

“Line of Death”

After Action Report

July 10, 1983

Cruising off the coast of Libya

Personal Log of Squadron Commander Dan “Cherub” Verssen

Looks like Colonel Gaddafi is at it again by declaring another “Line of Death” across the Gulf of Sidra. Word has it we’ll be testing that line over the next couple days. The squadron is feeling good and ready for action.

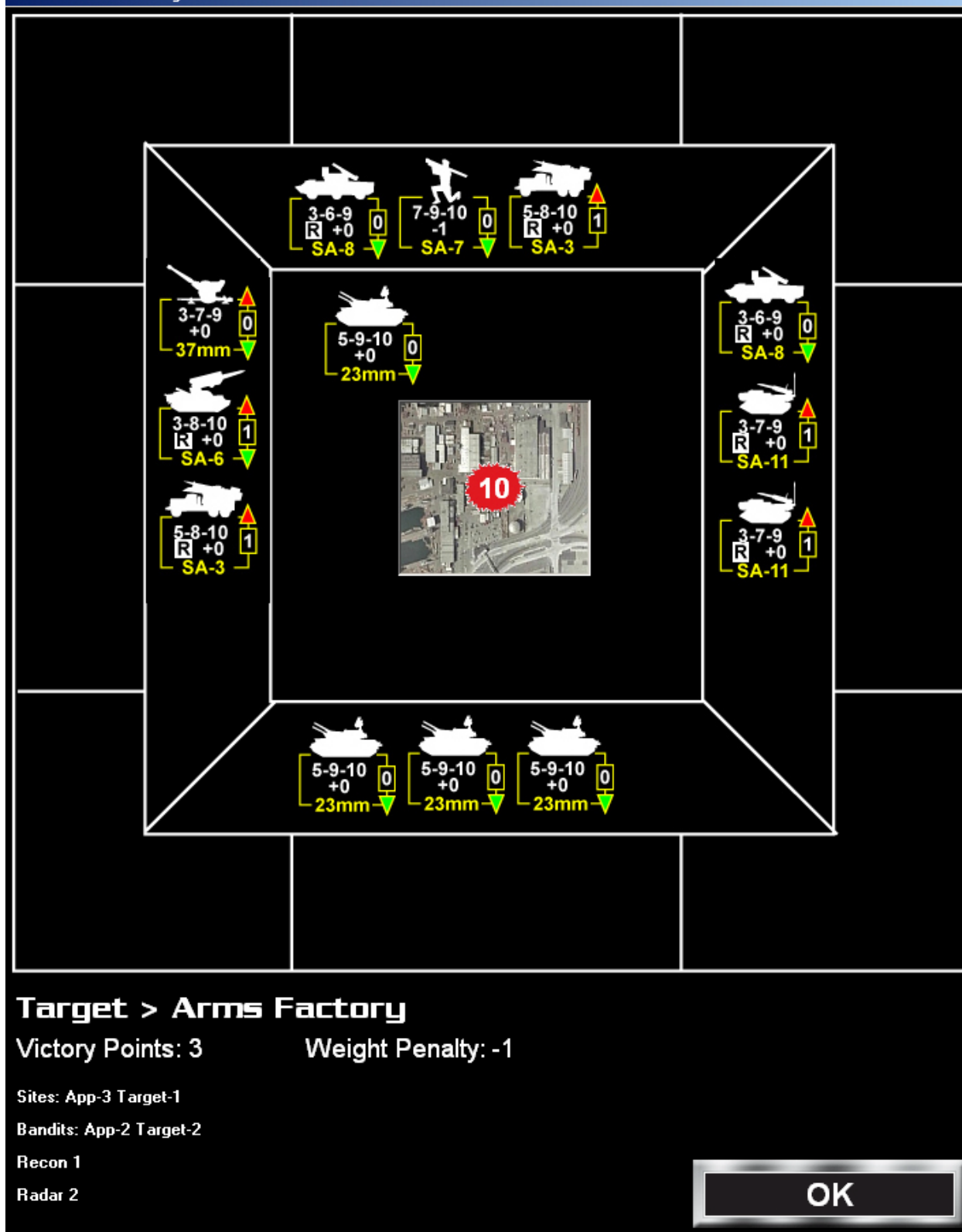
Mission orders have been cut. We’ve been tasked to take out a large arms factory defended by both sites and bandits. I’ve selected 6 pilots for the mission: Spider, Banzai, Wedge, Dino, Lightning, and Griffin.

From the intel report, it looks like the factory is ringed by a fair number of long range sites. They have a 23mm gun set-up in the factory’s parking lot.

On the good side, the target is located near the coast, so we’ll be able to carry almost a full weapon load.

