FLASHPOINT CAMPAIGNS™

RED STORM

Flashpoint Campaigns:
What's New in 2.04

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1   Introduction

Welcome to "***What's New in FLASHPOINT CAMPAIGNS 2.04***"! This is the one-stop shop for all the new and wonderful things to be found in the 2.04 Update. The OTS Design Team has been hard at work for about two months working to fix bugs (many of them very deep and hard to track down), adding new features, and enhancing other game functions based on your user feedback and our in-house list. The result is a version of the game that plays better, provides more feedback on events, improves the use of custom maps and markers, adds several UI improvements, and opens access to the games awesome scenarios so you can easily make and post your variants (really, start making more scenarios).

1.1   Why are you Reading This??

Personally I don't know why you are reading this and not just playing the game right now. It's that good. Since you are reading this document, I will pass on as much information as I can remember of what was fixed, changed and added to the game. I'm sure to miss a couple of things and if I do please feel free to post those on the forums so others will know what you found. Think of it as a treasure hunt.

A few cosmetic changes visible upon loading the game

2   New Features/Enhancements/Bug Fixes

So what are you getting for two month's waiting? Fair question. A number of things both visible in the game and invisible under the hood have been done in that time frame. In this section we will summarize those visible elements. Most of what is here are new features or enhancements to the game. Many of them suggested by you the player. Away we go...

2.1   Issuing Movement Orders

Movement orders and the request for more control have been on the wish list from before day one. While this is not a full blown per waypoint system with overarching SOPs (that has to wait for the 2.1 game engine), we have added new features to the system and made some enhancements along the way to boot.

2.1.1 New – Movement Orders End State Setting

This is probably *THE* new feature for 2.04. Once you finish issuing a movement order and in some cases a dismount distance (see 2.1.2), you are shown the dialog below. Here you can select the end state order of the move. You have four choices.

Options for orders at arrival hex for units

- Hold – This keeps the unit fixed in place and it is much less likely to back out under fire.

- Screen – The unit use cover, but if the enemy gets too close it will move out to open the distance. The range of this standoff varies by unit type.

- On Call – Useful for HQ and Arty units that need to be ready to do other things when they get where they are going.

- Resupply – Really doesn't need an explanation. The units with rest and restock.

And before you go running off to the forums to ask, no, we did not include engineering functions at this time. We will be working on those a bit more in 2.1 and making decisions on adding those end states then. Sorry.

2.1.2 Enhanced – Dismount Dialog

The dismount dialog has been in the game awhile now. If the unit is carrying infantry or scouts you will have the option to have them dismount and move to the final objective on foot with the transports supporting the move. The unit will adopt the order state given in the new Orders on Arrival dialog shown above.
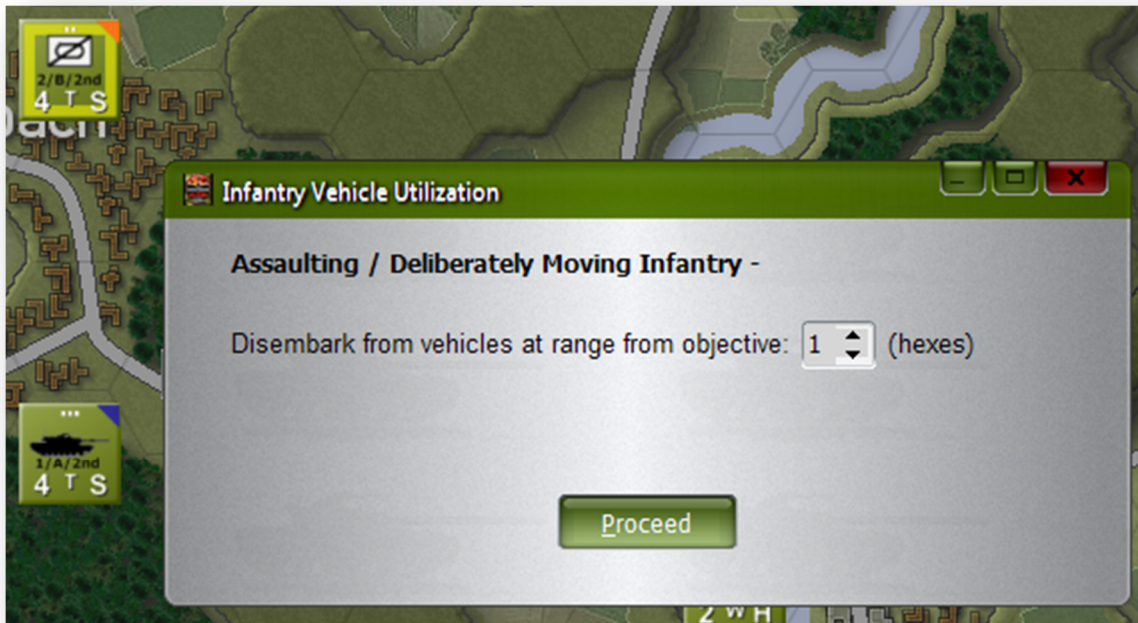
Setting the dismount distance from the final objective

