



23/07/2013, 13:45.

4 days have passed since our strike against the Syrian Scud positions. Following the attack we participated in, the JSTF has launched several other strike packages targeting other confirmed Syrian Scud positions. These attacks have resulted in the destruction of a large number of Syria's suspected ballistic missile stockpiles and reduced the threat their existence provides.

The deployment of Scuds however was only one of the major developments in the STO this week. As we were egressing from our strike, Poodle and I ran straight into a large formation of Russian aircraft, transitioning south between Syria and Cyprus. This formation included Bears, Flankers and even Foxhounds - the latter never before seen outside Russia operationally. In addition the Russians also brought an A-50 AWACS aircraft with them. The presence of the Russians blocked our route back to Incirlik, and whilst we might have been able to pass through the formation without incident, the posture the Russian fighters were taking gave everyone pause for thought. As a result we were diverted into RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, which at least gave me a chance to show Poodle the bar there and introduce him to some old RAF friends of mine. Have to say Poodle really loosens up a bit after a few beers...

Our stopover in Akrotiri was brief, we managed to return to Incirlik the next day, the Russians were still heavily patrolling the direct route into Incirlik so it involved a long route west out of Cyprus and looping back north to Incirlik, but we eventually made it back.

Once we were back we had a few days of much deserved rest, just as well as it looks like another major operation is planned for tomorrow, and as ever the Red Devils are going to be right in the middle of it.

At 08:00 this morning we once again found ourselves in Incirlik's briefing theatre. For the first time in Cerberus North the briefing theatre was packed to capacity, with several hundred personnel present, once again a mixture of USAF and US Navy, and accompanied by our small Marine contingent. As Link, Poodle, Newt, Woody and I seated ourselves in the theatre we looked up at the screen, which was blank except for the words 'Operation Dominant Enforcer'. "Not the most subtle name in the world is it" I muttered to Woody, drawing a stern look from Poodle. And there I was thinking he'd maybe started to lighten up...no such luck I guess.

Once everyone was seated Major General Forster began the briefing by inviting Major Daniels to commence with the intel brief. It's fair to say Daniels had a lot to talk about. He began with the Russians, the arrival of the additional Russian aircraft appears to be in support of an attempt by Russia to assert dominance in the area. We are now seeing a larger number of TU-142 'Bear' maritime patrol aircraft basing out of the Russian airbase, these additional aircraft have been harassing the Navy since they arrived, tracking their

position and generally making a nuisance of themselves. The arrival of a Russian AWACS platform and additional fighters is also a concerning development. The reason for these deployments is so far unclear, after all the Foxhounds have no value in the strike or CAS roles that the Russians have so far been engaged in, the most likely reason is as a further deterrent to escalating JSTF activity. Whatever the reason, the fact that we are no longer the only force in theatre with AWACS support drew a few grim faces amongst the gathered.

Moving on from the Russians, Daniels then filled us in on events on the ground in Syria. The last couple of days has seen further uprisings break out in the Damascus suburbs, predictably these uprisings have drawn violent responses from the SAA and local militias. Reports are also surfacing of more defections within the SAA. At Yabrud the fighting continues, with neither side managing to gain a sustainable advantage so far, the SDF is attempting to resupply their forces at Yabrud but has experienced repeated air and rocket attacks against the Homs road. In the east the SDF have now broken through the Syrian lines and besieged Palmyra airbase.

Following it's decision to allow the JSTF to use it's airspace to launch attacks into southern Syria, Israel has experienced a barrage of rocket attacks from Lebanon by Hezbollah. The IAF has responded to these with airstrikes against rocket positions in southern Lebanon.

As the fighting in Raqqa continues, a steady stream of refugees continues to arrive at the Turkish border.

