

Perfect for
First-Time
Flyers!

ACE COMBAT 8™

WINGS OF THEVE

Crystal-Clear Illustrated Guides!

No Prior Knowledge Required!

Explore Further Horizons in the
Long-Awaited New Series Title!

The latest entry in the dynamic aircraft shooter series, ACE COMBAT 8: WINGS OF THEVE, offers a one-of-a-kind, immersive flight experience across skies with breathtaking depth generated by an in-house middleware engine. This guide is a one-stop resource containing all the essential information you need to begin your airborne journey.



FLIGHT GUIDE

**Difficulty Can Be Changed During Missions
to More Beginner-Friendly Levels** Tips

This guide assumes you will be playing on the PILOT or VETERAN difficulty level. If you're really not comfortable with action games, you can also try the story-focused ROOKIE mode.

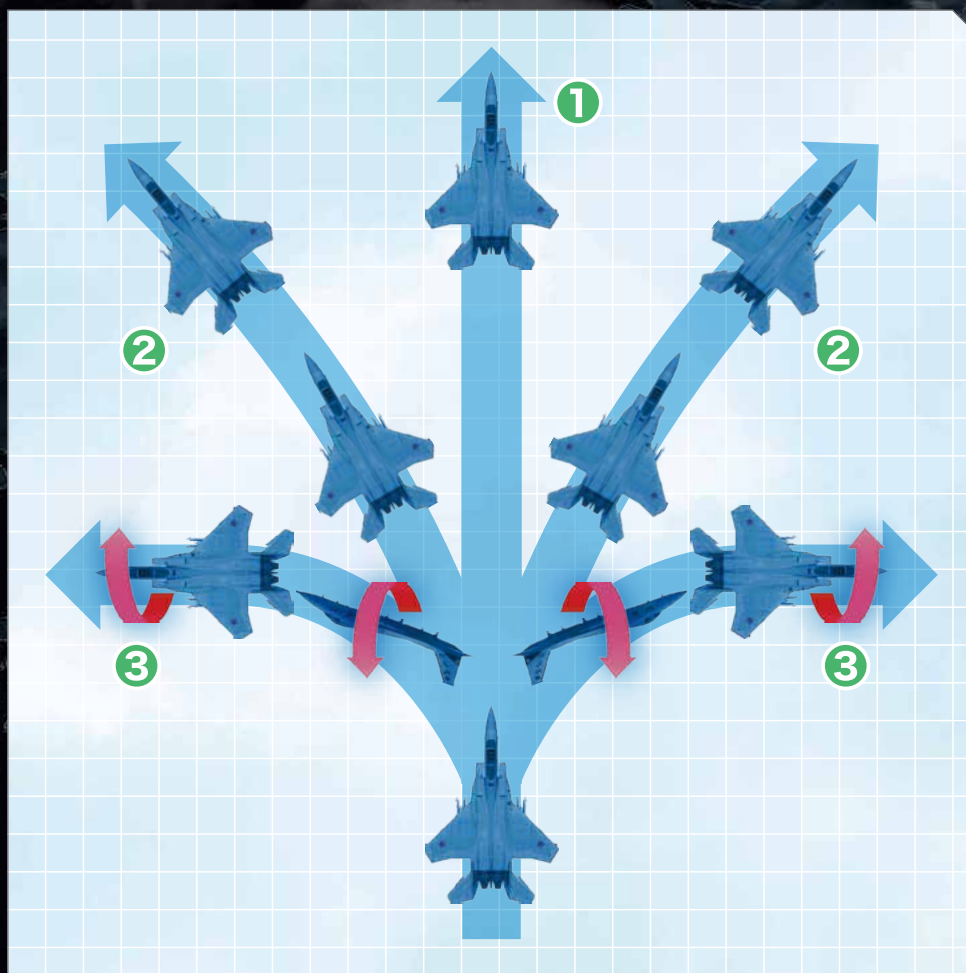


Note: This guide uses the PlayStation 5™ controller button layout.

The Basics: Let's Take to the Skies!

BASIC TECHNIQUE

There are two control schemes for flying your aircraft: **STANDARD**, a simple, intuitive scheme that only requires the left stick to turn, and **EXPERT**, which requires both roll and pitch to turn, much like a real fighter jet. This guide explains the controls using the **EXPERT** scheme, but you should choose whichever control style suits you best.



[① Accelerate/Decelerate]

Accelerate with the R2 button and decelerate with the L2 button to adjust the aircraft's airspeed. Generally, you'll accelerate to close in on distant enemy aircraft or speed toward faraway objectives, and decelerate to turn. See page 12 for more information on sharper turns (high-G turns).



[② Yaw]

"Yawing" refers to moving the aircraft sideways left or right. Use L1 or R1 button to yaw and slowly change your flight direction without tilting the aircraft. This is useful when you need to make fine adjustments, such as when aiming machine guns at enemies with limited movement.



[③ Roll/Pitch Up/Pitch Down]

With yawing and pitching down (tilt left stick upward), you can only change direction gradually. The aircraft's strongest maneuver is actually pitching up (tilt left stick downward), so the basic method for turning left

or right is to roll (tilt left stick left/right) to approximately 90 degrees, then pitch up. After completing the turn, roll in the opposite direction or activate the autopilot (L1 + R1) to level out the aircraft.



If You Want to Use Advanced Maneuvers...

Tips

With **STANDARD** controls, you simply tilt the left stick left or right to roll and pitch up. This allows even beginners to control the aircraft intuitively. However, this control system is less suited for acrobatic maneuvers such as inverted flight, so if you want to perform more complex flight techniques, **EXPERT** controls are recommended.



Having Trouble Flying? Try These Tips!

BASIC TECHNIQUE

If the aircraft doesn't move the way you want and you end up crashing, don't worry. Every crash can be roughly categorized as either a control issue or the direct result of an enemy attack. In this section, we'll go over how to handle either situation.



Aircraft crashed...



Control Issue

[Check Your Speed and Altitude!]

Decelerating too much will cause "STALLING" to appear on the screen. Stalling is a dangerous condition that can easily result in crashes. Additionally, if your mission involves ground targets and you fly too low, you're at risk of colliding with the terrain. Keep a close eye on your speed (SPEED) and altitude (ALT) displays.

Enemy Attack

- TARGET: M1G-21BIS-370
- Pitch Up/Pitch Down
- Roll Left/Roll Right
- Left Yaw Turn/Right Yaw Turn
- Decelerate/Accelerate
- Level Flight
- Switch Radar
- Switch Target
- Fire missile
- Fire machine gun



[Evade by Pitching Up!]

If your aircraft's damage level reaches 100%, it will fall from the air. When an enemy targets you, make evasion your top priority. If you're not yet comfortable keeping an eye on the radar, you can evade most enemy missiles by pitching up and turning.



For more detailed techniques, see page 13!



Accelerate or Turn On Autopilot to Save Your Aircraft!

Tips

You can recover from a stall by accelerating with the R2 button. If you experience vertigo, a state where you lose track of which way is up or down, stay calm and press the L1 and R1 buttons simultaneously to turn on autopilot and level the aircraft.



Use the Velocity Vector to Check Your Aircraft's Future Position!

Tips



To prevent crashes, it is important to keep track of where your aircraft is heading. The velocity vector in the center of the screen shows you your aircraft's predicted path. Your aircraft will fly toward the velocity vector, so as long as it's not pointing at buildings or terrain, you don't have to worry about collisions.

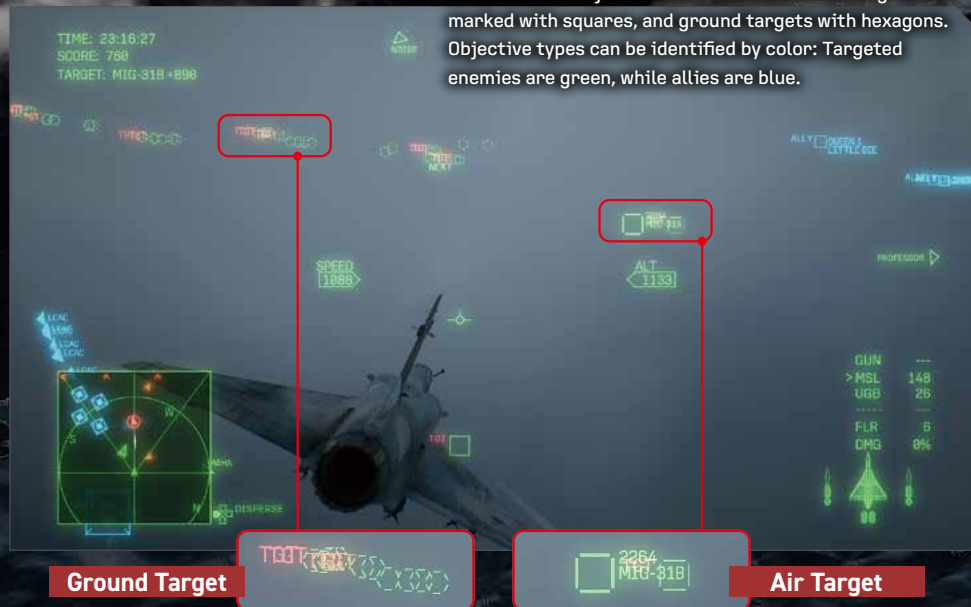
Combat Techniques

(Basics)

COMBAT TECHNIQUE

Objective Containers

The positions of both air and ground targets are displayed on the HUD as objective containers. Airborne targets are marked with squares, and ground targets with hexagons. Objective types can be identified by color: Targeted enemies are green, while allies are blue.



Changing View

Press R3 to switch between third-person, HUD perspective, and cockpit view. Also, after firing a projectile, you can hold the ○ button to follow the projectile with the camera, or hold the △ button to watch the target.

HUD (First-Person)



Third-Person



Cockpit



Reading the Radar

The radar marks the positions of nearby enemy and allied aircraft in real time within a fixed range around you. The icons on the radar also indicate aircraft's horizontal heading. The icon for your currently selected target flashes, just like its objective container.

- ▲ Aircraft (Green: Self / Blue: Allies / White: Enemies)
- Ground/Surface (Blue: Allies / White: Enemies)
- ▲ Aircraft (TGT)
- Ground/Surface (TGT)
- | Missile
- Danger Zone (blast radius, etc.)

Note: Score levels for target destruction are indicated by red (highest), orange (middle), and white (lowest).



Locking On and Firing Missiles

Confirm Your Lock

Press the △ button to switch targets. When you are within a certain distance from the selected target (roughly 2,000 meters), the missile seeker will track the target. When the objective container overlaps with the seeker, its outline turns red, indicating that you have a lock.



When you are locked on while behind the target, the SHOOT prompt will appear.

Fire a Missile

Once you are locked on, press the ○ button to fire a missile, which will automatically track its target. Up to two standard missiles can be fired at once, and they will reload after a set amount of time.