2.1.3 Bug Fixes – Waypoints/Waypoint Editor

A number of bugs were both created and fixed with the addition of the end state order. Most of these occurred when a group was selected. As you can see below there is an option to inspect group waypoints and also set delays to coordinate arrivals better.
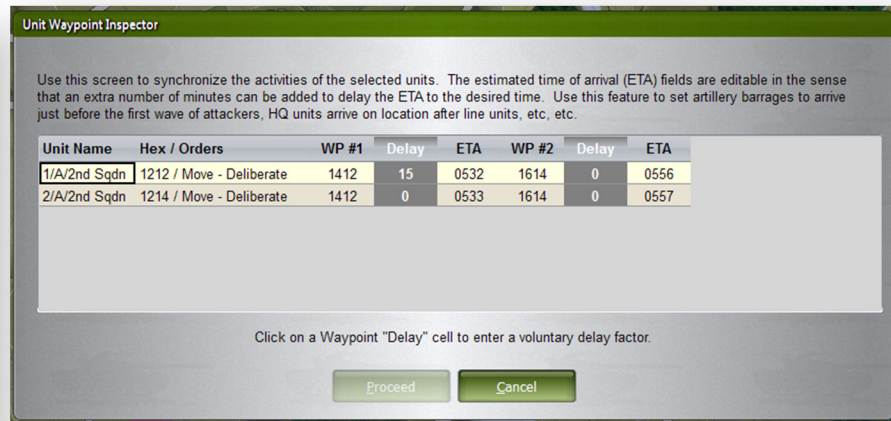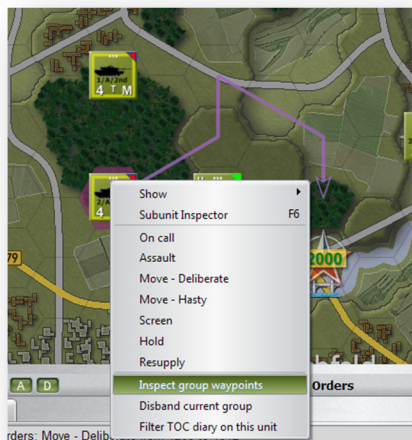
Adjusting the timing of group waypoint arrivals

2.2   Sudden Death

If there was one game mechanic that folks loved because of what it did in the game or despised because of what it did, it was "Sudden Death". We have done a couple things we said we would do.

First, the calculation of awarding victory locations (VPs) has been extensively overhauled. The results of those calculations are displayed when Sudden Death is triggered in the game. We are now taking into account the readiness of the forces, time remaining in the battle, distances to VP locations and the strength of the units. Infantry in city terrain gets a bonus too to the calculation. Depending on this Influence rating a VP may stay yours, be contested and split between both sides or flipped to the enemy. It is spelled out in the dialog as seen below.

Secondly, there are three items at the bottom of the dialog. You are given the overall score and result if the game is ended at this point of Sudden Death. Hitting the End Game Now button will send you to the game's post mortem screens like it did in the past. As players, many of you wanted to fight to the last man standing. A tad bit OCD but we as gamers get that. For those time you need to see things to the utter end, you can now hit the continue button and play until the time limit or until you decide to end the game via the menu with File – End Game Now. Enjoy!
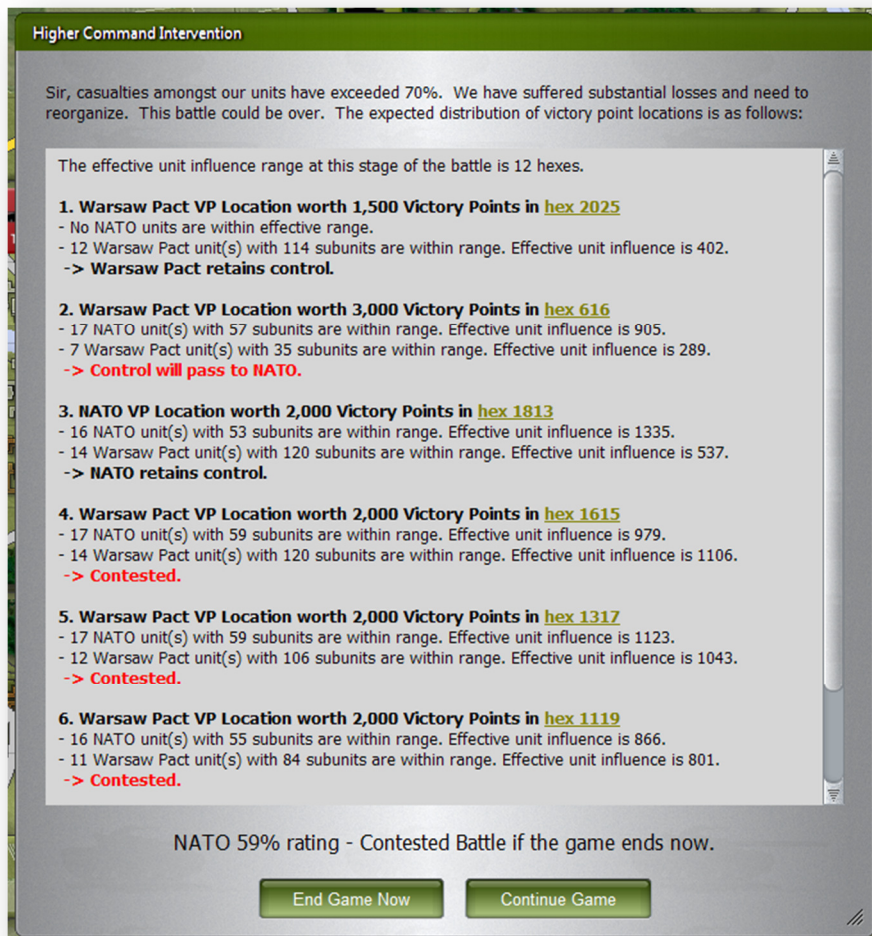
A new, deeper explanation of the Sudden Death VP awards