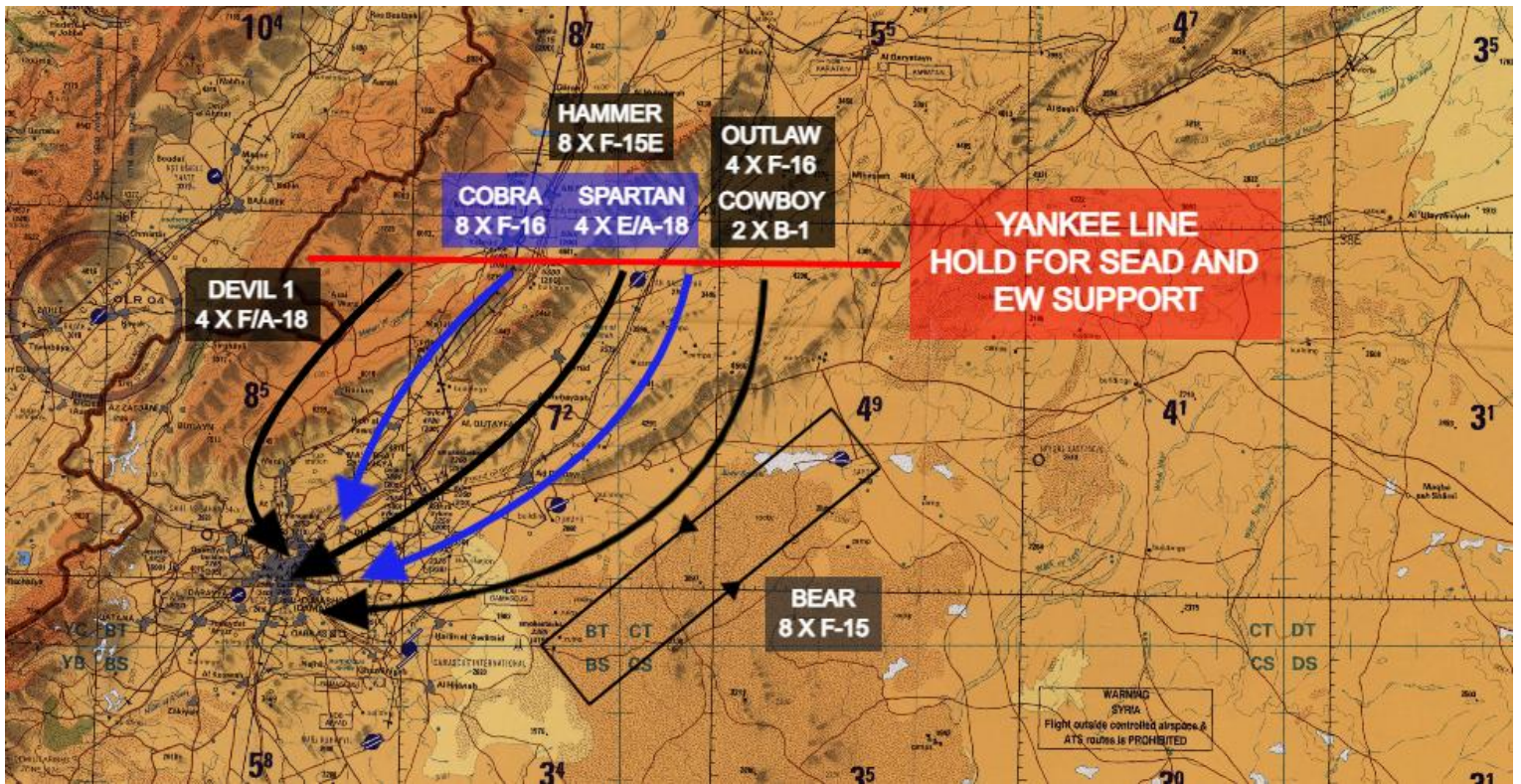
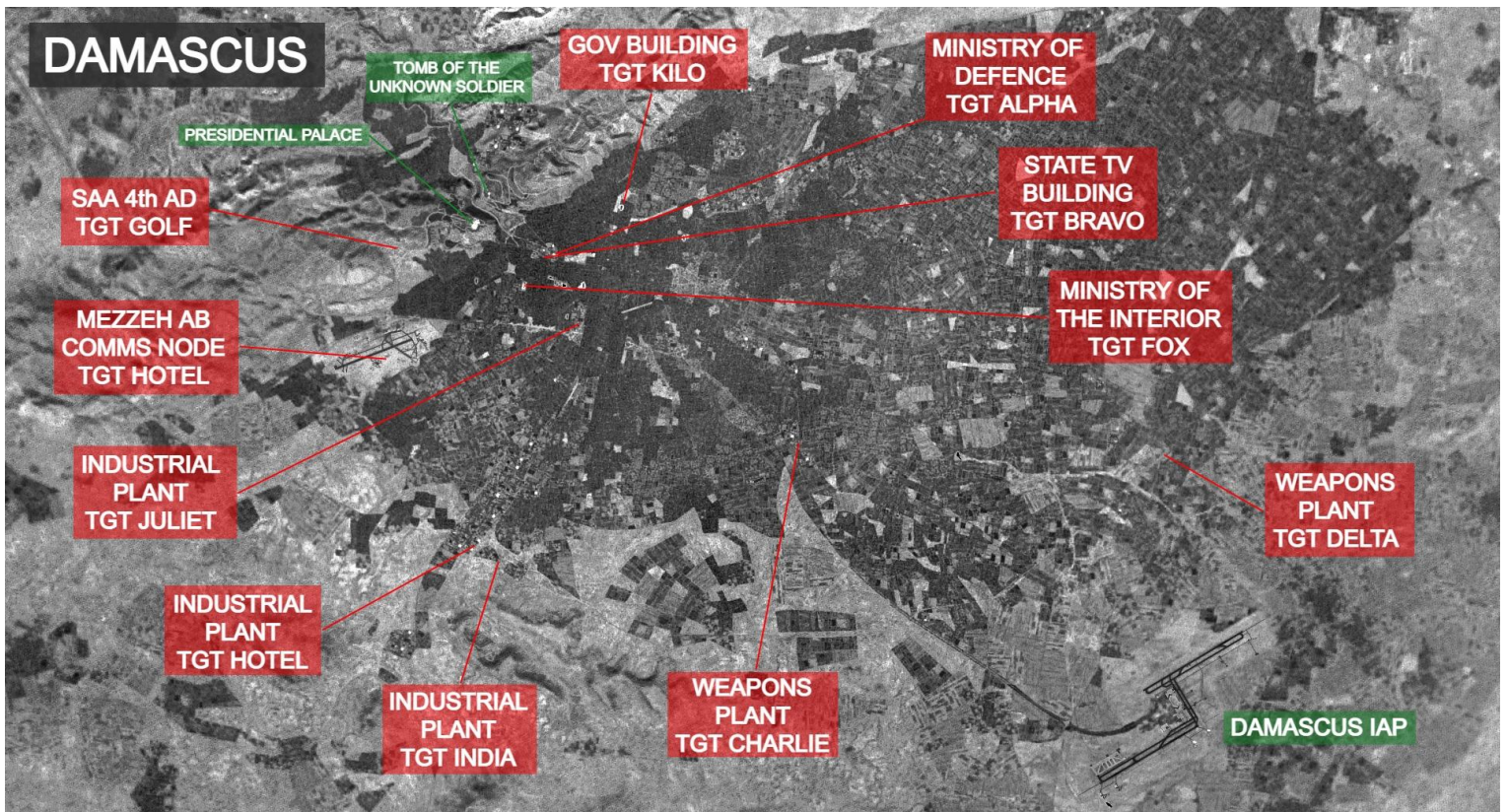
With the intel brief completed, General Forster re-took the podium and began to brief Operation Dominant Enforcer. As mentioned by Major Daniels, following the latest uprisings around Damascus the response from the government was severe. Attacks by the SAA and supporting militias were relentless and indiscriminate, and UN estimates put this latest round of violence as the worst so far in Syria, with thousands either displaced, wounded or dead. The pressure within the UN and leading governments has been mounting for a more direct intervention...and that pressure had finally paid off. Operation Dominant Enforcer will therefore directly target key government and military targets in and around Damascus, focusing on the parts of the regime involved with the brutal repressions we've been seeing. The objective of this operation is to degrade the political and military command and control structures and warfighting capability of the Syrian government, in order to help tip the balance of power in favour of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Dominant Enforcer will begin at 01:00 tomorrow morning. At this time Tomahawk cruise missiles will be fired by the Navy, targeting air defence C3 facilities and the larger AAA batteries around Damascus. As these missiles are airborne B-2 Spirit bombers will appear over Damascus, destroying the two SA-10 batteries in the vicinity of the city. As this takes place the main strike package will be assembled south of Incirlik before proceeding into Syria and south to Damascus. Forster went on to outline the details of the strike package and it's target list.