Its 3 Victory Points will also advance me toward a Great outcome for the campaign.

If I can destroy this target and not suffer too much stress, I should be in a good position to take on a major target tomorrow and win this campaign.



Now comes the tricky part of the mission. How do I defeat this layered defensive network?

The large number of long-range SAM (Surface-to-Air-Missile) sites makes this a complicated mission. Also, the high number of hits that need to be scored on the target doesn't help. Luckily, Bandit should be minimal. I'm expecting to have roughly 3 bandits in the target area.

Here's a couple general attack plan ideas...

Aircraft – I'd like to arm 2 Hornets for air combat. This leaves me 4 Hornets to suppress the sites and score hits on the target.

Air Combat – The 2 air combat Hornets will be armed with Sparrows and Sidewinders. This will let them attack the bandits and provide suppressing fire if any of the Bandits try to shoot at the air to ground guys.

Shrikes/Mavericks – I could load up with AGM-45 Shrikes, AGM-62 Walleyes, and AGM-65 Mavericks, take out the sites from Pre-Approach, and then volley the Walleyes/Mavericks from an Approach area. This keeps me from having to enter the center area where all the long-range sites can get me, but I'm not sure I can score enough hits. I would need to fire maybe 16 to score 10 hits. I'm not sure I can afford to devote 32 weight points.

Shrike/Bombs – I take out the sites with Shrikes, then fly over the target and hit it with bombs. The nice part of this plan is I get a lot of hitting power with bombs. The bad part is, I need to fly over the center of the target. This plan will either leave me vulnerable to long-range sites, or I will need to carry extra Shrikes.

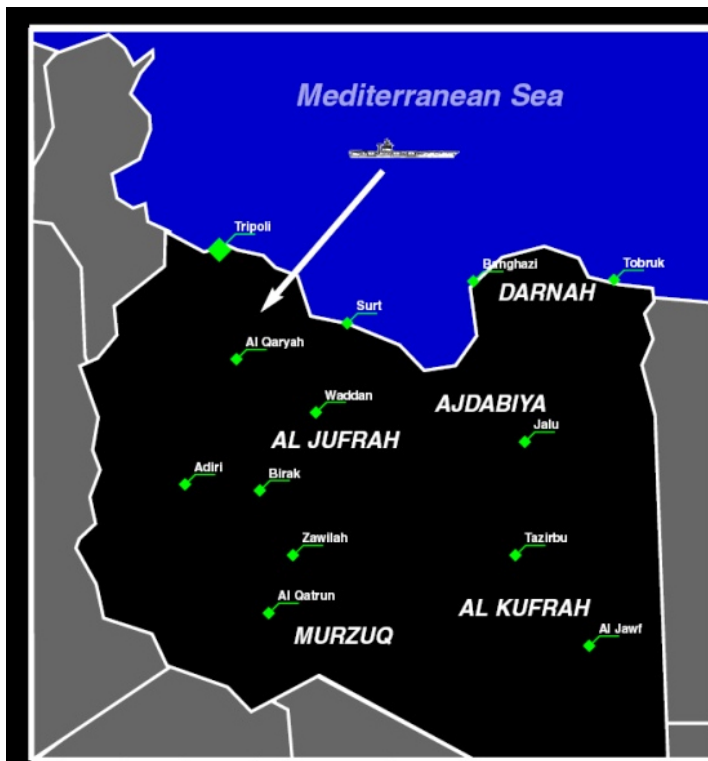
Special Option Weapons – I can spend some special option points to buy some of the high-tech weapons, but I'd like to save them for the next mission.

Defense Pods/Bombs – Another option is to take pods instead of Shrikes. In this plan, I would take the site attacks, and hope the pods can keep me safe. I'm not sure about this one. I would need to take the ALQ-119s to protect me from the long-range sites. This would use 2 weights per plane. With the 5 remaining weight point, I could probably get 3 hits per plane with bombs. This would give me 12 hits, but if even a single plane gets damaged I'll come up short on hits.

