

Gog and Magog

The mobilization phase

By Fredrik Voss

(adapted from AAR initially published on krigsspel.se)

Playthrough of the mobilization phase of the campaign scenario ("Gog and Magog") in Sacred Oil.

Background

"On June 8, 1985 one month after announcing widespread reforms during a speech in Leningrad, General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev is deposed by a military coup. A State Emergency Committee, formed by Kremlin hardliners and presided over by Andrei Gromyko, takes power in Soviet Union.

On June 12, the State Emergency Committee in Moscow decides during a secret meeting to start preparations for Operation Baikal and Operation Ladoga, having respectively Iran and NATO as objectives. Both options are kept open until further notice.

Long prepared plans are put into motion. A complex Maskirova disguising the preparations as an internal struggle for power keeps both NATO and Warsaw Pact guessing about Soviet Union's intentions. However, US and its closest allies are starting to consider options for the Southwest Asia region.

In Tehran, the Iranian theocracy remains both deaf to any appeal for collaboration and mortally locked in the conflict with Iraq, now on its fifth year. During a public appearance in Tehran, ironically on the same day as the State Emergency Committee decides to start preparations for war, Ayatollah Khomeini declares that "with the help of God, the Islamic Republic of Iran will repel the satanic hordes led by Gog and Magog".

The core of the scenario is thus a Soviet invasion of Iran, where the scenario begins a number of days before hostilities begin. However, there are already two wars going on that are represented in the game. The tankies in Moscow have the war in Afghanistan to deal with, which is an abstracted but important part of the scenario. Iran's war with Iraq is also an important component that is fully represented on the operational map with a satisfactorily large number of chits to manage right from the very start of the scenario:



Now, one can be led to believe that the counterparties in the game are Iran and the Warsaw Pact, but that is not the case. The bad guys are represented by the Soviet Faction, and the less bad guys by the US Faction. So, it's Russians and Americans who are fighting for victory points, but they have teammates to assist them. In the Soviet Faction, the Soviets are initially alone, but they may receive help from Iraq, Syria, and the Warsaw Pact. In the US Faction team, the US, UK, and France are already members, but it may be expanded to include NATO, Iran (!), Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Thus, it is the Soviet player who manages Iraq's units, and it is the US player who manages Iran.

Operations

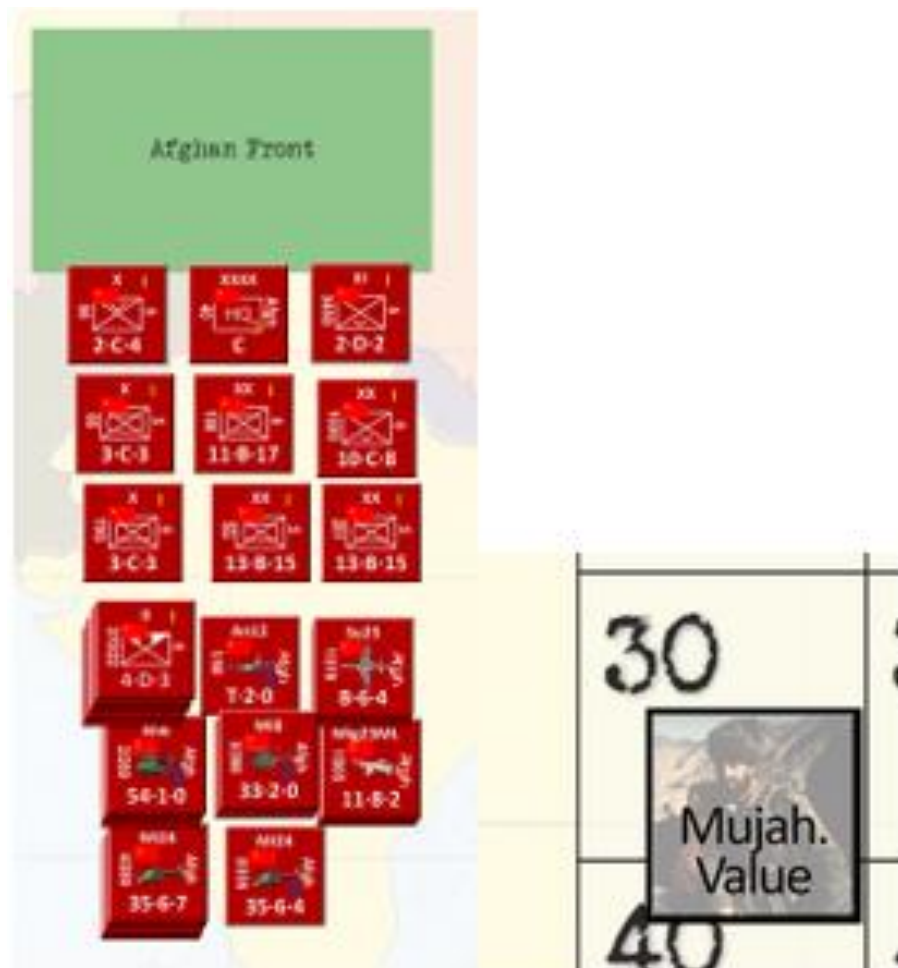
The scenario begins with the Soviets having to decide when Operation Baikal (the invasion of Iran) should be launched and Iran declared war. It takes more than a week to get a reasonably potent invasion force in place through mobilization and march to the front so Gromyko (me, that is) has decided that the invasion will begin on June 26th – in turn 8 (one turn is two days). The comrades must also decide if, and if so, when, Operation Ladoga (the invasion of Europe) should be launched. A possible invasion of Europe is dealt with in the abstract in the game, but affects which units can be mobilized to the Middle East, and it also affects how victory points are counted. In this case, the Soviets have decided that it is too risky to attack Europe, so there will be no Operation Ladoga.

The US player (also me... a less-than-optimal scenario to play solo) doesn't get to know any of the above in advance. He knows that there will be an invasion of Iran (otherwise there will be no game) but not when, and he does not know if there will be an invasion of Europe and if so, when. This is an interesting mechanism as it means that the US player does not know for sure how victory points will be counted. We'll get back to how this works in more detail later.

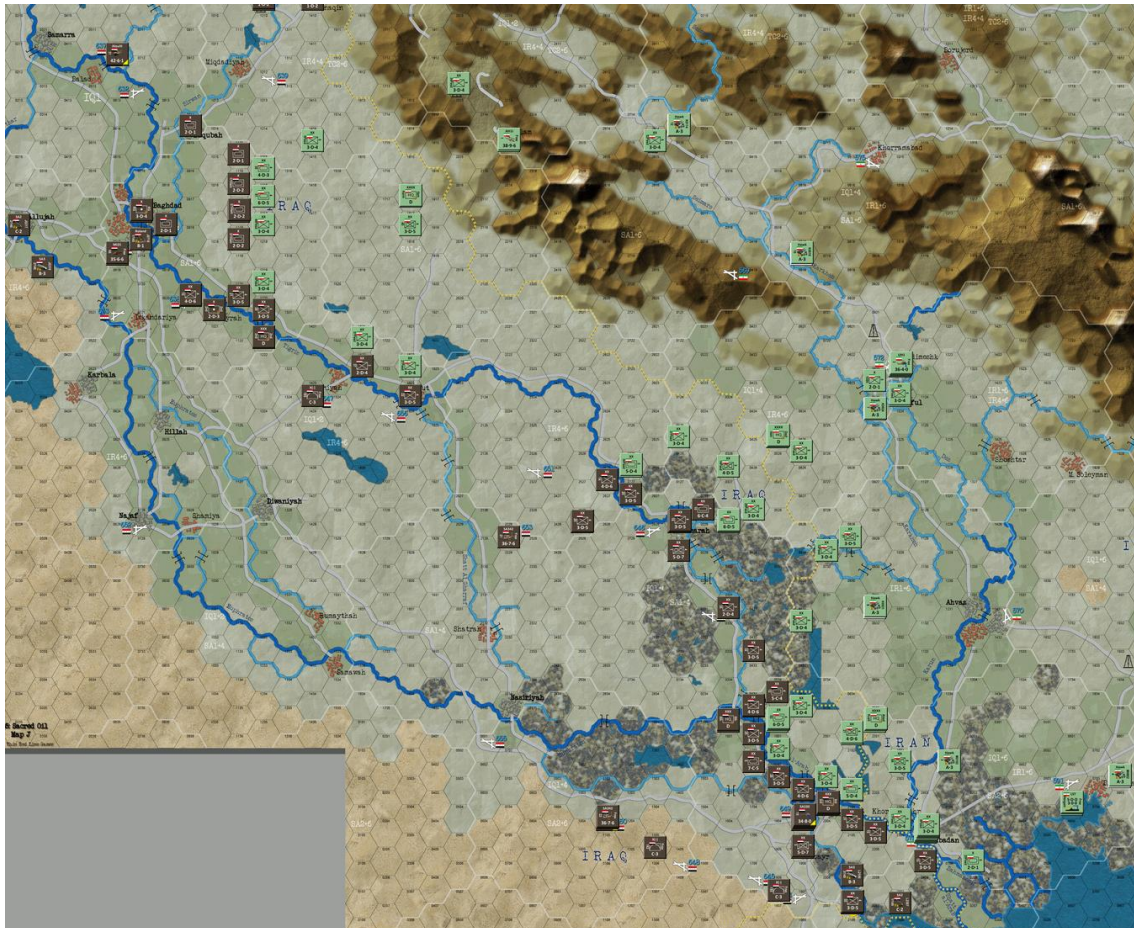
I will only play the parts of the game that have to do with mobilization and getting forces into position until the point in time when the Soviet and US Factions are at war. I will skip everything that has to do with the ongoing war between Iran and Iraq under the assumption that neither side is strong enough to achieve a breakthrough.