The package will be led by 4 E/A-18Gs (Spartan) and 8 F-16CMs (Cobra). These aircraft will be suppressing and jamming the extensive Syrian air defences around Damascus. Behind them will be 8 F-15Cs (Bear) on OCA. Bear will sweep the area of enemy air and then hold an orbit above the Syrian airbases in the area, ready to pounce on any Syrian aircraft that attempt to interfere. Two B-1 Lancers (Cowboy) will be targeting industrial facilities and weapons plants critical to the Syrian military. 4 F-16s (Outlaw) will be targeting further weapons plants along with communication facilities at Mezzeh airbase. 8 F-15Es (Hammer) will be targeting a variety of city centre targets; the Ministry of Defence, a political HQ heavily involved with the militias and the state TV broadcast centre that is pumping out serious amounts of propaganda and disinformation. Finally Devil 1 flight will be targeting the Ministry of the Interior and the command of the SAA 4th Armoured Division - a unit heavily involved in the recent attacks. All in, this package will consist of 38 aircraft, no small number when you consider the fairly tight area we'll be operating in. Forster went on to highlight the importance of following our flight plans and altitude blocks to ensure we deconflict with each other.

The package will push to the Gold Corridor at 01:25 local, all flights will need to be airborne and ready to push at this time.

The key point that Forster repeatedly hammered home was that no flight (with the exception of the B-2s) should proceed further south than 'Yankee' - a line anchored on An Nasiriyah AB - without SEAD and EW support. Should anyone get ahead of the package then they must hold for Spartan and Cobra before proceeding. Likewise once the Vul time is reached for Spartan and Cobra all flights should egress north of Yankee immediately. Push time from Yankee is 01:51, with a vul window of 20 minutes, which means all flights should egress from the target at 02:11 at the latest.



Briefing complete, Forster then stepped down and ended proceedings. The crowd began to filter out and I could feel the deathly silence as they filed out, no doubt contemplating the mission ahead.

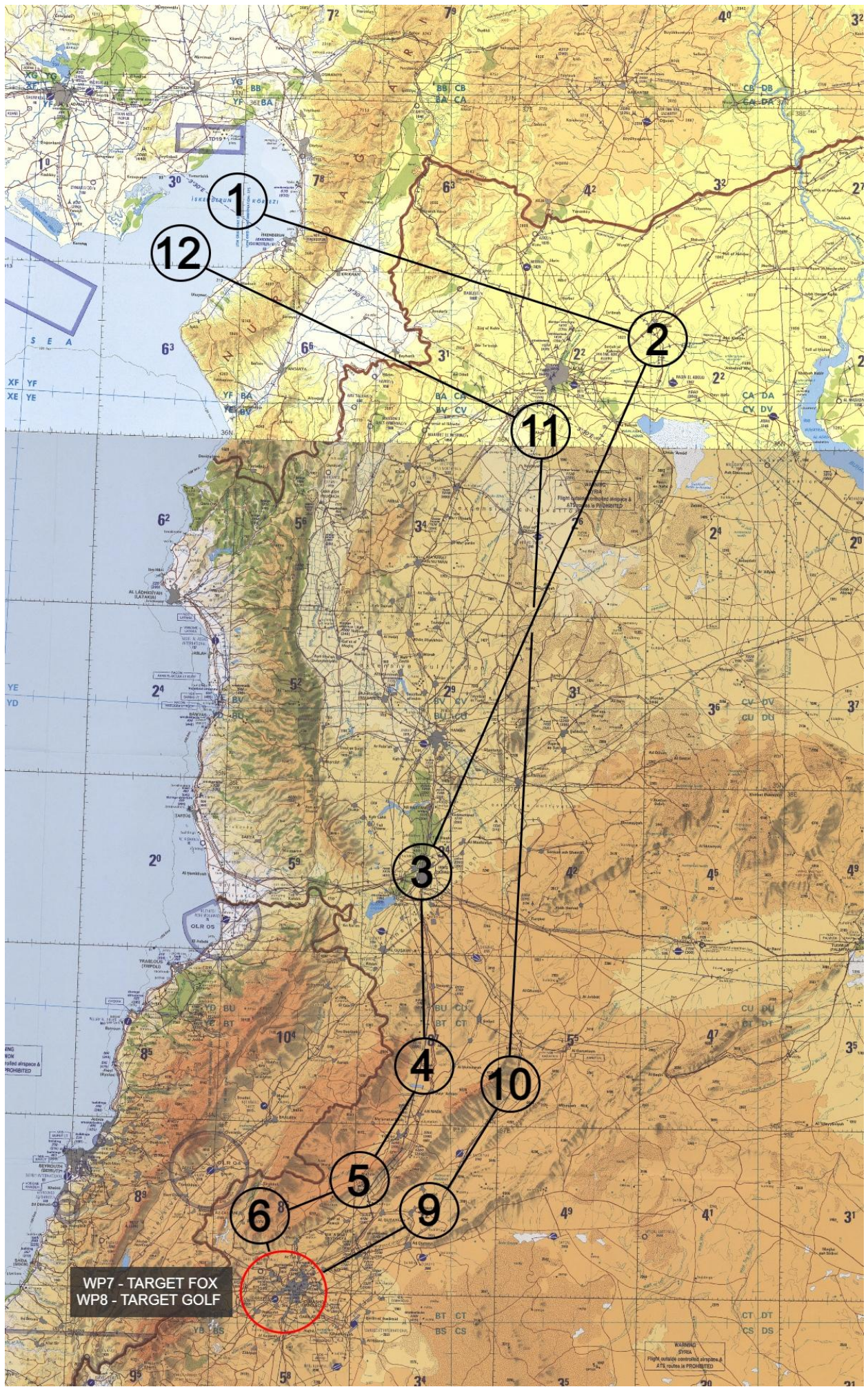
Our contingent of Marines then found themselves in the small briefing room we regularly use. Captain Edwards joined us to give our met briefing, telling us that we can expect a few light clouds around 13,000 feet and relatively calm winds all night.

