

DCS MISSION STARTER

USER GUIDE

Pick a map, an era, and an aircraft — fly a living world in minutes.
Airfields dressed. SAMs up. The strike group at sea. No waypoints, ever.

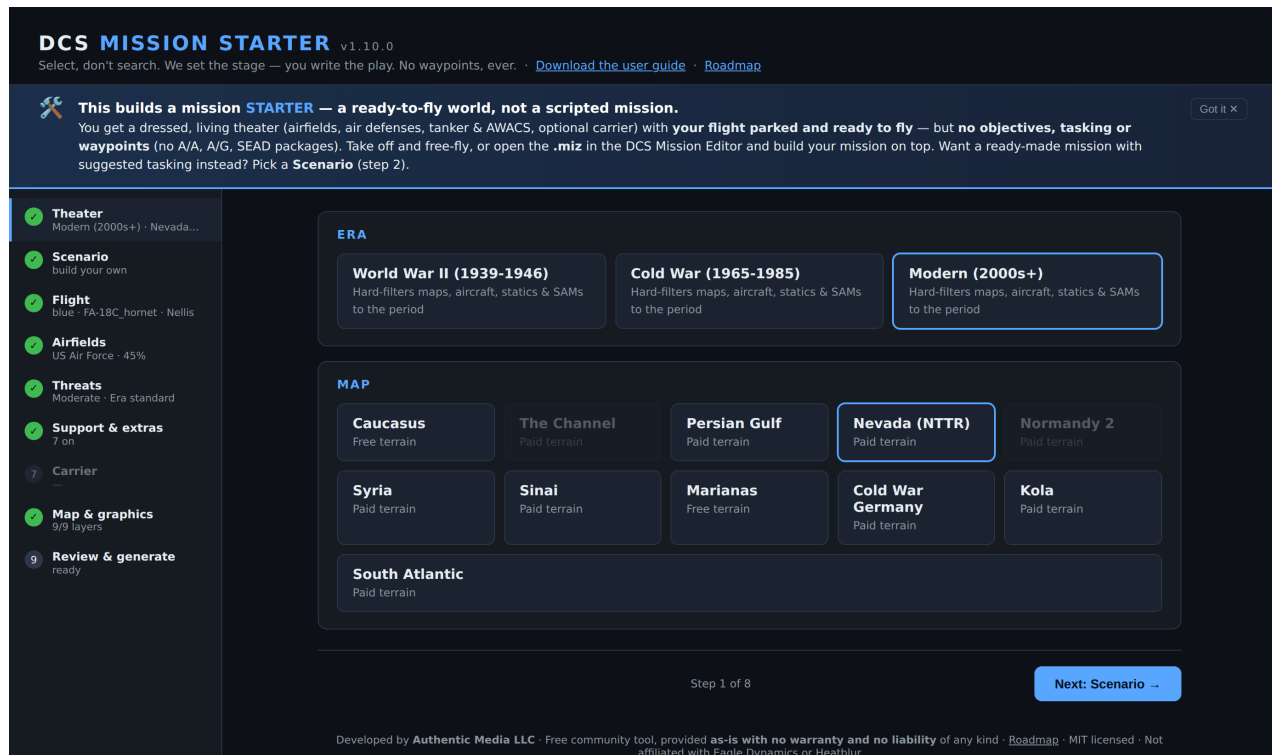
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Welcome aboard

Select, don't search. The DCS Mission Starter builds a living world for you: airfields dressed with period-correct aircraft and equipment, working SAM sites, support flights on station, and a carrier strike group with a properly spotted deck. You download a ready **.miz** file and build *your* mission on top in the DCS Mission Editor.

