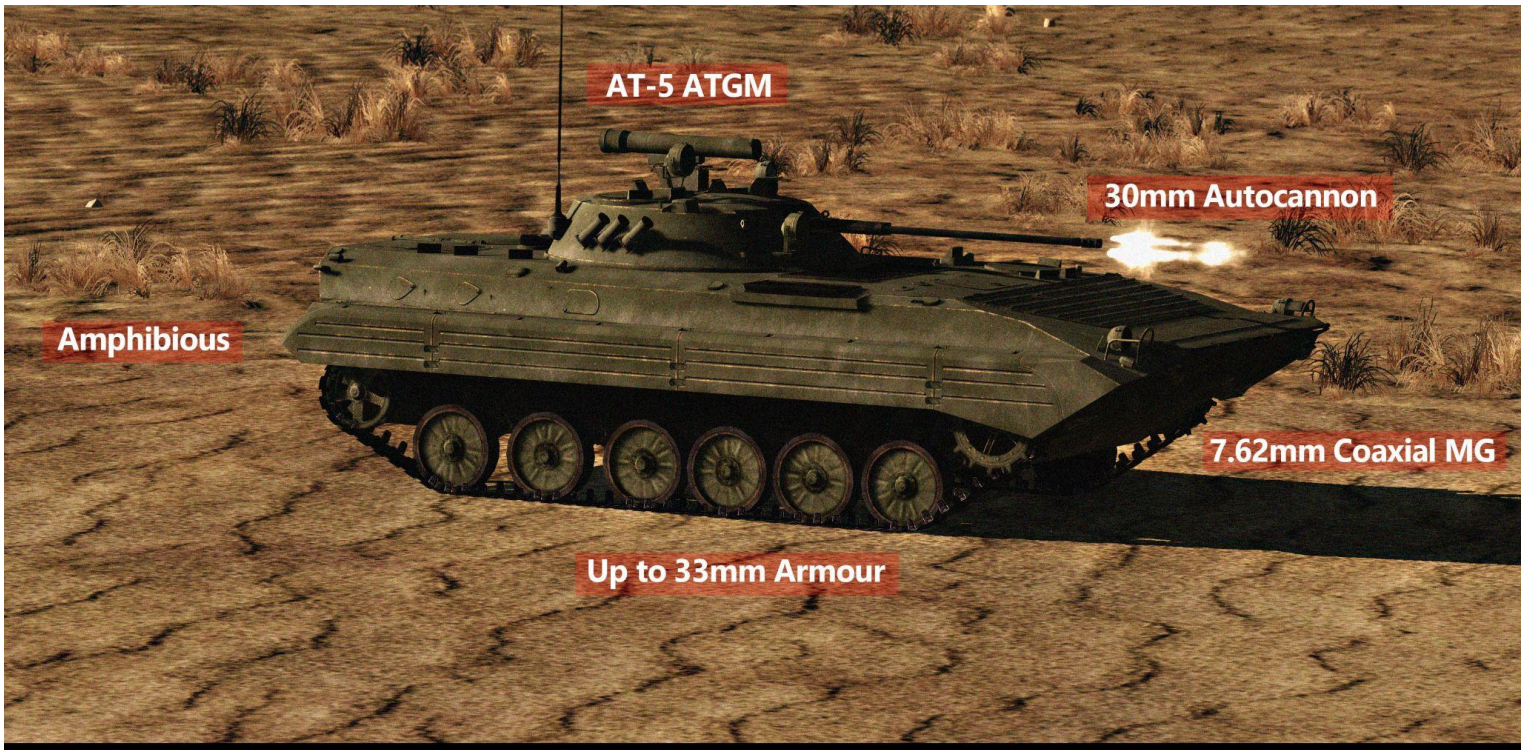
T-72 Main Battle Tank

Russian built MBT, crew of 3, operated by IRGC



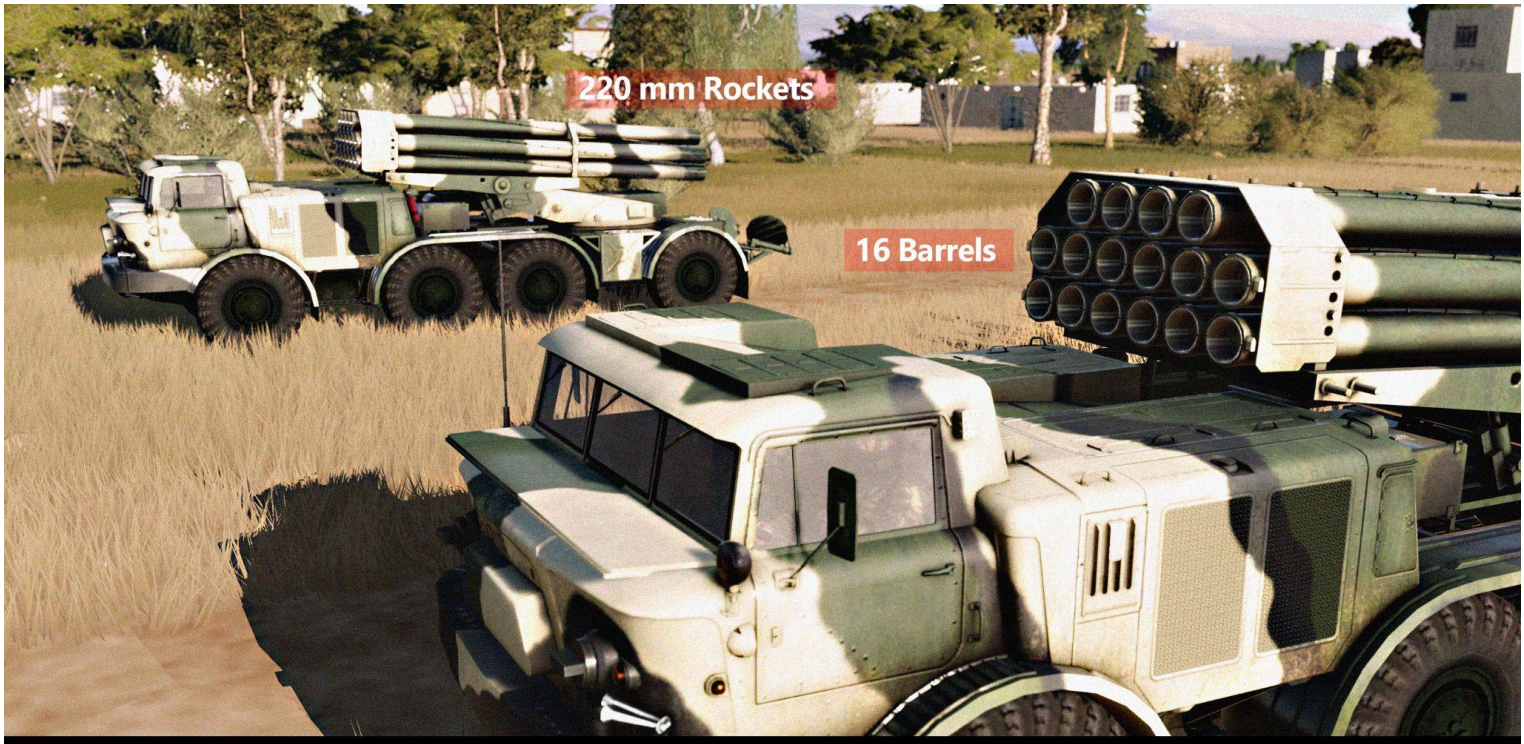
ZTZ-96B Main Battle Tank

Chinese built MBT, crew of 3, operated by IRGC



BMP-2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Russian built IFV, crew of 3 +7 passengers, operated by IRGC