Link and Poodle then broke down the operational details of our mission. Once airborne our flight will rendezvous at waypoint 1 ready to push at 01:25. It will be important to make sure we are ready to push at this time, if we are late to the push we'll risk arriving over the target late, reducing our operating window before Spartan's departure. Our flights will assemble at waypoint 1, Poodle will be leading this sortie, paired with Newt, and I will be flight lead of the second element, paired with Woody.

Once the package pushes, we will climb to FL300 and proceed in formation through the Gold Corridor to waypoint 2. Due to the number of aircraft in the air today the upper altitude restrictions within the Gold Corridor have been lifted temporarily, Sentinel will be ensuring clear airspace ahead for the package. Once clear of Aleppo we will turn south and proceed on our flight plan. Throughout the flight we should pay careful attention to our flight path and assigned altitudes to make sure we deconflict with the rest of the package.

All flights in the package will switch to and monitor the assigned Strike frequency as they clear Aleppo, this frequency should be monitored throughout the mission. There will be a dedicated mission commander on this frequency, callsign 'Almighty'.

Waypoint 4 is located northwest of An Nasiriyah AB, this marks the 'Yankee' line, which lies just outside the max engagement range of the remaining Syrian SAMS at Damascus. By this point both SA-10 sites should have been obliterated by the B-2s. We must not proceed beyond Yankee without SEAD and EW support - which is due to begin at 01:51.



