

After Action Report USN Rolling Thunder Campaign Size - Medium

ROLLING THUNDER USN - 1967

OVERVIEW
The Rolling Thunder air offensive was based on the idea of "gradualism." Lesser targets were attacked while holding more important targets "hostage" against attack to bring North Vietnam to the negotiating table.

CAMPAIGNS
Short: 4 Days, 4 SO
Medium: 7 Days, 9 SO
Long: 11 Days, 18 SO

WEAPONS

Weapon	SO
AIM-7 Sparrow	0
AIM-9 Sidewinder	0
Gun Pod	0
Mk.82 Iron Bomb	0
Mk.84 Iron Bomb	0
AGM-12 Bullpup	0
AGM-45 Shrike	0
AGM-62 Walleye	1
CBU	0
BLU-1	0
Rocket Pod	0
GBU-10 Smart Bomb	1
GBU-12 Smart Bomb	1
ECM Pod	1

AIRCRAFT
Gain 1 Pilot Skill upgrade for each A-4 Skyhawk or F-8 Crusader selected.

Recon Start
2 3 3 3 3 4 4

Intel Start
No Change No Change No Change -1 Center Bandit -1 Center Site -1 Center Bandit -1 Bandit or Site -1 Bandit and Site

Politics Start
3 3 2 2 2 1 1 1 0

Phantom Leader

Card Display Sheet

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

PRE-FLIGHT

- 1) Draw Target card(s)
- 2) Select Target and Move Politics counter
- 3) Determine Sites Present
- 4) Assign Pilots
- 5) Arm Aircraft

TARGET-BOUND FLIGHT

- 6) Draw Target-Bound Event card
- 7) Place Aircraft in Pre-Approach Area(s) of Tactical Display
- 8) Determine Bandits Present
- 9) Draw Over Target Event card
- 10) Place Turn counter in "1" box

OVER TARGET (4 TIMES)

- 11) Jettison Decision
- 12) Fast Pilots Attack
- 13) Sites and Bandits Attack
 - One Pilot may Suppress
 - Pilot under attack may use Evasion
- 14) Slow Pilots Attack
- 15) Aircraft Move and Adjust Altitude
- 16) Bandits Move
- 17) Advance Turn counter

HOME-BOUND FLIGHT

- 18) Draw Home-Bound Event card
- 19) Roll for SAR results (if needed)

DEBRIEFING

- 20) Record Outcome, Victory Points, Adjust Recon and Intel
- 21) Add Target card Stress to Pilots
- 22) Pilot Stress Recovery (all Pilots)
- 23) Move Politics counter 1 to the left
- 24) Record Pilot Experience and Stress

I've decided to play a USN Rolling Thunder Campaign.

I check my Campaign types and choose a Medium sized Campaign. This gives me 7 days (7 Missions) and 9 Special Option points.

I need to choose my Squadron of 12 Aircraft / Pilots.

I get 1 Newbie, 2 Green, 6 Average, 2 Skilled and 1 Veteran.

I choose:

- | | | |
|----------|------------|-------------------------|
| Newbie: | Tiger 02 | A-4 Skyhawk = +1 Skill |
| Green: | Bronco 05 | F-8 Crusader = +1 Skill |
| Green: | Georgia 01 | A-4 Skyhawk = +1 Skill |
| Average: | Bronco 06 | F-8 Crusader = +1 Skill |
| Average: | Utah 01 | F-4 Phantom II |
| Average: | Hazel 11 | F-4 Phantom II |
| Average: | Hazel 12 | F-4 Phantom II |
| Average: | Tiger 01 | A-4 Skyhawk = +1 Skill |
| Average: | Georgia 02 | A-4 Skyhawk = +1 Skill |
| Skilled: | Utah 05 | F-4 Phantom II |
| Skilled: | Cougar 01 | EA-6A Electric Intruder |
| Veteran: | Condor 05 | F-4 Phantom II |

Several of the Aircraft are inferior to the F-4 Phantom. Choosing 1 of these Aircraft allows me to increase any one pilot up one Skill level. I choose to increase:

- Utah 01 from Average to Skilled
- Hazel 12 from Average to Skilled
- Tiger 01 From Average to Skilled
- Georgia 01 from Average to Skilled
- Cougar 01 from Skilled to Veteran
- and Condor 05 from Veteran to Ace

