



30/06/13, 16:30

It's been an eventful day so far...but it's not over yet.

I returned to Incirlik this morning, our mission to attack the Metro Orange SA-11 battery complete. As soon as we were out of our aircraft we went into the debrief and within an hour of the completion of the debrief we were back into another series of briefings...looks like we have a quick turnaround today, we're due to go back out tonight for another raid on the Syrian air defence network.

We started to receive our briefing for the next mission in Incirlik's large briefing theatre, there will be another large strike package going in tonight with the Red Devils once again at the tip of the spear...seems someone in the CAOC likes the work we're doing over here.

This time it was Major Daniels' turn to lead the intel briefing. The Syrian IADS around Homs took a heavy hit today - our flight hit the Metro Orange SA-11 hard, with other flights following us in and striking the Metro Red and Green SAM sites. These strikes have punched a hole in the long range SAM coverage east of Homs and will enable the JSTF to more easily intercept any Syrian aircraft approaching Homs. The Syrians have however scrambled to plug the gap in their air defence network, we encountered the first of the reinforcements this morning - a Dog Ear mobile radar and command post. Over the course of today our Rivet Joint flights have detected additional Dog Ears and at least 5 SA-8s moving into the gap and establishing a picket line of short range air defenses. Although a lot less potent than the SAMs destroyed today the Geckos are tied into the IADS through the Dog Ears and can still pose a threat to JSTF aircraft.

We have seen two further attempted attacks by the Syrian air force over Homs today, the second of which was turned back after our CAP responded. There has been no significant change in the status of the ground battle on the southern side of Homs.

The Russians are thankfully still quiet, with nothing untowards being picked up by COMINT and ELINT. SATINT shows that major maintenance work is still underway at the Russian airbase.

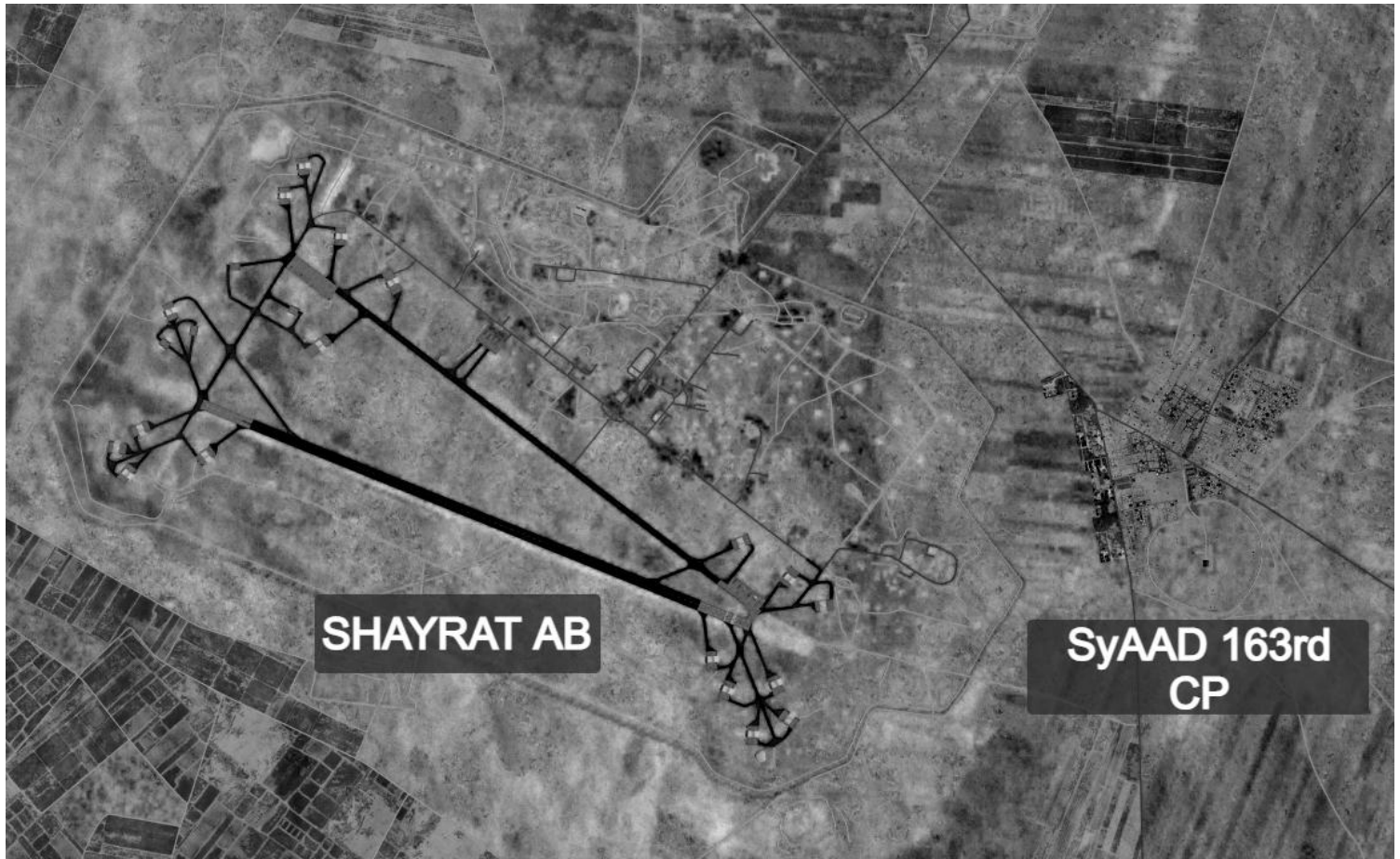
In the northeast Operation Jackal is still going well and the SIA threat is being steadily eroded, the impact of which is being felt in Homs as SDF forces are funnelled south to support the fighting there.