WP7 - TARGET FOX
WP8 - TARGET GOLF

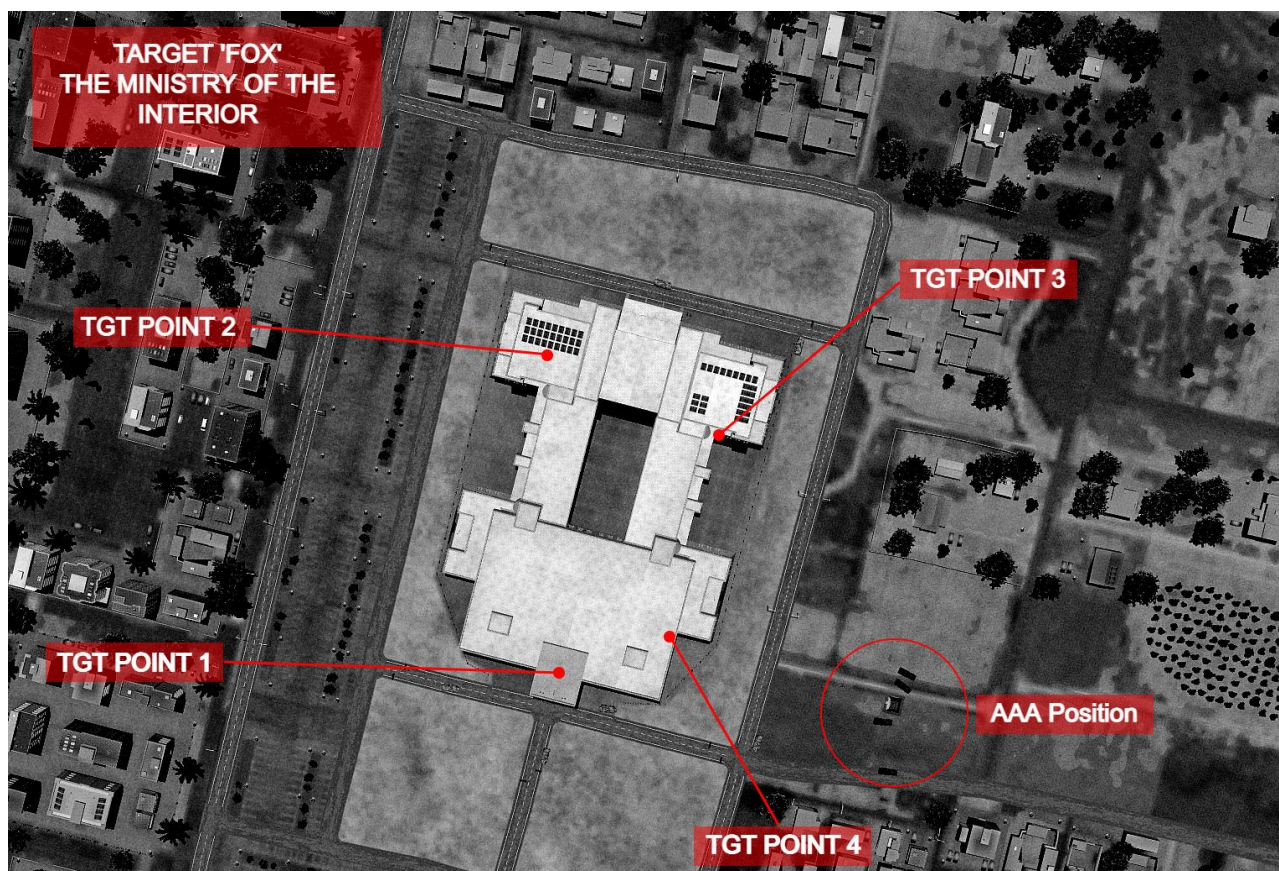


WARNING
SINER
Flight outside controlled airspace &
ATA routes is PROHIBITED

Once Spartan and Cobra push from Yankee and we are satisfied the threat is sufficiently reduced then we will proceed south and attack our target. Our TOT is 01:59, which we must observe to aid with deconfliction over the target.

Devil 1 has two target locations assigned. Target Fox is our primary target, and Golf our secondary target.