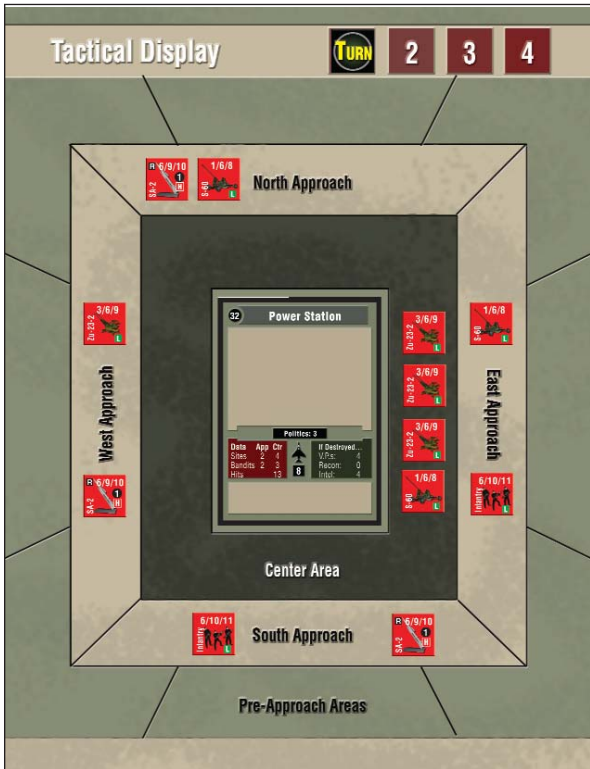


Pre-Flight

Checking the Sequence of Play on the Card Display Sheet, I now draw 2 Target cards. I draw #13 - VC Stronghold and #32 - Power Station.

I'd like to get this Campaign started with a large success so my Recon and Intel do the most good, so I choose the Power Station.

It's a risky decision, because the Politics counter will immediately move by 3 to the right just for choosing the Target. That means next turn I will only be able to choose a Target with a Political value of 2 or less.



Once I have selected my Target, I determine sites present.

I'm going to be swamped with sites.

The good news is that most of them will leave me alone as long as I stay at High Altitude.

The bad news is that I have to hit the target 13 times and very few of my munitions are accurate at High Altitude.

I'm going to have to arm my aircraft for a Low Altitude dive over the Target, with enough extra munitions to either destroy the sites or use them for suppression.

As a bonus challenge, the Target is way up North in Route Pack 6B, with a Weight Point penalty of -2.

Now it's time to Assign Pilots, then Arm the Aircraft.

Aircraft	(after penalty)	Speed	Weight Points Load for Mission
Hazel 12	4	Fast	4 AIM-9s
Condor 05	4	Fast	AIM-9, AIM-9, Aim 7, Aim 7
Bronco 05	2	Slow	AIM-9, AIM-9
Tiger 01	2	Fast	AGM 45, CBU
Cougar 01	4	Fast	AGM 45, AGM 45, AGM 45, AGM 45
Utah 05	4	Fast	Mk. 82, Mk. 84, CBU
Utah 01	4	Fast	Mk. 82, Mk. 84, CBU
Hazel 11	4	Slow	Mk. 82, CBU, GBU 10 (Special Options Point)



Target-Bound Flight

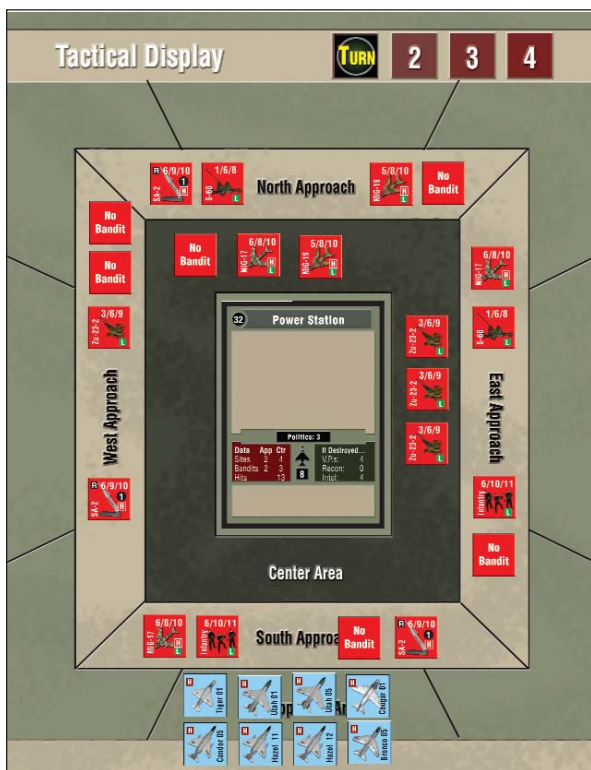
I now draw a Target-Bound Event card from the Card Display Sheet and read the Top section. I draw:

AC-47 "Spooky" Pre-Strike: Destroy any 1 Site.

