

WINGS: AIR LEADER SERIES

A Hornet Leader TDA Update

BY JEFF PETRASKA

As a follow-up to his highly rated Hornet Leader TDA in the premiere issue of C3i, Jeff covers the new weapons systems introduced in the TAL Hornet Leader Module.

In case you haven't heard, Dan Verssen, Gene Billingsley and Rodger MacGowan have packaged a little surprise in every copy of **Thunderbolt + Apache Leader**. No, you won't find it mentioned anywhere on the box. It's a small expansion kit for **Hornet Leader!** This unexpected bonus now requires me to update my original *Hornet Leader Tactical Decision Aid (TDA)*, published in issue Nr.1 of *C3i*, to include its new features.

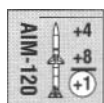
This expansion kit consists of six new weapons for the Hornets to carry and two new enemy aircraft for them to tangle with. A single sheet of rules describes when and how to use each new item, and indicates how they are affected by particular Special Conditions and Mission Events (Munition Shortages, Targets of Opportunity, etc.).

Air-to-Air Additions



The **Hornet Leader** expansion kit contains a pair of two new Russian fighters, the Su-27 and MiG-31. These are first-rate opponents, and only appear in the World War III Campaign as potential substitutes for MiG-25s or MiG-29s. The air combat values for the Su-27

are 6/5/4/4, while the MiG-31 values are 8/6/4/2. Like the MiG-29, they both get a +2 Fire Position Result modifier. Since there are only two of these backprinted counters, you will never encounter more than one pair in any dogfight.

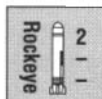


In addition, one of the new weapons for the Hornets is the AIM-120 AMRAAM missile. Previously available only by Special Condition card, the AMRAAM is now available in limited quantity (determined by a die roll) for each mission in the World War III Campaign. The AMRAAM functions like a more lethal Sparrow missile, having the same weight and load restrictions. The long range Fire Position Modifiers are +4 for a single AMRAAM, +8 for two AMRAAMs, and +7 for one AMRAAM plus one Sparrow. Also, there is a +1 modifier on the Fire Position Result table for each AMRAAM fired.

AGW Additions

There are five new air-to-ground weapons (AGW) in the **Hornet Leader** expansion kit: Rockeye cluster bombs, rocket pods, Sidearm missiles, SLAM missiles, and gun pods. Each of these new weapons is described below:

Rockeye cluster bombs:



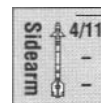
The Rockeye weighs one weight point and uses the same load area allocations as the Mk 82 bomb. Its small, multiple submunitions offer the best hit probability of any weapon in the game (90% base chance), but no chance of scoring multiple hits. Like all bombs, Rockeyes can only be used against targets in the

same area as the Hornet carrying them.

Rocket pods:

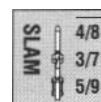
Rocket pods weigh one weight point and use the same load area allocations as the Mk 82. Rocket pods have a relatively low hit probability (50%), and no chance of multiple hits. However, what makes them unique, is that they are never expended after an attack, and can thus be used repeatedly on a single mission. Rocket pod attacks are carried out like bombing attacks, and thus can only be used against targets in the same area as the Hornet carrying them.

Sidearm missile:



The Sidearm is a small, short range version of the HARM missile. Like the HARM, its only function in the game is to reduce and/or knock out SAM sites. The Sidearm weighs zero weight points and uses the Sidewinder load area allocations, which means that Hornets executing air-to-ground attacks ought to carry pairs of Sidearms on their wingtips in place of the usually useless Sidewinders. The Sidearm has a lower hit probability than the HARM (70% base chance), but its greatest drawback is it can only be used against SAM sites in the same area as the Hornet. Nonetheless, considering it does not reduce the AGW capacity of your aircraft, it's a great little weapon to have along.