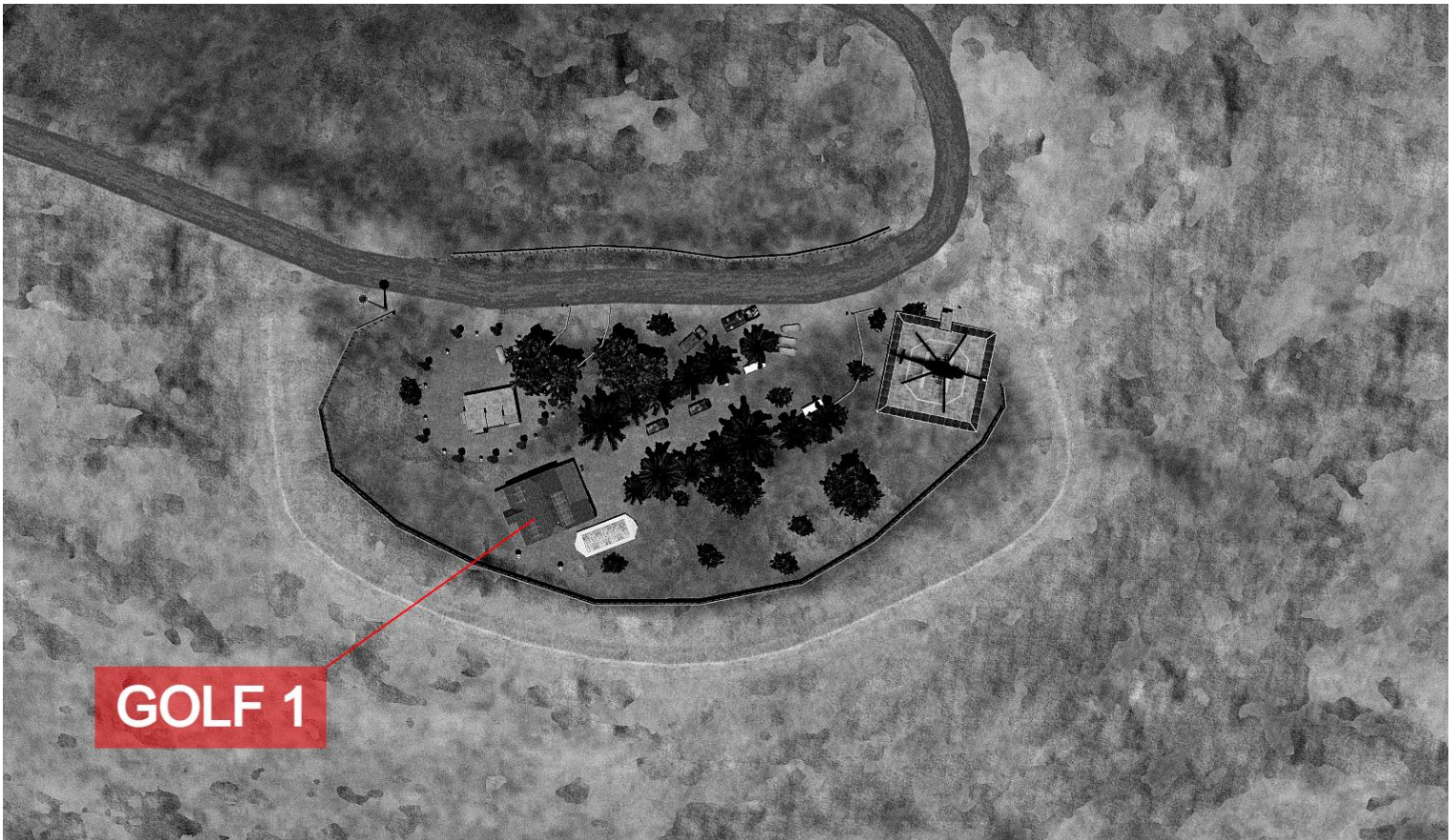
Target Fox is the building housing the Ministry of the Interior, which includes the notorious Internal Security Directorate (ISD). This organisation is responsible for running the detention centres housing political prisoners and is suspected of being involved in a number of atrocities against civilians. Our flight will be targeting four separate points on Fox, which intelligence tells us will directly impact locations in the building relating to the offices of senior ISD figures. My target will be target point 2 and so I will be looking to impact my weapon in the centre of the southeast tower.



Our secondary target is the SAA 4th Armored division's command facilities. The 4th AD is one of Syria's most elite units, fanatically loyal to the regime - as evidenced by its basing right next to the presidential palace. The 4th AD has also had a leading role in the violence committed during the Damascus uprisings. The assigned targets at Golf are all facilities occupied and used by the 4th AD senior commanders.

Poodle's assigned secondary target is Golf 1, mine is Golf 2, Woody's Golf 3 and Newt's Golf 4.

If after the destruction of Golf 1-4 we have any ordnance left on the aircraft we are cleared to drop it on any Syrian armour (T-72s) present in the 4th AD position.