From the Sudden Death dialog above, here is the map at that point with the VPs (using The Plodder's awesome VP markers and map in this case, read on about custom folders later in this addendum) showing as awarded or contested in some cases. The Sudden Death calculation is more detailed internally then before, but we will be looking to add some more detail down the road.
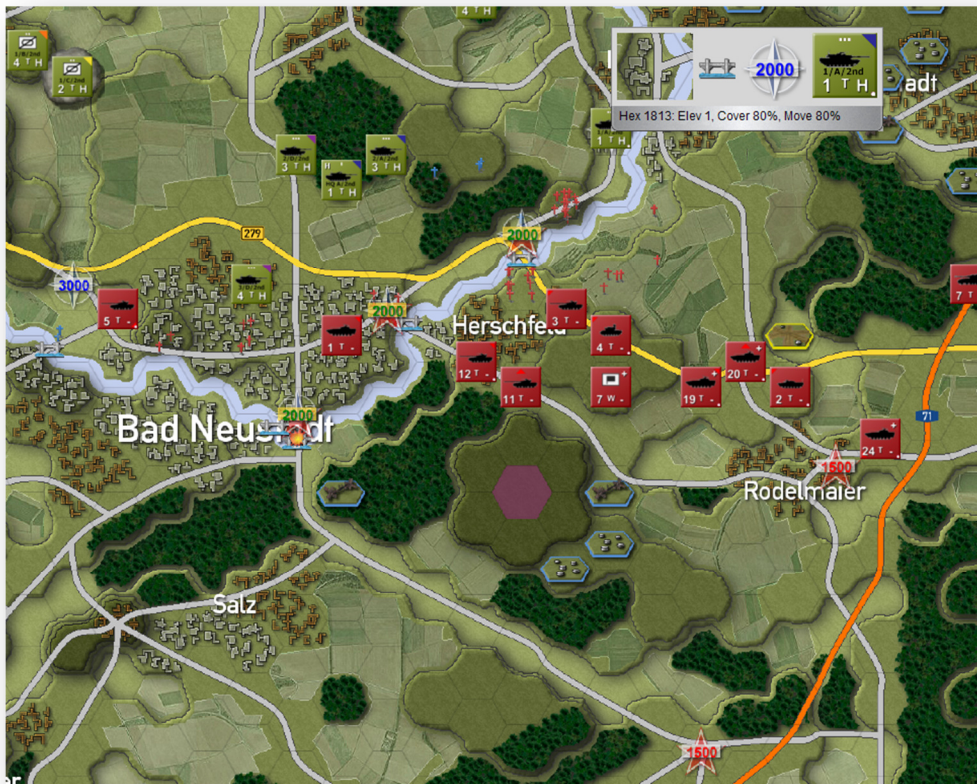
Viewing the map after Sudden Death

2.3   Fog of War

Fog of War or FoW for short, was another area that people took exception to the way information was displayed in certain areas and dialogs. In 2.04 we have cleaned up the way information on the enemy is displayed in hints, diary logs, on counters and in the UDP. If you have "full" FoW going, view enemy counters is off and browse enemy is off, the information you get will be based on one of the three spotting states used by the game.

- Undetected – No unit shows on the map. You do not have eyes, ears, or any other contact with the unit.
- Identified – The class of the unit is known like Tank, APC, etc., but exact type is not. Numbers are generally not know and show up as a "*" on the counter.
- Acquired – Now you know the exact type like a T-80BV, but numbers are still fuzzy.