Expanded Map



Battle Map



Switching the Radar

Press the touchpad button to switch between three radar modes: enemy detection, expanded map, and battle map. Use each mode depending on your needs, such as searching for distant targets or understanding your position relative to enemy aircraft.

Dogfighting (Air-to-Air)

DOGFIGHT TECHNIQUE

Just like you, enemy aircraft are constantly moving around while looking for opportunities to attack. Even when you're locked on, they will usually evade your missiles unless you fire from an advantageous position. Your goal in dogfighting is to find these favorable positions while avoiding enemy attacks.



✈ Create a Favorable Position

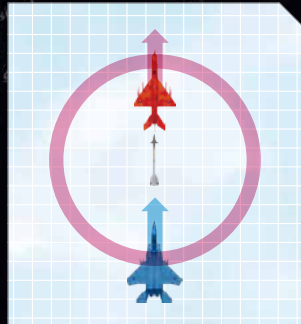
Missiles are much more likely to hit when fired from behind the target. When using weapons with limited ammo, make sure to fire from this position to maximize the chance of a direct hit.



✈ Check the Target's Heading

During high-speed combat, it can be difficult to quickly determine an enemy aircraft's heading visually. The enemy's direction is clearly displayed by its icon on the radar, so use that to help position yourself. As a general rule, try to fire missiles only in the situation shown in diagram 1 below.

[① Enemy is Ahead]



[② Enemy Crosses in Front]



[③ Enemy is Approaching]



[① Enemy is Ahead]

When an enemy aircraft is ahead of you and showing its tail, this is your best opportunity to attack. After firing missiles or special weapons, immediately switch to the next target and begin adjusting your position.



Missiles won't always hit if you fire head-on at an enemy. Wait for the moment when the enemy shows its tail.

**Hit tough enemies
with everything you've got!**

Once you're behind an enemy, fire off a barrage of missiles. Against tougher targets, use other armaments such as special weaponry as well.

[② Enemy Crosses in Front]

When an enemy aircraft crosses in front of you, it is easier for your missiles to lose track of their targets. Even if you've locked on, don't rush to fire. Instead, pursue the enemy and try to get behind it. If you need to quickly turn toward an enemy aircraft, use the arrow indicating its direction (target locator) as a guide.



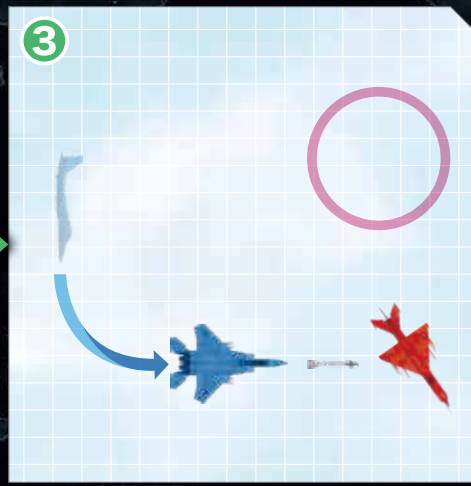
[③ Enemy is Approaching]

You can sometimes land missiles on enemy aircraft that are charging straight toward you. However, continuing to fly directly at them will also leave you exposed to their attacks, so take evasive action immediately after firing. If you want to avoid the risk, let them pass by, turn around, and pursue them until you reach the situation shown in 1 (see the next page for details).



Getting Behind Enemy Aircraft

When an enemy aircraft crosses your path (1), simply following the target locator and pursuing it by the shortest route may not allow you to turn quickly enough, and you risk being outmaneuvered (NG). Instead, turn in the opposite direction to create some distance (2) then put the enemy back in your sights with another turn (3). Managing your distance is key to expert flying.



Caution When Using High-G Turns

Tips

Press L2 + R2 to execute a high-G turn, useful for turning sharply and pursuing enemy aircraft that have crossed your path. However, this can easily lead to stalling, and you may lose sight of the enemy while accelerating to recover. Do not pursue enemy aircraft too aggressively, and switch to normal turns when your speed drops.



Using a high-G turn while flying at low speed and being pursued by missiles is dangerous. Focus on evasion in this situation.

Increase Burst Damage with Machine Guns

Machine guns are effective against enemy aircraft that consistently evade missiles. Once the enemy is within range, anticipate its direction of travel and press the X button to fire.



Targeting Reticule



When an enemy enters machine gun range, a circular aiming reticle appears. This indicates where your rounds will hit, so try to line it up with the enemy.

Effective Against Tough, Slow Bombers

When attacking durable bombers that cannot be shot down with two missile shots, following up with machine gun fire is a highly effective technique. This is also useful against ground targets that barely move, and helps conserve missiles. However, avoid focusing so much on firing that you forget to take evasive action.



Improve Accuracy with the SHOOT Cue

While the basic strategy is to fire missiles from behind enemy aircraft, enemies may still evade. The SHOOT cue indicates timing when enemies are less likely to evade. The word "SHOOT" appears when the angle difference between your aircraft's heading and the enemy aircraft's heading is small, meaning you have a good chance of landing a missile.



Targeted by the Enemy?

When an enemy aircraft locks on to you, the HUD turns red and an alert sound is triggered. You may feel the urge to speed up or turn immediately, but first stay calm and focus on the radar in the lower-left corner of the screen. As long as no enemy missiles are visible, you are safe.



Keep the Offensive with Chaff and Flares

Sometimes, you might not be able to afford to spend time evading even if the enemy is locked on to you, such as during time-limited missions. In these cases, press L3 + R3 to deploy chaff and flares to disrupt enemy missile tracking. Despite the limited uses, don't hesitate to use them when needed.



Always React to Missile Alerts

If an enemy aircraft locking on to you is either behind or in front, continuing to fly straight will leave you highly likely to be hit. Prioritize evasion above all else and begin maneuvering. Once you're shot down, you can't get back up in the sky.



Use Cloud Cover Effectively

You can fly into clouds to shake off enemy missiles. If you're having trouble escaping a dangerous situation, diving into clouds to regroup can be an effective strategy. Staying inside clouds for too long has disadvantages, though, so do this in moderation.



Outrun Enemies at Full Throttle

If an enemy aircraft targeting you is far enough away, you can accelerate and outrun it. This is effective when you are heading straight toward your destination. If an enemy missile is about to catch up, dodge it with rolls or turns.



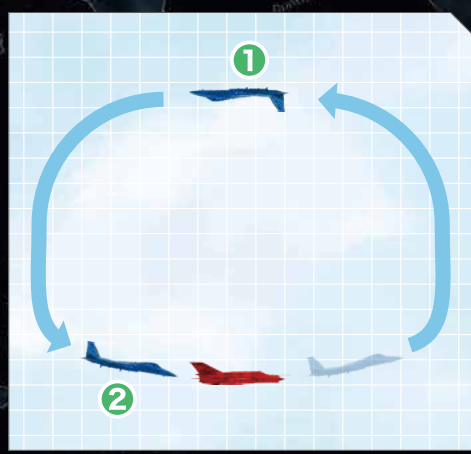
Reduced Lock-On Range

When you target enemy aircraft flying inside clouds, the lock-on range of standard missiles is reduced, and you can even lose your lock. Firing a missile after the lock has been broken will only waste it, so aim carefully.



Backflip to Turn the Tables

To evade attacks from an enemy aircraft behind you, perform a sharp pitch-up turn (backflip) to dodge. You can then disengage from the situation shown in 1, but if you can get behind the enemy aircraft as shown in 2, it becomes an opportunity to attack.



Disadvantages of Cloud Cover

Staying inside clouds for too long can cause icing, reduced visibility, lowered maneuverability, and more frequent stalling. In addition, lightning strikes can sometimes render the radar unusable. This is a quick way to fall victim to vertigo, so use autopilot with L1 + R1 to regain control before you end up falling to the ground.

AIR-TO-GROUND

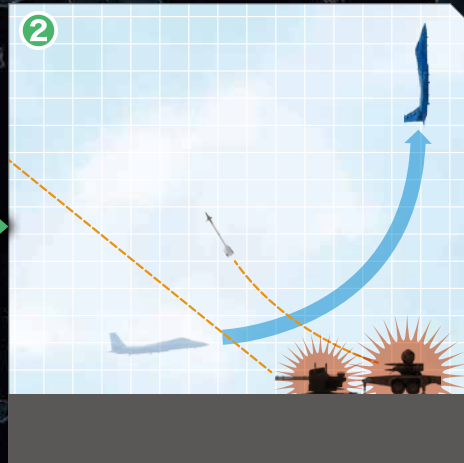
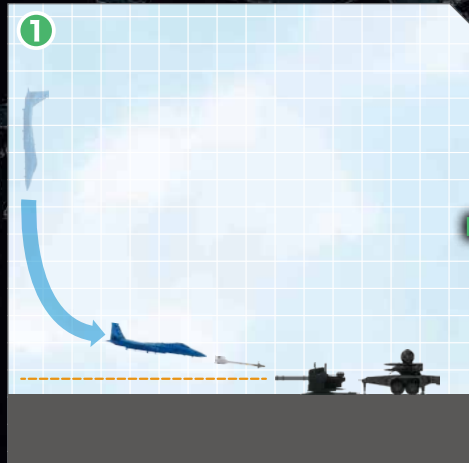
Attacking Surface Targets

Compared to high-speed jets, surface targets are practically motionless, so they cannot evade your missiles. However, they do fight back with high-accuracy AA guns and surface-to-air missiles, which at times can be more dangerous than aerial foes. Attacking surface targets demands different tactics and methods than air combat.



Basic Tactic: Hit-and-Away

Approach the surface target as low as possible (1) to disrupt surface-to-air defenses, then engage the target when in range. After completing the attack, pull up sharply and break with hard turns to evade any follow-up fire. (2) Flying in a straight line makes you an easy target, so try to fly unpredictably as you approach. Also, keep an eye on your altitude to avoid ground collisions.



Maintain Airspeed and Don't Get Greedy

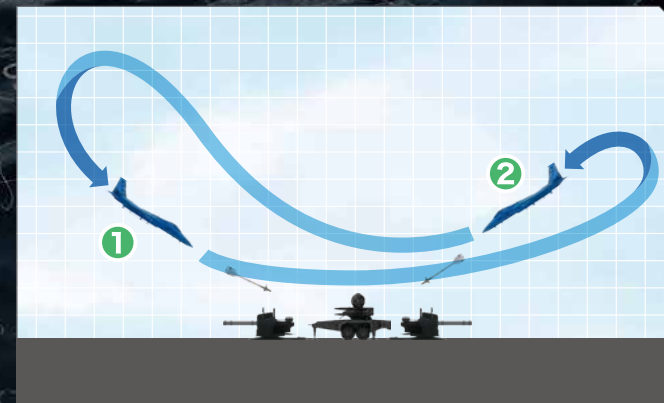
Tips

Some targets need more than a two-missile salvo to destroy. However, do not slow down and wait for a reload on the same pass or try to finish them off with your guns. Maintain airspeed, regain altitude, and come around again. Staying airborne is essential to completing the mission.