BM-27 Uragan MLRS

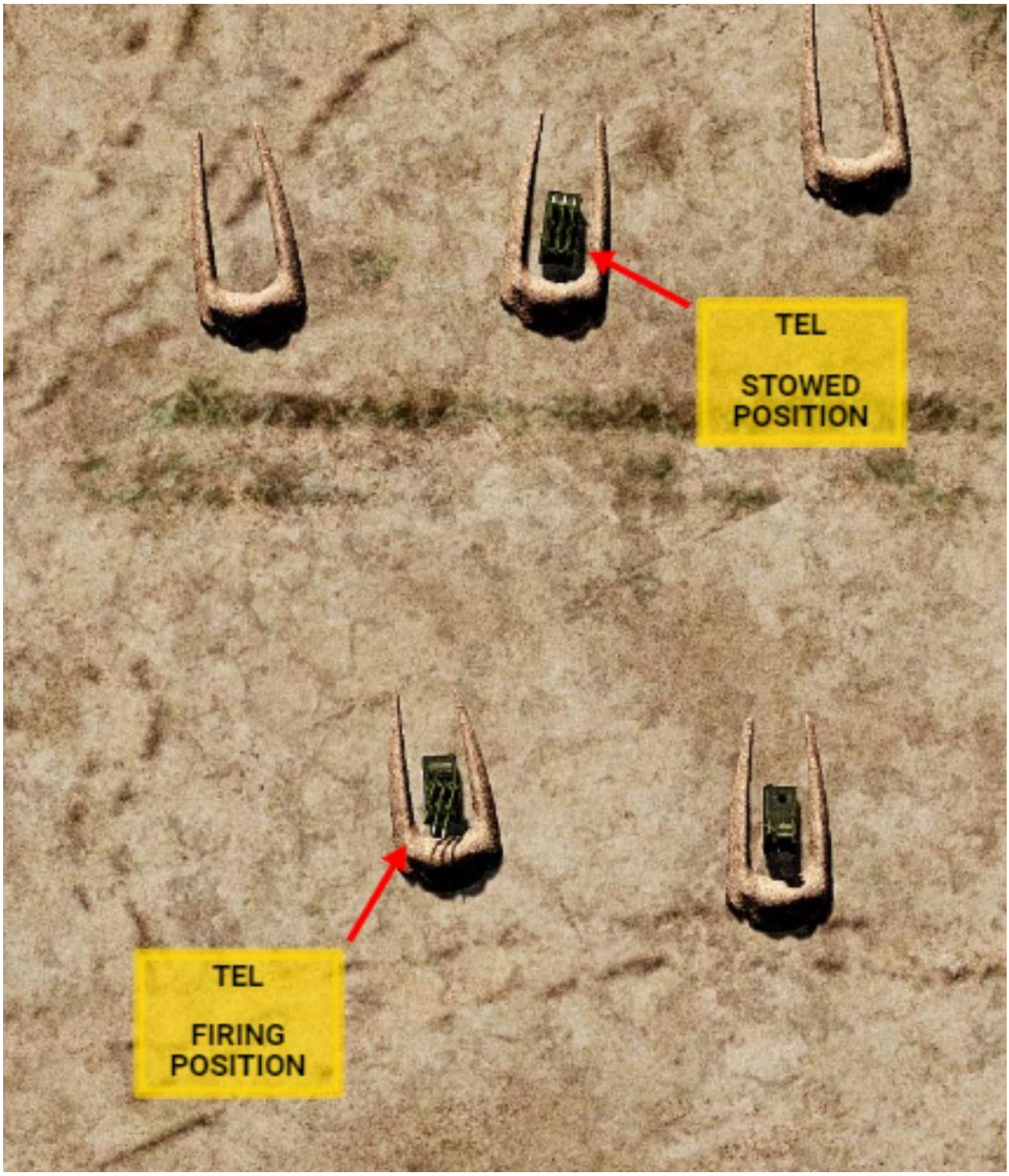
Russian built MLRS, crew of 6, operated by IRGC

HQ-7	
Guidance Type	Semi active radar homing
Acquisition Range	16 nm
Max Engagement Range	6 nm
Max Ceiling	17,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	2.3
Warhead Type	Frag HE
Fuzing	Proximity
RWR Symbology	HQ (SR), 7 (Weapons guidance)
Notable Features	Self propelled, Chinese built low altitude SAM system. Typical battery configuration 1 x search radar vehicle, 3 x launch vehicles