Situation

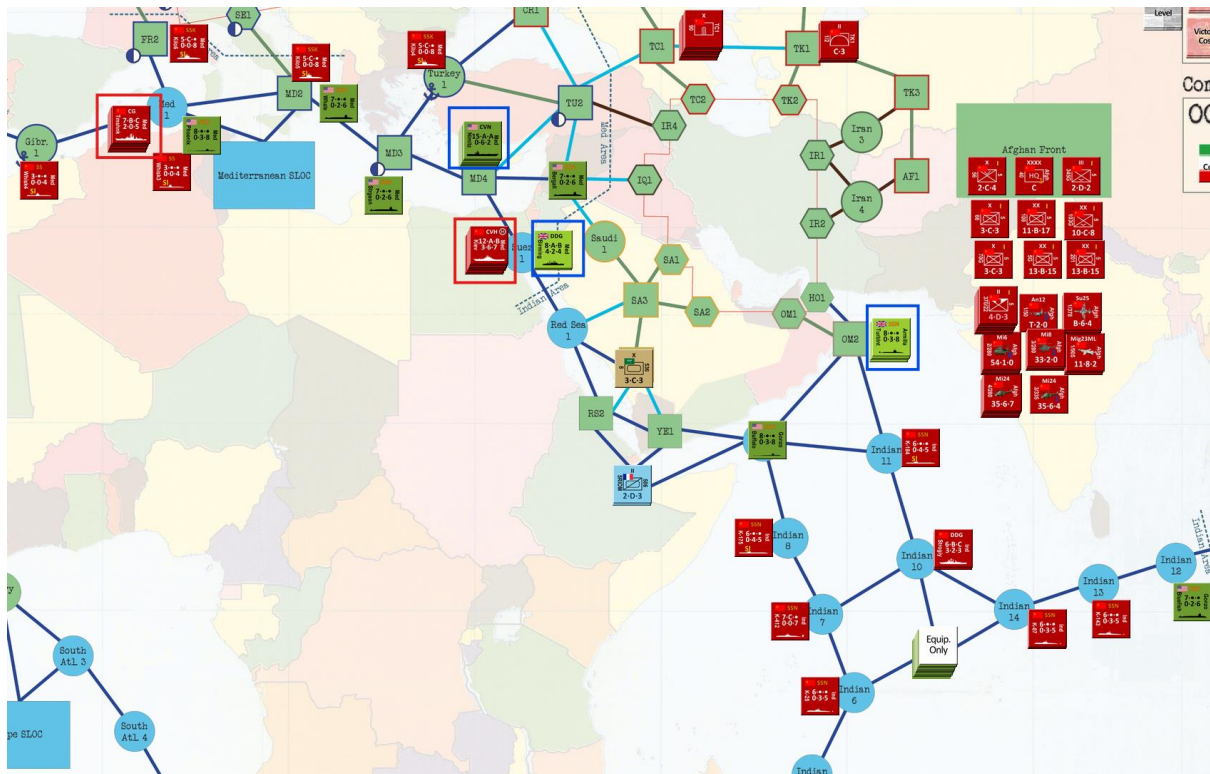
It is the morning of June 12, 1985. The wars in Afghanistan and Iran/Iraq are not going anywhere at the usual glacial pace. The Soviets have 5-6 divisions with associated support on the ground in Afghanistan that are fighting against the guerrillas (represented by a "Mujahideen value" that currently stands at 30):



As mentioned, the war between Iran and Iraq is also raging along the front without any breakthroughs from either side:



Other noteworthy matters are that there is a Soviet fleet simmering in the western Mediterranean Sea (Med 1), that the group with the helicopter carrier Kiev in the lead is near the Suez Canal (Suez 1), guarded by a small British fleet. A British frigate group is bobbing on the waves off Oman (OM2). In the Mediterranean Sea (Med 4) the American aircraft carrier CVN Nimitz with accompanying escort is taking it easy. Elsewhere, there is a whole bunch of Soviet and American submarines on patrol in the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans:



Inside the Persian Gulf, it looks a bit like the start of the Barcolana: a mishmash of small and even smaller ships of different types and nationalities:



And last but not least, the carrier group CV Constellation is located outside the Persian Gulf and keeps track of what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz:



International Relations

The input values politically are that Iran is neutral (Commitment 0). They have enough with themselves and the war against Iraq - and hate the Great Satan for all that they are worth. This is a problem for the US Faction player. Iran is militarily inferior to the Soviet Union, so it is in the interest of the US player to get his forces into Iran asap to avoid having to watch the Soviets grab yummy victory points (ports, air bases, oil fields, etc) undisturbed. In addition, the West maintains an embargo on Iran, which means that its SAM Hawk batteries have limited capabilities and that Iran's air bases operate at reduced capacity. This embargo will be lifted if Iran's Commitment to US Faction reaches Level 2 ("Supporting").

Commitment Track				
00	01	02	03	04
Iran Commit	Qatar Commit Kuwait Commit Bahrain Commit UAE Commit Saudi Commit	Iran Commit NAFO Commit Iran Commit Iran Commit Iran Commit Iran Commit	Iran Commit WP Commit Syria Commit Iran Commit Iran Commit Iran Commit	

Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, and Saudi Arabia all have Commitment 1 ("Friendly") to the US Faction. This means that the members of US Faction (currently the US, UK, and France) can use the airspace

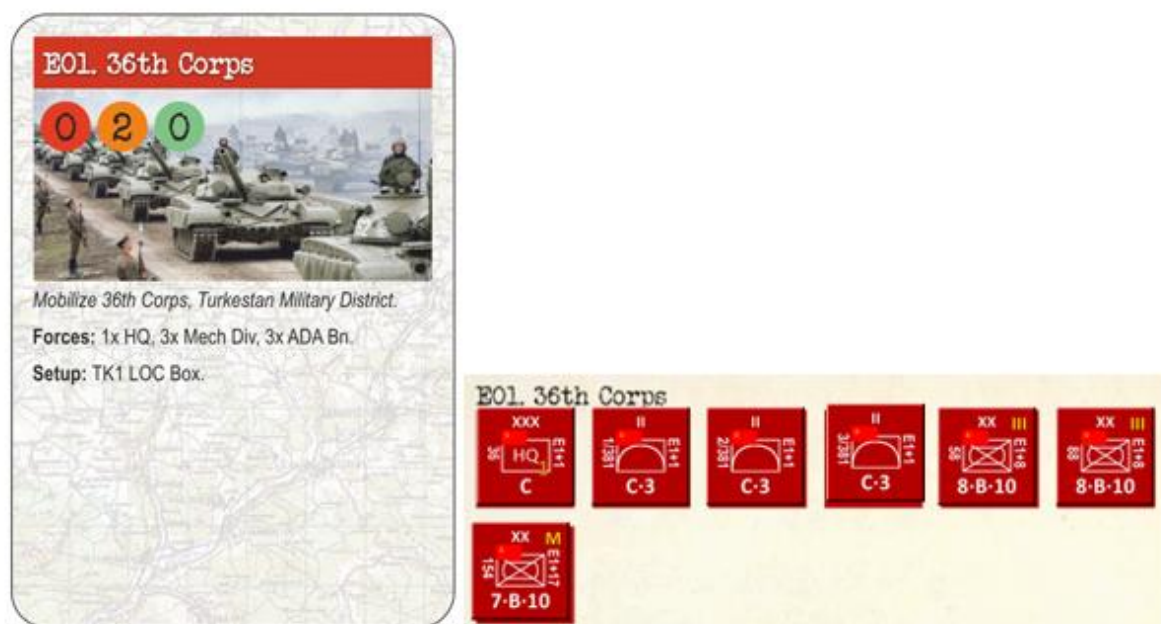
of these countries – but cannot use their bases or position troops in those countries. Iraq has a similar relationship with the Soviet Faction.

NATO and Oman at level two ("Supporting") allowing the US Faction to use their airspace and bases (though the bases only for limited purposes). However, US Faction troops do not have access to the territories of these countries. The Warsaw Pact and Syria have a similar relationship with Soviet Faction.

Hence, this is where we are when it is time for the Soviet military leadership to start issuing mobilization instructions to the invasion army.