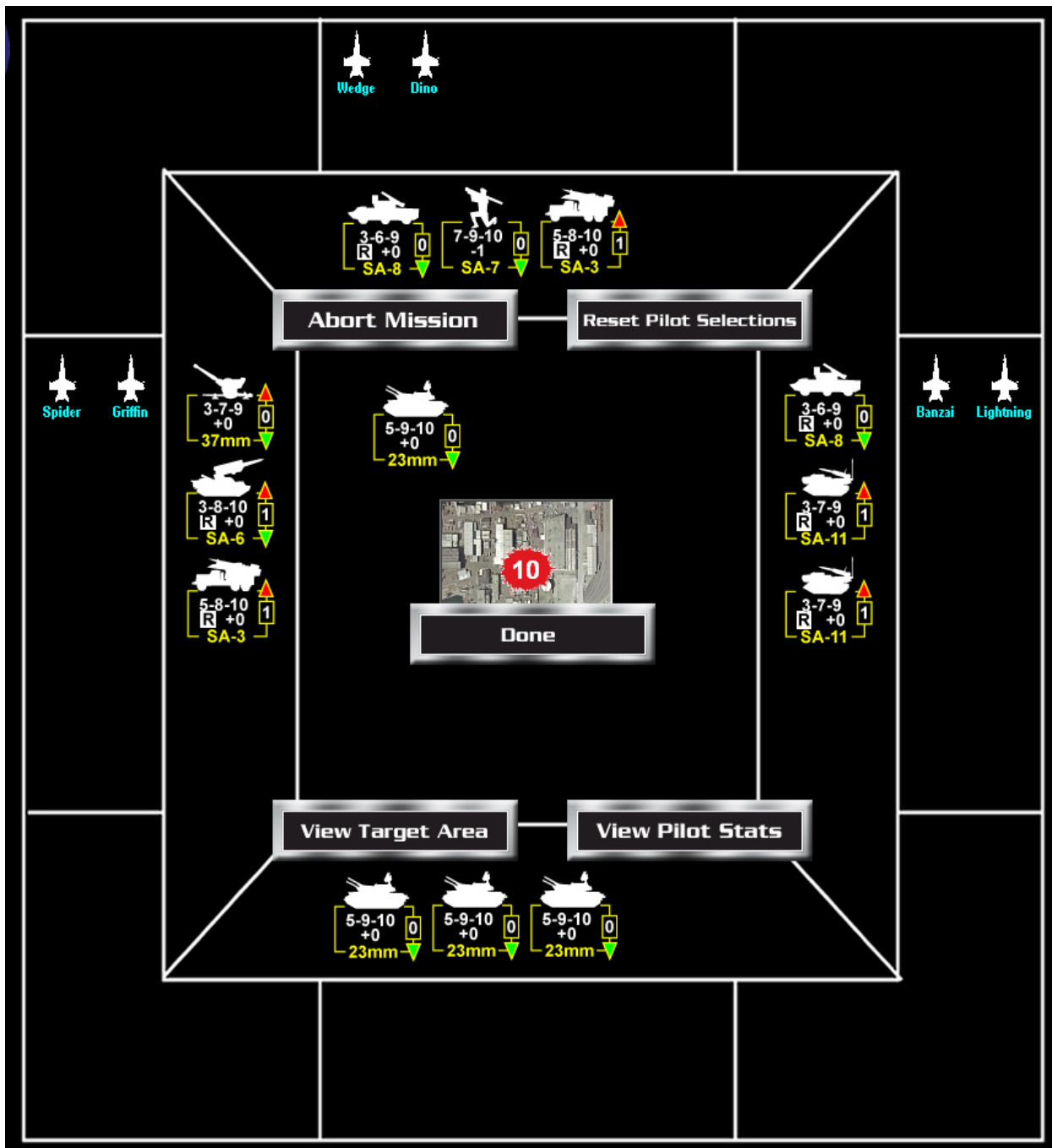
Approach Paths – I can either divide the planes and hit the target from different angles, or group up everyone and hit it from one direction. If I come in from different directions, I can take out a good number of sites on the first turn. If I group-up, I can punch through one side easily, but I might take a lot of fire from the adjoining approach areas.

I've decided to arm-up with a mix of Shrikes and bombs for the air-to-ground guys, and Sparrows and Sidewinders for the air guys. The major challenge we're going to face is the sheer size of the complex. It's going to take a lot of pounding.