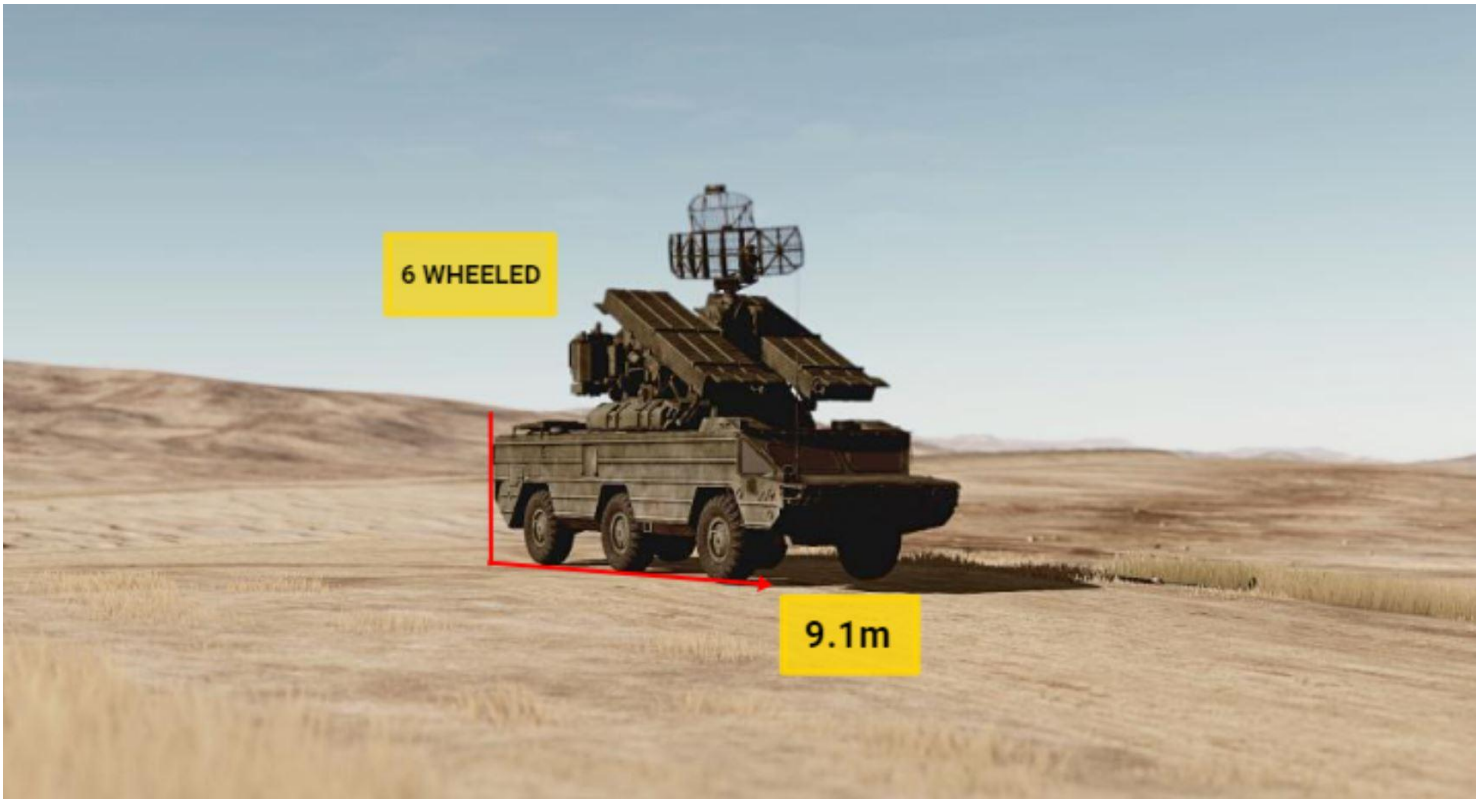
SA-6 'GAINFUL'	
Guidance Type	Radar, command guidance, semi active radar homing
Acquisition Range	40 nm
Max Engagement Range	15 nm
Max Ceiling	40,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	2.8
Warhead Type	130lb Frag HE
Fuzing	Proximity/contact
RWR Symbology	6
Notable Features	Semi Active Radar Homing in terminal phase. Missile burn time ~ 21 seconds. Highly mobile, can be operational within 15 minutes of relocating. Typical configuration - 1 x Tracked 'Straight Flush' radar vehicle, 4 x tracked TEL's carrying 3 missile apiece.


'STRAIGHT FLUSH'
SEARCH/TRACK
RADAR

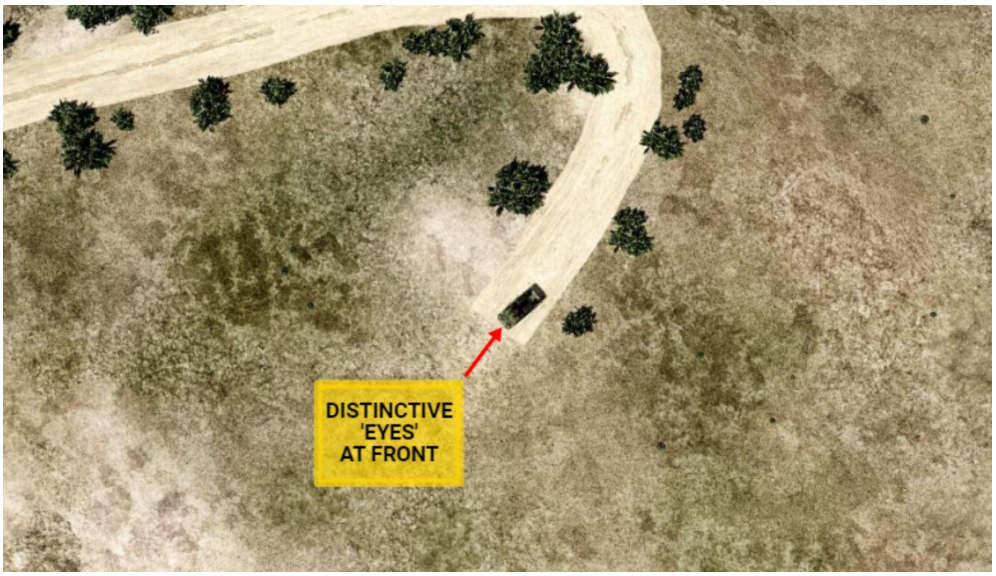

5.8m
TRANSPORTER
ERECTOR
LAUNCHER
(TEL)