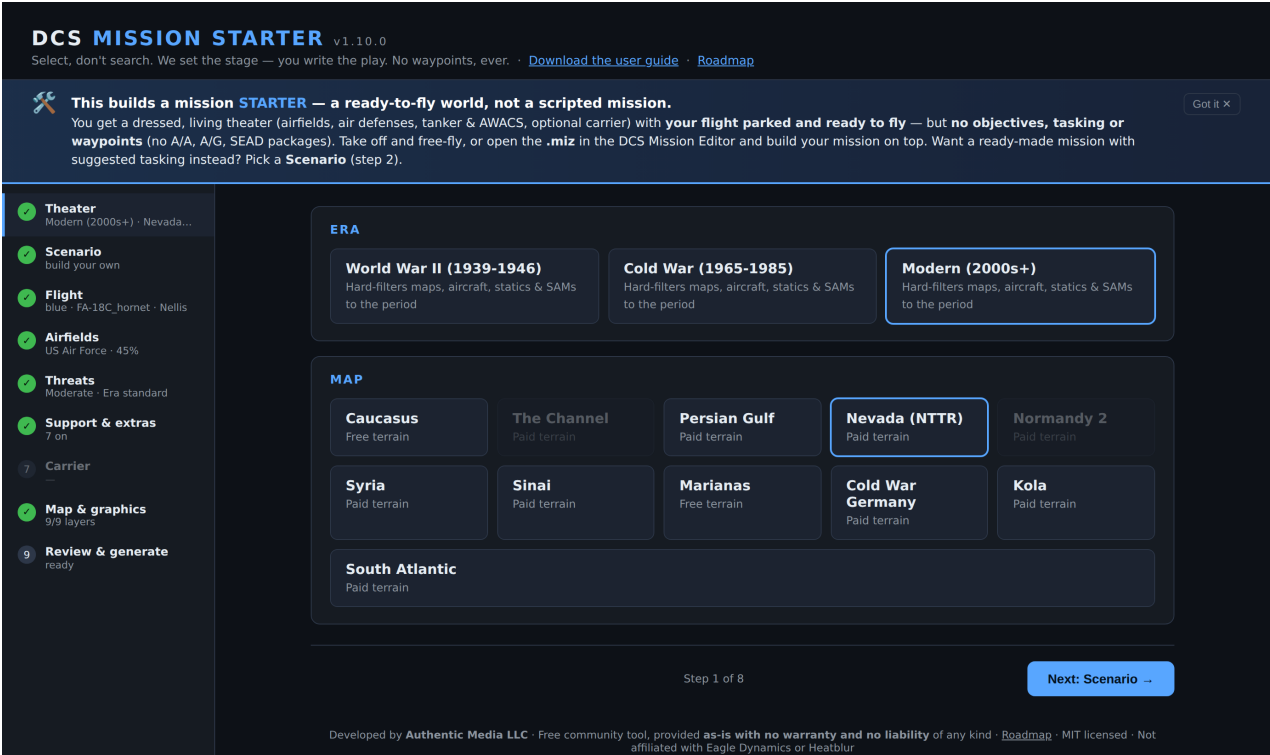
We set the stage — you write the play. The Starter never places your waypoints. Flight planning is always yours.



The Mission Starter wizard.

Finding your way

The app works as a set of **focused screens**, not one long page. The **rail** on the left lists the mission's areas — click any one to switch to it, and you see just that screen. Each rail item shows its current value and turns green with a ✓ once set, so you can tell at a glance what's done. A **Next** button (with Back and a "Step N of M" readout) walks you through in order if you'd rather be guided. The live **PREVIEW** line and the **GENERATE** button are pinned at the bottom of every screen, so you can build the moment you're happy — there is no required order, and changing one thing and regenerating is always two clicks. Your work saves itself: close the browser mid-build and everything is exactly where you left it ("Reset wizard" starts fresh).



Section navigation: the rail switches screens, completion checkmarks show progress, and Generate + the live preview stay pinned.

Screen by screen

1 · Theater — era and map

Start with **when**, then **where**. The era is the master filter: it decides which maps, aircraft, statics, SAMs, and support can appear — a WWII starter never offers a Hornet, a modern one never a Spitfire. Maps without content for the era grey out. All eleven theaters are here: pick WWII and the Channel, Normandy and the 1944 Marianas light up; Cold War Germany puts you on the Inner German Border; Kola covers NATO's Northern Flank; Sinai in the Cold War is October 1973. Each preset carries its major airfields on both sides — on the NTTR that includes Groom Lake and Tonopah Test Range as blue home plates (USAF fields; even the captured MiGs there flew as USAF units).