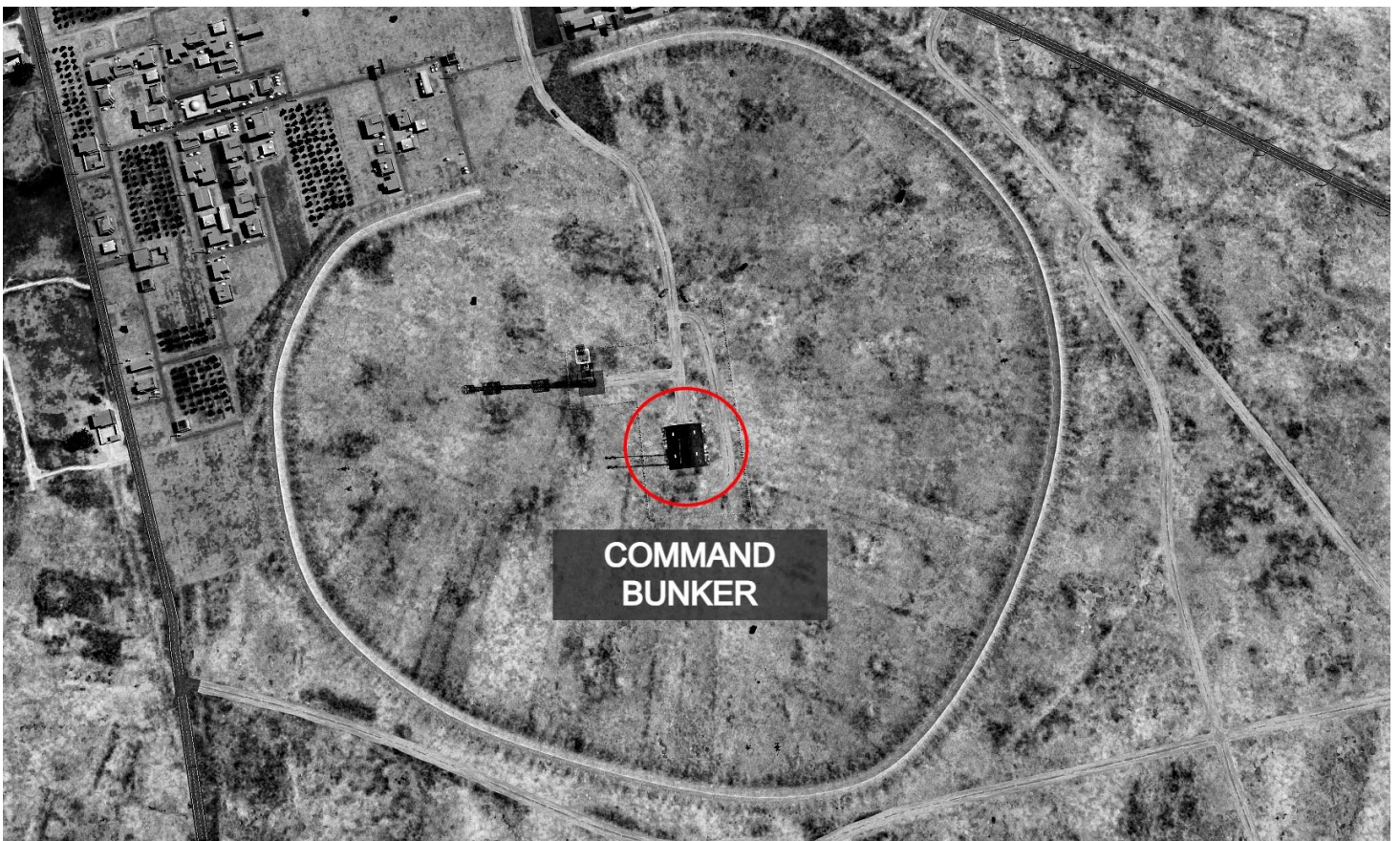
With the intel brief complete, Captain Edwards gave us the met brief, today's clouds should begin to clear overnight and the winds die down so we should be looking at good weather tonight.