I Choose to destroy the S-60 in the Center Area. I need to get rid of as many problems that will be shooting at me over the Target as possible.

After the Target-Bound Event card, I place my Aircraft in the Pre-Approach Area or Areas of the Tactical Display.

I choose to place them all in the South Pre-Approach. I usually break my Aircraft into smaller groups and fly toward the Target from different directions so they can take out as many Sites and Bandits as possible along the way (especially Sites with a Range of 1). But this time I have the advantage of having Cougar 01 in the squadron, who gives all enemy rolls targeting the Area he is in a -1 penalty. Every Aircraft in the Squadron can benefit from this as long as they are together. All Aircraft start at High Altitude.



After placing my Aircraft in the south Pre-Approach area, I determine Bandits present. There are quite a few possible Bandits, but luckily several draws were No Bandits so that helps.



I then Draw an Over-Target Event card and read the Middle section. I draw:

Important Target: Sites gain +2 on die rolls Over Target.

Delightful, I have even more problems over the Target. This is going to be a very challenging Target.

I place the Turn Counter in the #1 Box on the Tactical Display Sheet and get ready to Fly.

Over Target

Turn 1

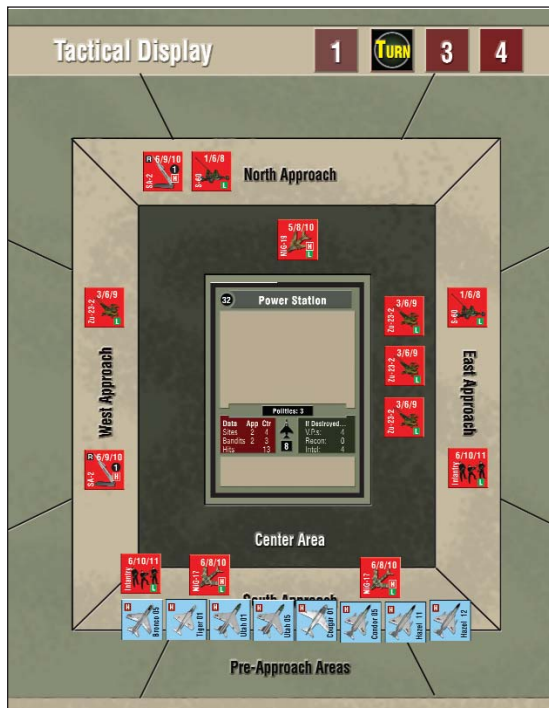
I choose not to Jettison any of my munitions and get right to attacking with my Fast Pilots.

Hazel 12 attacks the MiG-17 in the South Approach with 2 AIM-9 missiles, Hitting and destroying the MiG. Condor 05 attacks the MiG 19 in the Center Area with two AIM-7 missiles, also Hitting. So far, so good. Cougar attacks an SA-2 in the South Approach with an AGM 45 and Hits.

There is nothing around to attack the Squadron, so the Aircraft all head into the South Approach area, followed by two MiG-17s. Also, a Mig 19 drops into the Center Area from the north.

I advance the Turn Counter.

Turn 2



At the start of Turn 2, I'm nose to nose with two MiG-17s, and I am in range with an SA-2 from the west. I'm going to leave the SA-2 to Cougar 01 and focus the rest of my efforts on those MiGs.

Hazel 12 fires off an AIM-9 at a MiG-17 in the South Approach, but misses. Condor 05 then fires an AIM-9 at the same MiG and hits. Cougar 01 sends an AGM 45 toward the SA-2 in the west and hits. Tiger 01 fires at the other Mig-17 using a Gun attack, but misses. Utah 05 and Utah 01 also try to Gun attack the MiG but miss.