ERA

- World War II (1939-1946)**
Hard-filters maps, aircraft, statics & SAMs to the period
- Cold War (1965-1985)**
Hard-filters maps, aircraft, statics & SAMs to the period
- Modern (2000s+)**
Hard-filters maps, aircraft, statics & SAMs to the period

MAP

- Caucasus**
Free terrain
- The Channel**
Paid terrain
- Persian Gulf**
Paid terrain
- Nevada (NTTR)**
Paid terrain
- Normandy 2**
Paid terrain
- Syria**
Paid terrain
- Sinai**
Paid terrain
- Marianas**
Free terrain
- Cold War Germany**
Paid terrain
- Kola**
Paid terrain
- South Atlantic**
Paid terrain

Step 1 of 8

Next: Scenario →

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Nevada (NTTR) · Modern (2000s+) · blue · FA_18C_hornet from Nellis · seed 1

COPY SHARE LINK

GENERATE .M

Theater: era across the top, then the maps valid for it.

2 · Scenario — a ready-made mission, or build your own

Right after you've set the theater, the **Scenario** step offers ready-made missions that fit *this map and era* — pick one and it fills the rest of the wizard for you, which you can then tweak on any screen. Choose **Carrier Qualification** or **ACLS Practice** and the boat, deck state, tanker and a calm threat picture drop into place; choose **SEAD / Wild Weasel Range** and a heavy SAM belt with AWACS and a tanker are set up for you; **CAP /**

Alert-5 stands up an enemy air picture to intercept. Only scenarios valid for your theater appear — carrier scenarios stay hidden on a landlocked map, modern-only ones vanish in WWII. Each writes its **suggested tasking into the briefing** (targets and the threat picture) — never forced waypoints, so the Starter principle holds. Prefer to configure everything yourself? Leave it on **Build your own**. The F-14 **Crew Ops** scenarios also live here (see that section).

3 · Flight — side, jet, home base

Pick your side, home airfield, and aircraft from the full DCS flyable roster (period-filtered), plus single- or multiplayer slots, start type, time, weather, and world density. On coastal maps **the carrier** is offered here as a home base (last in the list); land bases are the default, so choosing the boat is a deliberate act — and doing so lights up the Carrier screen.

Variations & the seed

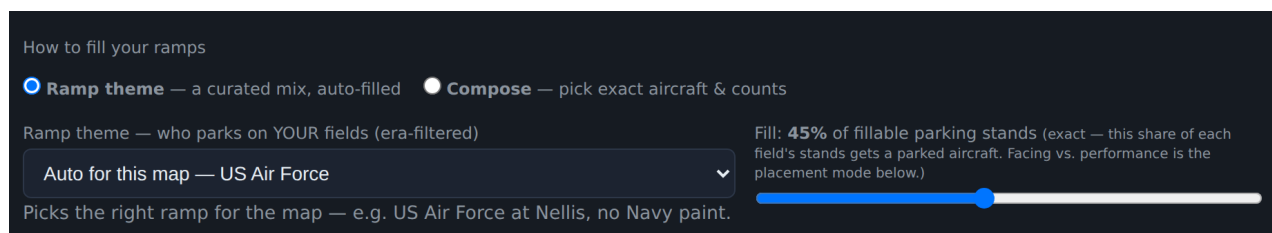
The **Variation (seed)** field is the one control people find mysterious, so here's the whole story: the generator makes hundreds of small random choices — which stands get aircraft, where the area SAMs sit, exactly where the tanker orbits. The **seed** is the number those choices are rolled from. **The same recipe and the same seed always build the exact same mission**, byte for byte — that's how a share link reproduces your mission precisely for a squadron-mate. If you like a mission but want to tweak one setting, *keep* the seed so everything else stays put. If you want a *different* layout of the same scenario, change the number — or just hit the **re-roll** button next to it — and generate again. You never have to think about the actual value; treat **re-roll** as "give me another version."

