

TITLE PLATE — THE LOW COUNTRIES AND THE SOUTHERN NORTH SEA, 16 DEC 2026. SATELLITE IMAGERY: NASA EOSDIS WORLDVIEW (MODIS/VIIRS TRUE COLOUR), RENDERED MONOCHROME; SITES, BASES, SHIPS, LIMITS AND ROUTES DRAWN OVER IT.

OPORD 26-071 · BRIEFING PACK · SERIAL 07

Kleine-Brogel, 2026

Swarm Line · Operation SWARM LINE · 16 December 2026

Originator
The Belgian and Netherlands Chiefs of Defence, acting jointly

Support
CRC GLONS · legal advisers of both Foreign Ministries · NATO, on request

For
Commander, BENELUX SHIELD, at the Control and Reporting Centre Glons

As of
16 DEC 26, 0200Z

Order
BNL/OPS/SL/26-071, DTG 151600ZDEC26

Campaign
Europe 2026 · scenario 7

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Small drones have been circling two air bases since before midnight. They come from the sea, from merchant ships that look like forty others, and they go back to them. You command everything Belgium and the Netherlands have put under one hand for twenty-one hours: fighters, helicopters, five ships, a submarine and two boarding teams. Shooting drones down is the smaller half of the task. The governments want the ships: found, proven, and taken where the law allows it.

THE SCENARIO, FOR THE PLAYER RATHER THAN THE COMMANDER

COMPLEXITY

5/5

Air, surface and one submarine at once; no patrol ready-made; forty-four merchant ships to sort; the law of the sea to apply ship by ship; nine special actions in four families.

DIFFICULTY

5/5

The ships you look for watch you back, and a ship that feels watched destroys the evidence. Two boarding teams, slow to reuse. Every mistake at sea is a political one. No two games are alike.

DURATION

21 h

0200Z to 2300Z on 16 December: the end of one night, a short day, then the night that decides. Several sessions of play at compressed time.

1 Situation

1.1 Drones over the bases

Kleine-Brogel, in Belgian Limburg, and **Volkel**, in North Brabant, are two of the air bases that matter most to the Alliance in the Low Countries. Since the autumn, small unmanned aircraft have come back over them after dark, as they did a year earlier: a few at a time, lights off, circling for an hour and leaving. They have also been seen over **Brussels Airport** and over the **port of Antwerp**.

They are too small and fly too far to come from a car park. The assessment of both staffs is that they come from the sea: **one ship launches them, another takes them back aboard, a third relays their control link**. Those ships are merchant ships, or look like it, and they wait among the ordinary traffic of the busiest sea lanes in Europe.

1.2 Why it matters

A drone that circles a base films it: the shelters, the routines, the reaction of the guard. That is harm enough. But a ship that can send four drones to look can send more to do something else. **A formation of drones flying together from the sea towards a military site is not surveillance**, and nobody can tell from the ground what it carries. The same ships can put small quadcopters over a port from a few miles away.

Each drone brought down protects a site for an hour. A ship seized ends it for good, gives the prosecutors a crew and the allies an attribution they can stand behind. That is why the order puts the ships first.

1.3 Why it is hard

The ships wait **outside territorial waters**, where a foreign merchant ship cannot be boarded without the consent of the state whose flag she flies. Two Russian naval vessels are in the same waters, **where they are entitled to be**. The ships watch their radars: a warship that closes on one of them is seen long before it arrives, and what is on deck goes over the side. You have two boarding teams, and each needs hours to recover after a boarding. And you may be wrong: eight ships are watched, most of them are guilty of nothing but an untidy record.