SLAM:

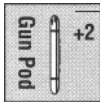


The SLAM (Stand-Off Land Attack Missile) is a land attack version of the Harpoon missile. It is identical to the Harpoon in **Hornet Leader**, except the SLAM can be used against both land and sea targets. However, the SLAM

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can only be used in the World War III Campaign, and the quantity available for each mission is determined by the same die roll used for AIM-120 AMRAAMs. The single die roll result determines the total quantity of AMRAAMs/SLAMs available, and the player decides how to split the result between AMRAAMs and SLAMs.

Gun Pods:



Gun Pods weigh one weight point and use the same load allocation as Mk 82 bombs. Gun pods are used solely in an air-to-ground attack role, yielding a +2 modifier to strafing attacks. Each Hornet can only carry one gun pod. Although a gun pod raises the base hit probability for a strafing attack to 30%, it is still the least likely way to damage a target. In general, gun pods should only be used by Hornets that have no other AGW option.

Table 1 shows the average number of hits that each individual weapon will inflict on the target, and can be used as a mission planning aid as described in the previous *Hornet Leader TDA* article. For convenience sake, I've included both the original **Hornet Leader** weapons and the new ones found in **Thunderbolt + Apache Leader**. Mavericks, Harpoons, and SLAMs are not listed in the "Same Area" section of the table because they offer no benefit from firing them there, compared to other AGWs. When firing multiple weapons, sum the average hits shown in the table to determine the total expected hits. For example, dropping two Mk 83s and two Rockeyes will, on the average, score 3.8 hits if there is no attack modifier, 4.6 hits with a +1 modifier, and 5.2 hits with a +2 modifier.

Mission Planning Procedure

The new weapons in the **Hornet Leader** expansion kit add more variety to players' options, but do not require any fundamental changes to the mission planning procedure described in the previous Tactical Decision Aid article. There are only a few points and tips to keep in mind:

Table 1. Average Number of Hits Per Weapon

TARGET	WEAPON	AGW to-Hit Modifier				
		-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Same Area	Mk 82	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2
	Mk 83	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.6
	Rockeye	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0
	Rockets	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7
	HARM	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.4
	Sidearm	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1
Adjacent Area	Gun Pod	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5
	Maverick	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
	Harpoon	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.6
	SLAM	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.6
Non-adj Area	HARM	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1
	SLAM	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2

- Remember during mission planning that rocket pods are not expended after attacking, and so can be used against both SAM sites and the mission target.
- Note that, when delivered with a modifier of +1 or more, Rockeye cluster bombs are certain to score 1 (and only 1) hit.
- Use Sidearms to clear the selected Approach Area and Target Area of SAM

sites, and HARMs to eliminate the long range SAMs in adjacent areas. This should result in the ground attack Hornets carrying fewer HARMs and, therefore, more AGWs for use against the mission target.

Summary

I think you'll find the new additions provided in this **Hornet Leader** expansion kit make for more interesting mission planning and play, especially since most of the new weapons are light weight. Substitute the version of Table 1 accompanying this article for that offered with the original *Hornet Leader TDA*, and you should be on your way to bigger and better things. Also, keep your eyes on future issues of *C3i*, as additional updates to the *Hornet Leader TDA* will be published as required.



Note:

For additional coverage on *Hornet Leader* please refer to issue one of *C3i*. You will find a complete Module on North Korea with new rules, cards, counters and campaign map; and Jeff Petraska's original *TDA* for *Hornet Leader*.

Hornet Leader

F/A-18 Strike Fighter Operations
 Published: 1991 Winner: CSR Awards 1991

Game Design: Dan Verssen & Gene Billingsley
 Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan

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MAVERICK
4/11
6/12

Contents: 200 die-cut Counters; One 22x17 inch Combat Display; Rulebook; 110 Playing Cards; One 10-sided die; Bookcase Box

Playing Time Scale: 15-25 minutes per mission
 Unit Scale: Single F/A-18 Hornets
 Players: One (2-Players can play as a team)