Make Repeated Attack Runs

Ground targets are often found in clusters. After making the attack run (1), maintain airspeed, continue past the target area, and disengage. Then perform a loop or turn (2) to begin another run. Repeat this cycle to gradually reduce the targets in the safest manner. After an attack, do not turn back too soon, and instead widen the distance before you turn. This makes it much easier to set up your next run.



Making attack runs in this way gives AA guns multiple opportunities to hit your plane. This damage can build up quickly, so take out AA guns as soon as possible. However, on escort missions, it's better to focus on SAM sites first.

Boost Efficiency with Special Weaponry

Some special weapons are designed specifically for air-to-surface strikes. They may increase your attack range or take out concentrated clusters of targets in a single strike. In some cases, a weapons upgrade will enable you to quickly complete a mission that would otherwise take considerable time with standard missiles and machine guns.



AIRCRAFT

Four Main Types of Aircraft

ACE COMBAT 8 includes more than 30 aircraft, from real-world fighters from around the world to fictional aircraft exclusive to the series. They are divided into four types: fighter, attacker, multirole, and electronic warfare. Aircraft performance varies within these categories, but you should begin by learning about each type.



Use the AIRCRAFT TREE to Obtain New Aircraft

Tips

You obtain new aircraft, upgrade parts, and special weaponry by spending Military Result Points (MRP) on the AIRCRAFT TREE. The tree branches along paths that lead to different types of aircraft. The order that you unlock planes and parts is entirely up to you. However, if you want powerful aircraft fast, the best strategy is to stick to one branch and move along it as far as possible.



Fighters Aerial Combat Specialists



Fighters are designed specifically for aerial combat (dogfighting). They will give you the edge in missions with large numbers of enemy aircraft. Notable examples are highly maneuverable planes such as the F-14D, MiG-29A, and Typhoon.

Attacker Air-to-Surface Specialist



Attackers are designed specifically for air-to-ground missions and excel at taking on ground installations, ocean-going targets, and land battleships. They are well armored against ground fire, and can withstand AA damage that would bring down lighter aircraft. Main examples in this category include the F-2A and A-10C.

Multirole Versatile and Adaptable



Multirole aircraft are excellent all-rounders that are capable of both air-to-air and air-to-ground combat missions. They are a solid choice when you are not quite sure what to expect in a mission. Top examples include the F/A-18C, F/A-18EF, F/A-18F, and Mirage 2000-5.

Electronic Warfare Boost Your Wingmen



EW aircraft deploy advanced systems that can enhance wingmen capabilities or jam enemy weaponry. The technology can also boost your own plane, enabling you to take control of a fight at a key moment. Examples include the EA-6B Prowler and EA-18G Growler.

WEAPONS

The Power of Special Weaponry

In combat, use the  button to switch between special weaponry. They come in a wide variety of types, including missile clusters that can hit multiple aircraft at once, bombs that can wipe out large groups of surface targets, and elec-

tronic warfare systems. New special weaponry is acquired through the AIRCRAFT TREE, but not all weaponry can be equipped to all aircraft. Here we take a look at the main types.

Air-to-Air Missiles

This category includes 6AAM, which can lock on to and hit up to six targets in a single launch, and the advanced high-performance tracking missile, QAAM. Air-to-air special weaponry is especially useful in missions involving multiple enemy fighters or giant continental transport craft.



SAAM

The SAAM is an air-to-air missile with excellent tracking performance and extremely long range. However, the tracking is not fully autonomous, and after launch, you have to keep the target in your sights to ensure a hit. This weapon is at its best when engaging enemy aircraft at long range.

Air-to-Ground Missiles

Typical examples in this category are the LAGM with enhanced effective range and the LASM that is especially effective against ships. They are the best choices for missions that involve multiple ground or ship targets.



4AGM

The 4AGM can lock on to and hit up to four surface targets at once. The multi-lock capability is easy to use, and is especially effective when ground targets are spread out over a wide area.

Bombs

These weapons include the UGB unguided bomb and the SOD, which delivers a series of locked-on bombs along the flight path. Bombs are most effective against tightly clustered ground targets, when they can take out multiple targets in one pass. Unguided bombs require manual aiming, but once this is mastered, they can be a devastating weapon in many missions.



Specialized

These provide a wide range of specialized capabilities. For example, the RKT launches a barrage of rockets, and the MGP enables you to mount additional machine guns. EW systems such as ECM and ESM can provide additional support capabilities to EW aircraft. Each has its own quirks, but can be extremely powerful when mastered.



Equip Two Special Weapons!

Tips

As you progress through the ACE COMBAT 8 campaign, you will unlock the ability to sortie with two special weapon loadouts. Switching between two special weapon systems gives you the flexibility to handle multiple battleground threats and objectives. However, carrying the extra weapon reduces your overall ammunition payload, so make the call based on the mission objectives.



Pick Weapons With Long Range and Better Targeting Capabilities

Tips

If you are unsure which special weapons to choose, pick those with long range and superior target tracking. For example, in Mission 04, you engage an enemy fleet with many ship targets, against which the LASM long-range anti-ship missile will be extremely effective. Equipping the right special weaponry for the mission makes it much easier to complete all the objectives.



WINGMAN

Issue Useful Orders to Your Wingmen



The pilots of Joker Flight, which the protagonist leads, often join you on missions. Here we take a look at the wingman system and introduce the three trusted pilots who have your back.

Wingman Orders

You can issue four different orders to your wingmen: forward attack, dispersed attack, support, and special weapons clearance. Issue commands according to the situation. For example, order a dispersed attack when facing multiple bandits, or request support when you are receiving heavy fire.



Up: Forward attack

Your wingman will engage the enemy you are currently targeting. Issue the command again to have the wingman switch to another enemy near that target.

Left: Dispersed attack

Your wingmen will operate independently, engaging targets at will. They may also try to drive enemy planes into your sights to make it easier for you to bring them down.



Down: Support

Order your wingman to attack the enemies attacking you, or act as bait and try to draw away their fire. Wingmen may also deploy chaff and flares to obstruct incoming missiles.

ELLINGTON BAXTER (Professor)

Voice: Yuki Onodera

"Lieutenant Commander, Joker Flight's No. 2, and the calm hand that holds the rest of them together. Highly knowledgeable and considerate, Baxter once served as a university lecturer, though he has never revealed his field. Tasha calls him "Teach," and the two of them can often be found studying together in the mess."



Tasha Severskaya

Voice: Chika Anzai

"Ensign, Joker Flight No. 3. Originally a star pilot in Yuktopania's acrobatic team, Zvezda, Tasha was on the Endurance to shoot publicity footage when war broke out and ended up staying on the ship."

WILLIAM COSTER (Noise)

Voice: Yoshimasa Hosoya

"Lieutenant Junior Grade, Joker Flight No. 4. A skilled wingman capable of keeping up with Tasha's extreme maneuvers and providing effective cover. A diehard rock music fan, Coster brings a compact music player into the cockpit to listen to during missions."



Wingmen Settings

In the hangar, you can select your wingmen's aircraft alongside your own. You can all fly different aircraft, or the same one, as long as you possess enough of that type. In general, your wingmen will perform best if you select aircraft that are suited for the mission at hand.



Determining a Wingman's Target

Tips

An indicator on the objective container shows when an enemy aircraft is being targeted by a wingman. When you see this, avoid wasting missiles and special weapons; leave that plane to your wingman and switch to a different target.



Save Your Wingmen's Special Weapons

Tips

In some missions, enemy reinforcements can arrive later on in the battle, and you will have a hard time dealing with them if your flight has used all its special weaponry. As long as you have the situation under control, keep those special weapons in reserve. On the other hand, be sure to authorize their use when things get desperate!



Landing and Aerial Refueling

Some missions will require you to land on carriers or at bases, or perform mid-air refueling. Such maneuvers require precise control and careful flying. As an ace pilot, you will want

to master these tricky flying scenarios to prove your mettle. They may be difficult at first, but as with many things in flying, practice makes perfect.

Carrier Landings

Carrier landings are notoriously difficult, and you will face your first one in Mission 02. Keep the horizontal and vertical bars of the cross aligned to maintain the correct approach and descent and adjust your velocity vector so it is close to the center of the deck. Then reduce speed as you reach the deck and touch down.



Runway Landings

The longer runway makes landing at an airbase much easier than landing on a carrier. Use visual cues to adjust your aircraft's approach so that it lines up correctly with the runway.



Aerial Refueling

You need to approach the tanker slowly until the inner diamond reticle perfectly overlaps the diamond reticle in the center of the screen. The key is to make careful throttle adjustments so that you do not overshoot the tanker.



Hard Sequences are Skippable

Tips

The carrier landing sequence appears very early in the game, and you might end up replaying it over and over. You will get better the more you do it, but you can always skip the landing and practice it later. Note that completing these sequences does add a small point bonus to your mission results.



Make Use of Training

Campaign training presents a series of exercises designed to mimic actual combat. Completing these in order will teach you piloting fundamentals and hone your skills. The training is recommended if you are new to the ACE COMBAT series or if you want to review the basics.

Fundamentals first, then combat



Practice Flight Control Basics

You can learn how to control your aircraft during actual missions. However, in training mode, you can focus solely on flight controls without the distractions of enemy aircraft. If you are thinking of switching controls from STANDARD to EXPERT, this is the perfect place to practice. You can also use this mode to decide which control system suits you best.



Learn When to Use Special Weapons

The tutorials on special weapons are especially useful. Whenever you acquire a new weapon, you can come here to practice using it against actual targets. Many special weapons are controlled differently to standard weapons. Some are unguided, while others require you to keep the enemy in your sights to land the hit. The tutorials are the best place to practice these skills.



Clear Tasks and Earn MRP

Tips

Another advantage of this mode is that you earn MRP for completing tasks. The payouts are not huge—somewhere in the 1000 to 3000 range—but they can be enough for you to finally pick up that aircraft or special weapon you have been saving up for.



Early Mission Walkthrough

EARLY STAGE WALKTHROUGH



In the following pages, we take a look at the first 10 missions of the game, along with recommendations for aircraft and special weaponry. War has erupted between the FCU and Sotoa. How is this affecting the world? Why have you, the protagonist, been thrust into the role of future hero? In these missions, you'll soar into the first chapters of your tale as you get a feel for sitting in a cockpit.



Wings of Theve

Tips

First-person scenes between the missions take you deeper into the story and world. You are free to turn around, zoom in, zoom out, and take a closer look at whatever sparks your interest. Pay attention in the air, too—during missions, you will witness key events and receive important messages from your allies.