So as information on a unit improves you will get hints and log entries with better details. We plan on continuing to add more FoW elements in 2.1.

2.4 Scooting and Standoff Range

Both of these AI related functions were torn down and recoded for this update. Although not perfect and quite frankly there is no way to really make it that way, we did work a through a number of iterations to have both decent standoff range based on unit type and orders and then worked to make the type of scooting involved more timely and intelligent. One item we ditched was the max standoff range in the UDP. It wasn't really doing anything other than confuse folks. The big number if the minimum standoff range. This is the point a unit will back out if pressed by an enemy. There is no simple table of ranges, but here are some general guidelines of how numbers will be calculated.

- Line units like tanks and mechanized forces will have lower ranges.

- HQs and support units like SAMs and Arty will have larger ranges.

- Recon units will have longer ranges.

- Being in a Hold order will reduce most range to near zero or zero. These units will scoot only when losses force them to move.

- Being in a Screen order is a neutral adjustment.

- On Call and Resupply with have increased ranges.

When scooting, most units in most situations will back out in a few minutes using a deliberate move order. This move assumes the unit is making a more ordered and cover based fallback. In some cases a unit may be surprised or set upon and need to bail quickly. In this case a hasty move in a few minutes will be used. A trade of speed for defense will be made here.

2.5 UI Tweaking and Improvements

We did a good deal of UI cleanup and tweaks and also peppered in a few new item into the UI. As you could see from the first screen shot we did change some UI colors and toned down some of the effects on the silver panels. We have also made changes to the Sub–Unit Inspector too (See section 2.6.2). Here is a breakdown of the various improvements and fixes.

- Fixed a bad TOC report where Smoke was stated in place of ICM in MLRS missions.

- Remove the Promo score code for good.

- Unit parameters will now go to 100% for Readiness, Ammo and Morale in the Scenario editor and in the UDP display.

- Max standoff range in the UDP was dropped.

- Game shows hints if the FSCC is setting missions for on map artillery units.

- Units wiped out in battle now show back up in the TOC's Force Roster.

- Hyperlinks in all area should now be Olive and not BLLLUUUEEE. Wow it hurt my eyes. (See image, right)

- Enemy bridges should only show if spotted now.

- Changed the wording in the SUI for the protection value(s) of aircraft, helos, and unarmored/soft units. The "Front/Flank
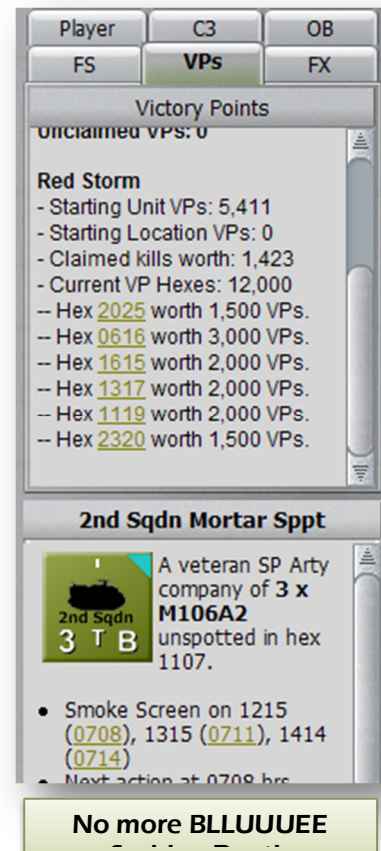
Protection" will only show if the unit has armor. Aircraft and Helos will say "Protection" and Soft units will state "Unarmored Unit".

- Control-U will now also hide key map markers.

- Selecting a unit or HQ by holding the "CTRL" key and click will now highlight the HQ and subordinates of said HQ. You cannot issue orders from this selection in any game orders mode. See image below.

A quick way to see whose part of a formation

2.5.1 New Quick Function Buttons

At the bottom of the map in the status bar right next to the zoom buttons are three new buttons adding more functionality with less mouse clicks. In this case the three buttons do the following:

- L – Toggles the Lin of Sight (LOS) display on and off for the selected unit. Once selected you can shift click an empty hex for its LOS as normal too.

- A – Toggles on and off all of the Friendly Movement Paths. Pretty self-explanatory.

- D- Toggle on and off the Command Radius of the selected HQ or unit. Non HQs have a radius but it does not affect play (for now).
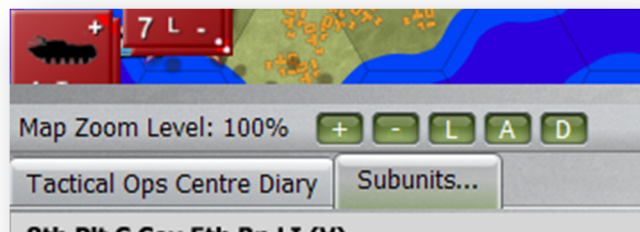
Three shiny buttons

Why only three buttons? Because we have limited space in the status bar at minimum resolution and we want to

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test these out. If folks like them, we are talking about making them on their own bar and also making them customizable so you can set it up with your most used functions (Ctrl click keys and such). So speak up if you find them helpful.