Once Captain Edwards left the podium, responsibility shifted once again to Major General Forster to brief tonight's operation.

Our squadron will be part of a strike package tasked with destroying several key nodes in Syria's northern IADS, the aim being to disrupt command and communications within the air defence net. Three targets have been allocated; a radar reporting station (target Alpha), a communications node (target Bravo) and a regimental air defence command post - which has been assigned to the Red Devils.

We are tasked with 'target Charlie' - the 163rd SyAAD Regimental command centre, located close to Shayrat airbase. The command centre is located within a fortified bunker, in a compound east of Shayrat airbase, the coordinates for which have been provided in my briefing pack.





The strike package will consist of three strike elements (the Red Devils plus two Strike Eagle flights), an electronic warfare flight of Growlers, a flight of F15 Charlies on offensive counter air and two flights of Vipers on SEAD. The push time for all flights is 02:30 local, upon the codeword - Jericho.

The EW flight, Spartan 5-4 has a vul time of 02:43, the OCA flight Dagger 2-1 is frogged to complete their initial sweep at 02:40, but will hold north of the target to respond should any Syrian fighters attempt to get airborne. Dagger's vul time is 02:50.

With the operational overview complete, Forster ended the briefing and the audience split up into individual smaller briefings to go over their own plans. Not long after we found ourselves back in our small briefing room where Poodle briefed us on our specific mission.

Takeoff is slated for 2am tonight - this will be a night mission. I'm never a fan of night ops...too disorienting for my liking but at least it will help keep us hidden from the Syrian AAA. This sortie is planned for Newt and myself, with me as the flight lead. Poodle and E-Boy will also be airborne as backup if we're unable to complete the mission. We're going to be carrying a mix of weapons on this one, I will be carrying a single 2000lb penetrating JDAM for the command centre, along with 2 AGM-88 HARMs and air to air weapons for self defence, along with 2 external fuel tanks. Newt will operate a similar loadout but with laser Mavs replacing the HARMs. We were hoping to be able to use weapons with more standoff capability such as a JSOW or even a SLAM but the presence of an SA-15 near the target has put an end to that idea.

The briefing then moved onto the attack itself and with it came an oddly comforting moment from the usually gruff Poodle...I am being entrusted with planning my own attack - seems I must have shown some competence up to this point. Poodle took me through the possibilities for the attack, leaving the final decision up to me once in the jet.