Mission Flow

Although there are some exceptions, missions proceed as described below. Some missions have checkpoints from which you can restart if you fail the objective.

Briefing

Select Aircraft and Weaponry

- »Select Wingmen Aircraft
- »Unlock new aircraft and arms on the AIRCRAFT TREE

Sortie

- »May include takeoffs and landings from runways or carriers
- »Objectives are often updated during the mission

Debriefing

(Prepare Carefully)

<< CHECK! >>

Starting with Mission 04, you will be able to spend MRP before you sortie to unlock new aircraft and parts. Prepare with optimal weapons and parts.



(Different Missions, Different Objectives)

<< CHECK! >>

Objectives vary from one mission to the next. These include destroying all targets, protecting allies, earning a certain number of points, and more. Know your objectives, and remember to check for time limits, too.



<< MISSION 01 >>

Jokers Wild

! Your First Sortie: Learn Controls as You Fight

It is time to fly your first mission as the new Wings of Theve. The enemies are not too tough, so this is the perfect time to learn the basics of combat flying. Watch out for the fighters that appear at the end—they're armed with missiles, and although they are not mission objectives, you should take them down quickly.



This is your chance to learn the basics from flight controls to firing missiles.



Recommended Special Weaponry

4AAM

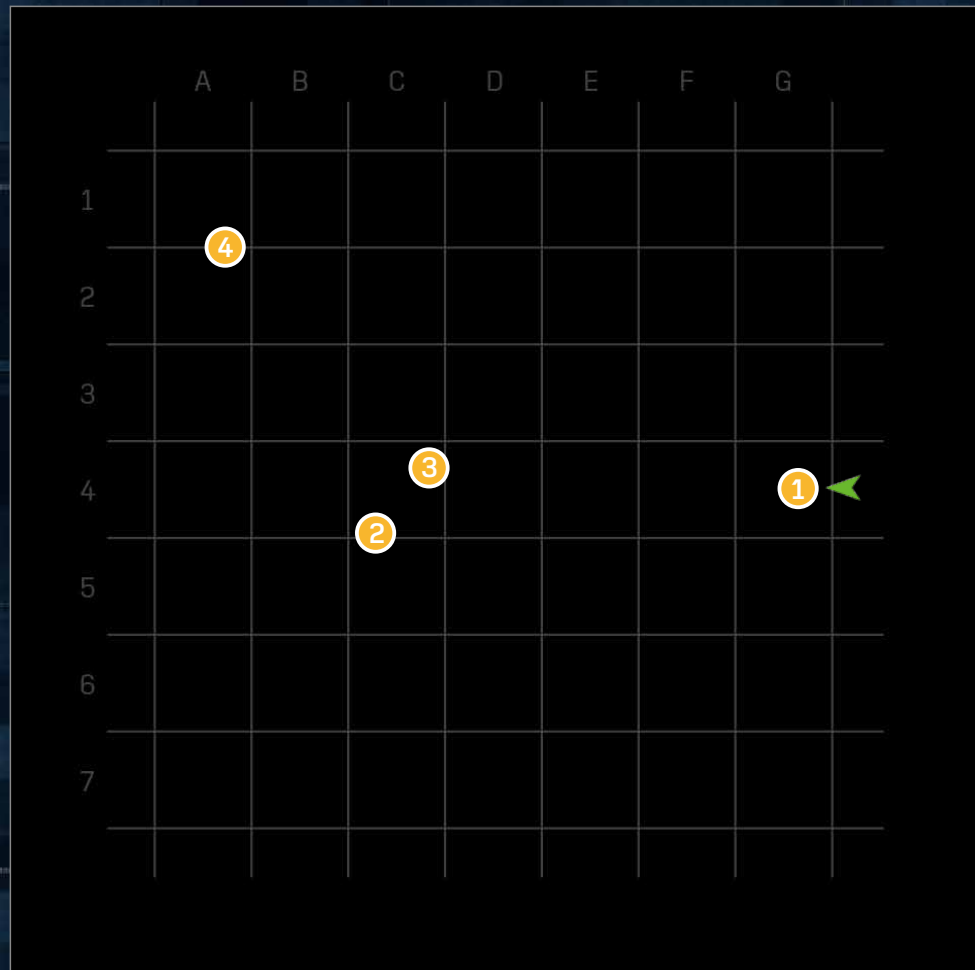


You will encounter various aircraft, including drones, recon planes, and fighters. Your starting weapon, the 4AAM, is a pod of powerful air-to-air missiles that can target up to four bandits at once. The payload is limited, but with only a few targets in the mission, there's no need to hold back.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

The Real Fight Begins with Drones!

Once the controls tutorial ends, an event occurs. The mission is updated and you enter your first combat. Stay calm—the drones in these early missions don't fire back, and the only thing you really need to worry about are the final fighters.



① You don't need to complete the tutorial to trigger the event, but if you are new to the series, it's recommended to go through it. Even veteran pilots might want to drop in just to hear the radio chatter with their wingmen.

② ③ After the event takes place, drones will appear two at a time. Accelerate to close the distance and take them down.

④ Your target is the reconnaissance plane, but watch out for its two fighter escorts. Eliminate them first, then finish off the recon plane.



You can lock on to multiple points on the recon plane. Use your 4AAM to deliver maximum damage in a single pass.

<< MISSION 02 >>

Nomad

! Protect the Carrier from Enemy Aircraft

The mission begins with a landing on the deck of the carrier Endurance, but you are interrupted by a surprise attack from enemy aircraft. The mission fails if the carrier is destroyed, so your top priority is to shoot down the planes targeting it. You will reattempt a carrier landing at the end of the mission. You can skip this, but it does earn a small amount of MRP, so flip to page 23 for hints and give it a try.



Radio messages and ripples on the radar will tell you when the carrier is being attacked. Head to the point of contact to intercept.



Recommended Special Weaponry

4AAM

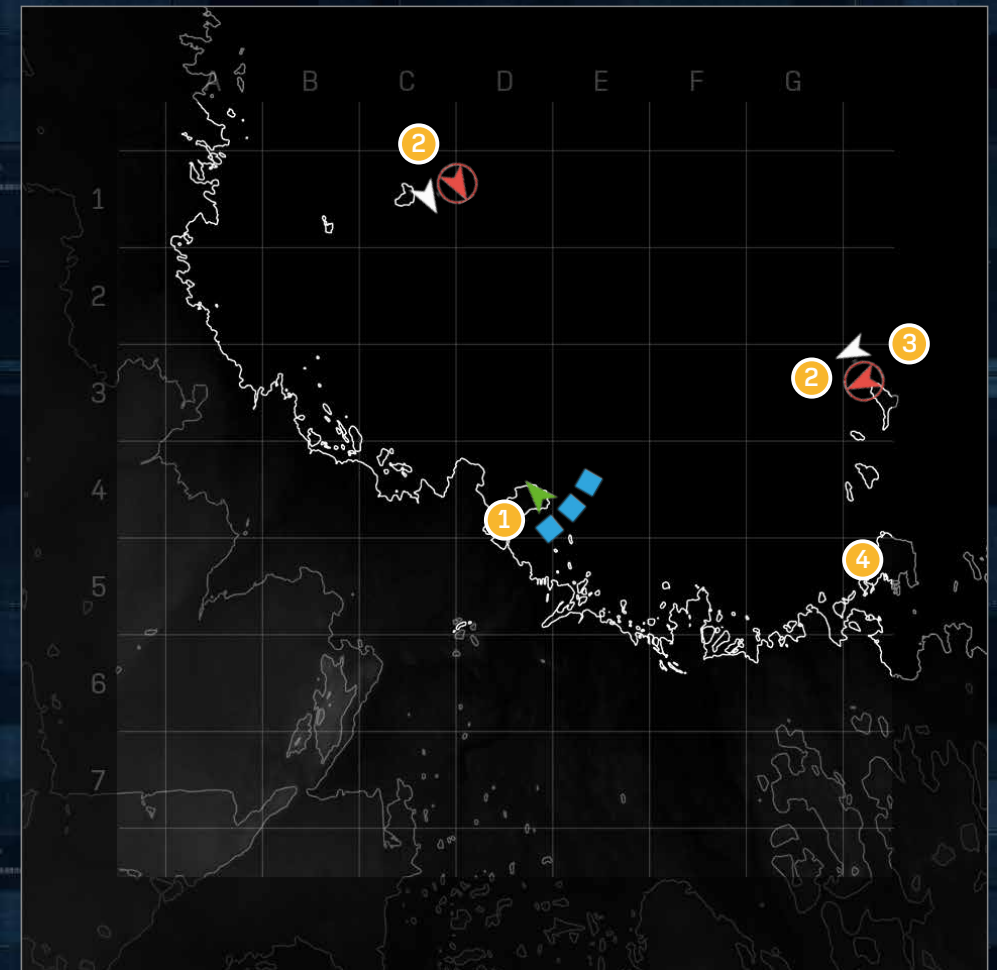


Like Mission 01, you'll be flying the F/A-18C. As the fight progresses, you will receive a tutorial on using the 4AAM, so this is a good time to learn how to make the most of it. The 4AAM is especially effective against bombers, which have multiple lock-on points.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Watch for the Last Wave from the East

After you defeat the initial attackers, the mission objectives will be updated and new attackers will come in from the north and east. Be sure to save up ammo for the last bombers coming from the east. From this mission on, you will also be able to use wingman orders to incorporate your fellow pilots into your strategies.



- ① First, take down all the attacking aircraft.
- ② ③ The subsequent waves of attackers will go straight for the carrier. ② attacks from the east, followed after a short time by ③. Neutralize the threat in the north before turning to cover the east.

- ④ The bomber escorts are worth a lot of points upon defeat, and doing so makes it easier to take out the bombers. If the carrier is threatened, though, you'll need to prioritize the bombers.



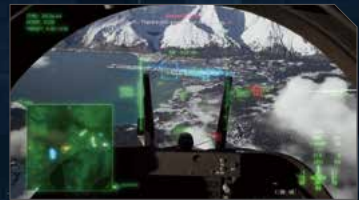
After the battle, you will return to the carrier landing sequence. Landing on a ship at sea isn't easy, but true aces relish the challenge.

<< MISSION 03 >>

Purple Magic Takes Flight

! Protect Allies on the Ground from Waves of Attackers

In this mission, you must defend White Valley Base, the last FCU stronghold. Specifically, you are tasked with protecting the base's radar installations as well as the aircraft of Purple Magic Flight, who are still stuck on the ground. After you destroy one wave of attackers, more will appear, so use the battle map to intercept them as they arrive. Note also that the Shadows will make an appearance near the end of the fight—these are much tougher foes than any you have faced so far.



If you let too many attackers through, your allies will be destroyed on the ground and you will fail the mission. Prioritize the incoming targets.