2.5.2 New FX Tab Layout

The FX tab has been redone into a single scrolling list (at least on the non-jumbotron screens like mine it needs the scroll ba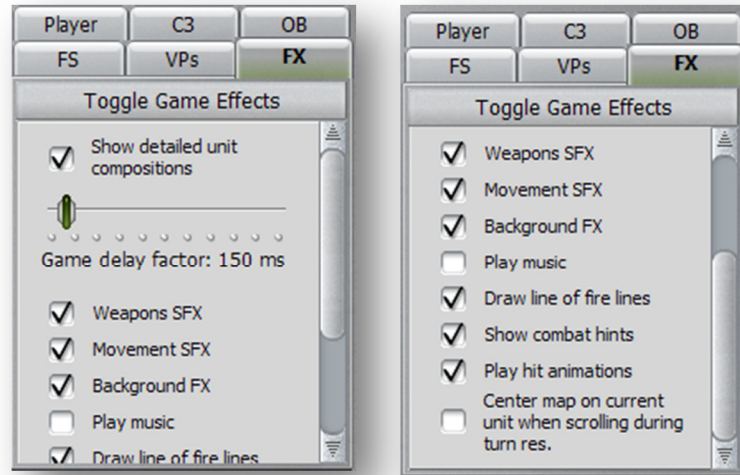r). The new layout has all of the options in a larger font making them easier to read. This also provides us with room to expand in the future if new options become available.

Expanded and more readable options

2.6 Editors and Modding Improvement and Fixes

In 2.04 there are numerous fixes, tweaks and additions to both use and display modding content.

2.6.1 Custom Folders for Maps and Markers

The biggest improvement we did was to add a "Custom" subfolder in both the Maps and Map Markers folders. The game will now look for maps (art and FP9, FP9 is not required unless you have a custom version of your own) and markers of the same name in these folders first. The same name is the key. Putting a new map in the game should be done by placing it in the proper Maps folder. There is no method for adding new a new type of map marker. You can only make new images for the existing ones and place those with the same name in the Custom folder. This change will keep us from overwriting any custom content you place in the game. These custom maps and markers will also show up in the Scenario Editor too.
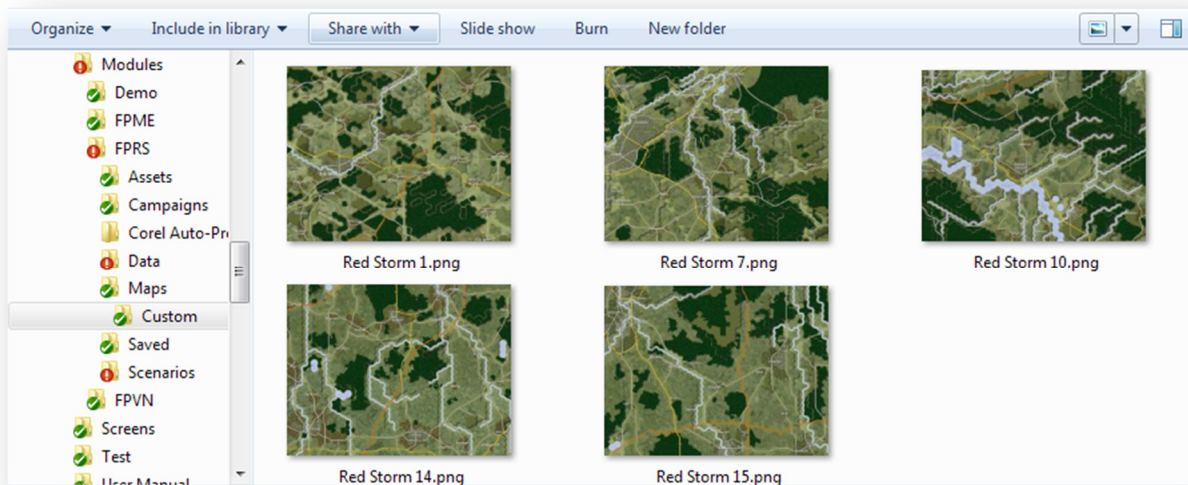
A new home for your custom maps!

2.6.2 Sub-Unit Inspector Enhancements

Another area of change was in the Sub-Unit Inspector (SUI). We made the image and SUI larger and added the ability of adding a new image (BMP) for a given platform by adding a "-S" to the name. Let's say you wanted to put a cool color picture of a T-80U in the SUI all you would need to do is have a BMP image 256 x 128 pixels (or larger, but in the same proportions, the game will scale down a bigger image) and save it in the Data folder as T80U-S.bmp. It has to be the same image name used by the game as seen in the data files or in the Common folder silhouette images. The image as seen in the picture can be color. You can give it a 3d look or add a drop shadow to style it (in your paint program). If there is now "-S" image the game will use the unit silhouettes instead. The "-S" images will NOT be flipped for player two. This will keep any image you use the way you have it. Not flipped text or numbers if they are in the image.