Turn 1. 12-13 June, 1985

It is time for Gromyko & Co to start the mobilization for Operation Baikal (the invasion of Iran). They do this by selecting mobilization cards from a deck of 53 cards (some of the cards do not represent activations of units but special operations such as "block the Suez Canal", "kill Khomeini", etc.). Each card mobilizes a component of the Soviet armed forces. For example, the card E01 which mobilizes the 36th Corps:

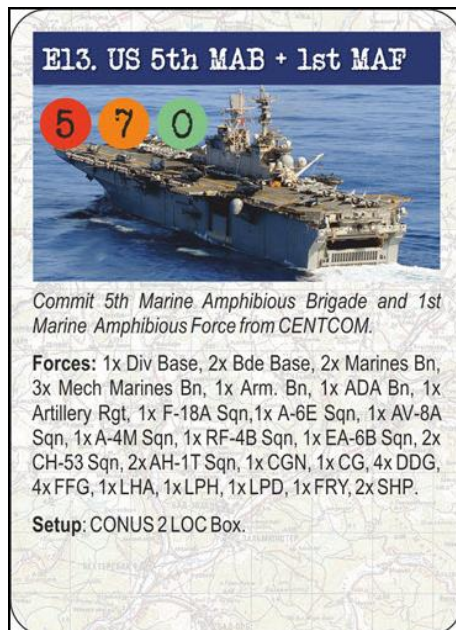


The 36th Corps consists of a HQ and some air defence units, all of which appear in Turkestan (TK1) the turn after the card is played ("E1+1" on the card). In addition, it contains two mechanized category-3 divisions that require eight turns to become operational ("E1+8"), as well as a mechanized division of fresh draftees that need a long time to get ready for action ("E1+17").

All in all, the Soviet player decides to play twelve cards representing roughly 30 divisions with associated support units, artillery, air defence, some air force units and helicopters. These units have mobilization times ranging from a few days to a few weeks. All units belong to the military districts of Turkestan, Transcaucasia, and North Caucasus. The Soviets are careful not to choose any cards that represents entities based in Europe as it would be a clear signal to the U.S. player that there will be no Operation Ladoga (invasion of Europe).

The selected twelve cards are placed face down in front of the US player:

circle), but the Tension Level is only 1 at the moment so it is not possible. Secondly, it costs seven Tension Points to play the card (the number in the orange circle) and the US player only has six Tension Points available.

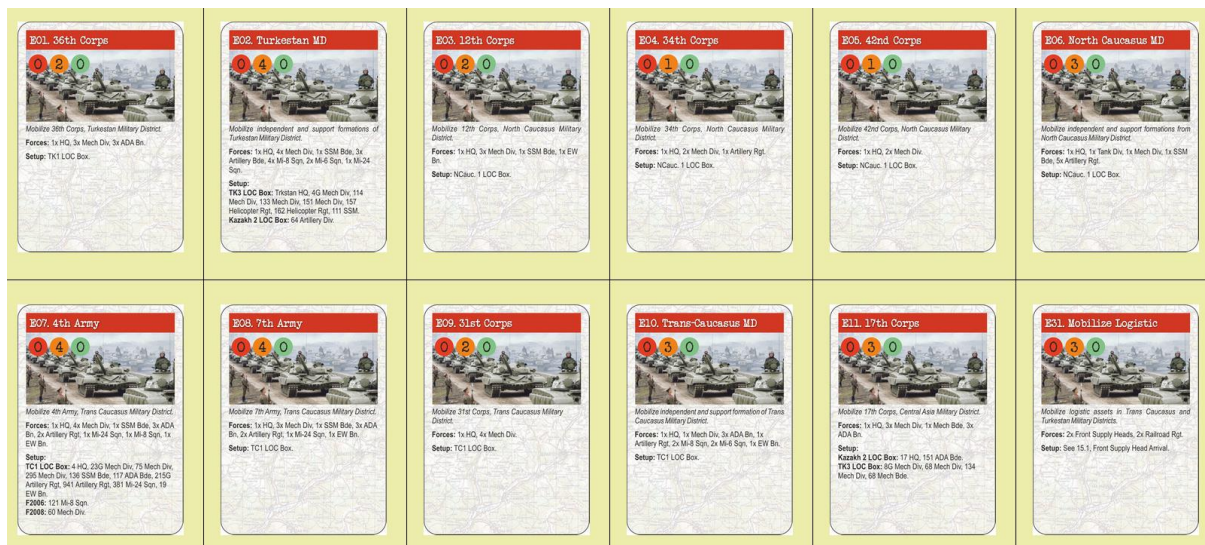


Most of the US Faction's cards require the Tension Level to be two or more, but there are two cards where the requirement is only Tension Level 1. One provides support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan and the other represents a diplomatic offensive in the Middle East:



Thus, the US player pays five Tension Points (the orange numbers) and sends Reagan to Kuwait. Reagan performs a spectacular song and dance number in Kuwait City and subsequently rolls a four. A diplomatic success, and Kuwait's Commitment to US Faction goes from one to two (from "Friendly" to "Supporting"). Then the US Faction spends an Airlift point and rolls "14" - the Mujahedin is visited by Tom Hanks and Philip Seymour Hoffman who hand out Stingers and chunky bundles of dollars: The Mujahedin value increases from 30 to 31.

Now the Soviet player flips the six remaining cards that were not "discovered" previously and implements all the cards, i.e. putting all mobilized units where they belong on the Turn Track:



Both sides now check the green circles on their played cards. All cards have zeros in the green circle, which means that none of the cards affect the calculation of Victory Points.

In Moscow there is caviar and Russian champagne on the dinner table tonight. The mobilization of 30 divisions has begun and the only thing the opponents have achieved is a tourist trip for Reagan and minimal additional trouble in Afghanistan

At this point in the sequence of play it is normally time to get to grips with what is going on the maps – especially the war between Iran and Iraq – but we will skip that part and instead assume that the sides continue to pummel each other without achieving any major breakthroughs. In Washington no alarm bells are triggered by what is happening on the LOC map. Most Soviet faction units stay in position, the only thing that seems a bit strange is that a large number of Soviet cargo ships drop anchor in an unusually coordinated fashion and set off from Sevastopol in direction of the Bosphorus. In addition, a group of slightly inconspicuous Russian fishing boats appear in the Red Sea, but no one cares about that.

Turn 2, 14-15 June, 1985

Satisfied with what they accomplished last turn; the Soviets decide not to play any cards this round. They want to do as little as possible to increase tensions in the area for the duration of the mobilization, so the Tension Cost remains at "17".

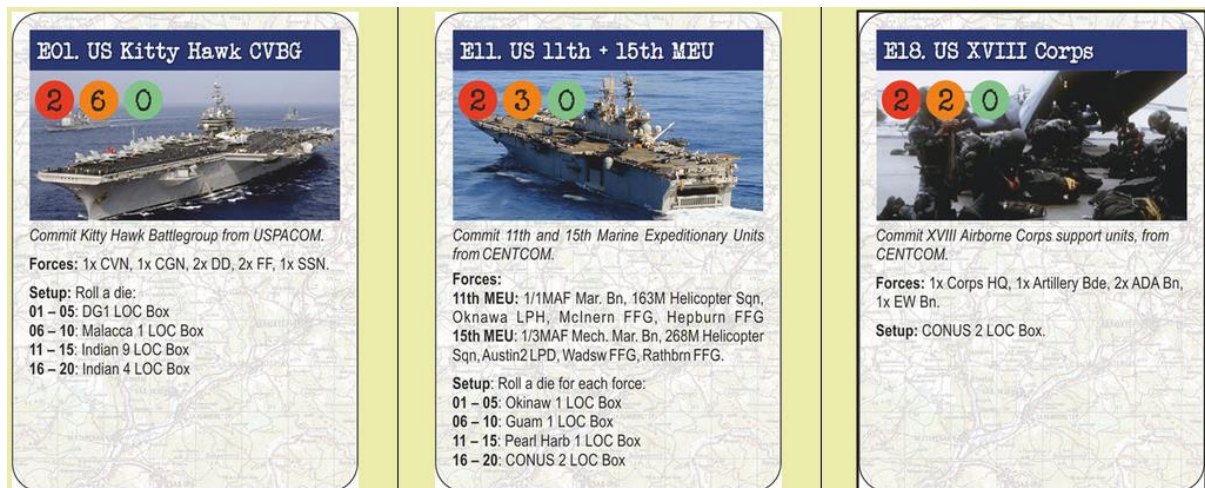
But it seems that the Americans actually are on to something. They roll "10" on the Tension Table, which increases the Tension Level from one to two, and the US Faction receives a few more Tension Points, so now they have a total of 11 Tension Points to spend:



With the Tension Level rising to 2, the US player now has more options at his disposal, represented by the following cards (any card with a two or lower in the red circle):



As long as the US player does not know if Operation Ladoga will proceed or not, he does not want to play any cards that affect the Victory Points calculation. Hence, he chooses not to play any card that has a value of more than zero in the green circle. In addition, Reagan is tired after his last trip and the guerrillas in Afghanistan are fed up with Hollywood stars so those cards are also left unplayed this turn. It would have been great for the US player to select all the other cards, but since he only has 11 Tension Points available, he chooses to play E01 Kitty Hawk, E11 11th & 15th MEU, and E18 18th Airborne using all his eleven Tension Points (values in orange circles):



He rolls for the units' positions: the 11th MEU will arrive at CONUS2 (San Diego – worst possible outcome) and the 15th MEU will arrive at Guam1 in a turn's time. On the other hand, Kitty Hawk with escort arrives Diego Garcia in two turns – can't get any better. The 18th Airborne will also be available in San Diego, but not until Turn 5 (it is not possible to see mobilization times on the cards, mobilization times are printed on the unit chits).