4 · Airfields — populate your ramps

Fill your side's fields with parked aircraft, ground equipment and infrastructure. There are two ways to do it, chosen with the toggle at the top of the screen.

Two ways to fill

Ramp theme auto-fills a curated, era- and base-correct mix — Nellis dresses as an Air Force base, not a Navy ramp — at a **fill percentage** you set. This is the quick path: pick a theme (or leave it on Auto) and go.



The toggle picks how ramps are filled; in theme mode you get a theme dropdown and a fill slider.

Compose exact aircraft

Switch to **Compose** for the Ramp Composer, where you pick exact aircraft and counts by role — Fighters, Bombers & Heavies, Tankers, AWACS, Transport, Helicopters — with your own coalition and Red/OPFOR aggressors in separate, colour-coded sections. It starts **pre-populated from the selected theme**: pick *Red Flag* and you get Vipers, Eagles, a Tornado, a pair of B-1s, tankers and an AWACS already laid in — adjust the numbers from there. Counts are **per airfield**, era-filtered (a WWII composer offers warbirds, never a B-1), and placement is stand-aware: helos on pads, heavies on the big ramp squares, anything beyond a field's capacity skipped. The exact mix rides the share link, so a squadron-mate who clicks it gets the same ramp.

20 aircraft per airfield. [Reset to theme](#) · [Clear all](#)

Your coalition — Blue

FIGHTERS & ATTACK

Canada (NTTR) · Modern (2000s+) · blue · FA_18C_hornet from Nellis · seed 1

COPY SHARE LINK

GENERATE

The Ramp Composer, pre-populated from the Red Flag template — your coalition and Red aggressors listed separately (scrolls for more categories).

Placement mode & object types

Placement mode matters for performance. **Static objects** (recommended) are inert scenery — no AI pilot, so they use far less memory and CPU, load instantly, and never show as map contacts; their facing is **exact** on the surveyed maps (all but Falklands and The Channel). **AI aircraft** align to the painted line on any map but are live units that cost frames and can hurt FPS on lower-end PCs — only worth it on the two unsurveyed maps. The three checkboxes switch parked aircraft, ground equipment and the infrastructure cluster independently. Runways and taxiways always stay clear, and enemy fields dress themselves with their own era-correct theme.

Parked-aircraft placement

Static objects (recommended) — inert, low memory, exact facing on surveyed maps

Livery style — how parked aircraft are painted

Squadron mix (recommended) — real nation-correct schemes

Skins match the base's nation (a USAF F-4E won't wear USMC paint). For exact, verified liveries on YOUR install — including paid ones — run `scripts/dump_liveries.py` ONCE.

☒ Parked aircraft ☒ Ground equipment (fuel & utility trucks by occupied stands) ☒ Infrastructure (fuel farm, tents, barracks off the ramp)

Placement mode (Static is recommended for performance) and the object-type toggles.

5 · Threats — defenses and the Threat Dial

Turn on **Air defenses** (era-correct SAM sites + SHORAD at every enemy field), then set the **Threat Dial**. **Intensity** (Minimal → Maximum) adds extra area SAM sites and airborne enemy CAP on top of the base defenses — the count is rolled off the seed, so re-rolls differ. **System level** sets the calibre: *Era standard*, *Light* (SA-2/3, MiG-21/23), *Heavy* (SA-10/11, Su-27/MiG-31), or *Mixed*. Everything is era-gated — a WWII field never fields an SA-10. The enemy CAP engages you inbound; the area SAMs form a belt to plan around.

THREATS

Air defenses plus the Threat Dial — how hard the mission pushes back.