Recommended Special Weaponry

4AAM

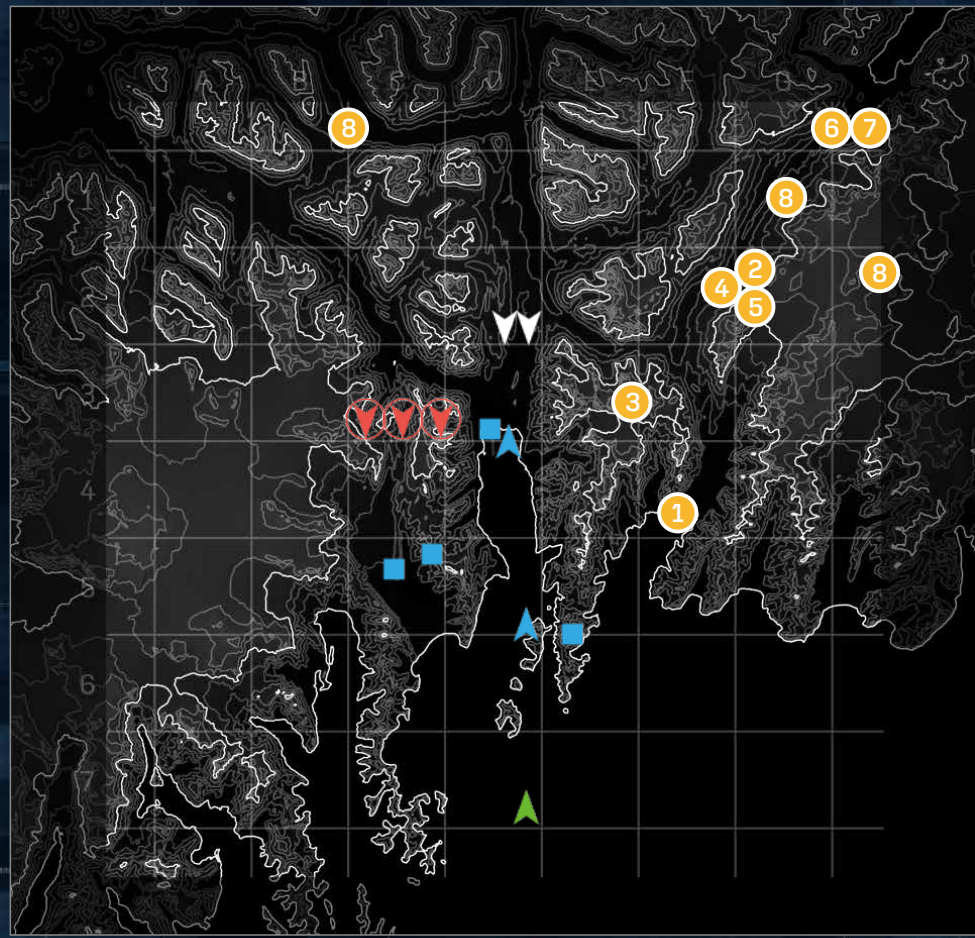


You will only be facing aircraft in this mission, so the powerful 4AAM is especially effective thanks to its ability to hit four targets in a single launch. It has limited ammo, so save it for situations when you need to take down enemies close to the base, or for the final showdown against the Shadows.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Get Ready for the Elite Shadows

The four Shadows are elite pilots, faster and nimbler than any enemy you have faced so far. They will maneuver aggressively to get on your six and lock on. The peak danger point is when they first arrive and you still have your hands full with other enemy targets. Don't hesitate to use your special weaponry and chaff and flares to take down targets fast and even up the odds.



- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ Waves of attackers will appear in order and fly directly for the radar facilities and base. Dealer of AWACS will warn you of each wave, so check the battle map when you get the heads-up. There will be multiple aircraft inbound, but you should prioritize the mission targets and minimize the damage done to the base and allied planes.
- ⑦ An enemy wave of bombers and their escorts will approach at both low and high altitudes. After elimi-

nating one group, gain or lose altitude to find the second group. The bombers are well armored, so use your machine guns as well as missiles. ⑧ Following the usual enemy reinforcements, Shadows will appear at one of the locations marked ⑧. Draw on all the skills you've honed so far—including the use of special weaponry and issuing commands to your allies—to face this threat.



Bringing down the Shadows aircraft is a major turning point in the story. You should pay close attention to the radio chatter and your own responses.

<< MISSION 04 >>

The Fall of the Numbered Fleets

! Attack the Enemy Fleets at Newfield Island

Two expeditionary fleets are anchored in ports at Newfield Island. The first is in Anderson Port to the east, and the second is harbored in the northeast at Belta Port. You can attack them in either order. Either way, the northeastern location is the most heavily defended. Make sure you have enough special weaponry in reserve so you can handle the Shark Squadron aces. There will be a landing sequence after the mission. You can skip it, but we recommend you refer to the hints on page 23 and give it a try.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

Mirage 2000-5
LASM & 4AAM

Recommended Parts

MSL.RELOAD+



Your primary targets are the expeditionary fleets, but you will be fighting a lot of aircraft, including the Sharks. A multirole aircraft like the Mirage 2000-5 enables you to handle both jobs. The special weaponry can be used against surface and air targets, but have a small ammo loadout. You will be using a lot of standard missiles, so add upgrades to improve reload times.

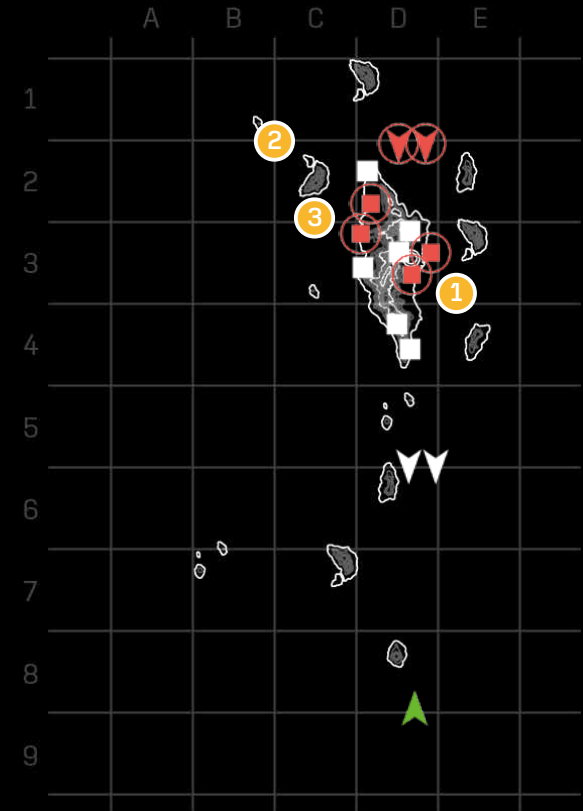


Pay attention to the radio chatter during the dogfight with Shark Squadron to learn more about their connection with the enemy.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Try Taking Out the Sharks

Though not logged as a mission update, you will encounter the Shark Squadron when you enter the Belta Port airspace in the northwest. The Sharks are not a required objective, but they are too dangerous to ignore. They also award high scores when shot down, so ideally, you want to eliminate the whole squadron. Work with your wingmen to bring them down.



- ① First, destroy the fleet in Anderson Port in the east. Long range anti-ship LASM missiles are your best bet here. Also, try to shoot down as many aircraft as you can. It's not essential for the mission, but it will help to boost your score.
- ② Arriving at Belta Port in the northeast triggers the arrival of the Shark Squadron. These planes are not required targets, but it's much safer to deal with them

first. There are a lot of them, so use your wingmen and issue orders as needed.

- ③ Enemy aircraft that take off from the base close to Belta Port can be destroyed on the ground. Your best bet here is the 4AAM, which can lock on to multiple targets at once. Once you have sunk some of the target surface vessels, spend time padding your score with extra kills before eliminating the rest of the fleet.



You can also use a tunnel to reach Belta Port in the northwest and boost your score by eliminating enemy units inside the tunnel.

<< MISSION 05 >>

Retaking of Theve

! Cover the Landing Craft Headed for the City

Your objective in this mission is to protect the landing craft carrying troops to Theve from air and ground-based threats. Ground units fire at the boats at regular intervals, so keep whittling down the ground forces in between dealing with attacks from the air. Watch for the mission objective to change when the landing craft get within 900 meters of land. You will need to continue reducing the enemy forces while avoiding the massive blasts from enemy artillery.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

Mirage 2000-5
UGB

Recommended Parts

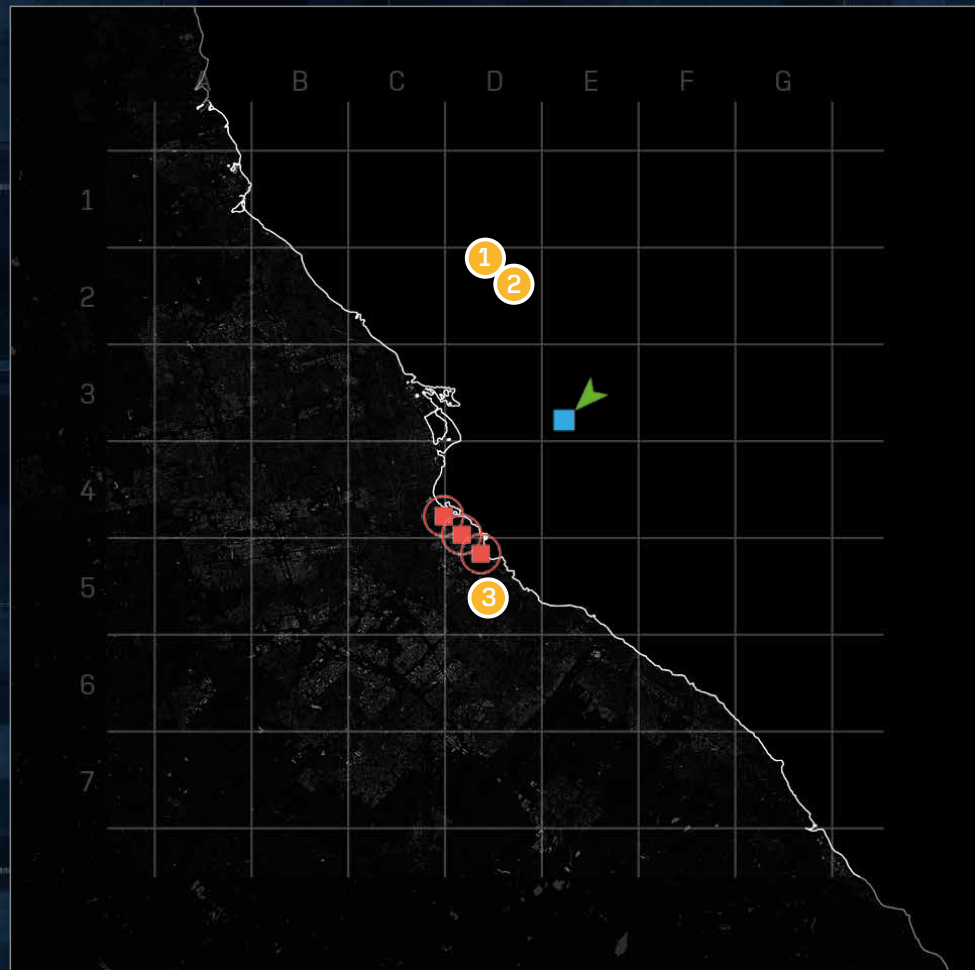
MSL.RELOAD+
STABILITY+

You'll be facing multiple aircraft and dealing with concentrated ground forces at the same time, so a multirole aircraft with UGB is your best bet here. The upgrade parts will give you an edge by shortening reload times for standard missiles and enhancing high-G turns.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Protect Allies from Enemy Pursuers

Once the mission objective changes, you will be constantly threatened with large blast zones that deal heavy damage if you are caught inside them. Check the impact point and blast radius on your radar and get out of the way fast before resuming your own attacks. There will be lots of enemy aircraft in the air, but don't get so caught up in the dogfight that you stray into blast zones.