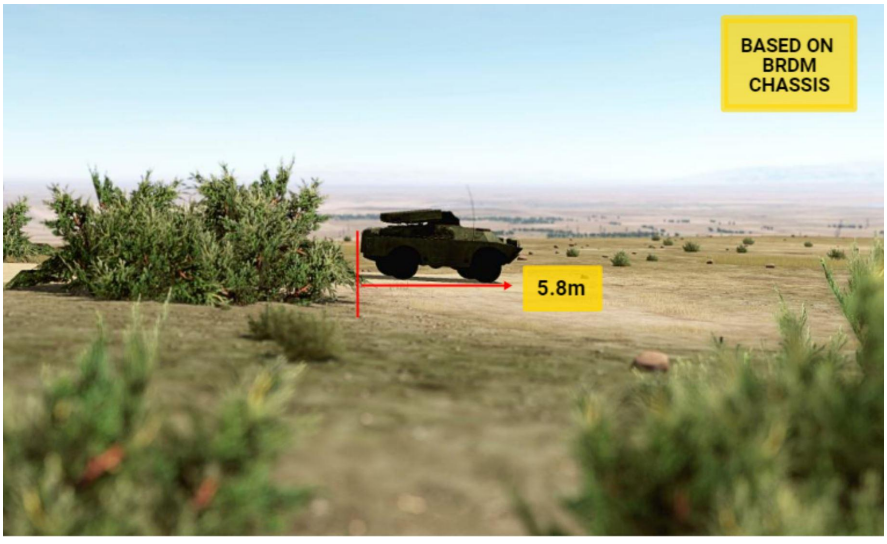

TEL
STOWED
POSITION
TEL
FIRING
POSITION

SA-8 'GECKO'	
Guidance Type	Radar, command guidance
Acquisition Range	15 nm
Max Engagement Range	6 nm
Max Ceiling	39,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	2.0
Warhead Type	35lb Frag HE
Fuzing	Proximity/contact
RWR Symbology	8
Notable Features	Amphibious & highly mobile. Missile burn time ~ 15 seconds. 6 missile load.