☒ **Air defenses**
 Complete era-correct SAM sites + SHORAD

Intensity: **Moderate** (how many extra area SAMs & enemy CAP flights spawn between the lines — count is randomized off the seed, so re-rolls feel different)

1 Minimal · 2 Light · 3 Moderate · 4 Heavy · 5 Maximum

On top of the SAM defending each enemy airfield, the dial adds an area SAM belt and airborne enemy CAP on the threat axis. Everything is era-gated — a WWII field never fields an SA-10. Needs **Air defenses** (building blocks) on.

System level

Era standard — historical mix

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Step 5 of 8

Next: Support & extras →

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Threats: air defenses plus the intensity dial and system-level tiers.

6 · Support & extras

On-station assets and briefing aids, grouped by what they do: **air support** (tanker, AWACS, ambient traffic, FARPs), **targets & ranges** (strike packages, a practice range), and **briefing aids** (the comms card, in-jet kneeboards, named nav reference points). Turn on what the mission needs — sensible defaults are already set.

The **tanker matches your jet**: a boom receiver (F-16, F-15, A-10) gets a KC-135; a probe-and-droge jet (Hornet, Tomcat, Mirage) gets a drogue tanker. Support aircraft fly under a nation that actually operates them (US AWACS/tankers, Russian A-50), added to your coalition if your lead nation doesn't — so an Israeli- or UK-led force still gets a valid, editable KC-135 and E-3 rather than an airframe its country can't fly.

7 · Carrier (when the carrier is home)

Shown only when you chose the carrier as your home base. Pick a hull, a real-world deck state (recovery, launch, underway, packed), the aircraft spotted on deck, and optionally launch the air wing's CAP and Hawkeye. All approach systems come pre-activated.

CARRIER DECK CONFIGURATION

Hull

CVN-71 Theodore Roosevelt (CSG-9) — Supercarrier

Deck layout (real-world states)

Underway — cruise deck, light park aft of the island

Aircraft on deck

☒ **FA-18C-hornet**
parked on deck

☒ **F-14B**
parked on deck

☒ **E-2C**
parked on deck

☒ **S-3B**
parked on deck

☒ **SH-60B**
parked on deck

☒ **Deck equipment**
Tugs, MJ-1 loaders, crash & salvage gear at real stations

☒ **Launch CAP**
Air-wing 2-ship on station toward the threat axis

☒ **Launch Hawkeye (AAW)**
Air-wing E-2 AEW orbit covering the strike group

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Step 7 of 9

Next: Map & graphics →

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Syria · Modern (2000s+) · blue · FA_18C_hornet from CARRIER · seed 1

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Carrier deck configuration — hull, deck state, air wing.

8 · Map & graphics (F10)

Each layer draws real mission geometry on the F10 map: the tanker's racetrack with its freq/TACAN label, the AWACS orbit, carrier CAP and Hawkeye stations, the strike group's ops box, amber rings over targets and the range, FARP service rings, bullseye, and the intel picture — known enemy SAM rings at doctrinal radii. Friendly orbits and threat rings render on YOUR coalition's layer only, so multiplayer stays fair. Zones inform — they never route you.

9 · Review & generate

A one-glance summary of every choice. Hit **GENERATE .MIZ** (here or from the pinned bar on any screen), drop the file in *Saved Games/DCS/Missions/*, and fly — or open it in the Mission Editor and keep building. **Copy share link** gives a URL that regenerates this exact starter for anyone who clicks it; paste it in your squadron Discord.

REVIEW & GENERATE

One glance, then build. Any rail item jumps you back to tweak.

Modern (2000s+) · Nevada (NTTR) · blue · FA_18C_hornet from Nellis
airfields: composed 20/field · placement static (light)
threats: Moderate / Era standard
support: Tanker, AWACS, Ambient air traffic, Comms card, Starter briefing, Nav chart kneeboard, Nav reference points
map graphics: 9/9 layers · seed 1

GENERATE .MIZ

Copy share link

← Back

Step 8 of 8

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Review & generate: the full picture before you build.

Crew Ops — fly the back seat

The backseat contract: the mission flies the jet; you run the mission. Crew Ops templates are player-paced through the **F10 CREW menu** — no scripts on a stopwatch. Commands appear as they become relevant, the AI crew answers your calls, and real events drive the feedback (“GOOD EFFECT ON TARGET” when your convoy dies).