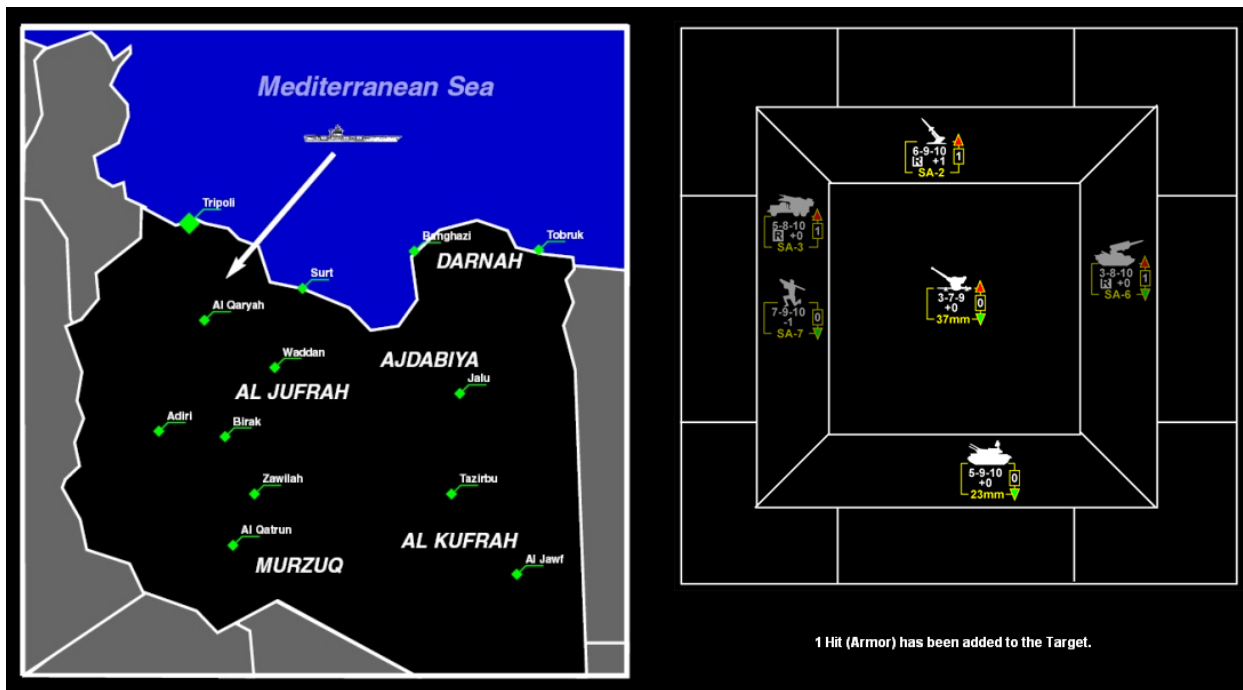
While heading for the target, we've been notified that the powers-to-be have decided this is a Vital Target.



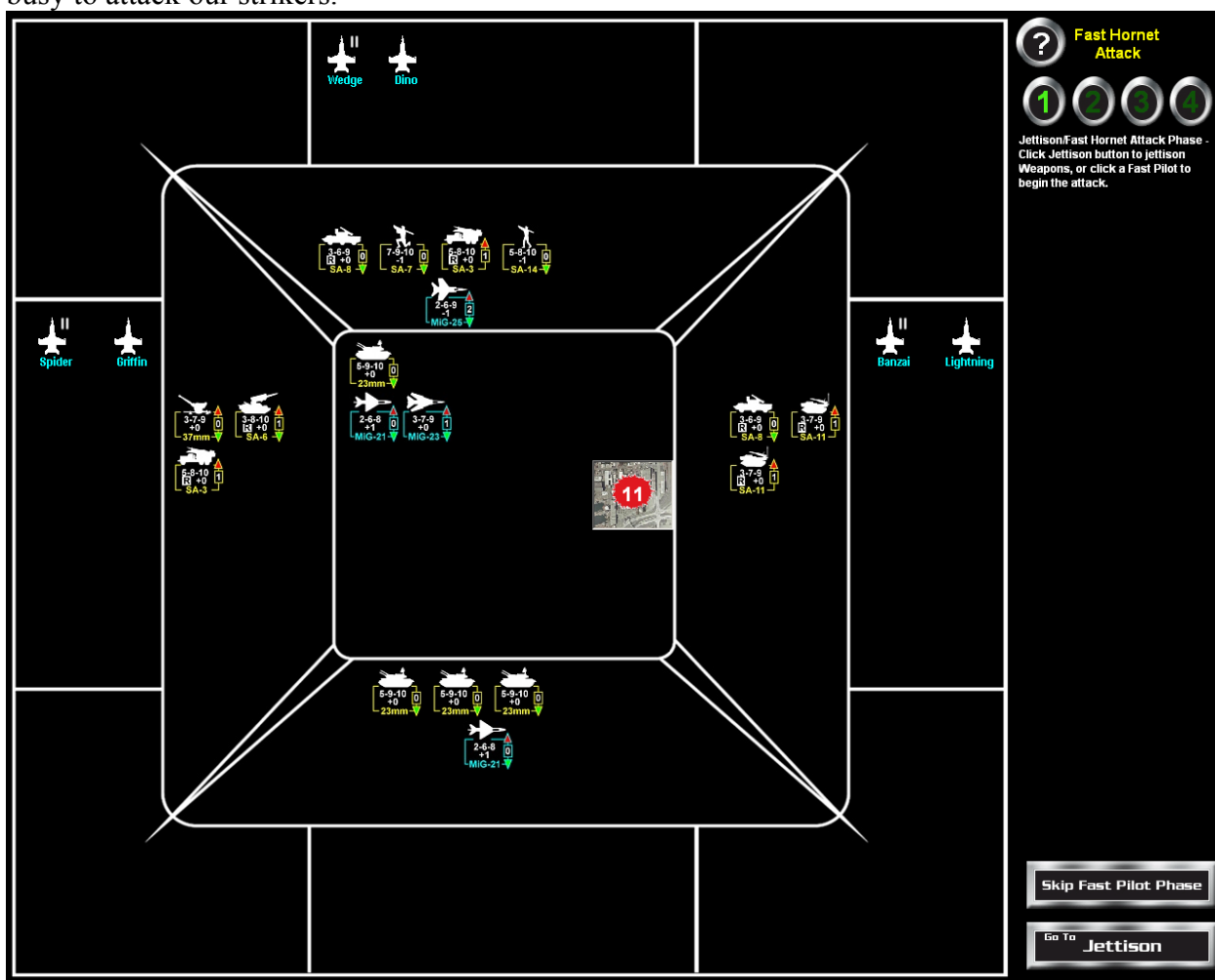
I've sent Wedge and Dino to come in from the North. From there, they should be able to provide air cover for the 2 strike groups coming in from the West and East. Everyone is coming in at high altitude. We'll do our best to take down their long range SAM sites before they can get too many shots at us.