Add in awesome color images for units

2.6.3 Bug Fixes for the Scenario and Map Editors

A number of bugs and little tweaks were done to both the Scenario and Map editor. The major items are as follows:

- In the scenario editor if you replace a larger map with a smaller one with units on the map, the editor will now move those units that are "off map" back onto the smaller map for setup.

- Scenario Editor now uses any custom maps and markers found in the new Custom folders.

- Tweaks for improved Scenario Editor screen refreshing.

- The Dawn and Dusk times in the Scenario Editor are now clearly spelled out and shown for the time they are in effect. (See picture)
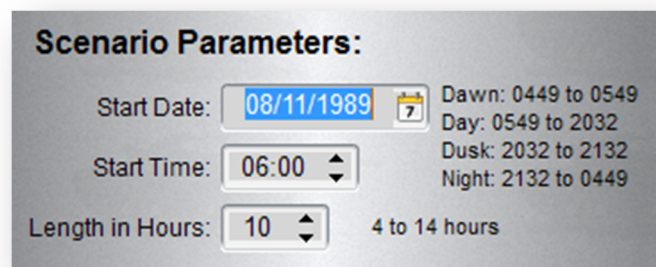
No more guessing when the sun rises

2.6.4 Data and Assets Enhancement and Fixes

We had a few areas in the data that needing updating and we did a few other things for modding assets too.

- Data for each country was revised and cleaned up for a number of parsing errors when selecting formations.

- Added in missing US OH-58C and D scout helicopters. Sorry about that.

- Revised the loadouts and equipment on the US AH-1s. They were overloaded with weapons and missing some equipment in a couple of cases.

- Removed guns from the command versions of the Soviet BMPs and BRMs. The guns have been replaced by a radio mast.

- US F-117s no longer carry nukes. There was a bad weapon pointer to a missing weapon. Fixed now. Surprised nobody saw that.

- The counter images (sils, as we call them) that are currently set to 128 x 64 can now be bigger. The trick is to keep the 2 to 1 proportions. The game will scale them down on the counters and other forms. This will allow for more detailed unit silhouettes (not the "-S" images from above). These sils in the SUI (now with a bigger image) will look better not getting scaled up. Best size would be 265 x 128 pixels now. We will do a full sils overhaul for 2.1.

3   Game Play Changes

Pretty much every update we do for the game has a good number of additions, tweaks and bug fixes under the hood that people don't see directly. The gameplay does change, hopefully for the better and more realistic, every time we touch the code. The next sections are a brief summary of the big changes done to the various areas of the code.

3.1   AI Enhancements and Corrections

Pretty much any change made in the game that is not a cosmetic UI tweak or addition touches on the games extensive and elaborate AI code. A lot of the delay in this update was working carefully in this code minefield. One small tweak can upset the AI applecart and make a mess of the game and the mechanics very quickly. We try to test every change as thoroughly as we can, but there aren't enough days in a year to see every situation and combination of events. So if you see odd behavior, let us know. With that being said, or more to the point written, let's talk about some of the changes in the AI area.

- Tweaks made to the when and how of resupply again. Units should try to disengage from enemies and then go into resupply.

- Helicopter resupply logic was tweaked again to make sure low ammo attack helicopters go back and resupply instead of sitting around as flying targets.

- Improvements in the scooting logic to seek out better cover and to get away from the enemy. This also includes improved logic by Artillery units to not move into other artillery or HQ unit hexes and more resistance to jumping into trees.

- Fixed an issue where certain enemy AI mortar units would move around but not deploy and fire.

- Orders delays in certain cases were too long and those have been fixed. This also fixes a slow start problem with the enemy AI that crept back in somewhere in 2.03. Plan accordingly.

3.2   Combat Model Updates

The Combat Engine we use is very detailed internally and takes a lot of parameters into account for every little situation that is important to blowing stuff up. The key elements are spotting and shooting. All of the various systems have certain methods to find targets and we have to make sure they work in a bunch of different environmental conditions. Some of the bugs we have squashed where weird corner cases or deeply hidden in various routines. Thanks to your bug reports and the work of our testers we nailed a bunch of them. Shooting had its fair share of issues too and we took down some deeply hidden bugs. We also added to the model too in response to your inputs. The combat engine is always on our list to continually improve and expand. That

philosophy will continue as we head down the road to 2.1. Here is a summary of the work done on the combat model.

- Improved the placement of airstrike counters on the map. In some cases there would not show up. It is better now.

- Fixed a bug were certain AD units would engage and kill hard targets like tanks with weapons like SAMs.