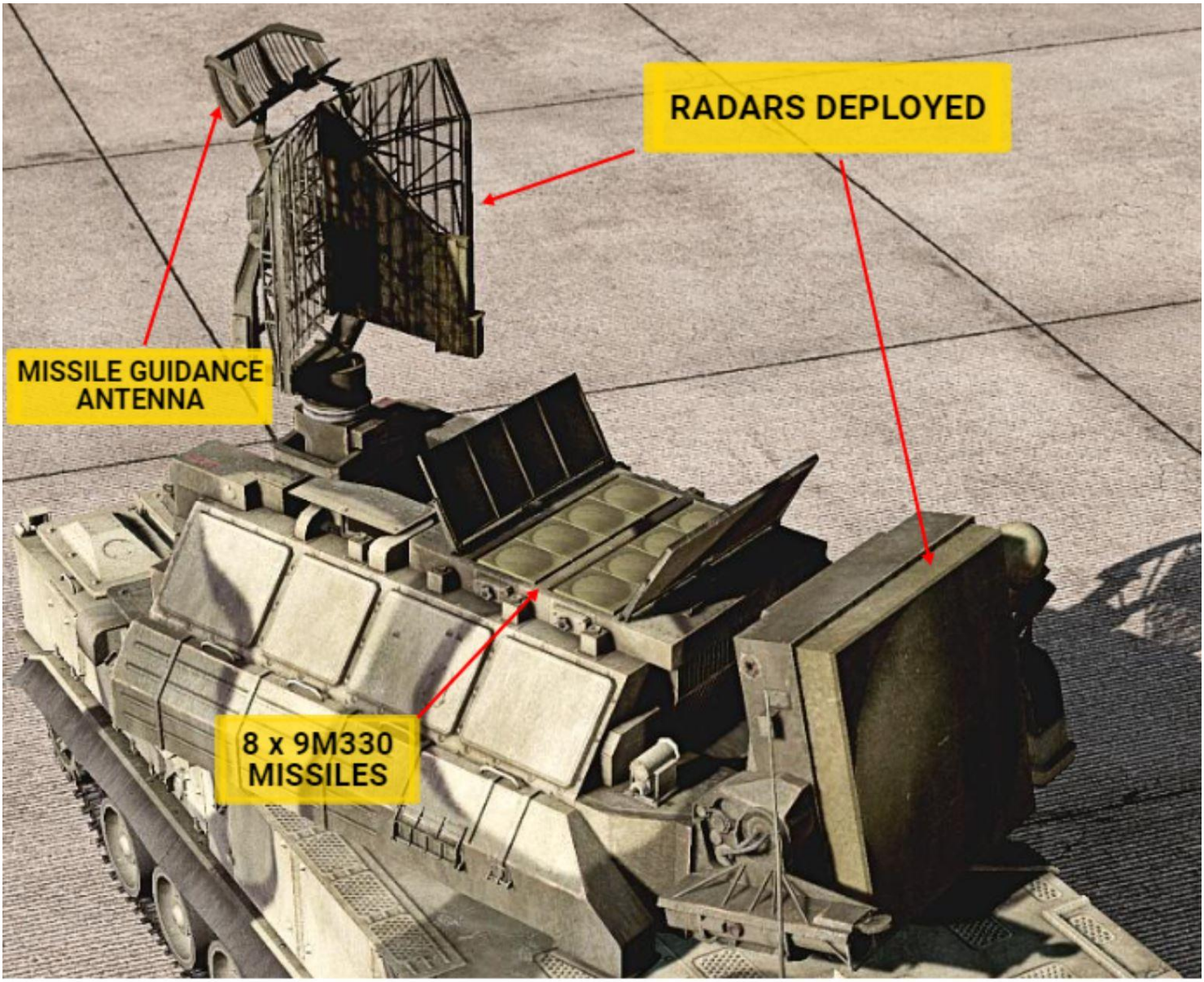


SA-9 'GASKIN'	
Guidance Type	Infra-red
Acquisition Range	Visual
Max Engagement Range	2.5 nm
Max Ceiling	12,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	1.8
Warhead Type	5.7lb Frag HE
Fuzing	RF Proximity
Notable Features	Amphibious & highly mobile. 4 missile load.