> ON THE PUBLIC RECORD, AND IN THIS EXERCISE
>
> **Reported in the real world** (taken from the scenario's design notes, which summarise press and institute reporting without listing each source): a count published in July 2026 of 144 drone incidents in thirteen European countries between August 2024 and February 2026, 25 of them in Belgium and 9 in the Netherlands, about half over military sites; overflights of Volkel and Eindhoven in November 2025 while merchant ships named in the press lay off the Dutch and French coasts; a Belgian order of 4 November 2025 allowing fire at drones over the bases only where nothing can be harmed below; overflights that came just after dusk; drones over the port of Antwerp; a tanker of the shadow fleet boarded by French forces, with men of a private military company aboard; and one launch from a ship confirmed, of a drone jammed by Sweden on 26 February 2026.
>
> **This exercise:** the day of 16 December 2026 and everything in it; Operation SWARM LINE and the single Benelux command; the eight ships named in section 4, which are invented, as are their histories; the positions of every unit; the Russian corvette and intelligence ship off the Dutch coast on that day; the formations; every order, message and quotation.

1.4 At 0200Z

It is the middle of a long December night: overcast, light rain, five degrees, a moderate sea. **Four drones are overhead now**, two near Kleine-Brogel and two near Volkel. Nothing of yours is in the

