TaskForce

COLLABORATORS			
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ACTION	*NAME*	*DATE*	*SIGNATURE*
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Chapter 1

TaskForce

1.1 TaskForce Gamer's Manual

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                TaskForce V0.31 (25.12.98)
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1.2 What is TaskForce?

TaskForce is a strategy game in the tradition of Laser Squad, Act of
War, or Jagged Alliance. If you aren't familiar with any of these,
just imagine a bunch of mercenaries packed with some mean equipment,
operating in enemy territory.

In TaskForce you take control of such a group of soldiers and try to
accomplish certain objectives by wise employment of your powers.
Your opponent will be either the computer, another human player,
or time itself.

A special feature of TaskForce is the mission editor included in the

archive. This way you can easily design your own maps and define
individual mission objectives.

1.3 Distribution and Disclaimer

                        TaskForce is Mailware. If you like the game, you should feel ←
                            obliged
to send
                    me
                     a short notice, by either email or snailmail.
You may copy and use TaskForce for free, but I retain the copyright
for all files included in this archive, unless otherwise noted.

TaskForce may be redistributed for non-commercial purposes provided
no changes are made to the archive.

DISCLAIMER:
USE OF THIS PROGRAM IS ENTIRELY AT YOUR OWN RISK. THE AUTHOR CANNOT
BE HELD LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CAUSED BY USE
OR MISUSE OF FILES IN THIS DISTRIBUTION.

This program makes use of the ReqTools package which is
©1991–1994 Nico François, 1995–1997 Magnus Holmgren.

TaskForce and all related files are ©1997–1998 Jens Granseuer.

1.4 Requirements

To run TaskForce you need any Amiga model with at least
Kickstart 2.04 and about 0.5 MB of free RAM.

reqtools.library V38 or higher must be installed on your system.
The library is included in this archive.

amigaguide.library is optional, but required to view mission
briefings from within the game.

To make use of the install script you must have Commodore's
Installer utility, which is part of your workbench since
release 2.04.

1.5 Installation

To install TaskForce to your harddisk, simply execute the install
script provided with this archive.

If you want to install the required files manually, copy the
TaskForce directory to the place of your choice and reqtools.library
to LIBS:. That's it. Simple.

1.6   How to play

On the options screen you can enter the players' names and select ←
your
preferred
difficulty
level and the mission you want to set out on.
Before playing a mission, you should have read the briefing so you
know what you are expected to do.
A checkmark or a cross in front of the team name gadgets indicate
whether the team will be controlled by a human player or the computer.
After having accepted the settings, you will find yourself right on the
playground.

Apart from the main playing area, there are three others of some
importance to you and your troops. To the right you see a list of all
mercenaries under your control. The colour they are printed in tells
you about their current condition. Black means everything is alright,
while blue indicates minor injuries, yellow critical health and red
unconsciousness. Injured units have their AP decreased by 20%,
critically wounded by 40%.
The small area below contains more specific information on the
currently selected
character
, like hit points or weapon.

Below the status bar is a small map of the area of operations and a
number of buttons. Pressing the left mouse button on a spot of the map
will take you to the selected part. All mercenaries under your control
are represented by yellow dots, while all enemy and neutral characters
are displayed red. You better make sure that it's really an enemy
before you take out a target.

At the bottom of the screen important messages will be displayed.

Your characters are controlled either by keyboard, by mouse or by a
combination of both. To command a mercenary, he must be selected. This
is indicated by a red cursor drawn around him. To deselect him simply
press space or click the left mouse button on his image. Do the same
to select him again.

For most actions in TaskForce action points (AP) are required. If a
character has no AP left, he can't do anything. AP are regained at the
beginning of a new turn.

You move your characters using the number pad or the mouse. If you want
to move using the mouse you must guide your characters one step after
another, as there is no pathfinding for player characters, yet. Any
kind of movement costs 1 AP.

Pressing 'i' or the upmost gadget next to the overview map will
bring up the inventory. Here you can pick up and drop objects, inspect
items you found, and use certain items much like on the map screen
itself. Some items may not be used on the inventory screen, though.
You can also equip another weapon or armour here.
Below the status bars of the unit's stats small icons may appear to

indicate special characteristics (invisibility and regeneration).