So, as we enter the Action Phase for Turn 2, the mobilization calendar looks as below. The Soviet units that are in box 02 will begin moving towards Iran this turn:

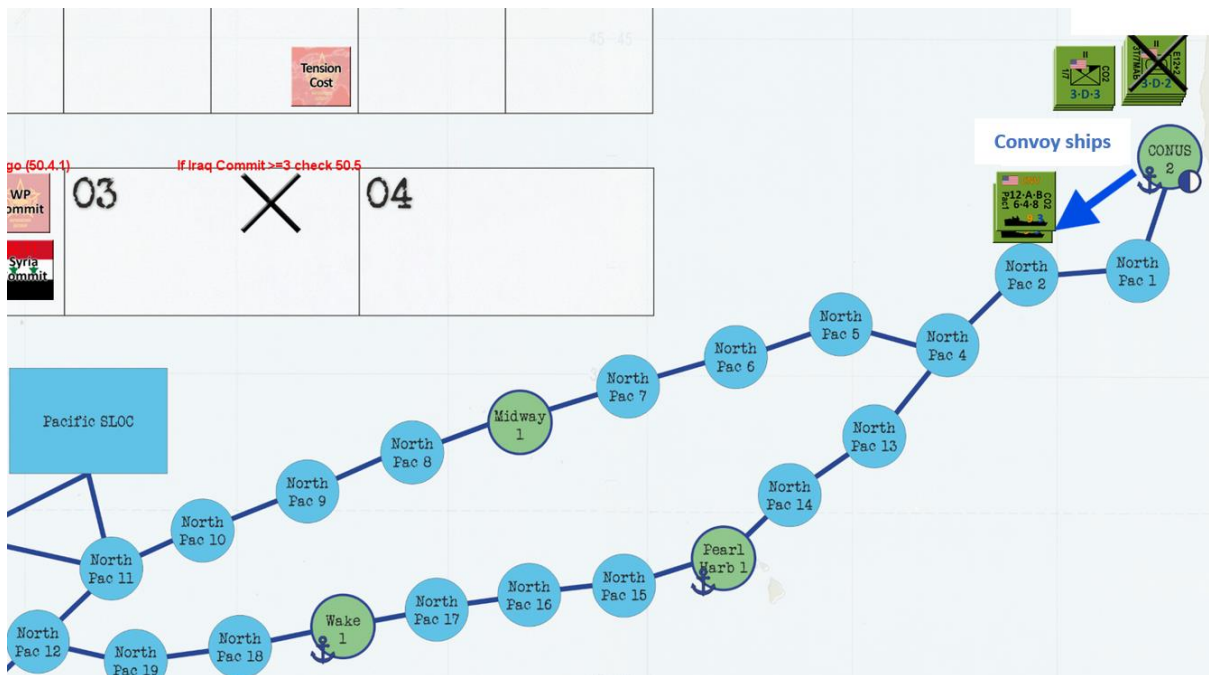
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

Now things are also starting to happen in Afghanistan. The mujahideen carry out a well-coordinated attack on the Soviet air base in Kandahar. They manage to damage the base so badly that it cannot be used until it is repaired, and they completely destroy a bunch of Su-25s that are parked in a remote corner of the facility. Not so happy faces in Moscow.

Another matter worth noting is that Soviet units have begun to appear west of the Caspian Sea, not far from the border with Iran. However, from the Soviet side they assure questioning Iranians that these troop movements are only the initial steps of a major exercise that will begin in a couple days:



At sea, the Soviet fishing boats move further south through the Red Sea and the Soviet cargo ships have left the Bosphorus and made their way into the Mediterranean. Far away in San Diego, an American group of convoy ships start moving West with the mission to establish a supply base on Diego Garcia:



Turn 3, 16-17 June, 1985

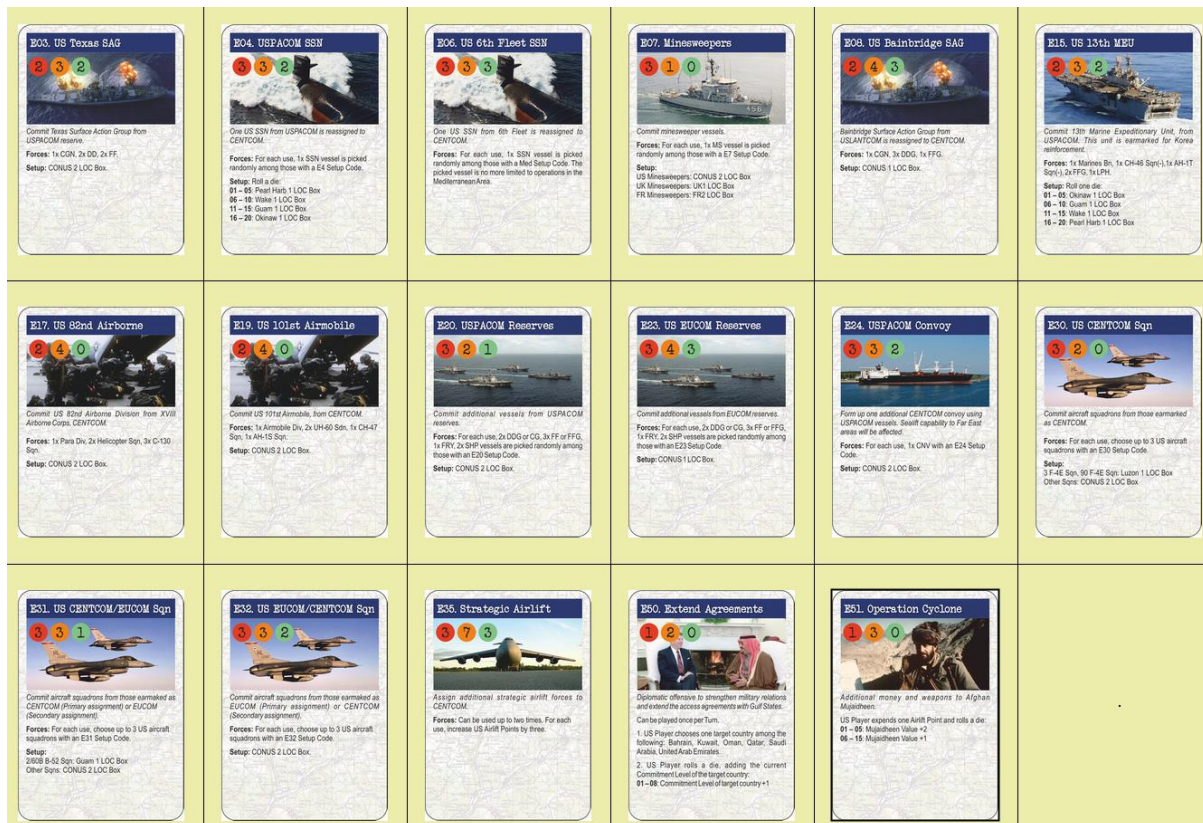
The Soviets see no reason to give the US Faction the opportunity to commence a more extensive mobilization, so they endeavour to continue avoiding an increase of the Tension Cost & Tension Level. They therefore choose to play only one card - trying to increase Iraq's commitment to the Soviet Faction:



Saddam thinks this is tremendous behaviour and reciprocates by rolling a three – Iraq's Commitment to Soviet Faction increases from "1" to "2" (Supporting). In Moscow, they are also satisfied.

The US Faction succeeded with the "intelligence roll" (they discovered Gromyko's contribution to Saddam) so the Tension Cost increases from 17 to 18. In addition, the members of the US Faction begin to sense what is going on (rolling a "19" on the Tension Table) which leads to the Tension Level increasing to 3 and they gain an additional nine Tension Points to spend on mobilization.

With a Tension Level of 3, the opportunity opens up to choose between more options:



After some discussion among USCENTCOM and their British and French counterparts, they come to the conclusion to save a Tension Point for later use and spend eight points to mobilize the 82nd Airborne, release some air units, and send Reagan to Kuwait again:

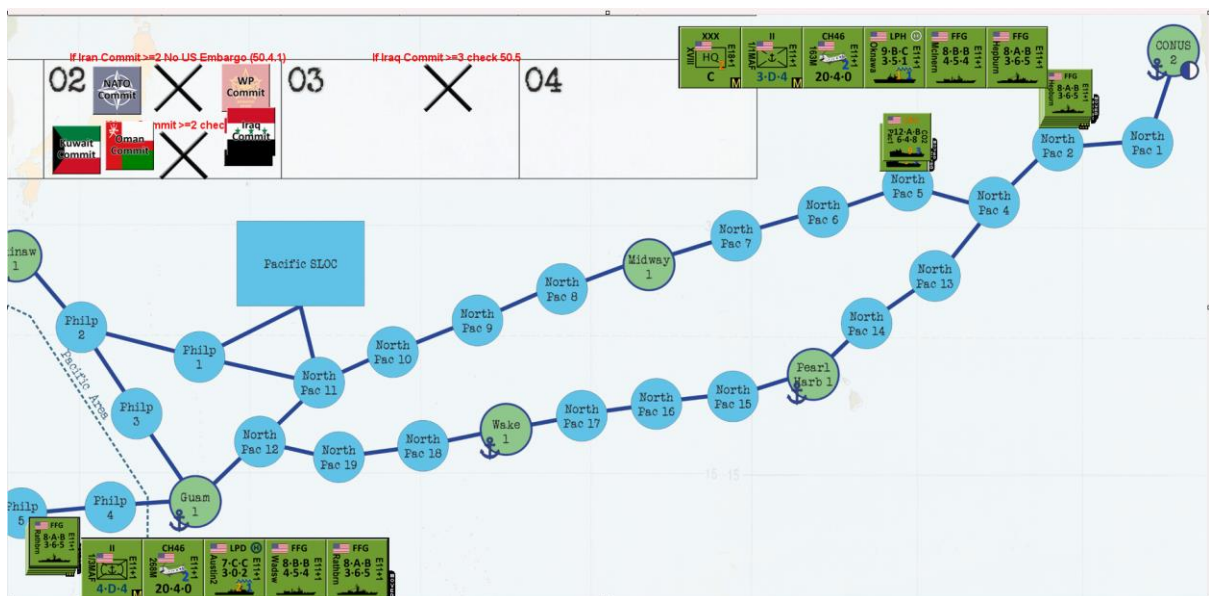


It takes two to six days for the 82nd and US CENTCOM aircraft to mobilize, so those units are spread out over Turn 4-6 on the Turn Track. In Kuwait, everyone wonders if Reagan forgot that he was there the other day, their admin staff roll "17" on the Commitment check, and thus Kuwait's Commitment Level to US-Faction does not increase but remains at 2 ("Supporting").