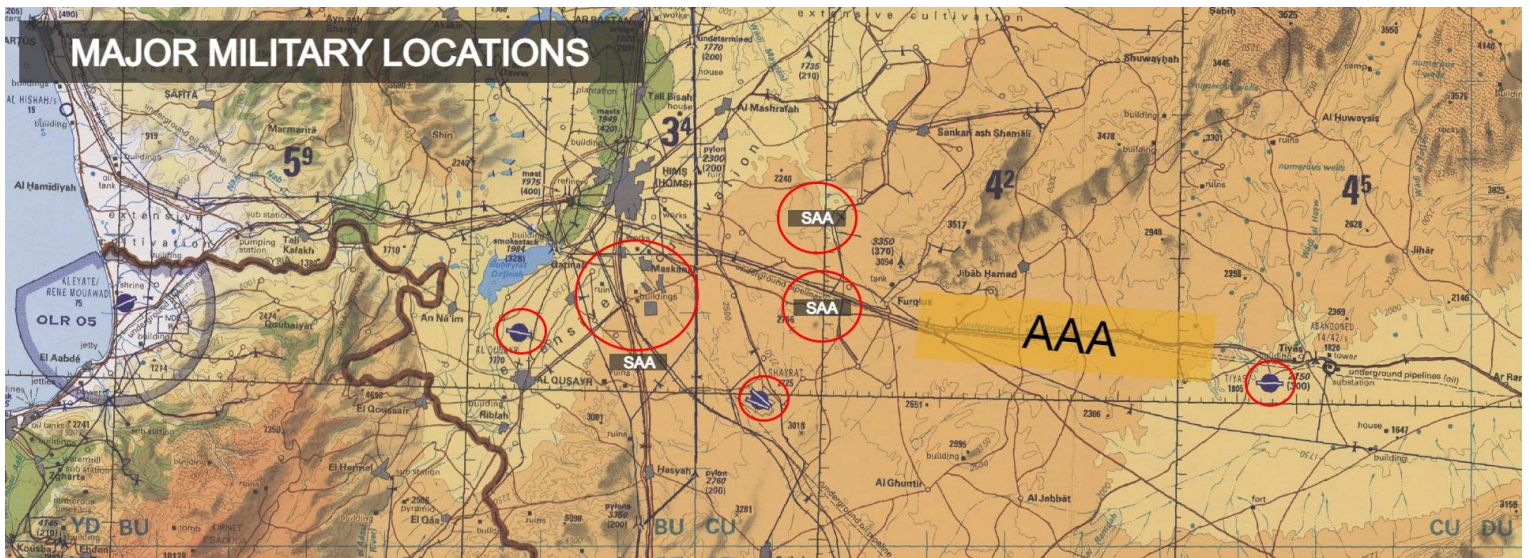
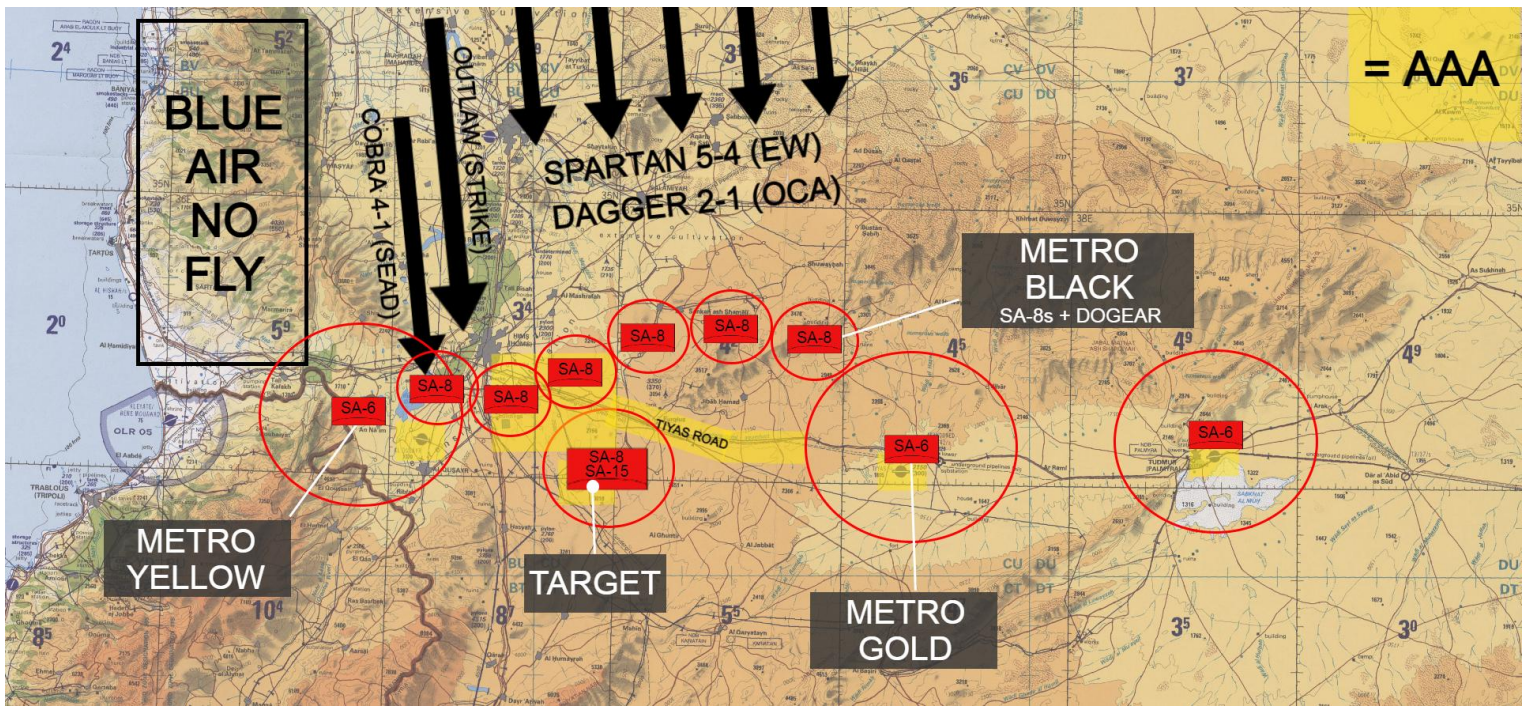
We will begin by following a standard approach into Syria, proceeding to waypoint three. At this point I am then free to execute the attack that I have planned. I should be careful to make sure I am at WP3 for the push time as we will be part of a bigger package and the SEAD, EW and OCA flights won't wait around for me. The SEAD flight Cobra 2-2 will be tasked with supporting my attack direction and if I'm on time they will be available for me to task.