If you have a gun equipped as your current weapon, you can enter firing
mode by pressing 's' or the second to top button. Move the cursor over
a target and press '5' or the left mouse button to release a shot
(costs 2 AP).
Some objects may be operated (doors or computers, for example). This
action is also used to talk to other characters. In TaskForce there are
no real coversations, but you may provoke some reaction from that
character (o or third button).
The fourth button (n) will select the next of your mercenaries, and
the last (e) will end your turn.

All actions can also be accessed by pulldown menus (Action menu).

Certain items you may find have special abilities. You usually use (u)
these
                    items
                     (2 AP). This is possible on and outside of the inventory
screen. However, the latter is the only way to use items such as
Medkits on units other than the active one.
If you use items on the inventory screen, they will always be applied
to the item carrier.

There are two ways to engage another character in close combat. You can
either just try to walk onto the occupied square, or you can step up
next to him and then press 'a' (2 AP).

If you expect to be attacked you may set your soldier on guard (g).
This enables him to return fire if he is shot at during the next
turn. It is only possible to enter guard mode if the mercenary has at
least 4 AP left. This decision is final, that means, all his AP are
cleared and he can't act again until the beginning of your next turn.
If somebody shoots at him, he will return fire and, even better, if he
has got a higher Perception rating than the attacker, he will
shoot first!
Guarding won't help against thrown weapons, though.

If you are not in move mode and press 'i' you will get some more
information about the terrain or units beneath the cursor.

Clicking the mouse on one of the names from the units list will
activate that unit and, if neccessary, center the view on it.
If you hold down one of the <SHIFT>-keys while selecting one of the
names, you can rearrange the order of your units and thereby the
activation sequence.

A mission is considered complete if one of the players has scored 100
points. Points are awarded on reaching certain goals which are usually
described in the mission briefing.
If you play against a computer opponent, the mission is considered a
total failure if all of your mercenaries are killed. This is not
neccessarily the case in a two-player scenario.

1.7   Character Information

All characters you can control in TaskForce have some values that
represent skills and other aspects of their personality. These
values decide how well that character performs in a particular
situation when the skill is needed.

All skill values may range from 1 (worst) to 10 (best) and can be
inspected on the inventory screen ('i').

Strength is used to determine how much a character can carry
around with himself and how far he can throw items. The damage dealt
in close combat also depends on the strength value.

Firearms is a measure for the character's marksmanship. The
higher this value the better the odds to hit a target with a gun.

Close Combat is similar to the firearms skill, but defines the
chances to hit an opponent in close combat.

Perception has two main purposes in TaskForce. First, during a
mission a character may be required to make a Perception test. The
result of this test determines what happens then. You will not be
informed about such a test taking place, so if the character fails
you won't even know about it. Second, if a character is attacked
when in guard mode and he has a higher Perception rating than the
attacker, he may "return" fire first.

If a character has zero HP, one additional point of damage will
be inflicted each turn, and he will eventually die from his wounds
unless he regains some of his hit points.

1.8   Difficulty Settings

In TaskForce there are three different difficulty settings.

In Easy mode you will always see all of your enemies (except
for invisible ones, of course). This spoils a lot of the fun and is
only recommended for absolute beginners. Therefore Medium is the
default setting.

In Medium mode you will only be aware of enemies that enter your
line of sight. You never know what's waiting behind the next corner.
You should always try a mission on Medium or Hard level, and
only switch to the next lower setting if this proves too difficult for
you.

Hard players finally suffer from some malfunctioning of the eyes
and their perception radius is limited to fifteen squares.
What do you think you've got that seventh sense for?

The difficulty setting only affects human players. Computer-controlled
units always operate in Hard mode.