Out in the field, quite a lot of Soviet units have started to appear both West and East of the Caspian Sea. The Iranians are beginning to nurture growing doubts about the veracity of the Soviets' claims that this is an exercise, and order two mechanized divisions to leave the front on Iraq and head North.



At sea, the unusual journeys of Soviet cargo ships and fishing boats continue. Also, the US 11th and 15th Marine Expeditionary Units are now appearing on the LOC map. The 11th in San Diego and the 15th outside Guam. Both groups immediately set speed to Full westwards:



Three turns into the scenario and the reinforcement calendar starts to fill up. Mainly, we have Soviet ground troops and American naval and marine units on the way.

Turn Track									
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

A helluva concern for the US Faction is the infinitely long supply line from San Diego (CONUS2) to the Persian Gulf. Shipping Supply Points (which are required to keep the fighting units going) such a long distance is practically impossible. The solution to this is to establish a Supply Hub on Diego Garcia, this is done semi-abstractly by sailing convoy ships into the box "Pacific SLOC" in the picture above – to where the two convoy ships currently in "North Pac 5" are heading. However, establishing a Supply Hub is not the end of the problems because once a hub is established on Diego Garcia, other cargo

In the days that follow, the tension rises further in the area (Tension Level goes from "3" to "6".) West of the Caspian Sea, five Soviet mechanized divisions are now right on the border with Iran. East of the Caspian Sea, there is also an increased Soviet presence, with a division+ in the border area:



At US Faction HQ, alarm bells are now ringing at the highest possible decibel strength – a Soviet Union with access to the Iranian oil fields and, possibly even worse, with access ports in the Persian Gulf would be total disaster ("Soviet Faction Decisive Strategic Victory" according to the scenario description).

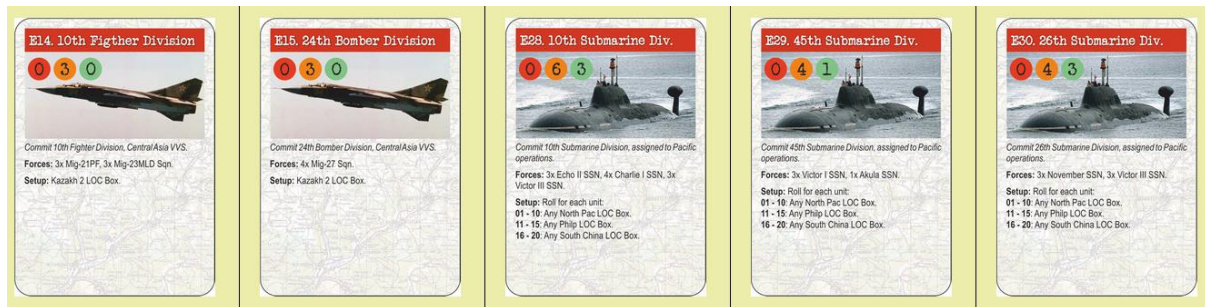
However, further diplomatic trips to the region in recent days did not provide any increased support (Commitment Level) from partners in the region. US diplomats travelled to Oman this time but it didn't go any better than the latest overture to Kuwait. Increased pressure on Tehran has also had no effect. Despite calling from Washington once every fifteen minutes for the past 48 hours, the ayatollahs have not even picked up the phone.



In Tehran, there is now total panic, so neither the clergy nor the military have time to answer the phone. The Soviet promises of an "exercise" ring increasingly hollow and everyone realizes that a two-front war is hopeless, but accept help from the Great Satan himself – no thanks! (Iran Commitment vs US Faction is thus still at zero). Instead, they engage in self-deception and pretend that there will not be a Soviet invasion.

In Moscow, the smiles are getting broader. Along the Iran/Iraq front, the parties are wrestling without any breakthroughs, and in Afghanistan a Soviet operation reduces the Mujahideen value from 31 to 30. The mujahideen did respond with repeated counterattacks that took a step off a Soviet brigade, damaged an air base, and smashed some Mi6 transport helicopters in the area – but

that is not a major concern. However, the main reason why the members of the State Emergency Committee are smiling is that in recent days they have managed to activate almost the entire submarine fleet in the Pacific and Southeast Asia plus additional air force resources without it leading to increased support for the US Faction among the Gulf countries:



On the US Faction side, they are mobilizing for all their worth. The 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, which already had equipment in place at Diego Garcia, has now also managed to get personnel in place through Strategic Airlift. Also, the unit's naval forces left San Diego a few days ago and are now in the Pacific Ocean heading west. The 101st Airmobile has pulled up its socks – the first brigade has managed to get to Diego Garcia while the second brigade is still preparing in San Diego. The 5th MAB and 1st MAF are also assembling in CONUS2:



The attentive observer notices that for the first time mobilization cards with numbers in the green circles have been played (thus far a total of seven for the Soviet Faction and five for the US Faction). These are Victory Cost points that mainly represent the mobilization of resources that are actually intended to be used for something else (e.g. to attack or defend in Europe).

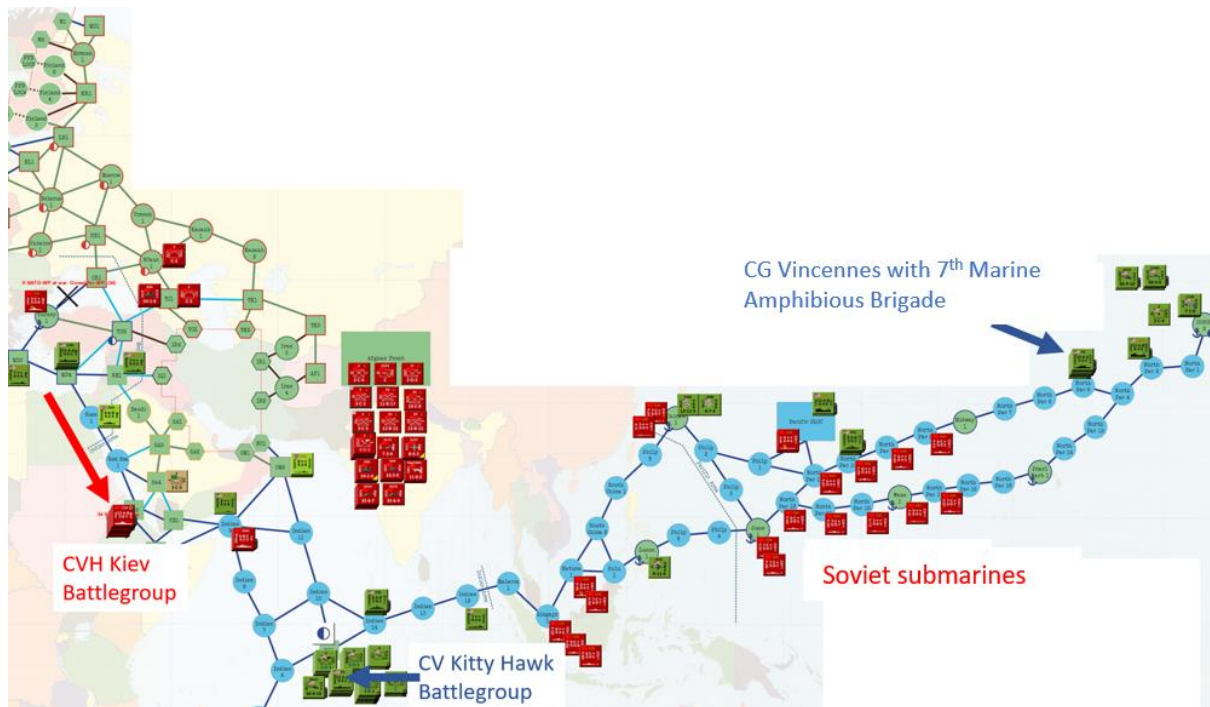
At the end of the scenario, "spent" Victory Cost Points are converted into Victory Points for the opponent. How many Victory Points a Victory Cost point is worth depends upon whether the Soviet player decided to invade Europe (Operation Ladoga) or not. And at the current moment in time only the Soviet player knows if the invasion of Europe will actually take place or not. Hence, this creates uncertainty and anxiety for the US player when choosing which units (cards) to mobilize. If the American chooses to allocate units that were intended for Europe's defence to the Persian Gulf and it then turns out that Operation Ladoga actually happens, there will be many Victory Points gained by the Soviet Faction. A clever, stylish and fun game mechanism.