Looks like the walls and roofs of this place were a little thicker than we thought. We did not need this. I was already concerned about not carrying enough bomb tonnage.

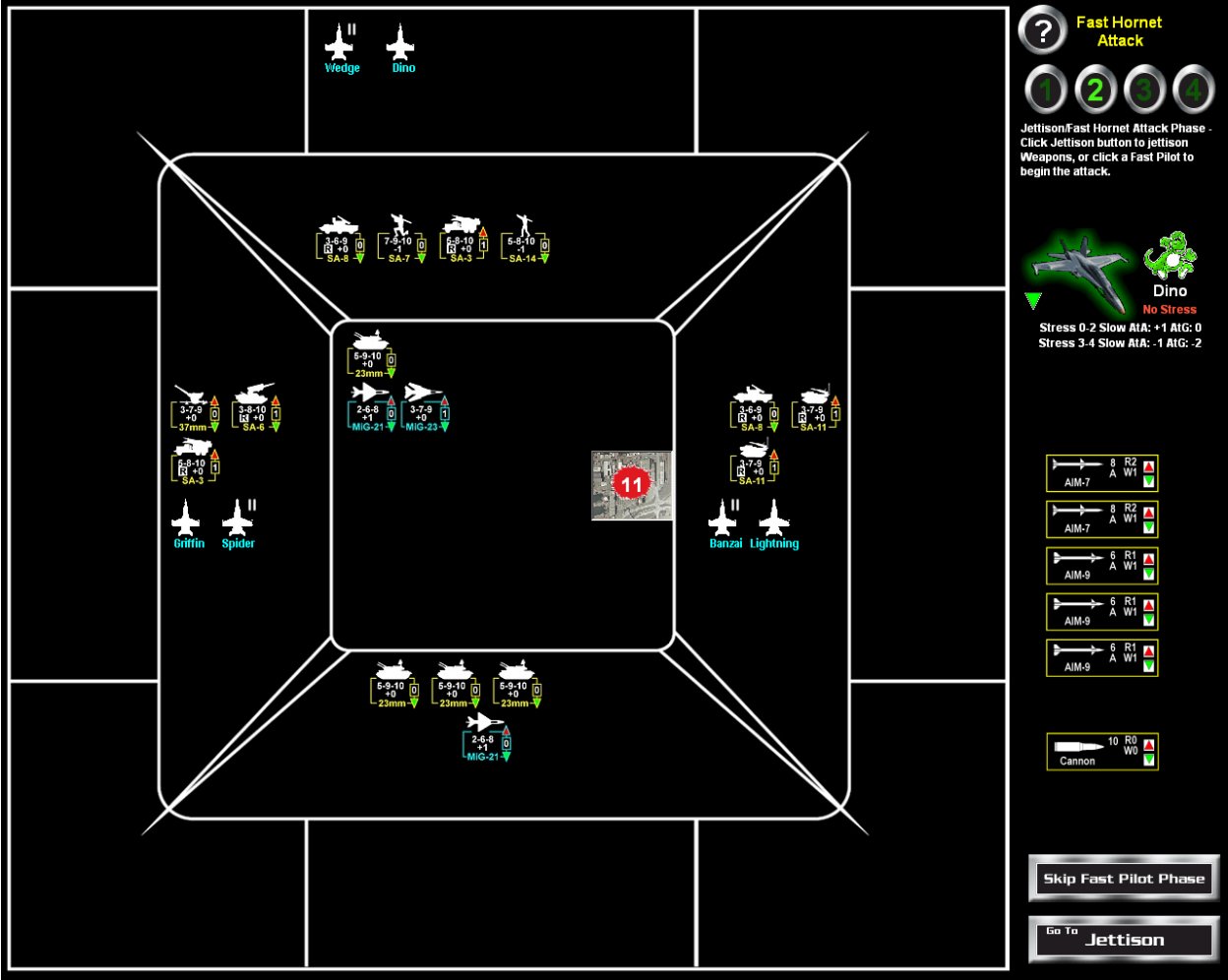


As we close in on the factory, we start to see the tactical situation. We've got a few bandits, but Wedge and Dino should be able to take care of them. Or at least fire enough missiles at them to keep them too busy to attack our strikers.