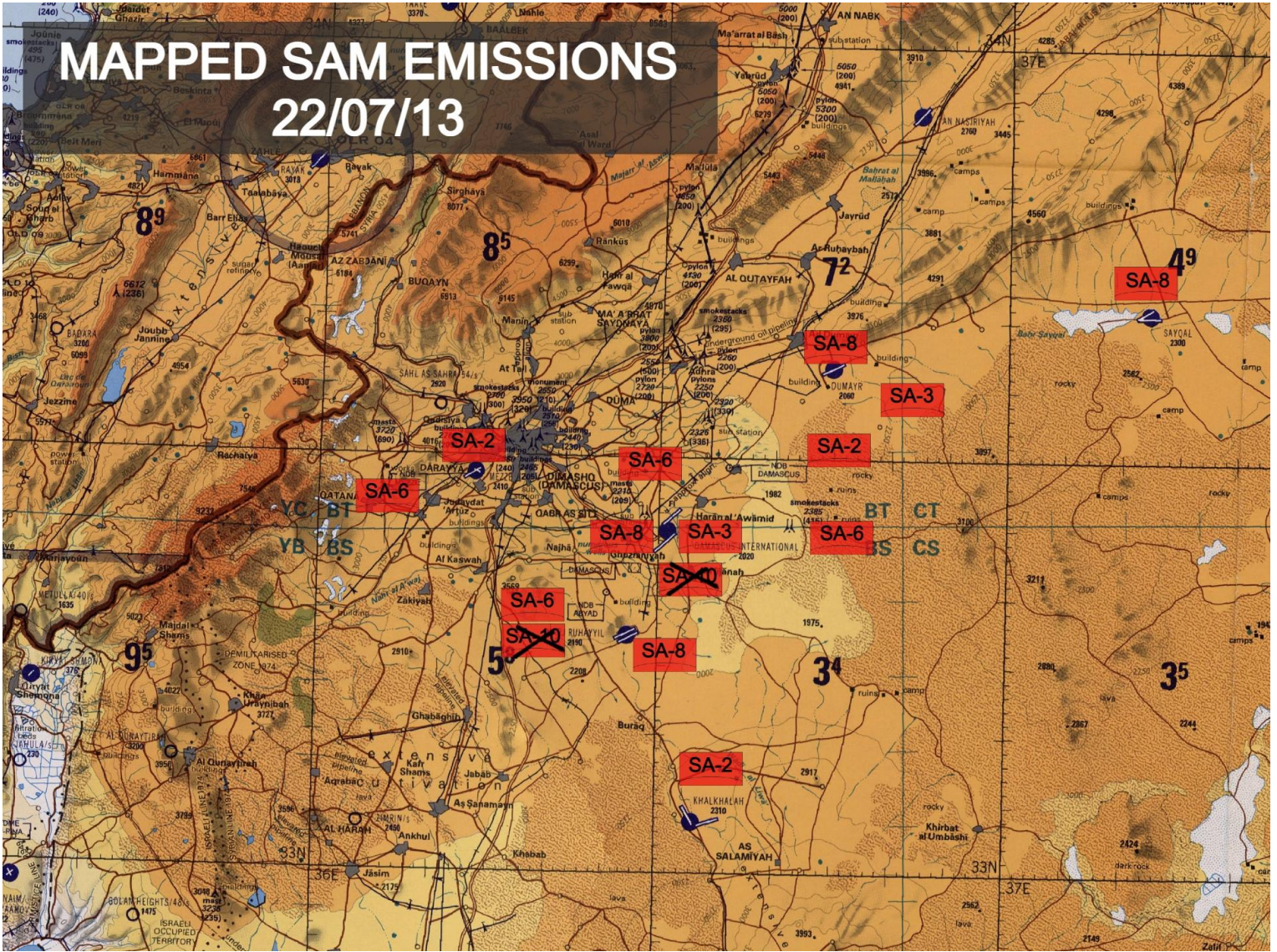


Loadout for this strike will be 1 GBU-24 Paveway III and 4 GBU-12 laser guided bombs. I should use the 2000lb GBU-24 on the MOI and save my smaller GBU-12s for the secondary target. The Paveway III HUD symbology is different to the standard LGBs we use so it's important I familiarise myself with this weapon before we depart.

Spartan have a vul time of 20 minutes so will be on station until 02:11, once Spartan departs we will lose our jamming escort - obviously we do not want to be over Damascus without EW support so we will need to pay careful attention to the vul times.

Bingo fuel will be 6,879 lb.

The briefing concluded with the threat analysis. Clearly the Damascus SMEZ is our biggest concern, but we do have a comprehensive SEAD and EW plan to protect us and the most capable Syrian SAMs - the SA-10s will be destroyed ahead of our arrival. The remaining SAM threats will be SA-2, SA-3, SA-6 and SA-8. There have been no double digit systems detected around Damascus apart from the SA-10s, meaning that we are confident our current EW suites can effectively negate the older Syrian equipment. However, as with previous missions the risk of these SAMs burning through our jamming screen will increase the closer to the radars we get.



In addition to the SAMs we know there is a lot of AAA in Damascus. The largest batteries are being targeted by the Tomahawks but this will still leave many, many smaller positions throughout the city. We can expect the usual mix of S-60 and ZU-23. As ever, expect a significant MANPAD / IR SAM threat at lower altitudes.

The air to air threats over Damascus could be any aircraft in the Syrian inventory.

With that the briefing concluded. A confusing whirl of thoughts are running through my head...the strategic and political ramifications of the target list aside...the precision, timing, speed of thought and rapid target identification will all be vital for us today. Although just guiding LGBs in from altitude onto static targets sounds simple, when we take into account the importance of staying within the jamming screen and hitting our targets within our vul time, it's likely to be anything but.

Takeoff is 01:17.