1.9 Special Items

Some items in TaskForce have special uses. These are:

* camouflage armour: Camouflage Armour makes a unit more
  difficult to hit if it's moving through appropriate terrain. Under
  different circumstances, like for example inside a building, it
  will expose the unit and increase the chances to be hit.
* crowbar: A crowbar can of course be used as a hand-to-hand weapon.
  What's more important, though, is that you'll be able to force
  jammed doors to open – if your soldier happens to be strong
  enough.
* data disk: Data disks are required in some missions to upload or
  download information to or from a computer system.
* explosive: A nasty and powerful weapon, explosives have to be primed
  before use. If you use them you are asked for a value to set the
  counter to. This value is given in turns, that means if you set it
  to 1 the fireworks will start at the end of your turn, 2, at the
  end of your opponent's turn, 3, at the end of your next turn, etc.
  Don't forget to drop them once you have set the timer!
* keycard: They are sometimes needed to open doors. If you carry the
  keycard when you try to open a door it is required for, it will
  automatically be used.
* medkit: Medkits can restore some of your lost HP. It is not
  possible to exceed your maximum HP value. No matter how many HP
  you regain, a medkit can only be used once.
* radio transmitter: With the help of radio transmitters you can call
  for air support. A plane will pull in and launch an attack on a
  target you selected, which may be anywhere on the map! The bombs
  are not as powerful as grenades and you should not expect clinical
  hits, so be careful and don't stand too close. Radio transmitters
  only have a limited power supply.
* steroids: If you take these, they will increase your available AP for
  a short time (until end of turn).
* thermal scanner: A thermal scanner will reveal the position of all
  "warmblooded" units within its range to you.

1.10 Credits

            The following people have contributed their time, work, and faith ←
              to
this project and their support has shaped TaskForce quite a lot.
Thanks all, and keep it going.

Missions

    Daniel Aufermann   –   Prison

Suggestions, bug reports, etc.

    Daniel Aufermann   Sebastian Bauer
    Gaelan Griffin   Robert Müller
    Dave Sealey

...and everyone else who sent me their comments.

If you feel you still need to know more
                read on
                .

1.11   Once upon a time...

The true history of TaskForce

This is for the eyes of those of you who always go straight down to
the roots of things. Now, I think that should have been enough of a
warning.

Actually, TaskForce started out as a test in November of 1997. The
days were getting shorter and I was expected to learn for my final
exams next spring, so I had to do something, right? I had been at
(serious) programming for exactly one year, and I thought it was
time to know what I was up to so I needed some kind of a large
project, a challenge. I settled on a game rather soon. There was
simply no application I could think of that I was lacking – or I
didn't have the knowledge of the Amiga internals (I'm still looking
for a decent system monitor, for example. Scout's rather nice, but
it's MUI...). I had picked up C from a book I had borrowed from the
local library and gathered some Amiga specific information from
examples I found on aminet and various other sources. A little later
I even got my hands on a copy of an Amiga C book. Of course it was
still about KS1.3 and I had already heard some indefinite rumours
about version 3.1 of the OS. I didn't really matter, though, because
the author of that book couldn't even tell the difference between
MEMF_ANY and MEMF_CLEAR. I'm sure you can see when all those bugs
began creeping in.

The fact that I was still working with the DICE freeware version was
somewhat hindering. It only supported small code and small data, so I
would have had to keep the executable down to 64k at maximum, and that
would have been quite a problem if you take into account that the
program is approximately twice that size now. Then vbcc appeared on
aminet and the world was bright from then on...

Well, almost. The most difficult issue, it turned out, was the
decision about what kind of game it should be. I'm very fond of
role playing games, but I didn't have a particularly original idea
for the story, so it had to be something else. (I still would like to
do an rpg sometime, though.) Next was the notion to produce a SimCity
clone, but this also didn't last very long. After that it was The
Settlers and I had already started to draw graphics when I realized
I'd have to make it turn based and there wouldn't be much left. Then
there was Battle Isle. That was a great game. I still play it
occasionally today. There wasn't too much to improve but nevertheless
I had some ideas about it, so I set out to produce a "new"
strategical.

I started drawing graphics again, and modified the already existing
code from the Settlers engine to fit the new needs. When I was ready

to display graphics I realized I didn't know how to mask bitmaps. I
thought I had understood what I needed by reading some usenet threads,
but it didn't work (I still don't know how to use BltTemplate() as
someone suggested there)! The only way to work around this was to use
square graphics. Battle Isle with "square hexes"? Nah! That wouldn't
be what I wanted. I had to find something else again, but I was
getting good at it (I had done it often enough, don't you think?) so
it didn't take too long to come up with an Act of War clone. Act of
War was a rather nice shareware game already, but its author stopped
its development even before I could register, and it was still
somewhat buggy and rather limited. So that was something to work on.