At sea, the group led by CV Constellation has abandoned its position off Oman and sailed into the Persian Gulf. A swarm of Soviet submarines has taken up position right in the Strait of Hormuz:



Out on the high seas, the Kiev group has left the Mediterranean and joined the Soviet cargo ships that left Crimea some days ago. The recently activated Soviet submarines have taken up positions in the Pacific Ocean and along the coast off Singapore.

On the imperialist side, CV Kitty Hawk together with escort is near Diego Garcia waiting for orders. The group led by CG Vincennes is heading west from San Diego. In addition, various frigates, destroyers, cargo ships and submarines are on their way hither and thither across the Pacific Ocean:



Turn 8, 26-27 June, 1985

Day B! Operation Baikal launches as planned on June 26th. Premier concrete-comrade Gromyko gives a suitably pompous speech that concludes with the USSR declaring war on Iran, threats to US partners in the region of a good spanking if they intervene, and that everything is the fault of the Western imperialists. This is followed by powerful renditions of the Soviet national anthem and the International.

The immediate political consequence of the declaration of war is that the Tension Level rises by two levels from six to eight. Beyond that the speech seems to have had the desired effect. Only the UAE and Qatar are expressing any form of extended support for the US Faction (Their Commitment Levels to the US Faction increase from "1" to "2"). Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia remain passive (all roll higher than "10" on a d20 on the Commitment Level check that the declaration of war triggered). In addition, Iran continues to not answer the phone (they rolled over "15" on their Commitment Level check). The only disappointment for Andrey G. was that Iraq does not express a change to its relationship with the Soviet Faction (Iraq also rolled higher than "10" on their Commitment Level check).

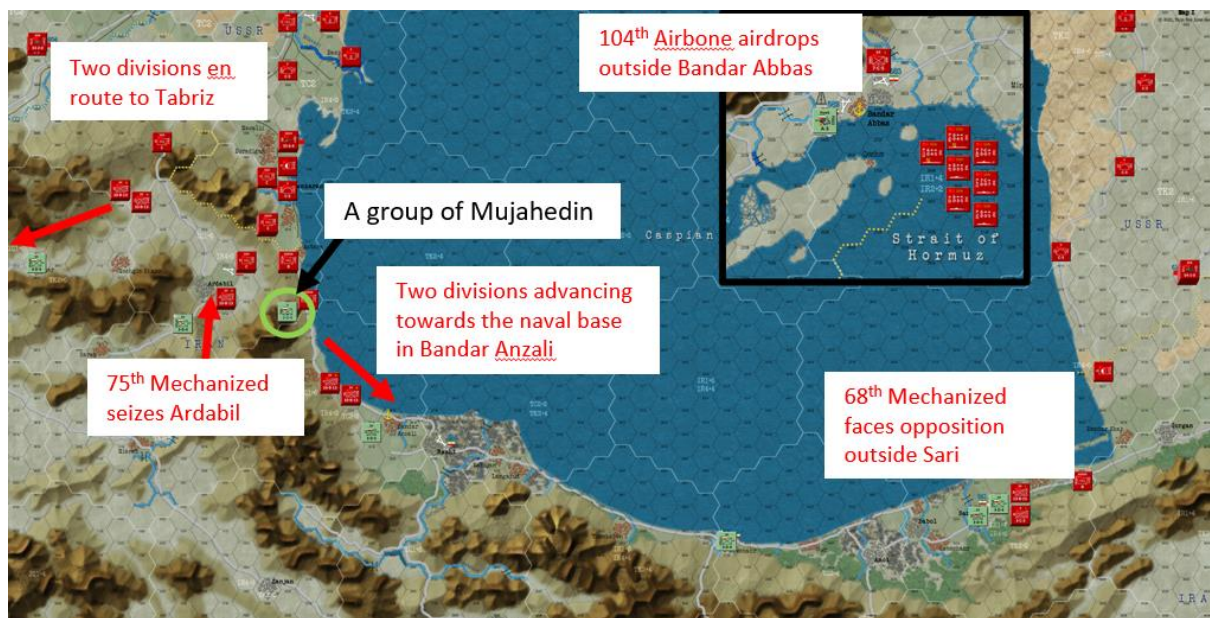
So, all in all we now have three ongoing wars: Iran vs Iraq, Soviet vs Mujahideen in Afghanistan, and Iran vs Soviet Faction. At this time the Soviet player has his big opportunity: while Iran is up against both the Soviets and Iraq it is critical for the Soviet Faction to secure as many Victory Points (cities, ports, oil fields, etc) as possible before the US Faction player can use his military resources to stop the communist advance (the Soviet Faction and the US Faction aren't at war yet). With the low level of commitment of the Gulf countries (and especially Iran) to the US Faction, things are looking very bright for the Soviets:



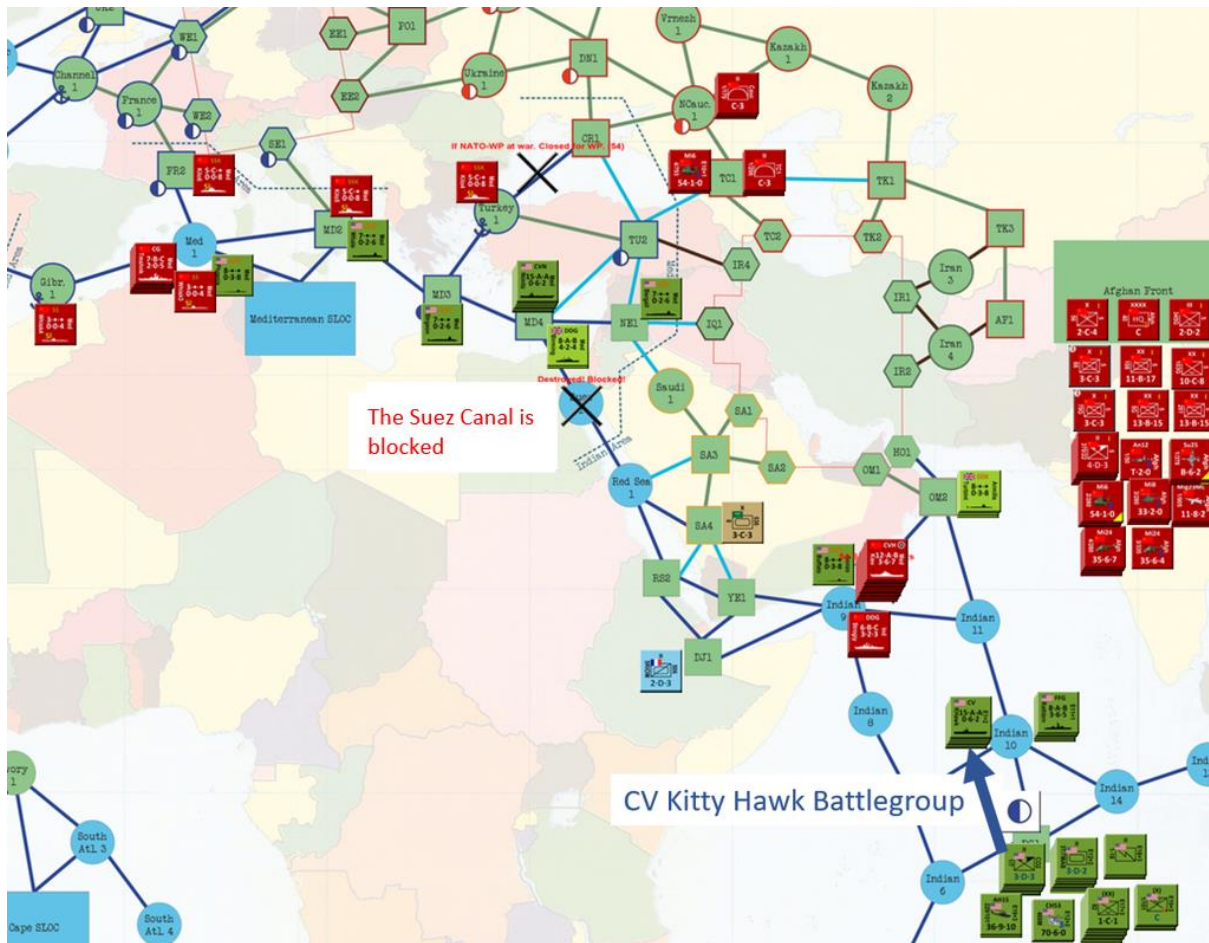
But they are still met by a wall of cold shoulders! Both attempts fail and now there is a real crisis for the US Faction player.

In parallel to the above, the first Soviet units roll across the border into Iran. Basically everything progresses smoothly, except that they encounter meaningful Iranian resistance outside Sari southeast of the Caspian Sea. Seriously troubling for the US Faction is that a division of Soviet paratroopers (104th) lands outside Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf.