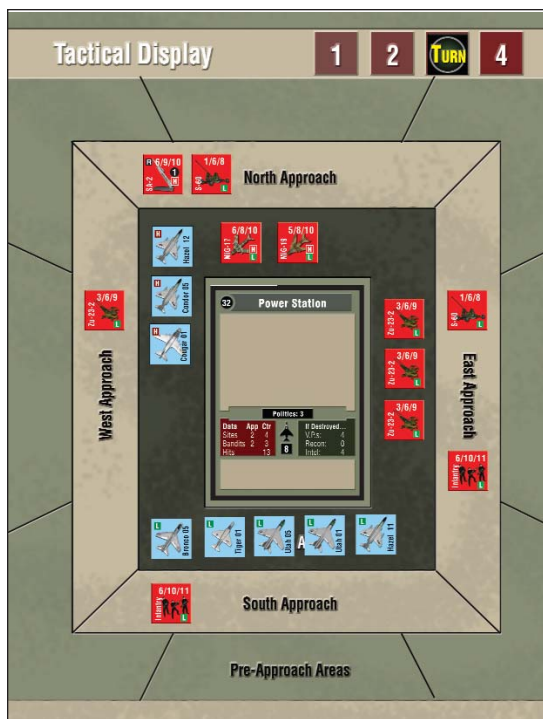
The MiG-17 then fires back, targeting Hazel 12. Bronco 05 sends an AIM-9 at the MiG for suppression, but misses. Hazel decides to Evade, costing him 2 Stress. The MiG-17 misses, thanks to the Evasion and Cougar 01's '-1 from enemy rolls' ability.

The slow pilots are now able to attack. Bronco 05 sends another AIM-9 at that same MiG-17 but misses again. Hazel also tries to strafe the MiG but also misses.

The team now moves into the Center Area and several of them change Altitude. Hazel 12, Condor 05, Cougar 01 stay at High Altitude. Bronco 05, Tiger 01, Utah 05, Utah 01, and Hazel 11 dive down to Low Altitude.

The MiG-17 moves into the Center Area.

Turn 3



At the start of Turn 3, I have two MiGs to deal with, my High Altitude Aircraft are now in range with an SA-2 in the North and my Low Altitude Aircraft are now in range with three Sites over the Center Area. AND, if I don't Hit the Target 13 times, my efforts will be for nothing.

Hazel 12 attacks the MiG 19 in the Center Area with an AIM-9 and Hits. Condor 05 misses the MiG-17 with an AIM-9. Cougar 01 misses the SA-2 in the north but Tiger 1 Hits it with an AGM 45. Utah 05 successfully drops a CBU on a Z-23-2 in the Center Area, and Utah 01 takes out another Center Area Z-23-2 by dropping both a CBU and a Mk82 on it.

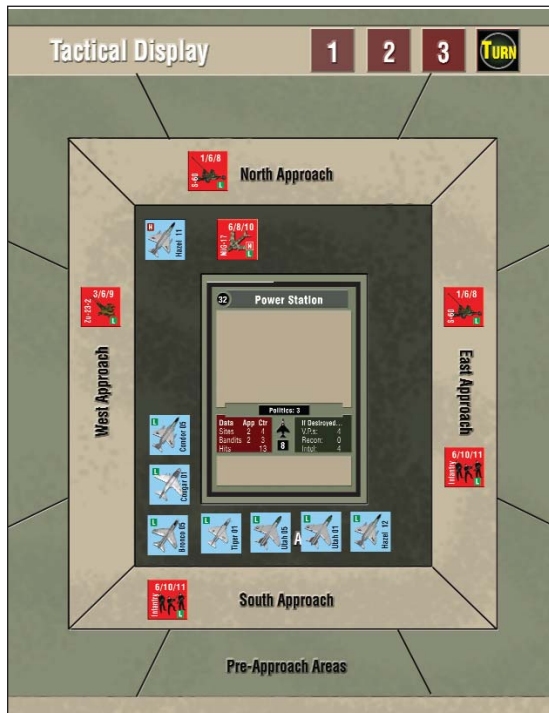
The remaining MiG-17 targets Condor 05. Condor 05 Evades but rolls a 6 and an 8, allowing him to take the lowest roll. Six would normally give him a Stress Hit, but because of Cougar 01's special note of -1 from enemy rolls Condor 05 is missed. The Zu-23-2 targets Tiger 01 who Suppresses with a CBU.

Hazel 11 targets a Zu-23-2 with a CBU and Hits.

All of my pilots move down to Low Altitude except Hazel 11, who climbs to High Altitude.

Great round, I have a pretty clear area for all my bombing next turn. If I can just avoid the MiG-17 I should be on my way home soon with a group of healthy pilots.

Turn 4



At the start of Turn 4 I unfortunately realize that I have been so careful about staying safe that I've used most of my munitions before actually attacking the Target. That's not good.