The first working title was TaskForce and it didn't really change
very much afterwards. I coaxed Daniel to help me with the graphics
as I had enough to do with the coding part. The exchange of those
graphics wasn't quite as easy because he doesn't have an Amiga himself
(there seems to be an awful lot of those people these days) and his
stupendous operating system kept altering the colours again and
again. He usually had to rework them on my computer.

The first "outsider" to ever get to know TaskForce was Robert. I had
been playing his games JdL and Silver for quite some time, and he had
talked me into writing a character editor for the latter before I had
started on TaskForce. I did it because I didn't have anything better
to do, and some time after I had taken up work on my own project he
also proposed that I take over the development of Silver. I believe
it's really got a lot of potential but I had my own baby now so I
turned down the offer. Of course he wanted to see my project then and
so I sent him a beta version. This turned out to be a mistake. Robert
has ever since come up with lots of ideas for improvements
(exorbitantly silly for the most part) and bug reports which usually
keep me from sleeping. Anyway, sometimes he seems to have flashes of
insight, I'll grant you, so it's usually not a good idea to discard
his mails on the first glance. And besides, he's one of the few
betatesters who can run Enforcer...

Finally, on 6th March, 1998, I thought myself ready for the first
public release on aminet. The release date had been delayed for a
number of times because everytime I was going to do a last check
before uploading I discovered another bug. This first official version
was released mainly for reasons of probing the support for such a game
out on aminet. I wanted to know whether it was worth all the time I
put in, whether anyone apart from myself was ever going to play it.
During the next week or so everything went the usual course, but then
there were the first reactions to the game. Among the first to answer
was Gaelan, who has ever since read me bedtime stories from the RKM's
and has helped me surmount some technical problems I couldn't get by
myself. Sometimes I strongly suspect he breeds bugs, though. He was
also the first who dared to openly insult me. He actually claimed that
my shotgun shells looked like beer bottles! Imagine! (Open to a
suggestion? Why don't you do the graphics? That would be less work for
Daniel and me, people would be laughing about you, and you had reasons
to insult yourself – or TaskForce might really look better, if nothing
else. Just for a change...)

About April I got a message telling me that TaskForce generated tons
of Enforcer hits. That was somewhat strange because none of the

betatesters had reported on this. A little bit of investigation
revealed that this only happened when mapping the display to a
CyberGraphX screen with a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels. Argghhh!
What had I done to deserve this? Nevertheless I set out to fix this
if possible without being able to check it myself. Ultimately, the
goal was (and still is) to let the player choose the desired screen
mode anyway, so I could as well start on this. I've worked on it and
I didn't get any more reports about such problems since then so I
assume it's fine now. Might be that I'm wrong but as long as noone
tells me I won't know.

Anyway, during the few months TaskForce has been out now I've got a
lot more mails than I had expected. Even more surprising was that most
of their writers pretended to like the game (though there were few who
didn't have at least one bug for me). That's probably because those
who don't like it don't bother to tell me about it, either. Perhaps
it's better this way, to me it sounds nicer, at least.

Just thought you might want to know...