A minor event that nevertheless causes severe eye-twitching for the Soviet commanders is the appearance of a group of Mujahideen in the mountains behind two Soviet divisions advancing towards Bandar Anzali:



Since the Soviet and US Factions are not yet at war, things are plodding along as usual on the high seas. The only new item worth noting is that CV Kitty Hawk Battlegroup has left Diego Garcia and set course for the Persian Gulf.



Turn 9, 28-29 June, 1985

Satisfied with the situation, the Soviet Faction does not see the need to activate more units, but they want to see more cooperation from Saddam, so they send yet more weapons to Iraq:

E51. Arms Shipping to Iraq



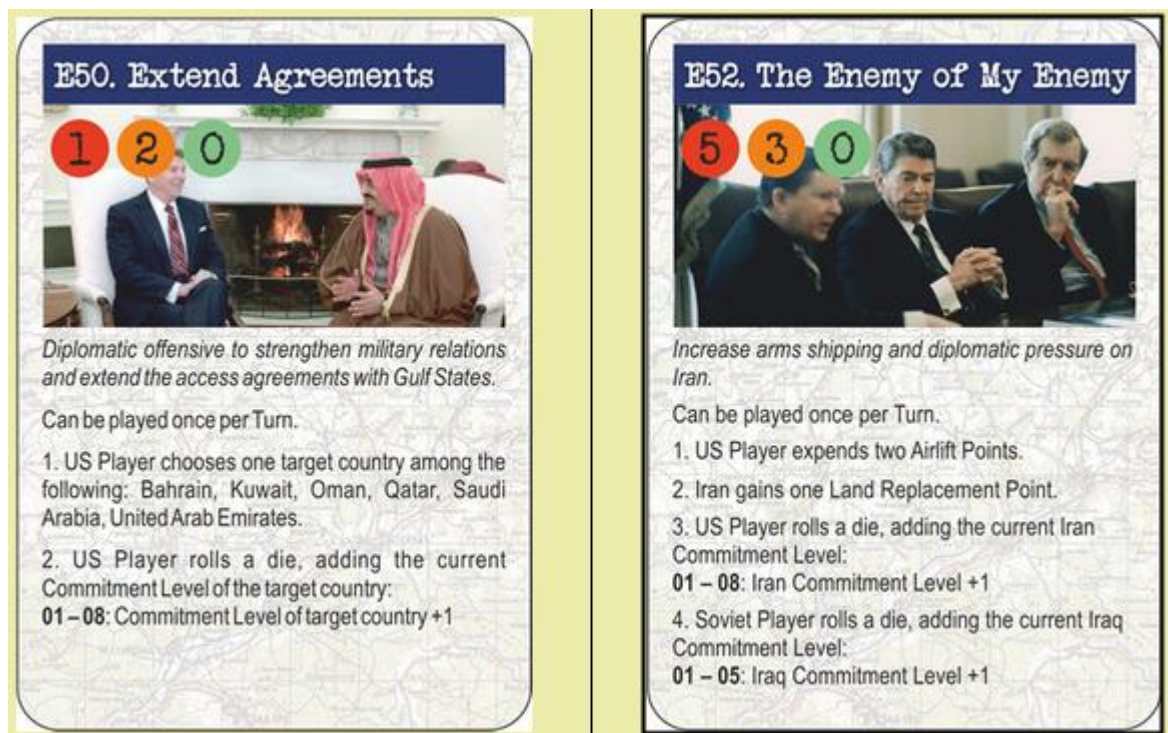
Increase arms shipping to Iraq.

1. Four IL-76 steps are removed from map and return as reinforcement in 5 Turns, in any valid Base with a TC1 or TK1 LOC Code.
2. Iraq receives 1 Air Replacement Point and 1 Ground Replacement Point.
3. Soviet Player rolls a die, adding the current Iraq Commitment Level:
01 – 08: Iraq Commitment Level +1

Saddam is less impressed this time and rolls "13" thus there is no increase in Iraq's Commitment. Gromyko considers this to be very poor form. The US Faction once again consults the Tension Table and this time they roll "14" so they receive nine Tension Points and the Tension Level is increased by one step to "10" – a significant development!

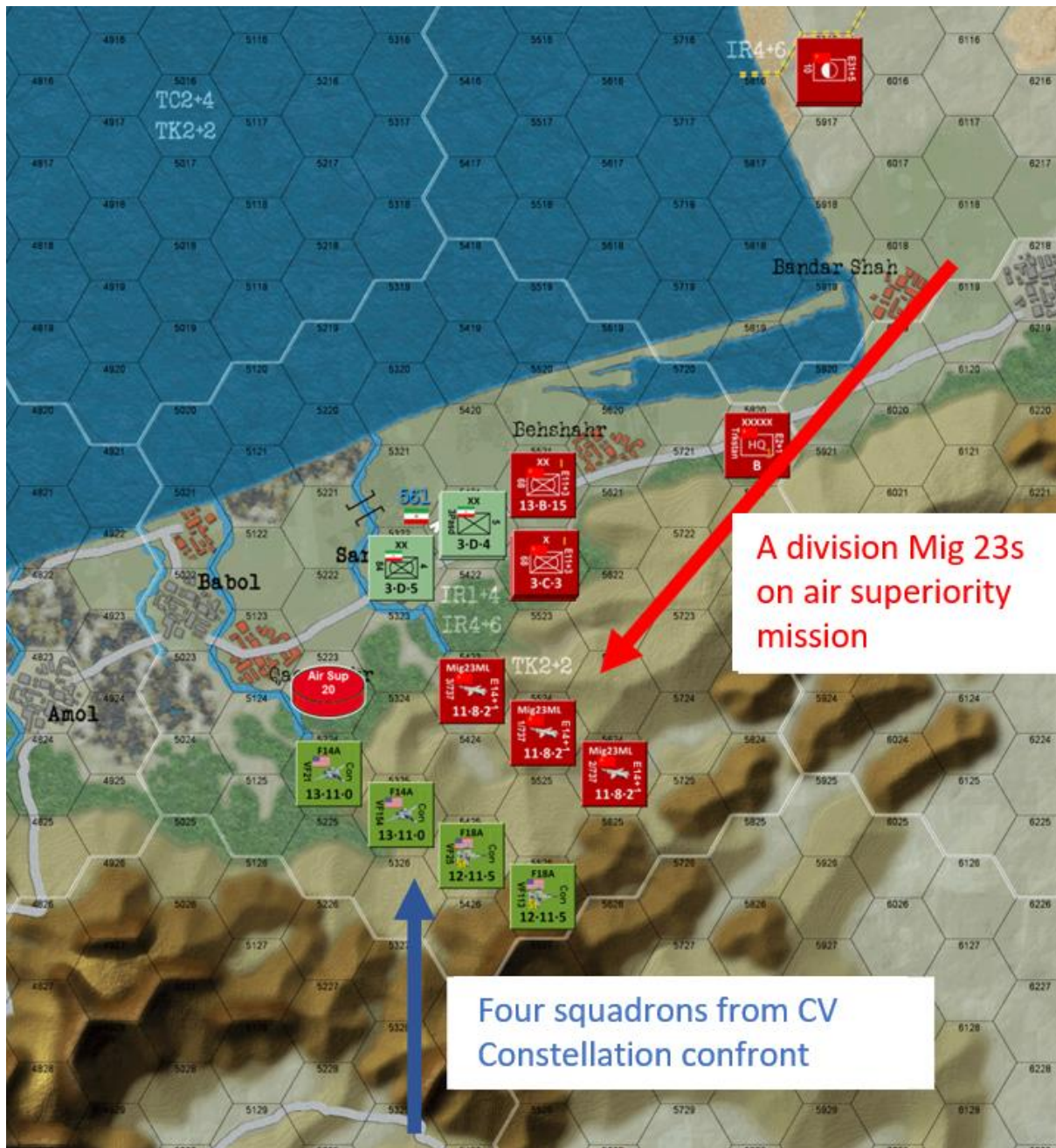
When the Tension Level reaches "10", it triggers a rule ("Casus Belli") that represents the desperation of the US Factions to defend their interests in the region. Somewhat simplified, this means that the US Faction can commence a chicken race against the Soviet Faction by challenging the Soviet Air Force in battles for air supremacy, confronting other types of Soviet air operations, or by firing anti-aircraft missiles at Soviet aircraft and helicopters. If a single Ivan in a Soviet plane or helicopter responds to such a provocation, or fails to avoid anti-aircraft fire, war breaks out between the Soviet and US Factions. Thus, the US player can then finally actively try to stop the Soviet units that are currently chasing easy Victory Points in Iran.

Hence, in order to gain access to local bases and Iranian airspace, US Faction is playing its key diplomatic cards again:



First, Reagan travels to Riyadh with his usual dog and pony show, but yet again without success. On his way home in Air Force One, he makes one final attempt to reach Khomeini – and this time the ayatollah finally answers! Khomeini is in very good spirits as he managed to par the difficult seventh hole during his morning round, so he responds positively to Reagan's approach thereby raising Iran's Commitment Level to "1". Finally the US Faction has access to Iranian airspace! Dizzy by the joy of this success, no one notices Saddam increasing Iraq's Commitment Level towards Soviet Faction to "3", which among other things enables the Soviets to use Iraqi air bases for offensive missions. Great behaviour, Gromyko muses.