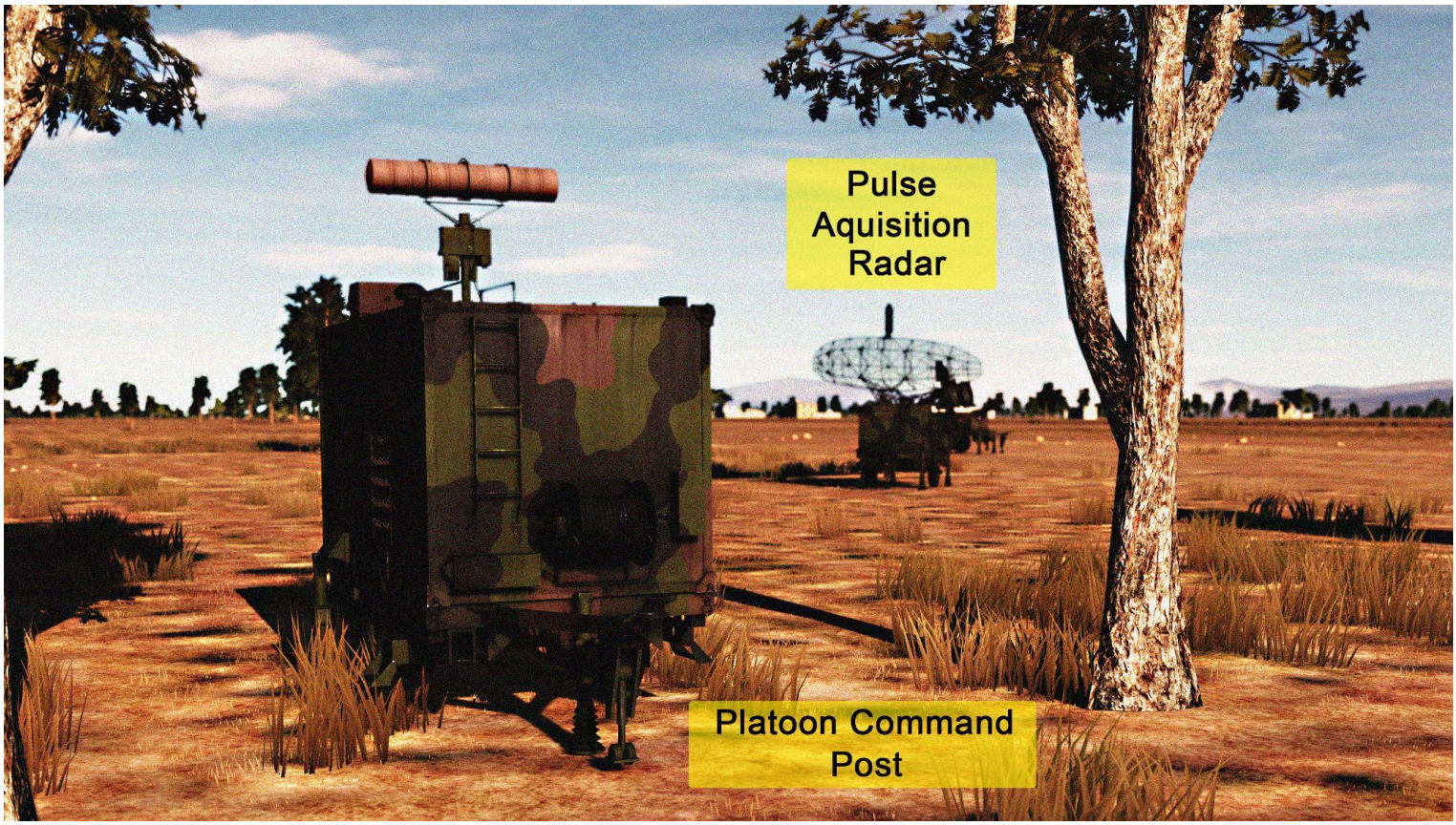


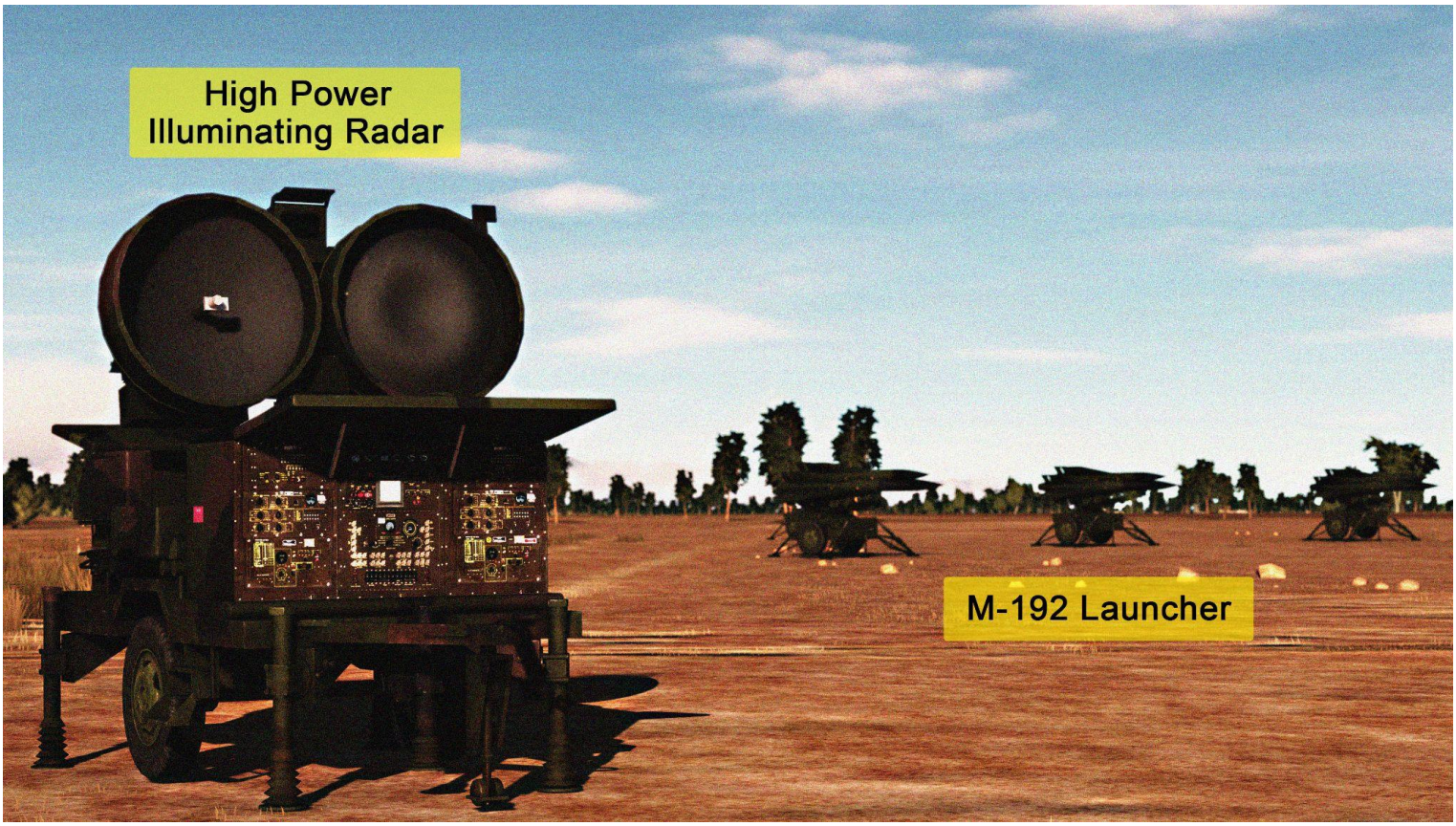
SA-15 'GAUNTLET'	
Guidance Type	Radar Command Guidance
Acquisition Range	15 nm
Max Engagement Range	8 nm
Max Ceiling	25,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	2.5
Warhead Type	30lb Frag HE
Fuzing	RF Proximity
RWR Symbology	15
Notable Features	Tracked TLAR highly mobile, carries 8 missiles ready to fire. Missile burn time ~ 7 seconds.