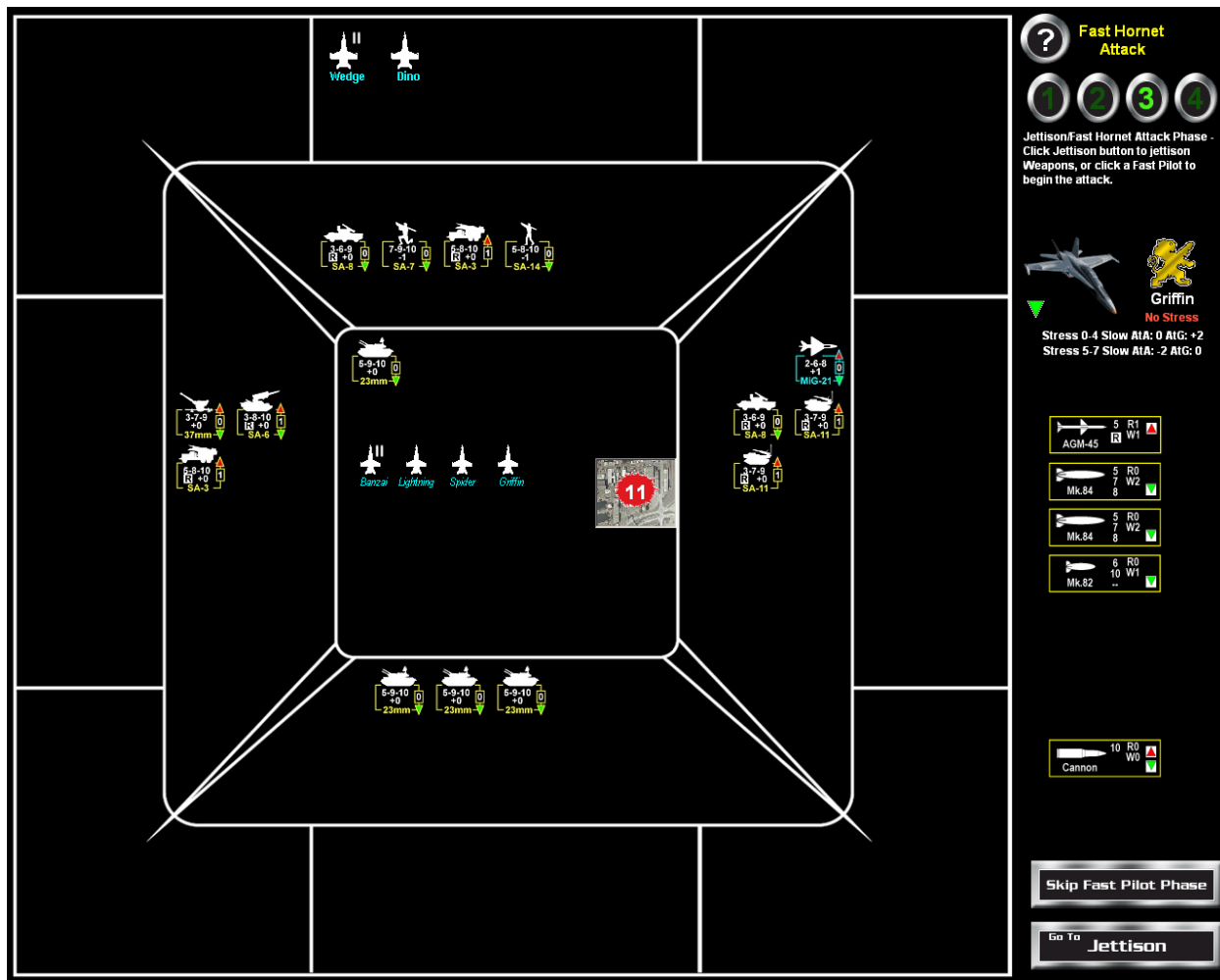


Not a great start to the battle. Wedge managed to bring down a MiG-25 with a pair of AIM-9 Sidewinders. Other than that, many AGM-45 Shrikes flew off the rails and didn't hit anything but desert sand. With all the high Altitude sites throwing missiles in our direction, all aircraft have been