- **F-14B(U) Pilot + Jester: IZLID Strike** — you fly the Tomcat; Jester (the AI RIO) puts the IZLID on the target when you call it from the crew menu. (Pre-release module.)
- **F-14B(U) RIO + Iceman: GCI Intercept** — you're the RIO; Iceman (the AI pilot) flies YOUR calls — commit, hold, recommit CAP — while you run the AWG-9. (Pre-release.)
- **RIO: Fleet Defense (F-14, solo or multiplayer)** — four Backfires inbound on the force; sort the raid in TWS and time the Phoenix shots. **Solo** (1 slot): you air-start level on CAP — trim, jump to the back seat, and Iceman holds the jet on your A-menu commands. **Multiplayer** (2 slots): human pilot up front, human RIO in back.

Crew difficulty: *Trainee shows [CREW HINT] prompts for the next call; Qualified gives you a clean cockpit. **Why F-14 only?** Jester and Iceman are the Tomcat's crew AI. The F-4E needs none — the Phantom's back seat has full flight controls, so a WSO player simply flies from the pit.*

Nav reference points

On maps with curated landmark data (Nevada today), named references — Area 51, Belted Peak, Student Gap, Coyote Summit and more — are marked on the **F10 map**, listed in the briefing with coordinates, plotted on the kneeboard theater page, and provided as named trigger zones (NAV BELTED PEAK) you can build your own logic on.

The standard comm ladder

Every starter uses the same predefined comms, so you learn the plan once. All agency frequencies sit on the real 25 kHz radio channel raster (they end on realistic .025 increments, not round whole numbers), and Guard stays fixed at 243.000. The ladder is printed on the in-jet kneeboard and in the mission briefing.

AGENCY	CALLSIGN	FREQ (UHF)	CHAN	TACAN	NOTES
Guard	—	243.000	last	—	monitored (fixed emergency)
Your flight	(varies)	305.725	CH1	—	flight common
Tactical	—	254.325	CH7	—	inter-flight coordination
AWACS	Overlord	251.475	CH3	—	land-based E-3 / A-50
Tanker	Texaco	253.625	CH4	39Y	speeds & altitudes per type
Carrier	(her callsign)	264.425	CH2	hull # X	ICLS 11 · Link4 336 · ACLS
Plane guard	Angel	262.050	CH5	—	Starboard Delta, flight ops
CAP	(squadron)	258.175	CH6	—	carrier air wing
AEW Hawkeye	(squadron)	259.925	CH3/8	—	CH3 if no AWACS in mission
FARPs	(name)	127.525+	—	—	0.25 steps per pad

***The comm plan is already in your jet.** COMM1 presets are programmed to this ladder at generation time (only for assets that exist in your mission) — Mother is CH2, gas is CH4, Guard rides the last channel. COMM2 keeps module defaults. The kneeboard's CHAN column matches the cockpit.*

*Carrier systems activate at mission start per hull, and every boat answers to her real name: **Rough Rider** (CVN-71), **Union** (CVN-72), **Warfighter** (CVN-73), **Courage** (CVN-74), **Lone Warrior** (CVN-75) — official voice callsigns per ACP 113. The Forrestal flies her fleet nickname **Fid** (“First In Defense”, convention). “Mother” still works — it's the brevity word for whichever boat is yours. **TACAN channel = hull number**: 73X on the George Washington, 59X on the Forrestal, 5X on Invincible (pennant R05). SuperCarrier boats also radiate ICLS 11, Link4 336 and ACLS; the Forrestal has no ACLS in DCS; the 1982 Invincible is TACAN-only; the 1944 Essex is visual recovery, era-true.*

Aircraft-side TACAN/ICLS/Link4 are cockpit state — DCS does not allow presetting them from a mission file; the kneeboard values are what you dial (F-14 crews: the RIO enters Link4 336.0).