- To improve turn resolution the flashing of the helicopter's hex when detecting ADA radar has been removed. Only the ADA unit flashes on the map if detected. The helicopter will still show a white spotted dot if detected by radar.

- Fixed a very rare and weird case where an unarmed unit could get an attack and kill hard targets.

- Fixed a bug were thermal sights on units would not work if certain passengers were loaded.

- Revised the artillery routines to have more weight on shell size and removed an accuracy penalty that was affecting mortars and a few field guns. The end result is bigger guns have an improved chance of scoring kills and mortars are effective again.

- Added a number of more informative combat hints during airstrikes.

- Revised the airstrike routine to include attackers being driven off by heavy AD fire from enemy units.

- Fixed a bug causing some weapons on aircraft not to be fire/used during attacks.

- Fixed a bug where smoke could obscure aircraft from certain AD units.

3.3   General Gameplay Enhancements and Fixes

Welcome to the garbage can of tweaks and fixes. If it wasn't captured in an earlier section because it did not fit in, it is here. The following is a small list of the miscellaneous updates made to the game.

- A real big change is the **unlocking** of the OTS scenarios. You can now load them up and make changes and post them on the forums. Just be cool about crediting the originator of the scenario. Rob did a few adjustments to better show the scenario creator and OTS scenarios will still show as official and any 3rd party scenarios will show up as User Generated. This includes derivatives of OTS originals.

- Fixed an issue where resting and refitting in campaigns was not working for all units.

- Fixed a potential crash on game exit bug. A long standing hard to find bug that did not show up for most players.

- HQ units will now show proper mode of transport. In certain cases they always showed as Leg (L) type.

- A handful of new combat hints telling of scooting and other actions to better inform the player.

3.3.1 Improvements in the Play of Sound Effects (SFXs)

Right at the end of the 2.04 update with some extra time with the trip to Origins blocking any release attempt, we were able to spend some time in the audio code in an attempt to address some issues in the manner the game was playing sounds. Mainly movement sounds and the loss of some combat sounds when interrupted by movement.

- Remastered a number of the combat sounds to be shorter to help in getting played during combat. While still not a perfect solution, it is the best we can do without a major rewrite of the audio code sections. This is something we can look at again in 2.1 to improve, but it is a low priority item.

- The game will now play movement sounds for your units and any spotted enemies. Combat sounds were moved to another routine to help queue up sounds and also stop movement sounds if combat sounds need to be played. Bottom line is there are more sounds and it flows better in this update. Enjoy!

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3.3.2 Changes to Map Scrolling Parameters

A few players had commented on the "sluggish nature" of map scrolling. We took a look and made a few changes to the low limits of the map scrolling options to "speed up" the scrolling response. It will vary based on your hardware and due to the nature of the 2D graphics engine currently used not a smooth flowing action. That is something we can look to address in the future. Below is a summary of the changes.

- Polling Interval – Minimum value reduced from 50 to 10 and steps from 50 down to 10. Lowering this should result in a faster scroll.

- Initial Delay Factor – Not Changed. Delay time before scrolling starts if cursor in the detection zone.

- Scroll Increment – Minimum value reduced from 64 to 8 and steps from 64 down to 8. Lowering this will move a smaller amount of map pixels with each polling interval. If you go low the scroll will be smoother but slower since less pixel movement is done each step.
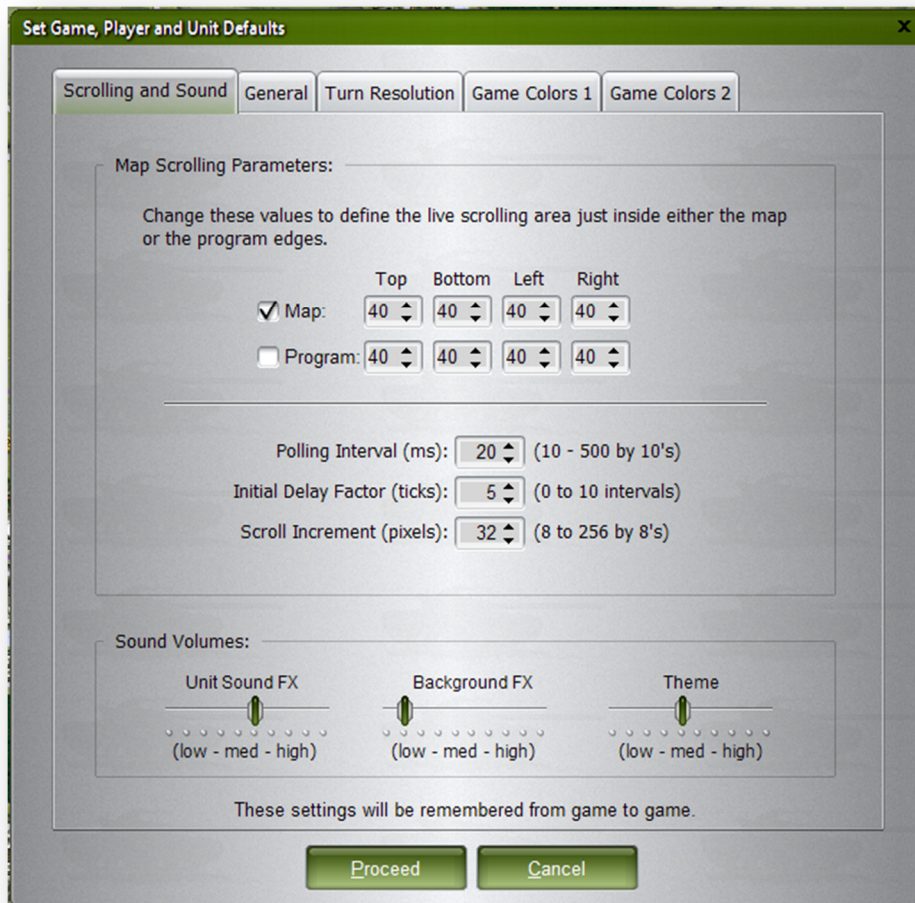
3.4   PBEM Fixes