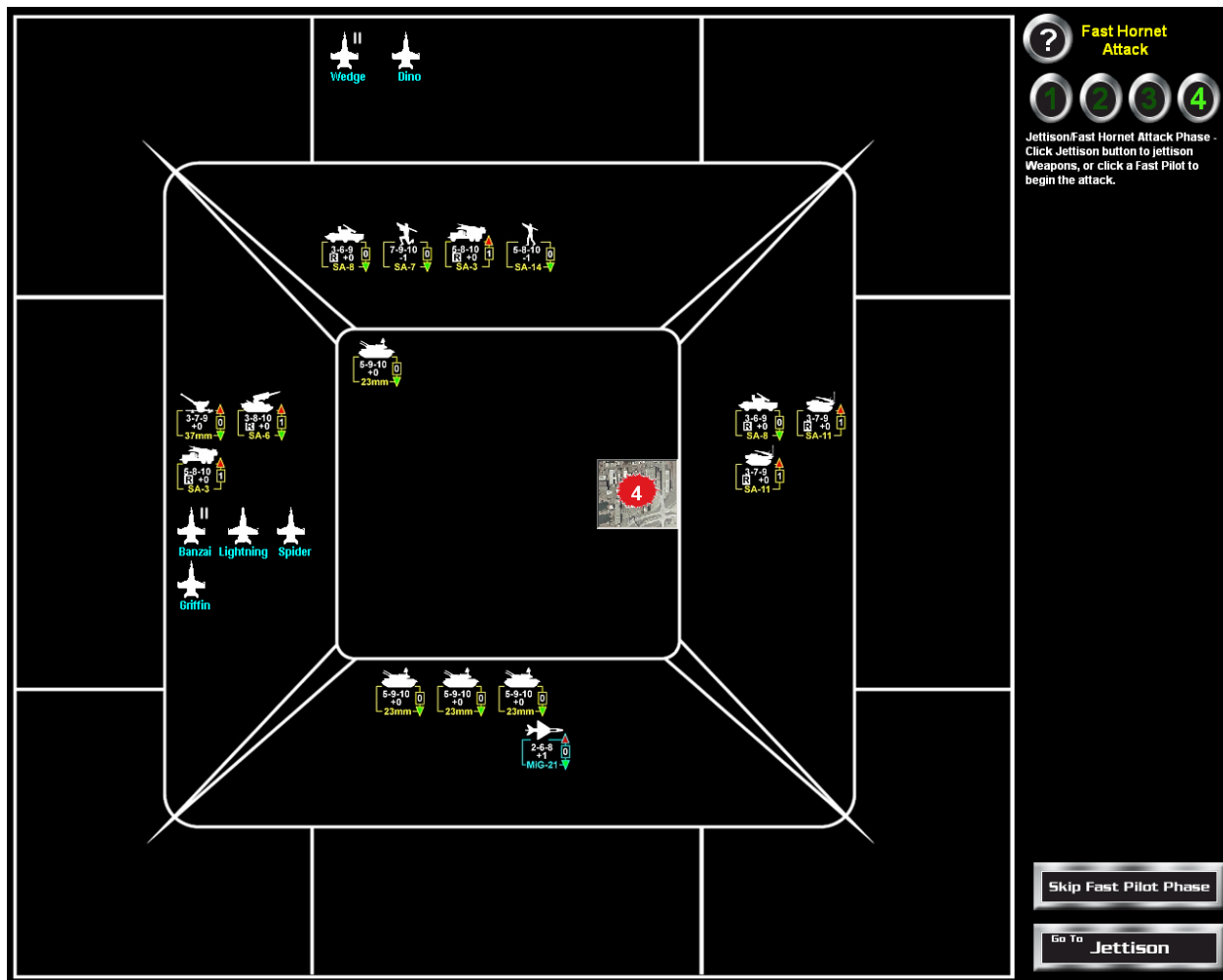
ordered down low. The pilots had to do some fancy flying to dodge the SAM volley, but everyone came through undamaged. Stress though is starting to build.



Wedge and Dino each managed to bring down a bandit with Sparrow shots. The ground guys just had to take it in the teeth with more missiles. Spider and a couple of the others are sounding kind of shaky through the radio. Luckily, they’ve reached the target and will be able to start their bomb runs.