① After eliminating the first wave of enemy aircraft, four new planes will appear close to the landing craft. They approach fast, so deal with them quickly. Also, try to reduce enemy ground positions as much as possible before the reinforcements arrive. There are multiple concentrations of ground units, so don't hesitate to use any air-to-surface weapons that you have.

② After ①, expect more enemy reinforcements. Around this point, the mission objective changes, and most of the designated targets will be removed from the target list.

③ Once the retreat begins, enemy aircraft will reappear as targets. Try to take them down while avoiding the explosions, and destroy as many of the pursuing forces as you can.



You will be fighting large numbers of aircraft during the second-half retreat, so air-to-air special weaponry will be a big help.

<< MISSION 06 >>

Attack on the Drinwich Airfield

! Protect Your Allies During the Assault

In this mission, you provide air cover for friendly forces tasked with assaulting Drinwich Airfield. The enemy will call in reinforcements and launch counterattacks as your own forces advance, so keep monitoring the radio chatter and respond to calls for help. The mission starts with an air refueling sequence. You can skip it, or accept the challenge. See page 23 for hints.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

EA-6B
ECM/ESM

Recommended Parts

ACCEL+
MAX SPEED+

The enemy will call in multiple waves of reinforcements, so we recommend an electronic warfare aircraft for its support and jamming capabilities. The EA-6B can equip ESM and ECM, which affect missile and lock-on performance—the former enhances friendly capabilities, while the latter interferes with enemy missiles. Boosting your plane's acceleration and top speed will help you get to trouble spots faster.

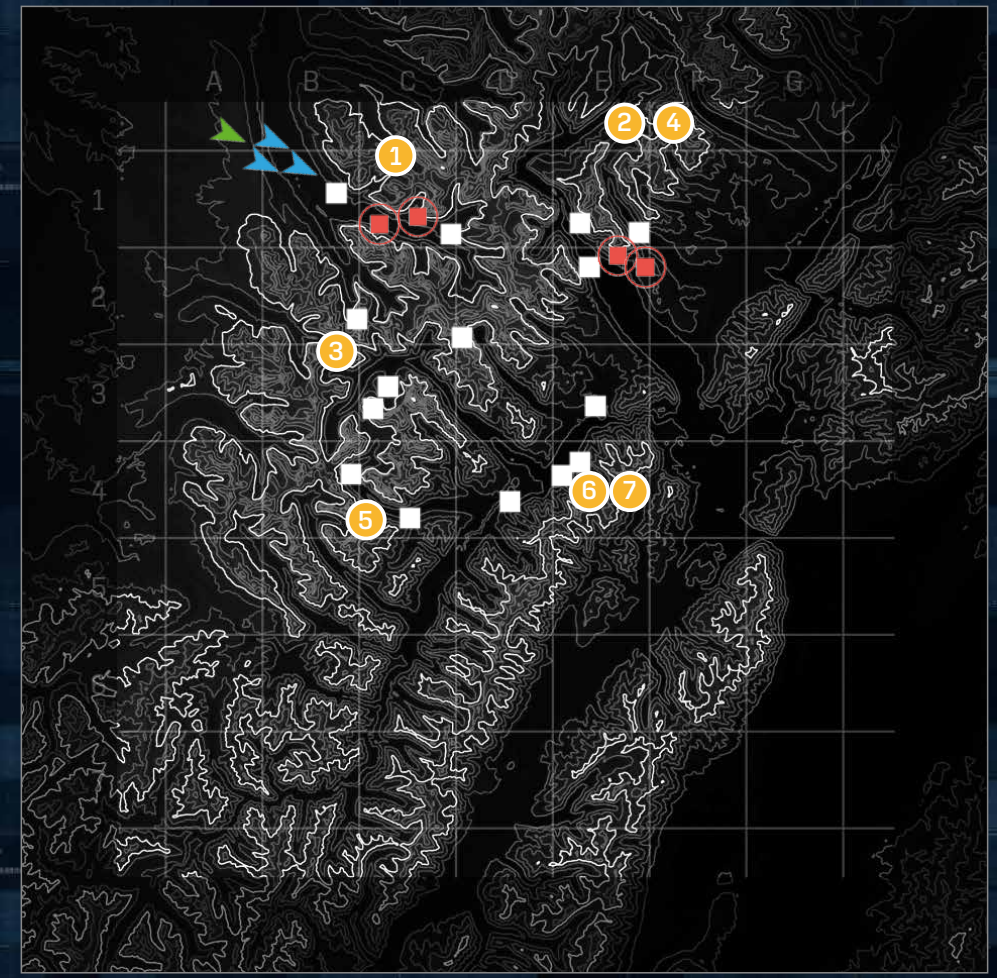


Ripple indicators on your radar will show when friendly forces come under attack. Keep the attack going by taking down the enemy planes before they do the same to your allies.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

After Reaching the Destination, Switch to Ground Support

The mission is updated when the assault force gets close enough to Drinwich Airfield. Your new task is supporting the attackers as they infiltrate the base, but the basic approach remains the same. Prioritize enemy aircraft attacking your forces. Resistance will stiffen as you get close to the objective, so you can't afford to let up until the job is done.



- ① Prioritize nearby targets, but keep taking out other enemy units, too.
- ②③④⑤ Multiple waves of reinforcements will arrive to take out the choppers carrying the assault troops. As you intercept the counterattacks, try to destroy ground-based AA weapons as well.
- ⑥ Support your troops once they hit the ground at Drinwich Airfield. Prioritize ground targets and let

your wingmen deal with the enemy aircraft. After this, more enemy air units will appear. (Spawn points vary depending on your own location.) Intercept the enemy reinforcements as they appear.

⑦ Four drones will appear over the airfield. Destroying them ends the mission, so if you want to boost your score, spend some time taking out other targets before finishing them off.



From ⑥ and on, the combat zone is centered on the airfield itself. ECM and ESM are useful area-effect weapons here. If you have them, now is the time to use your remaining special weaponry payload.

<< MISSION 07 >>

A Lifeline in the Desert

! Obliterate the Enemy Lifelines

Destroy enemy ground and aerial forces and reach the target score within the time limit to clear the mission. You'll want to keep up a relentless assault here, as destroying targets beyond the target score will earn you more MRP upon mission completion. Additionally, you can return to the blue line on the radar to land at the base and repair damage, resupply munitions, or change special weaponry.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

Mirage 2000-5
UGB

Recommended Parts

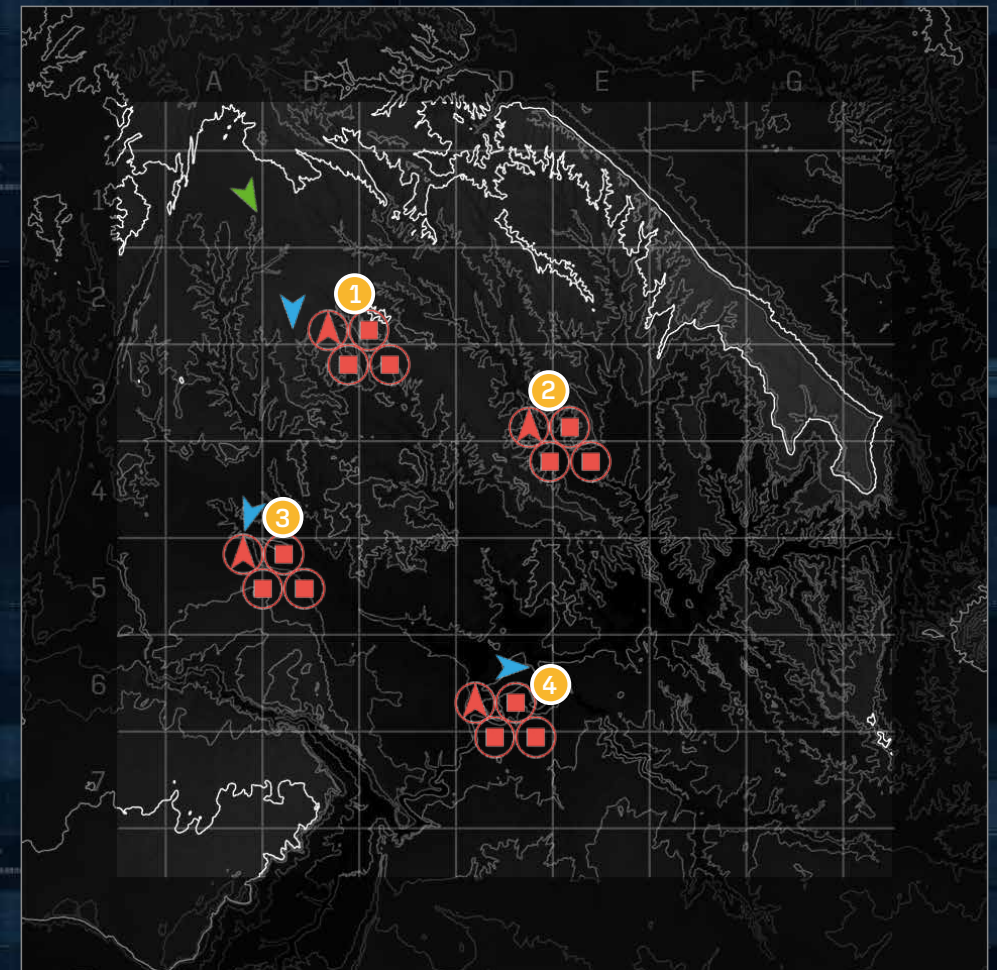
ACCEL+
MAX SPEED+

A multirole aircraft will serve you best against the mix of air and ground targets you'll be facing. The particularly large number of ground targets means you'll want to wipe them out quickly with wide-area special weaponry attacks. As the operation area is vast, upgrading your acceleration and top speed will help reduce wasted time.