With their newfound opportunities, the Americans immediately swing into action: consequently, a group of Mig 23s on a mission over Babol and Sari are caught by surprise when they run into American aircraft:



One of the Soviet pilots cannot keep his cool and a scuffle ensues. Hence, the Soviet Faction and US the Faction are now at war with each other and the US declares DEFCON 1.

The immediate political consequences are that the Tension Level is raised by five notches to 15. Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are all raising their Commitment Level to the US Faction by one step to level "3":

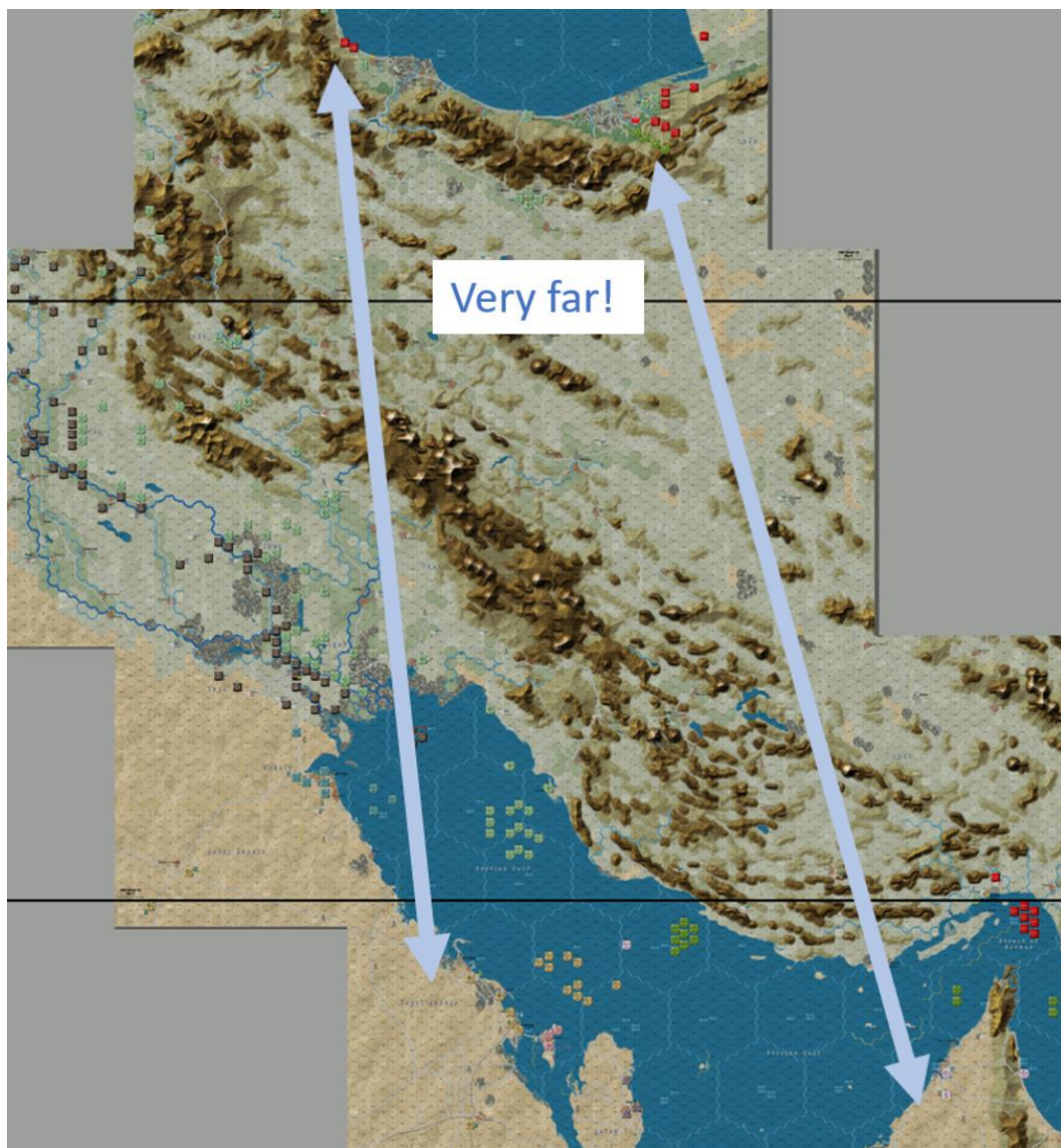
Commitment Track				
00	01	02	03	04

Alright. As the parties to the game finally are at war with each other the playthrough ends. Note that the current ongoing wars are the old favourites Soviet-Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, plus the newcomers

Soviet-Iran, Soviet Faction - US Faction (USA, UK, France). Remember that it is only when a country/organization reaches Commitment level "4" that they join an ongoing war. So, for example, NATO and WP are still not involved in any of the ongoing wars.

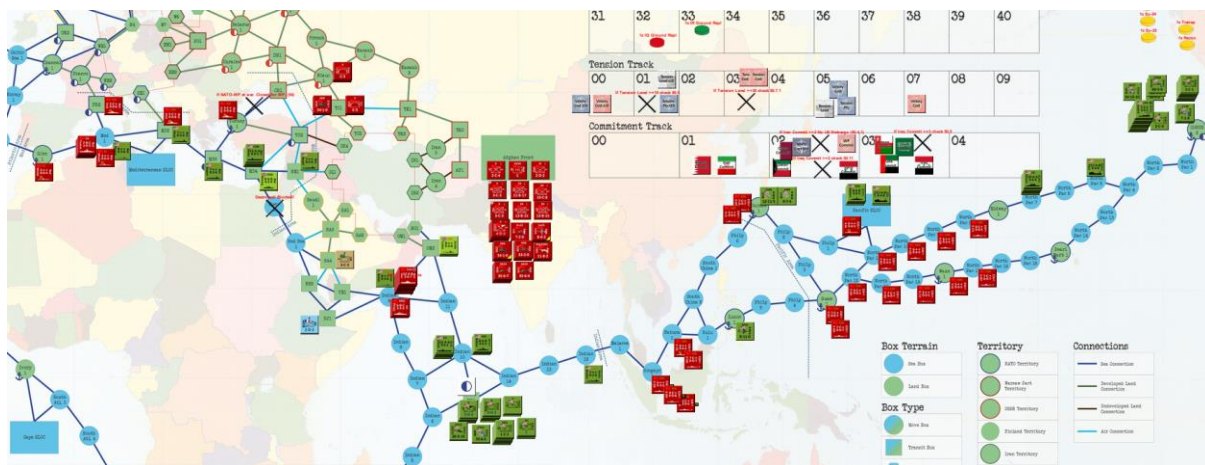
Technically, not much changes by the fact that war broke out between the Soviet Union and the US Faction. Each turn, the parties continue to have the opportunity to mobilize additional resources and engage in diplomacy. Players continue to keep track of the Tension Cost and Tension Level. The only difference is that the US player does not have to "pay" Tension Points to play cards, though the cards that the parties play continue to affect Victory Points. Hence, the sides cannot mindlessly play cards without having to reflect on consequences.

The US Faction now has a heck of a challenge to stop the advance of the Soviets. Admittedly, in theory, they have access to bases in Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE as those countries have Commitment level "3" to the US Faction, but most of those bases are small and they are far from the Iran/Soviet front. In addition, each base must be customized for the US Faction's air use (by spending Supply Points) before the bases can be used for offensive missions. In other words, the US Faction is extremely dependent on its aircraft carrier groups for the time being.



Even worse for US Faction is Iran's pathetically low Commitment Level. At the current level ("1"), although the Great Satan is allowed to use Iran's airspace, the US player does not have access to Iran bases and is not allowed to land ground troops. It is only at Commitment Level ("3") that US Faction can place ground units inside Iran.

Another challenge is supply. NATO units cannot use supply sources from partner countries and must establish supply lines from Diego Garcia. In step one, this will be required for bases used in Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE – and in step two when/if NATO ground troops make it to Iran. Supply must therefore be delivered by sea or air. In the long run, the US Faction does not have enough resources to supply more than a few units in Iran via air, thus they must also establish access to a relevant Iranian port (or two) and then set up convoys from Diego Garcia to those ports. These cargo ships must then be protected from the swarms of Soviet submarines that will try to make life miserable for the convoys. Phew.



For the Soviet Faction's part, it is important to keep pushing forward as long as the US Faction has the above challenges. A pebble in the shoe for the Soviets is the war in Afghanistan, but as long as the Soviets do not have to redirect resources from Afghanistan to Iran, they will probably succeed in keeping the Mujahideen in check. In the end, the US player will figure out that there will be no Operation Ladoga (invasion of Europe) and be able to redirect resources from there to the Persian Gulf, but at that point the Soviets will also be able to do the same. In short, it looks promising for the defenders of socialism, and the last update from the Kremlin was the State Emergency Committee had created a vodka-oozing conga line that merrily skipped through the corridors.

A rather intricate but phenomenally well-designed campaign scenario with a really fun and exciting mobilization mechanism.



Strait to Hell.

1985: Sacred Oil

1985 Module 3 - The Persian Gulf

Game Design: Fabrizio Vianello

Game Development: Fabrizio Vianello, Anthony Morphet

Graphic Design: Fabrizio Vianello

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