1.12   History of TaskForce

```
                    V0.31 (25.12.98)
  * unit stats were not displayed correctly on inventory screen
  * explosions don't penetrate walls any more
  * fixed minor problem with display of CPU units during CPU turn
  * a small frame on the overview map marks the visible map area
  * damage effectively decreases a unit's AP
  * new and improved title screen
  * selects screen mode using BestModeID() for OS 3.0+
  * uses NewLook menus for OS 3.0+

V0.30 (20.11.98)
  * improved handling of string gadgets

V0.29 (14.11.98)
  * fixed a bug which made crowbars as effective as toothpicks
  * fixed another potential Enforcer leak
  * view briefings from selection screen

V0.28 (21.09.98)
  * improved code to determine visibility of units
  * view mission briefings from within the game
    Due to the fact that the name of the mission is currently not
    preserved in saved games, this only works if the game in
    progress has not been saved or the name of the game file
    equals the mission name.
  * added regenerating units

V0.27 (20.08.98)
  * didn't update explosion areas
  * removed another Enforcer hit
  * 'Operate/Talk' accessible via button
  * added invisible units and
                  Camouflage Armour
```

```
                          * improved interface design

V0.26 (02.08.98)
   * didn't update overview map
   * didn't always update the selected unit's HP display
   * removed more Enforcer hits
   * units don't obstruct line of sight
   * computer won't shoot downed units
   * computer can handle more than one target per turn and unit
   * improved hand-to-hand combat
   * added sniper rifle and
               Thermal Scanner
               V0.25 (16.07.98)
   * newly created items were not correctly initialized
   * new and improved inventory display
   * new items
               Crowbar
                and
               Data Disk
                  * added jammed doors which can only be opened by employment of
      crowbars or brute force (explosions)

V0.24 (20.06.98)
   * fixed possible system locks on computer turns
   * removed even more Enforcer hits
   * improved line of sight
   * if the third player was enabled timers would be confused
   * order of units can be changed using <SHIFT>+LMB on the units list
   * significantly sped up overview map display
   * enhanced the computer players again
   * increased visibility range in Advanced mode to fifteen squares

V0.23 (05.06.98)
   * removed a bug that could cause TaskForce to freeze
   * computer didn't like to be shot down by guarding units
   * removed an Enforcer hit that occurred when operating doors
   * completely reworked the computer opponent
   * added some keyboard control to mission menu

V0.22 (21.05.98)
   * loading saved games was rather unstable
   * when saving games items and most events would vanish
   * no more crashes if audio device couldn't be opened
   * hopefully fixed some of the problems with non-native screen modes
   * if an object to use was selected by mouse it could happen that
     a different object was incorrectly removed from inventory
   * explosives sometimes didn't work correctly
   * unconscious computer-controlled units could still heal themselves
   * picking up objects now costs 1 AP
   * guarding units only return fire if they have a direct line of fire
   * during computer movement other input is disabled
   * weapon info now also contains current and maximum ammo
   * improved deployment of reinforcements
   * added indestructible windows

V0.21 (28.04.98)
   * fixed serious bug in scrolling routines
```

* didn't close sfx file
* Grenade Launcher didn't accept grenades but knives as ammo
* increased disadvantages when shooting at distant targets
* new item
                Radio Transmitter
                 to call in air support
* added teleporters
* slightly improved computer player again
* added some more sound effects

V0.20 (15.04.98)
* now supports a third player (computer controlled only)
* removed another Enforcer hit
* reduced explosion power to make it possible to survive a blast
  it's still not very likely with average hit points, though
* fixed some minor bugs

V0.19 (10.04.98)
* TaskForce would crash if it didn't get the audio channels
  it wanted
* units can be selected even if they have no AP left
* <Esc> cancels firing mode
* the game can be controlled entirely by mouse now
* on the mission selection screen the first mission is selected
  by default
* two more weapons available

V0.18 (06.04.98)
* if the active unit's HP sank below 0 it only pretended to
  become unconscious...
* shot down units blocked line of sight and line of fire
* time limit didn't work properly
* use of items didn't reduce the unit's load
* removed some Enforcer hits
* TaskForce no longer terminates if the allocation of the
  audio structures fails, but will remain silent
* using <shift> number pad you can now scroll half a screen
* in a single player game, you will be informed of explosions
  in the gap between two turns if one of your units can
  observe them
* major change in AP system and reduced HP values
* you are notified when you successfully activated an event
  of the type Find Item
* clicking on one of the names will take you to that unit
* slightly improved computer opponent
* new item
                Steroids
                V0.17 (06.03.98)
* first public release

1.13 Contact

If you encounter any bugs, have some ideas for improvements, or
just want to tell me how much you (don't ?) like TaskForce, send
your comments to this address:

```
Jens Granseuer
Junkermanns Weg 7
59071 Hamm
Germany

Email: jensgr@gmx.net

If you create any missions for this game, feel encouraged to send
them, too. If I like them, I may include them in the archive.

Have fun!
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