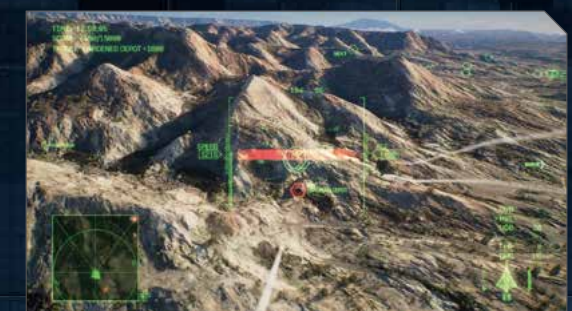
<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Establish a Return Line in the West

Destroying aircraft and causing devastating damage to the airfield (3 on the right) triggers the appearance of a second return line in the west. If you want to earn points quickly, you might be tempted to prioritize the stationary ground targets since they are plentiful and easy to destroy, but adding another return line also contributes significantly to boosting your score. Make sure to shoot down enemy aerial forces in between your air-to-ground attack runs as well.



- ① Targets vulnerable to machine guns lie densely packed in a solar panel field. Mow them down all at once with a machine gun strafing run.
- ② Munition depots carpet this area. Destroying one awards lots of points, but they can only be attacked from specific directions through their openings. If you struggle with adjusting your angle of approach, prioritize other areas first.
- ③ The airfield contains a high concentration of enemy aerial forces. Prioritize attacking this area to establish the additional return line.
- ④ Two Land Aegis ships guard an oil plant. The ships are heavily armored, so eliminate them quickly using weapons like UGBs. Facilities associated with the oil plant are also worth a hefty amount of points.



The munition depots are particularly difficult to destroy. While each one yields 1,800 points, if they end up taking too much time, it is more efficient to move on and destroy other targets instead.

<< MISSION 08 >>

Retaking of Theve II

! Protect Ground Forces from Waves of Enemy Reinforcements

In this mission, you'll return to Theve to face swarms of enemies unlike what you faced in Mission 05. Ground reinforcements are especially problematic, afflicting heavy damage while pinning down the capital invasion force you are tasked with protecting. While you will want to prioritize ground targets to protect friendly forces, the enemy aerial units cannot be ignored either. Keep a constant eye out for enemies you can attack to shave down their numbers as quickly as possible.

A Fierce War of Attrition



Because the number of appearing enemies can be overwhelming depending on the difficulty, you can easily run out of ammo for your missiles and special weaponry. If your line of sight isn't blocked by elevated highways or buildings, use your machine guns on enemy ground units, as you'll want to save your missiles and bombs to quickly eliminate enemy reinforcements appearing near friendly forces.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

Mirage 2000-5
UGB & 4AAM

Recommended Parts

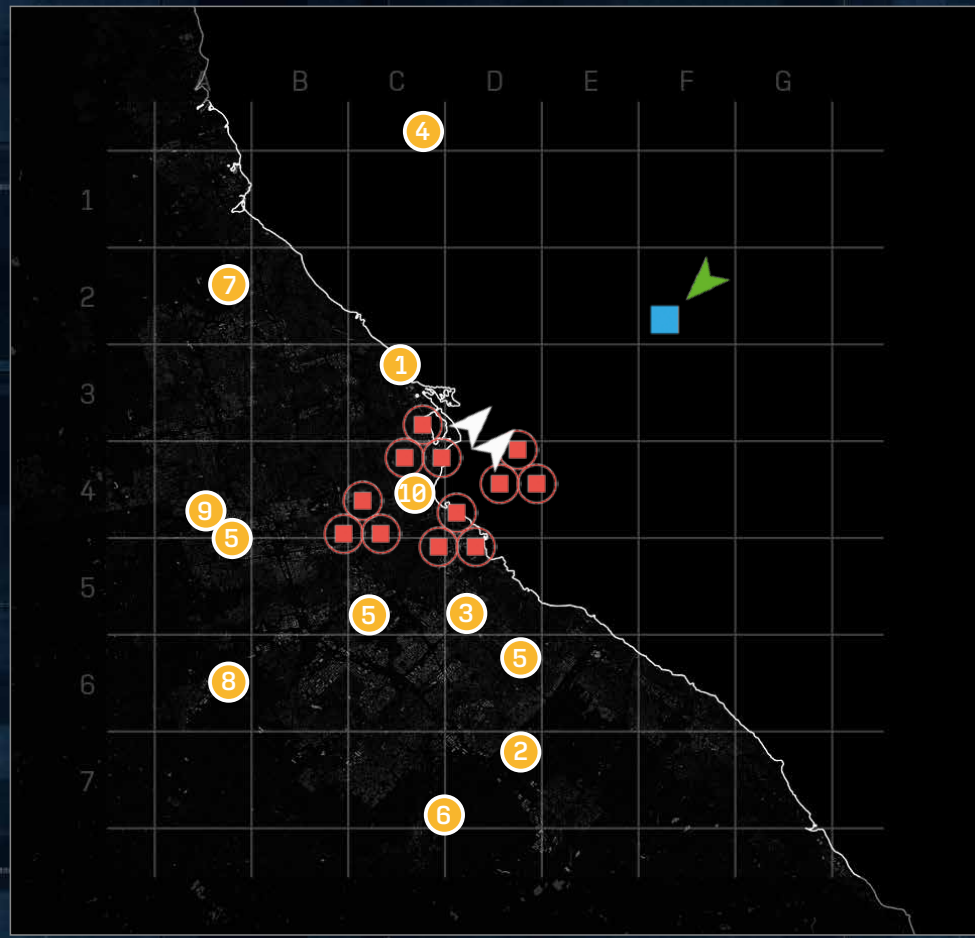
MSL.RELOAD+
MSL.PAYLOAD+
MAX SPEED+

Both anti-ground and anti-air capabilities are required. Equipping two types of special weaponry will give you a distinct advantage across the board. If you're concerned about ammo, you can also equip just one type and use only standard missiles and machine guns on air or ground targets—whichever you're best at.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Prioritize Destroying Aerial Reinforcements

With so many enemy aircraft in the air, it's very risky to leave them untouched. They will also get in the way when you're aiming at ground targets, so focus on them first, then pick off ground targets once you're in the clear. Near the end of the mission, the elite Shadow units appear as reinforcements, meaning you'll want to have some special weaponry left over for them.



- ①②③ Enemy aerial and naval units are located right next to friendly landing craft, so destroy them first. Since there is a grace period before reinforcements arrive, finish off some surface targets in this time as well.
- ④ Su-25s will approach high speed, so put them at the top of your priority list.
- ⑤ Enemy ground forces appear in three locations. Since their numbers are large, use anti-surface special

- weapons to quickly thin them out.
- ⑥⑦⑧ Bombers and escorts appear one after another and approach at high speed. Focus on the bombers first.
- ⑨ The Shadows appear, triggering a cutscene, and the mission objective switches to annihilating all enemy forces protecting the command center.
- ⑩ Shortly after ⑨, surface reinforcements appear around the command center. Keep your sights on the Shadows here.



Dramatic developments await throughout the entire mission. This is one of the early game's tougher challenges—give it everything you've got.

<< MISSION 09 >>

The Land Battleship Blockade

! Cooperate with Friendly Forces to Neutralize the Land Battleship

This mission tasks you with disabling a massive land battleship. First, you'll provide cover for unmanned bomb trucks, then you'll aim for the ship's exposed auxiliary treads following the blast. Enemy resistance will be fierce, especially with the land battleship's long-range railgun in play. The mission will fail if the bomb trucks are destroyed, so you'll want to ensure you're thoroughly prepared to wipe out targets while braving a heavy enemy onslaught.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

A-10C
UGB & RKT

Recommended Parts

BOMB.POW+
BOMB.AREA+
BOMB.RELAD+

Since your main target is the land battleship, attackers specialized in air-to-surface combat, such as the A-10C, excel here. Effective special weaponry includes UGBs, which can strike densely packed targets all at once, and RKTs, which fire a continuous barrage of rockets ahead of your aircraft. Choose your upgrade parts based on your special weaponry.

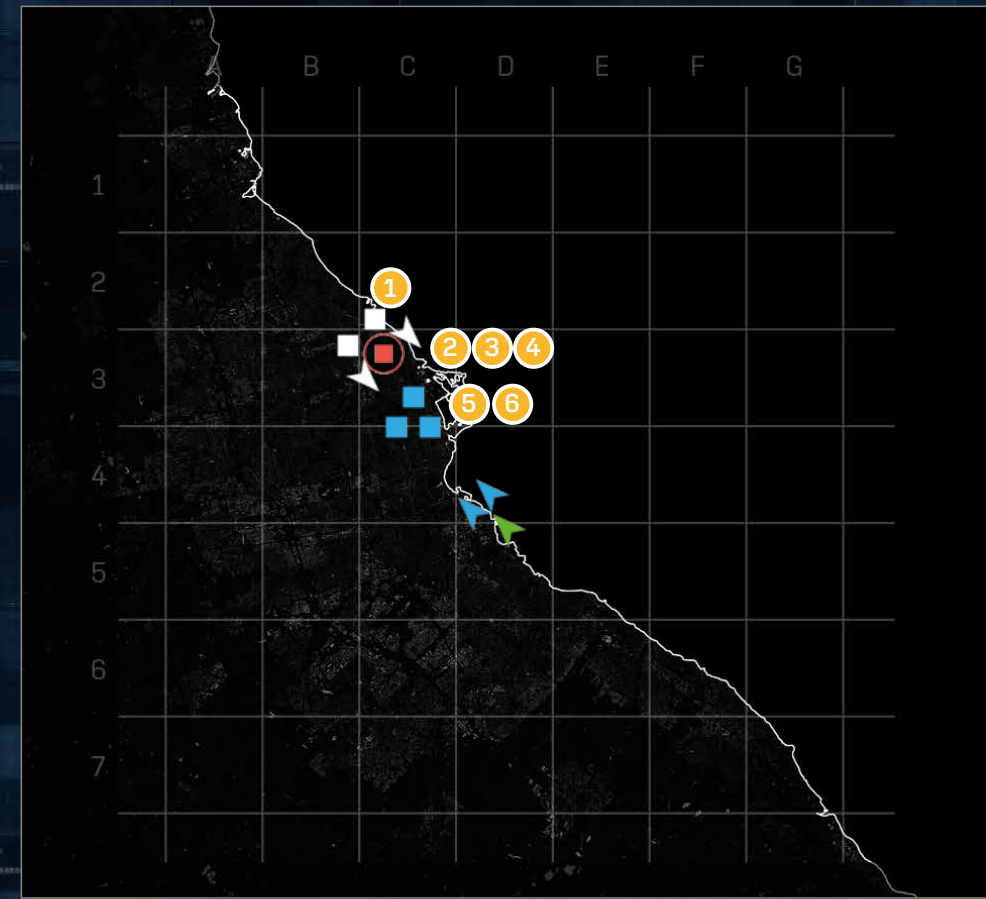


Pay close attention to the railgun's line of fire on your radar and by visual check. Stay out of it while you approach.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Destroy Buildings to Lead the Operation to Success

Near the end of the mission, you will have to detonate the Heaven's Central skyscraper to prevent the land battleship from breaching the final defense line. Destroy all targets in three locations within the time limit. Once you strand the land battleship with the debris, your next target will be its final defense—its rocket motors. The best tactic is to perform a low-altitude pass right next to the ship and get a lock on the rocket motors.