RADARS DEPLOYED
MISSILE GUIDANCE ANTENNA
8 x 9M330 MISSILES

SA-18 'GROUSE'	
Guidance Type	Infra-Red
Acquisition Range	Visual
Max Engagement Range	3 nm
Max Ceiling	12,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	1.9
Warhead Type	2.6lb Frag HE
Fuzing	Contact / Grazing
Notable Features	Man Portable Air Defence (MANPAD), highly mobile and easy to hide. May operate in teams of shooter/spotter, communicating over distance to ambush targets.

MIM-23 HAWK	
Guidance Type	Semi Active Radar Homing
Acquisition Range	49 nm
Max Engagement Range	25 nm
Max Ceiling	65,000 Ft MSL
Missile Mach	2.4
Warhead Type	119lb Frag HE
RWR Symbology	HA
Notable Features	US manufactured SAM system. Typical battery consists of Command Post, Search Radar, Track Radar and up to 6 launchers (3 missiles each). Some batteries may also contain a Continuous Wave Acquisition Radar, designed for low altitude detection. Missile burn time ~ 25 seconds.




High Power
Illuminating Radar
M-192 Launcher

ZU-23 AAA	
Guidance Type	None
Acquisition Range	Visual
Max Engagement Range	1.5 nm
Max Ceiling	7,000 Ft MSL
Notable Features	Twin 23mm autocannon. Towed system, easy to relocate. Cheap and widely proliferated. Can be truck mounted for a highly mobile, low cost air defence platform. Fires HE rounds that explode on contact or at set altitude.

ZSU-23-4 AAA	
Guidance Type	Radar
Acquisition Range	2.5 nm
Max Engagement Range	1.5 nm
Max Ceiling	7,000 Ft MSL
RWR Symbology	A
Notable Features	Four x 23mm autocannon. Tracked and high mobile. Fires HE rounds that explode on contact or at set altitude.

ZU-57-2	
Guidance Type	None
Acquisition Range	Visual
Max Engagement Range	3 nm
Max Ceiling	20,000 Ft MSL
Notable Features	2 x 57mm autocannon. Tracked, self-propelled system. Uses a version of the widely proliferated S-60 AA cannon.

S-60 AAA	
Guidance Type	None
Acquisition Range	Visual
Max Engagement Range	3 nm
Max Ceiling	20,000 Ft MSL
Notable Features	Single 57mm autocannon. Capable of firing over 70 rounds per minute. Towed system, easy to relocate. Cheap and widely proliferated. Fires HE rounds that explode on contact or at set altitude.

MIG-21 BIS 'FISHBED'	
Role	Fighter Interceptor
Max Speed	Mach 2.05
Service Ceiling	58,400 Ft
Gross Weight	19,235 lb
Max Thrust	15,650 lb
Combat Range	650 nm
Armament	GSh-23L 23mm cannon, 4 wing hardpoints for AA/AG weapons, one centreline hardpoint for bombs/fuel tank. Can carry R-3, R-13, R-60.
Notable Features	Exploitation programmes have revealed comparable performance to an F-5.

Mig-21

MIG-29 A 'FULCRUM'	
Role	Fighter
Max Speed	Mach 2.3 @ altitude, Mach 1.225 @ sea level
Service Ceiling	59,000 Ft
Gross Weight	32,849 lb
Max Thrust	36,680 lb
Combat Range	770 nm (no tanks)
Armament	GSh-301 30mm cannon, 6 Wing hardpoints for AA/AG weapons, 1 centreline hardpoint for fuel tank/pod. Can carry R-27, R-60, R-73.
Notable Features	Very agile fighter but limited by short range in combat and lack of SA aids and HOTAS.

Mig-29A

F-5E TIGER II	
Role	Light Fighter
Max Speed	Mach 1.63 @ altitude
Service Ceiling	51,800 Ft
Gross Weight	15,745 lb
Max Thrust	10,000 lb
Combat Range	120 nm
Armament	x2 20mm M93A2 revolver cannon, x2 AIM-9B/P (or reverse engineered indiginous version), dumb bombs/rockets
Notable Features	US built and sold to Iran before the Islamic Revolution

Northrop F-5E Tiger II

F-14A Tomcat	
Role	**Multi Role Fighter**
Max Speed	**Mach 2.34 @ altitude**
Service Ceiling	**53,000 Ft**
Gross Weight	**61,000 lb**
Max Thrust	**56,400 lb**
Combat Range	**500 nm**
Armament	**20mm M61A1 Vulcan cannon + 10 hardpoints for AA weapons**
Notable Features	**US built and sold to Iran before the Islamic Revolution**

Acknowledgments

EAGLE IMAGE:

Image by:
<ahref="https://pixabay.com/users/groffchris1980-12486409/?utm_source=link-attribution&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=image&utm_content=5925291">Christopher Groff from Pixabay

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