My current Munition load is:

Aircraft	Weight Points (after penalty)	Speed	Load for Mission
Hazel 12	4	Fast	-
Condor 05	4	Fast	-
Bronco 05	2	Slow	-
Tiger 01	2	Fast	-
Cougar 01	4	Fast	AGM 45
Utah 05	4	Fast	Mk. 82, Mk. 84
Utah 01	4	Fast	Mk. 84
Hazel 11	4	Slow	Mk. 82, GBU 10 (Special Options Point)

Well, I guess that's why we practice strafing. I start off with Utah 05 dropping both his Mk. 82 (rolling a 10) and Mk.84 (rolling an 8), Hitting with both for a total of 5 Hits. Great start! Then Utah 01 jumps in with a Mk. 84 (rolling 6) for another Hit. Hazel 12 tries to Strafe but misses, and Condor 05 Strafes and Hits.

The MiG-17 targets Utah 05 who goes Evasive and is missed.

The Slow pilots jump in with Bronco missing a Strafing run. Finally, Hazel 11 drops his Special Options point GBU-10 on the Target for 3 Hits.

I take a big breath, tally up my damage and realize that I have failed! I only hit the target 10 times, not 13. Arggg!

Out of fuel, we head home, shoulders sagging.

A bit of good news comes on the way home when we draw our Home-Bound Event. We get Domestic Issues: +1 Target card next mission.

The Mission Outcome was a Failure.

Our Victory Points = Zero

Our Recon and Intel Adjustments = Zero.

And, we're full of stress.

I fill in my Player Log to show this mission's information:



• Player Log •

Campaign: *Rolling Thunder - USN*

Length: *7 Missions*

Mission

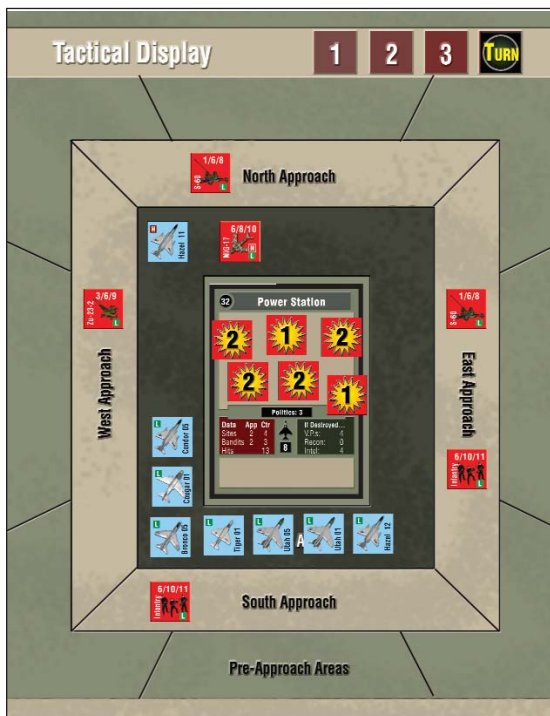
Special Options:

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	#13
----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Target #												
----------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Pilots	XP.	XP's Gained	Cool	32													
<i>Tiger 02</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>													
<i>Bronco 05</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>													
<i>Georgia 01</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>													
<i>Bronco 06</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>													
<i>Hazel 11</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>													
<i>Utah 01</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>													
<i>Hazel 12</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5</i>													
<i>Tiger 01</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>													
<i>Georgia 02</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>													
<i>Utah 05</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5</i>													
<i>Cougar 01</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>													
<i>Condor 05</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>													
Special Option Points Starting				<i>9</i>													
Special Option Points Used				<i>1</i>													
Special Option Points Remaining				<i>8</i>													
Target Status (X = Destroyed, O = Operational)				<i>0</i>													
Victory Points Earned				<i>0</i>													

Campaign Notes:



Clearly, I could have done a few things better.

While looking back over my mission, I notice that I spent way too much time and too many resources clearing out the Sites over the Target.

If I had dropped the majority of my bombs on the 3rd Turn when I first came over target, and only dedicated 1 pilot to taking out 1 Site, I would still have only taken 2 Site attacks.

Those attacks might have hurt me, or at least Stressed me as I Evaded, but it wouldn't have mattered as much, because I would have already dropped my bombs and "Succeeded" with my mission. It would have helped all the pilots who went on this mission and all the Pilots who did not, by adjusting my Tracks for future Missions.

Next time, I'll focus more on the Target and I'll treat the Sites and Bandits as the distractions they were put there to be.