air. Sixteen fighters, three unarmed MQ-9s and five NH90 helicopters are on the ground and ready; two frigates and three patrol vessels lie stopped off the coast; the submarine DOLFIJN is at periscope depth in the middle of the area. **No patrol is ready-made: you build your own.**

Everything is on WEAPONS TIGHT. The jammers of the seven sites are off. The three civil airports are open. The intelligence summary gives you eight names. BENELUX SHIELD is yours until **2300Z**, and before then the governments expect names: three at most, and rather one with evidence than three guesses.

If you come to this day from the earlier operations of the autumn, the mood in the capitals and what NATO can still spare carry over, and an opening message says what has changed.

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2 The theatre and the three legal zones

2.1 From Mons to Den Helder

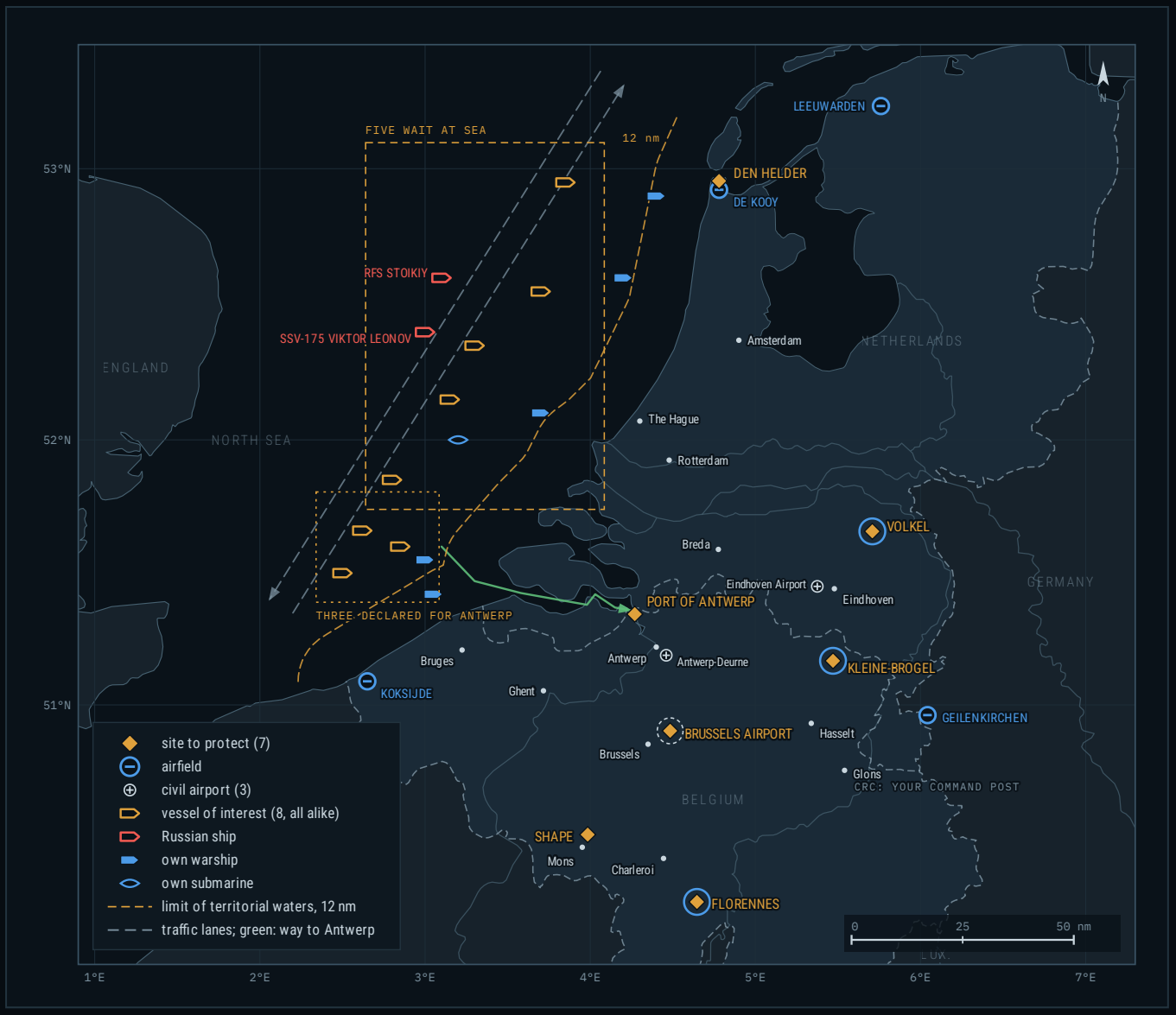
The theatre is Belgium, the Netherlands and the southern North Sea in front of them: about two hundred nautical miles from the French border to Texel, and a hundred and fifty from the open sea to the German border. Everything that flies in from the sea crosses the coast, then one of the most densely built-up regions of Europe, before it reaches a base.