Getting to the target won't be easy, the target is located 1 mile east of Shayrat airbase, which itself is 12 miles southeast of Homs. The most direct route will be through the hole we knocked in the Syrian SAM line this morning, flying high above the AAA located around the Metro Orange site, however this route will expose us to the SA-8s tied into the Dog Ear site. We also believe SA-8s are present around the SAA base south of Metro Orange, having picked them up on our RWR gear this morning. Other avenues of attack are available, but there are a number of threats I should consider before planning the attack:

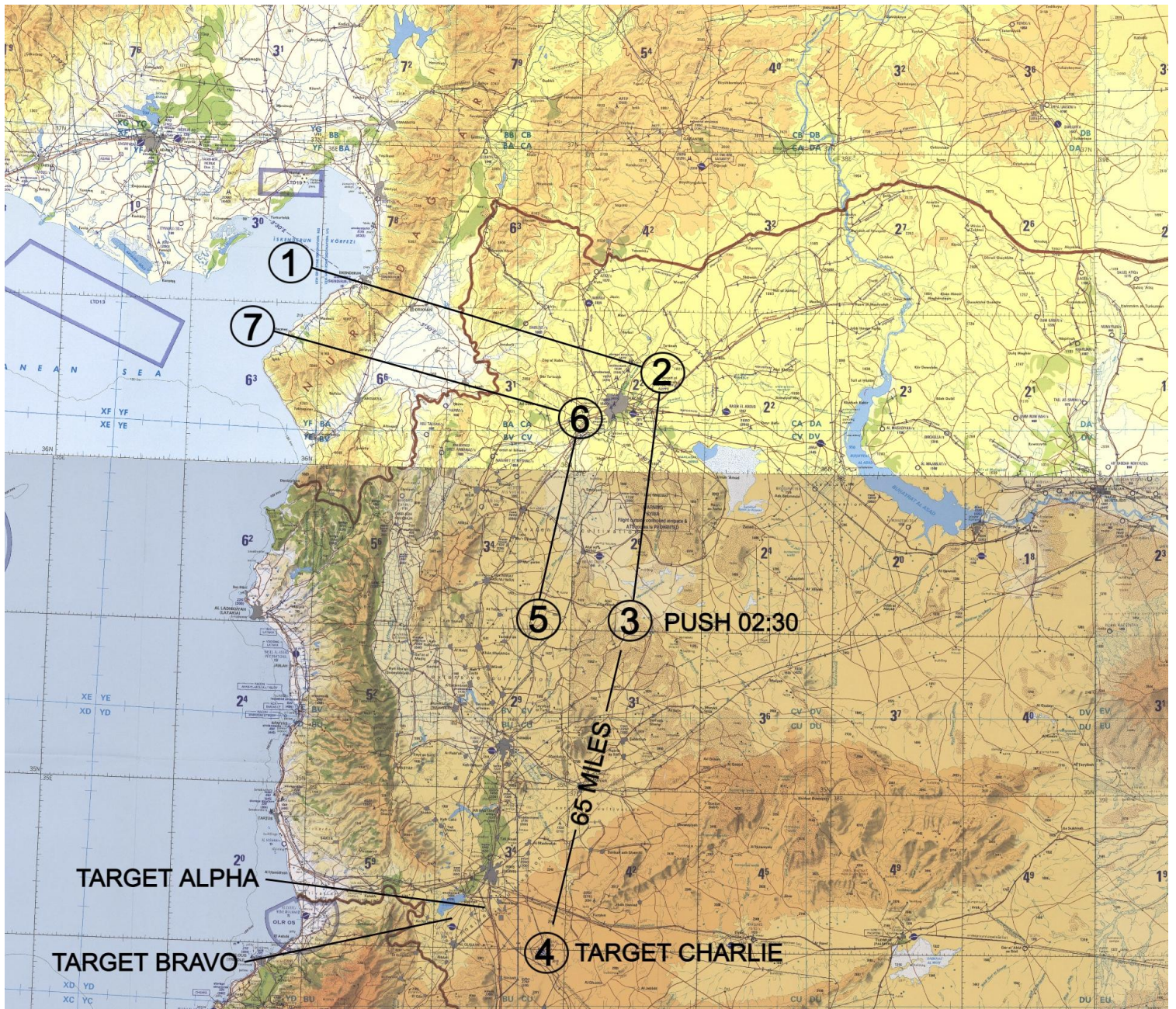
- There are still three SA-6 batteries in operation west and east of Homs, I should take careful note of their positions and weapons engagement zones (WEZs).
- Hezbollah fighters have been spotted deploying around the Lebanese border west of Homs, it should be assumed they are in possession of short range air defences.
- The southern side of Homs has a heavy deployment of SAA forces and will likely have mobile short range air defences present.
- Shayrat airbase will be defended by short range air defences, I should consider carefully how I approach the target and the position of the airbase relative to the target.
- The road from Tiyas to Homs is a key supply route from the weapons depots in the east to Homs, as such it has seen a heavy deployment of AAA along the road.
- EW support from Spartan will help reduce the effectiveness of Syrian radar until I get close and they burn through.

Poodle was also keen to stress that under no circumstances should we enter the 'Russian quarter'. The Russians will not accept any incursion into the airspace near their home base and if I violate this the Major made it quite clear that should I survive the resultant Third World War he would have me 'sent back to Blighty in pieces'.

Effective use of our weapons should also be considered, how I utilise my HARMS will be a key consideration. Newt will be available to attack the SA-8 and SA-15 at Shayrat if required.