Building blocks

BLOCK	WHAT YOU GET
Airfield dressing	Era- and faction-correct static aircraft on real parking stands, ground support equipment, fuel farms, tents, com
Air defenses	Complete, functional SAM sites with doctrinal layouts — SA-2/3/6/11, Hawk, Patriot by era and side — plus SH
Tanker / AWACS	On station behind friendly lines on the standard freqs. Not available in WWII — the era gate is strict.
Carrier strike group	A real CSG with a doctrine-spotted deck. See the next section.
Ambient air traffic	AI transports starting up and flying between friendly fields.
Functional FARPs	Pads with the fuel, ammo, command, and comms vehicles required for rearm and refuel to actually work.
Strike targets	Depot, convoy, and C2 packages in the enemy rear — each with a trigger zone ready for your own mission log
Practice range	Bombing ring and strafe line in the friendly rear.
Nav kneeboard	Comms card, airfield data, and a theater overview rendered into the jet's kneeboard.
Nav reference points	Named landmarks (Area 51, Belted Peak...) marked on the F10 map, in the briefing, and on the kneeboard, wi

The carrier strike group

Pick a hull and you get its **real strike group**. The Roosevelt sails as CSG-9 with USS Lake Erie (CG-70) and DESRON 23 destroyers; the Truman as CSG-8 with USS Gettysburg; the Forrestal as a 1980s Mediterranean battle group with USS Ticonderoga; HMS Invincible as the 1982 South Atlantic task force with her Leander frigates (and, true to history, no AEW); USS Essex as Task Force 58 with Corsairs for the 1944 Marianas. Screen stations follow doctrine: plane-guard destroyer astern, AAW cruiser on the beam, pickets on the bow quarters. The group steams into wind on BRC. On landlocked maps (Nevada) the carrier option greys out — there is no carrier water.

When the deck is set for flight ops (launch or recovery), the air wing's SAR helo is already airborne — **Angel**, an SH-60 holding in **Starboard Delta**: 300 ft and below, a quarter mile off the starboard beam, tracking the ship's course. Starboard, because the whole Case I pattern lives in left-hand turns on the port side; doctrine is "first off, last on" — the helo launches before the first cat shot. Each wing flies its real HS squadron (HS-6 Indians on the Roosevelt, HS-15 Red Lions on the Forrestal), up Angel common on 262.0. The 1944 Essex keeps her plane-guard destroyer astern instead — no helos in Task Force 58.

Deck configuration

DECK STATE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Recovery	Landing area clear (angle, waist cats, EL4, port stern). The bow is the pack: tight uniform herringbone rows across t
Launch	Cats, JBDs, and taxi flow clear; spares spotted aft in uniform rows.
Packed	Port-visit deck. Everything fouled including the angle. No-fly.

Check the aircraft types you want on deck — rows are spotted one squadron per row, with tugs, MJ-1 loaders, and crash gear at their real stations. Optionally launch the air wing's **CAP** (two-ship on the threat axis at 25,000

ft — e.g. VFA-146 Blue Diamonds) and an **E-2 Hawkeye** AEW orbit covering the force.

Scenario templates keep the no-waypoints rule: they preset the world and write suggested tasking into the briefing, never your flight plan. The F-14 Crew Ops scenarios are the one exception — the AI pilot needs steerpoints to fly. See the Crew Ops section.

Share links and recipes

A starter is defined by its **recipe** — your wizard selections plus a seed. Share links encode the recipe, not the file: the same link always regenerates the same mission, even after DCS updates. Change the seed to reroll the details while keeping your selections.

FAQ

The mission won't load or units are missing. Make sure you own the map. Carrier decks with CVN-71/72/73/75 need the Supercarrier module; the Stennis deck works in the base game, and the Forrestal comes with the F-14.

Can I edit the starter? Yes — that's the point. Open it in the Mission Editor; everything is ordinary groups and statics you can move, delete, or build on.

Why can't I pick aircraft X in era Y? Hard era gate by service window — the Hornet entered service in 1987, so it can't appear in a Cold War (1965–1985) starter. This keeps every starter period-authentic.