TaskForce

	COLLABORATORS		

	TITLE : TaskForce		
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WRITTEN BY		January 19, 2025	

	REVISION HISTORY		

NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

Contents

Chapter 1

TaskForce

1.1 TaskForce Gamer's Manual

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TaskForce
©1997-1999 Jens Granseuer
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Contents

```
  Introduction
  Distribution
  Requirements
  Installation

    Controls

    History
    Credits
    Contact
```

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 ©1997–1999 Jens Granseuer.

1.4   Requirements

To run TaskForce you need any Amiga model with Kickstart 2.04 or
higher.

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.

1.5   Installation

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

The first time you run TaskForce (or the editor) you will be
prompted to select a screenmode. This setting is saved in the file
TaskForce.prefs in the Data directory. If you want to change the
screenmode afterwards delete that file and run the program again.

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, along with information about their
weapons, hit points, and action points. The colour the HP are
printed in tells you about the unit's 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%.

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. Just click
the left mouse button on the destination if you have selected a unit.
Movement will automatically be halted if the unit reaches a closed door
or encounters hidden enemy units. Any kind of movement costs 1 AP per
step.

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 button to the top. 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 (o or third button,
costs 2 AP).
Certain items you may find have special abilities. You usually use
these items (u or fourth button, 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.
The last button or 'e' finally will end your turn.

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

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 '?' you will get some more
information about units beneath the cursor.

Clicking the mouse on one of the units from the 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 units, you can
rearrange the order of your units and thereby the activation sequence.
You can also select your units using the function keys.

A mission is considered complete if one of the players has scored 100
points. Points are awarded (or withdrawn) 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 Normal is the
default setting.

In Normal 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 Normal 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.
* 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.
  Once primed, explosives are automatically dropped and disappear
   completely until their time has come.
* 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 eat them, 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.
* toolkit: The toolkit is quite useful for repairing broken objects.

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    -    Kidnapped
    Pete Sutter         -    Beta Gleny I: Operation Babysitter
```

Translators

```
    Maciek Karpiuk (polish)
```

Suggestions, bug reports, etc.

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    Daniel Aufermann                    Sebastian Bauer
    Gaelan Griffin                      Olaf Köbnik
    Robert Müller                       Dave Sealey
    Pete Sutter
```

...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 to let the player choose the desired screen mode anyway, so I could as well start on this.

Anyway, during the first months I 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. Whatever the reason, to me it sounds better this way.

Somewhen in late 1998 I received a lonely mail demanding localization.
It was the first to come up with that, so I replied, "No, that's not
neccessary. There's not too much text in TaskForce, most of it stems
from the missions themselves. Besides, noone else requested translated
versions." Well, not yet, anyway. I don't know what happened then.
Perhaps it was just a matter of mobilizing connections, perhaps it was
just pure chance, or a joke of the universe. During the next three or
four weeks my mailbox was suddenly flooded with pleas for a localized
version. I still didn't like the idea very much (what's the point in
doing quite a lot of work if the result doesn't make any difference to
you?), but on the other hand I had to admit now that there obviously
was some demand for it. And it's fascinating to see what you will do to
satisfy people you just know the names of (if at all).

Just thought you might want to know...

1.12 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:

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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!