- 1 Pay attention to the railgun as you approach, and destroy as many of the land battleship's surface weapons and surrounding tanks as possible.
- 2 The land battleship's advance triggers an event. An engineering unit detonates the building, bringing the ship to a halt. Destroy hostile quadcopters to protect friendly bomb trucks.
- 3 As you take down the quadcopters, find the right moments to hit the secondary treads of the land battleship once it resumes movement. Note that the swarm drone reinforcements are worth a lot of points

- when shot down.
- 4 The engineering unit brings the battleship to a halt once again. Destroy the quadcopters and target the land battleship's secondary treads.
- 5 The land battleship resumes movement. Take over for the engineering unit and detonate the Heaven's Central skyscraper yourself.
- 6 Finish off the land battleship to clear the mission. Note that 5 and 6 provide a great opportunity to rack up points before the story events move forward.



Special weaponry with wide explosive radii, such as UGBs or SODs, allow you to sweep through the land battleship's gun emplacements in a single blow. Combine them with standard missiles and machine guns for extra potency.

<< MISSION 10 >>

Over the Rainband

! Seek and Destroy Airships Hidden in the Clouds

Your objective is to protect the carrier Endurance from the massive hits of the Tonitrus Spear weapon. The Tonitrus Spear relies partly on laser targeting from airships for precision aiming, which means you can sabotage its strikes by destroying these airships before the countdown reaches zero. The airships are equipped with jamming capabilities, making their precise position within the circular green radar zones unknown; however, you can easily pinpoint their locations by visually tracing the path of the laser beams. When you see a laser beam, make a beeline for the airship it's coming from. In the meantime, enemy aircraft will appear to target the Endurance. When no lasers are active, avoid blindly searching for airships and focus on these enemy fighters instead.

Use Lasers to Find Enemies



The countdown begins as soon as laser targeting starts. When comms come in, start looking for laser beams immediately.



Recommended Aircraft & Special Weaponry

F-14D
LAAM

Recommended Parts

LOCATOR.DISP+
MAX SPEED+
MSL.AIR.POW+

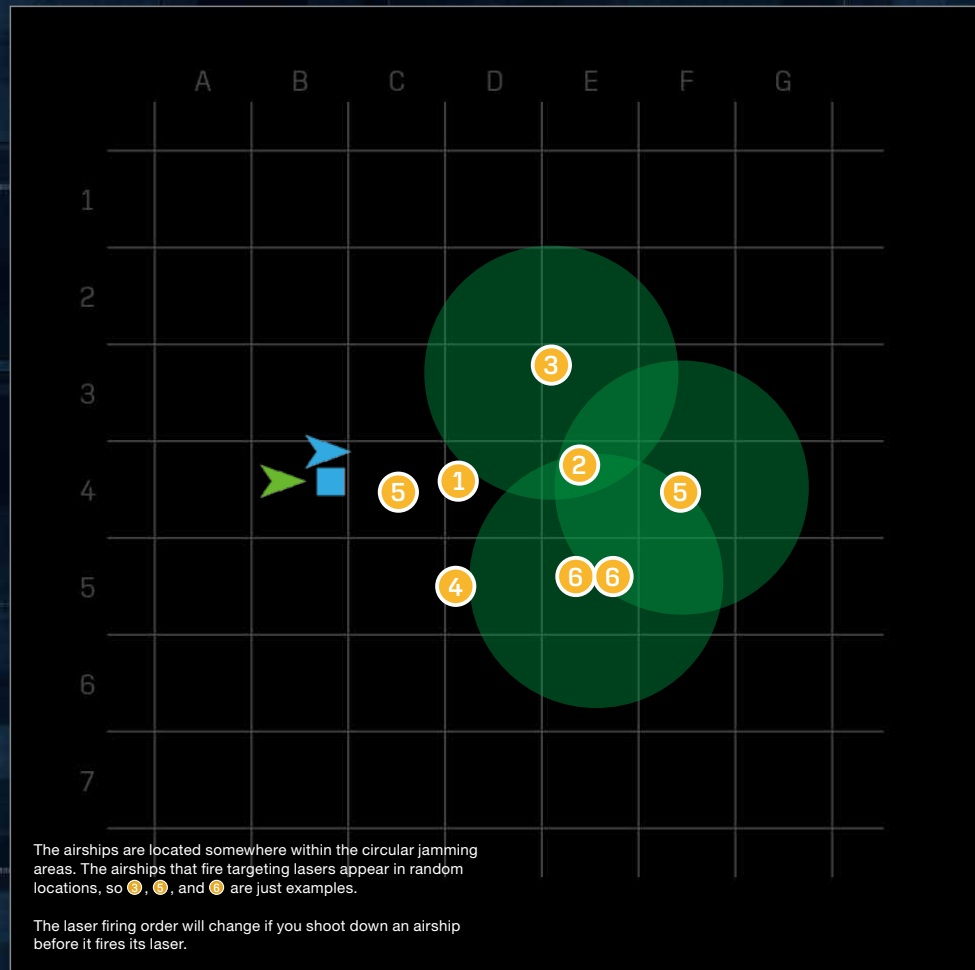


This mission restricts sortie aircraft to carrier-capable jets. Prioritize speed when selecting your aircraft. As for special weaponry, the high-power, ultra-long-range LAAM shines here. Since heavy cloud cover is present, it'll be helpful to equip parts that mitigate performance penalties inside clouds.

<< MISSION UPDATE >>

Focus on the Structural Parts of Airships

In addition to high structural durability, the airships possess powerful defensive measures such as VLS and swarm drones, so be prepared to evade. Since these armaments can be targeted separately from the main airship body, make sure that you're properly locked on to the main body before shooting off your missiles.



- ①② First, two groups of enemy aircraft will approach from within the radar jamming area.
- ③ A laser is fired, triggering a cutscene. The Spear shot flies in with shocking speed, and the laser fades quickly, making it difficult to trace.
- ④ After the cutscene, bandits appear near the Endurance. Once a certain amount of time passes, the laser targeting from ③ resumes along with a countdown.
- ⑤ Reinforcements come in to attack the carrier, after which laser targeting and the countdown begin again. Here, you'll have to rush to shoot down the airship.
- ⑥ Two airships begin firing lasers simultaneously. Locate them one by one and destroy them before time runs out.



Taking your time to deal with swarm drones will cost you precious seconds. Stay calm and focus your fire on the airships.

A Must-Read for Rookie Pilots!

Q&A Section

Q I want to fly to my destination, but missiles keep getting in the way.

A Use chaff and flares.

When a missile alert sounds while you're trying to reach a target or lock on to an escaping enemy, turning or accelerating to evade can cost you time. In these moments, press L3 + R3 to deploy chaff and flares. Although limited in uses, chaff and flares completely disrupt incoming missile tracking, letting you stay on course.

You can also issue support orders to your wingmen if you anticipate enemy pursuit. Your wingmen can even deploy chaff and flares on your behalf to protect your aircraft.



Q I was chasing an enemy aircraft and ended up kissing the ground.

A Keep a close eye on your altimeter (Alt).

Contact with the ground tends to happen during dogfights in dense urban areas or when lowering altitude to target surface objectives. Make a habit of constantly checking your altimeter, and if you end up with vertigo (unable to tell which way is up), use L1 + R1 to activate autopilot and right your aircraft. Also, you can better keep track of enemies' relative position by holding down the Δ button.

Special care is required when targeting ground enemies in areas with many structures. Fly along a route where there are no buildings in your path when launching an attack.



When flying at low altitude, check your airspeed as well. Take care not to decelerate too much, or you'll stall.

Q I'm scared of flying through gaps between buildings or tunnels.

A Keep a close eye on the velocity vector, and you'll be fine.

When flying through areas with many obstacles, check the velocity vector, which shows where your aircraft is headed. As long as this icon is positioned on air and not a building or terrain, you won't collide with anything. You don't necessarily have to force yourself to fly through building gaps or inside tunnels, but performing aerobatic maneuvers like that feels fantastic, so give it a try if you have the leeway!

When flying through tunnels, yawing to shift left or right works well. Using minimal movements helps reduce the risk of collision.



Here, we've provided a Q&A guide covering common hurdles rookie pilots face, along with their solutions. If you ever find yourself stuck, give this list a read.

Q I fired a missile, but my ground target wasn't destroyed.

A There may have been obstacles in your missile's trajectory.

When you fail to destroy a target despite locking on and firing a missile, you might be dealing with obstacles such as in the photo on the right. This happens particularly often in places with many structures, so try picking routes with fewer obstacles.



You fired a missile when the target container turned red. Normally it should hit. However...



"MISSED" appeared on screen, indicating that the shot failed. The missile likely hit a nearby building instead of your target.

Q My score won't go up and I can't get a RANK S.

A Be sure to also go after enemies other than your main objectives.

Your final rank is determined by the points you earned from destroying enemies, your completion time, and whether or not you restarted from a checkpoint. If your score falls short of S, it's a good idea to proactively destroy non-objective enemies as well. Increasing your kill count also comes with the added benefit of more MRP.



It is best to target non-objective enemies only when you are able to. In escort missions, getting sidetracked risks having your allies shot down and failing the mission, so always prioritize your objectives.

Orange targets give you lots of points!

Targets displayed in orange or red on the radar award lots of points when destroyed. Whenever you spot them, be sure to go after them aggressively.

TIME: 30:59:13
SCORE: 19940
TARGET: F-15C +700



Q I'm not sure which aircraft or special weaponry to unlock first.

A You're basically free to choose as you see fit. For maximum efficiency, go for powerful aircraft first.

Which order you unlock the AIRCRAFT TREE in is entirely up to you, but higher-performance aircraft are located on the right side of the paths. If you want to be efficient, it's better to focus on unlocking powerful aircraft on one path instead of spreading yourself too thin. Having strong aircraft makes it easier to earn MRP as well, so you don't have to hoard your funds, either.

The AIRCRAFT TREE branches into paths for American, European, and Russian-modeled aircraft. Pick one and advance along it as far as you can.