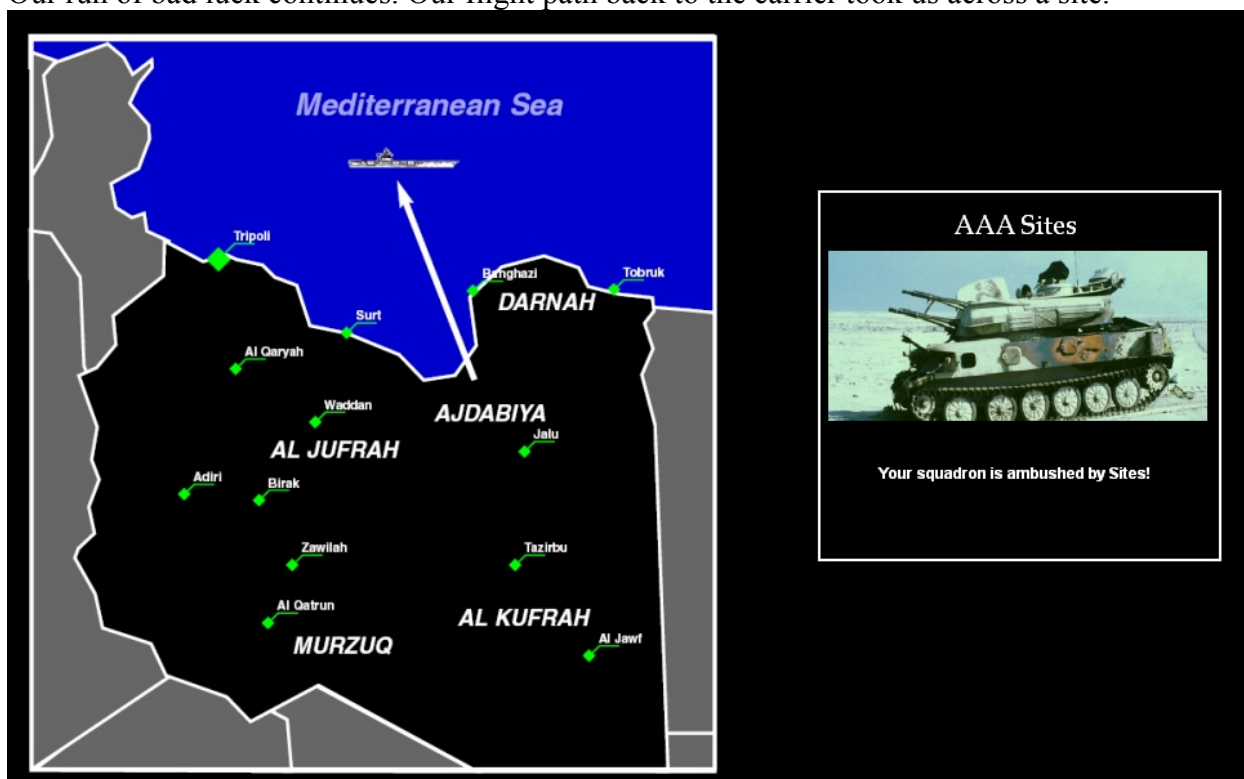


We hit it hard, but not hard enough. I think the stress got to some of the guys and while their bombs fell close, they were not close enough. The strike group is egressing to the West. The bandit threat is almost eliminated, and the one remaining MiG-21 doesn't seem interested in getting to close.



Lightning caught a few shells from the 37mm site as he pulled away. He had to jettison the remainder of his ordnance, but he's keeping it in the air.

Our run of bad luck continues. Our flight path back to the carrier took us across a site.



Even though the site turned out to be a group of guys with SA-7s, we didn't have the air-to-ground weapons left to suppress their attacks. They were in the right place at the right time to tag us. Banzai and Dino ended up being shot down.

Here's the result of our mission...



Mission Summary



Campaign: Libya 1986
Duration: Skirmish (Day 1 of 2)
Target: Arms Factory



Pilot Data

Pilot	Target Hits	Bandits	Sites	Suppressions	Status
Spider	2	0	0	0	Shaken (Stress: 7)
Banzai	3	0	0	0	Shot-Down
Wedge	0	2	0	0	Okay (Stress: 2)
Dino	0	1	0	0	Shot-Down
Lightning	0	0	0	0	Unfit (Stress: 7)
Griffin	2	0	0	0	Okay (Stress: 3)

Tactical and Strategic Effects

Target Status: Not Destroyed
No Victory Points.

Continue

It was a horrible mission on all counts.

In looking back on it, maybe I should have grouped the guys in one approach area, and spent a couple Special Option points on the advanced weapons. Also, I think I over-committed to air combat. I should have armed Wedge for air combat and given Dino a mixed load of Shrikes and Sparrows. Half way through the mission, the strikers were in desperate need of support and the bandits had been pretty well eliminated. A few more Shrikes would have been very handy.