A couple of issues still persist in the PBEM area and a few have been fixed with this update. We would love to have them all dealt with but time and repeatable cases of errors are limited and we wanted to get this out. We will continue to pursue PBEM issues as we shift into 2.1 mode.

- Fixed an odd reload error when the PBEM file encountered a changed name to the expected file.

- Fixed an error where air units would not go back and resupply when reaching 0% ammo.

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4   What's on Tap from OTS

OTS has been cranking away on the game non-stop since the release back in October to update, improve, and correct items with the game (not to mention the 5+ years working on the game before release). We do have some plans for this year and I'm going to hit on a few of those in brief below. So read on!

4.1   Went to Origins 2014

Rob and I were part of a number of Staff Wargame exercises, a let's-learn-to-play Red Storm session and also a Red Storm/OTS Q&A session. It was a working vacation for sure, but also a ton of fun and Rob and I got a chance to really work on a roadmap for the features of 2.1 and get our ducks lined up to attack the ever shrinking schedule for that. If you missed Origins this year, pencil it in for 2015 and check us out at the show.

4.2   What We Will Do for 2.05 if Needed

In a perfect world 2.04 will fix all the bugs in the game. Given that Murphy lives in game code we will not be that lucky. If any game breaking bugs pop loose as a result of 2.04 we will do a "bug fix only" 2.05 update/hotfix. Any time we spend in a 2.05 just pushes the 2.1 Southern Storm Schedule off to the right. And speaking of 2.1...

4.3   Setting Off on the Path of 2.1

As soon as the digital ink dries on the 2.04 update and we return tired by infused with new life for the game from Origins, we will dive headlong into the work for Southern Storm. We have a very aggressive schedule in place and we will need to hit the ground running to get the pieces of the puzzle put together. Once we return from Origins we will be in a better place to talk more about what we plan to do in the improved game engine beyond the new countries, maps and scenarios.

So we are looking at a busy end to 2014 and a big start to 2015 with Southern Storm. We thank all of you for your continued support and inputs. It really helps us stay focused on making a very good game great! Besides, we are going to want to hit to improve our gold medal game of the year count in 2015!

Enjoy the new update and happy hunting as MR says!

5   Known Issues

In a perfect world we would have a perfect game. Sadly lots of complex code has a way of breaking in place while you work in other areas. We are aware of one such break late in the updating cycle, that is so deeply intertwined in other code, that we decided to get 2.04 out the door and then work the issue as we get into 2.1 work.

Once we get a fix we will roll out a 2.05 hotfix for sure and we will keep you all posted on things too.

5.1   Mines and Obstacles

For whatever reason, the detection and clearing of mines and obstacles is not working right now. Rob has done a dive into the code and his prognosis was not a simple or easy fix. Apparently a number of changes and additions for 2.04 somehow have broken the routines that that control these items. Units still seem to be delayed by the objects in most cases, but kills from mines and clearing of the item are not working well or at all.

We apologize for the bug and will look at getting a speedy resolution out to you guys.

OTS In-house Splash Screen

6   CREDITS

6.1   On Target Simulations Design Team

Lead Programmer and Head Honcho: Robert "Ironman" Crandall

Data, Programming, Graphics, and Sound: Jim "Cap'n Darwin" Snyder

Maps, Scenarios, and Campaign Designer: Steve "Mad Russian" Overton

Quality Czar and Testing Lead: Charles "Hawkeye" Belva

Facebook Site Design/Maintenance: Rebecca "Beck" Snyder

6.2   What's New in 2.04

Author and Graphics: Jim "Cap'n Darwin" Snyder

Editing and Review: Rebecca "Beck" Snyder