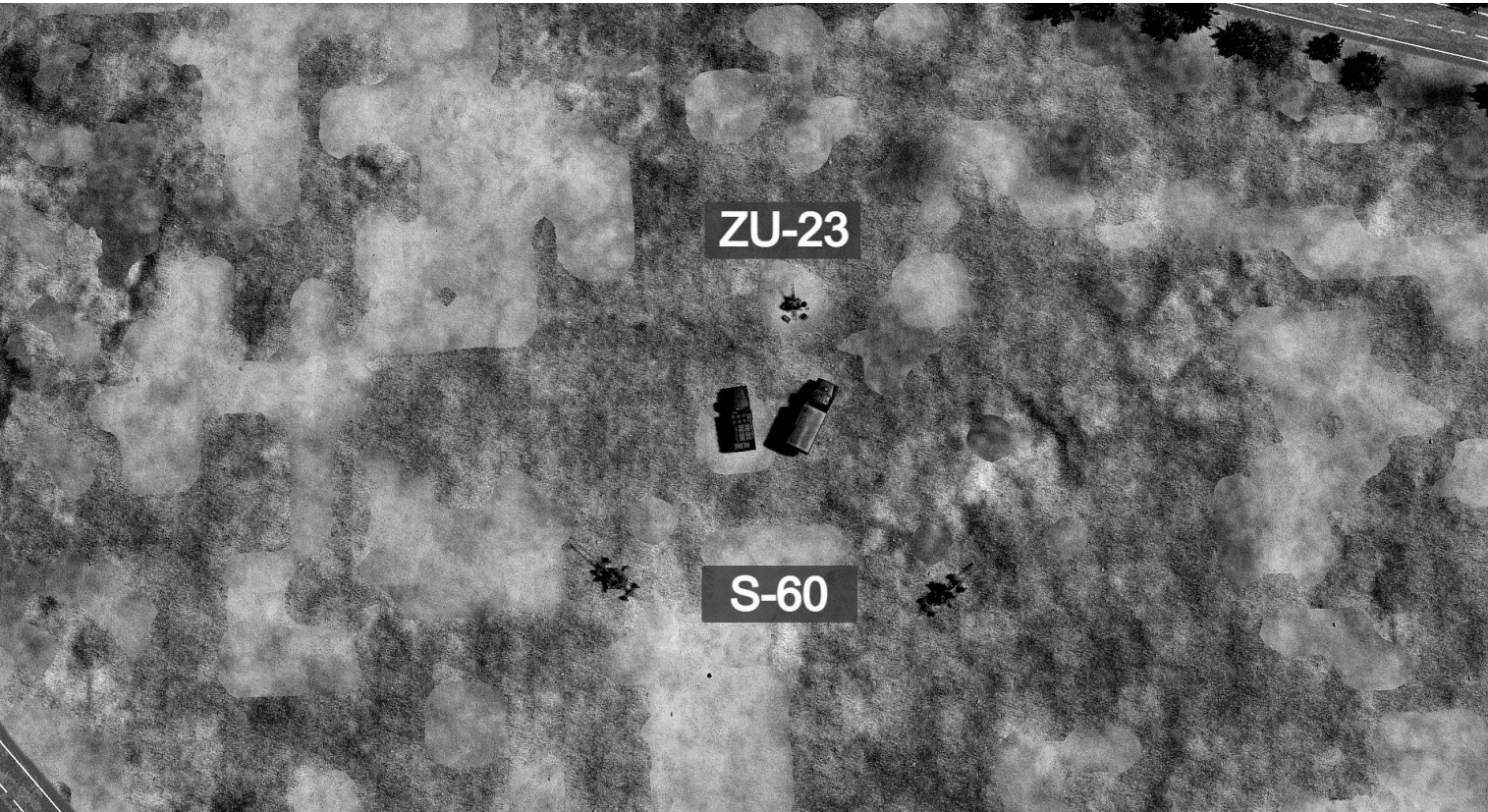


Planning my own attack comes with one other headache though...fuel planning. If I'm on plan I should hit WP3 at around 10,900 lb of fuel. Bingo is set as 6133 lb and will allow me enough fuel to get home comfortably (allowing for a low level egress to get clear of Homs if needed).



Needless to say we are going to be operating in a high threat environment tonight, but as with this morning if we plan properly it is possible to minimise the risk to ourselves. To break through to the target we will need to get by the line of SAMS near Homs, this consists of SA-6s in the west and east and SA-8s through the centre. Cobra 2-2 will be available to suppress any of these elements. On the target approach we can expect to see a heavy mix of AAA (both ZU-23 and S-60 variants) as well as MANPAD or SA-9 systems. The heaviest concentrations are likely to be located around the SAA bases, along the Tiyas to Homs road and along the south side of Homs. Target Charlie itself is protected by a mix of SA-9 and AAA systems, the adjacent Shayrat airbase also contains a combination of these systems along with an SA-8 and an SA-15. The aerial threat over Homs should be negated by Dagger 2-1's fighter sweep, however the further we stray from the Homs area the more at risk we will be from Syrian interceptors.

AAA along the 'Tiyas Road':



Air Defences - Target Charlie:



It's pretty sobering to think that after this morning's mission I'm going out again so quick, but as Poodle pointed out - I've already seen the terrain in the daylight and we know it as well as anyone in theatre right now.

The thought of being entrusted with planning this mission gives me a lot of pride..and worry... there's a lot riding on this mission and I can't shake the feeling that night attack or not, we no longer have surprise on our side.

But right now all I can do is push those thoughts aside and focus on the mission ahead...looks like I've got some planning to do.

*** DESIGNERS NOTES***

If you require assistance with planning this mission please see the 'Mission 7 Planning Document' included in the campaign documents.