Seven sites are highlighted on the map, each with a reference point of its own: SITE KLEINE-BROGEL, SITE VOLKEL, SITE ANTWERP (the port), SITE BRUSSELS (the airport), SITE DEN HELDER (the naval base), SITE FLORENNES and SITE SHAPE (the Allied headquarters at Mons). Three civil airports are marked too: AIRPORT BRUSSELS AIRPORT, AIRPORT ANTWERP-DEURNE and AIRPORT EINDHOVEN AIRPORT.

2.2 The sea area

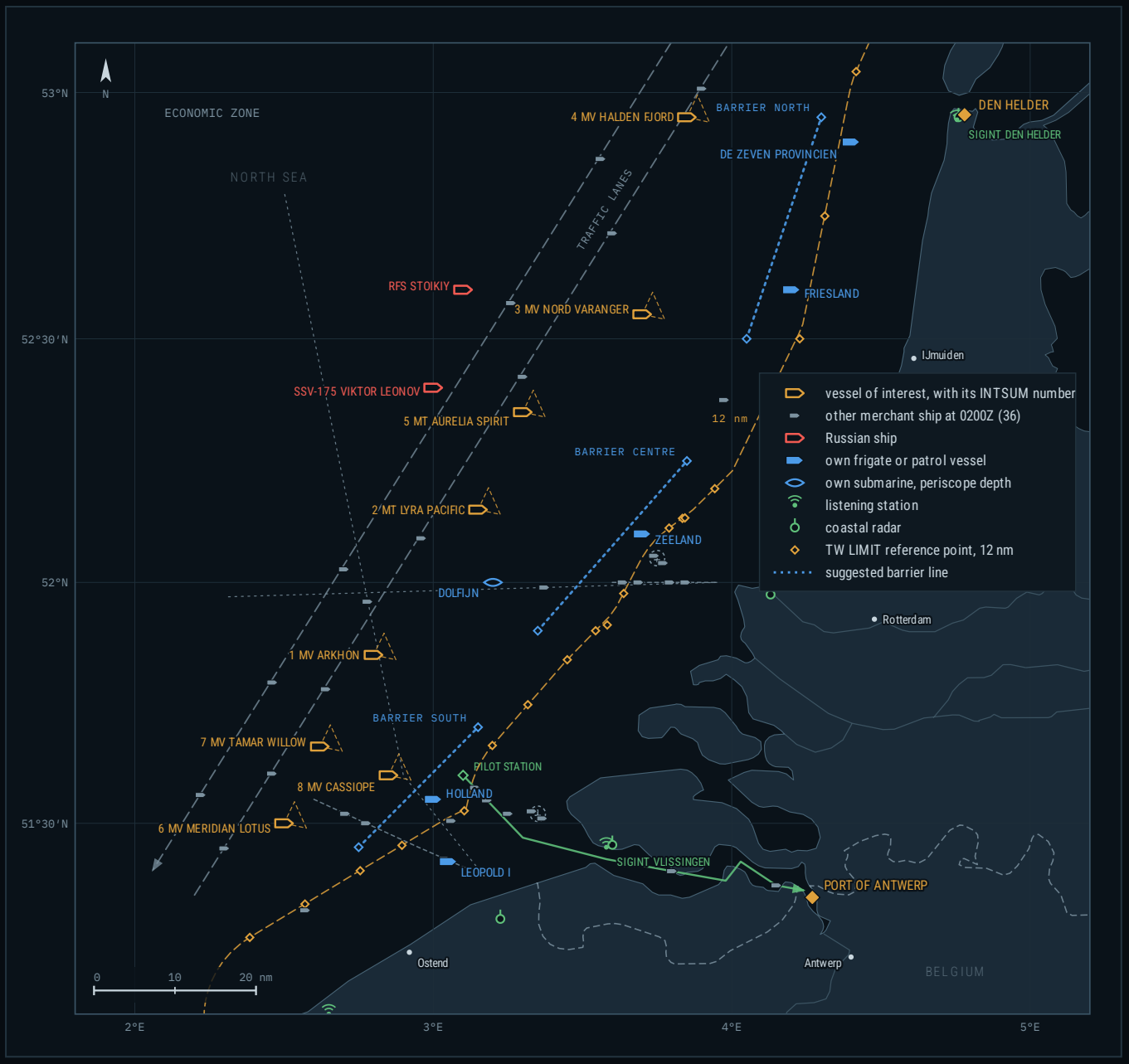
The sea in front of the two countries is never empty. **Forty-four merchant ships** are in it at 0200Z: container ships, tankers and bulk carriers in the two traffic lanes that run from the Dover Strait to the German Bight; ships going in and out of Zeebrugge, the Scheldt and the Maas; two ferries; supply vessels of the wind farms; ships at anchor off Vlissingen and off the Maas; two trawlers. All are shown NEUTRAL. Eight of them are the vessels of interest of section 4.

Reference points help you read it: **TW LIMIT 01 to TW LIMIT 20** mark the limit of territorial waters; PILOT STATION, VLISSINGEN ROADS, ANCHORAGE VLISSINGEN, ANCHORAGE MAAS, LANE SW and LANE NE mark the traffic; and three pairs, **BARRIER SOUTH A–B, BARRIER CENTRE A–B and BARRIER NORTH A–B**, suggest where a line of ships or fighters could stand between the waiting area and the coast. They are suggestions and nothing more.



Five of the eight vessels of interest wait at sea between the latitudes of Walcheren and Den Helder; three more, declared for Antwerp, wait off the Belgian coast for their turn up the Scheldt. All eight are outside the 12 nm line. The grey arrows are the two traffic lanes, the green line the ordinary way in to Antwerp.

FIGURE 2 — THE SEA AREA AT 0200Z

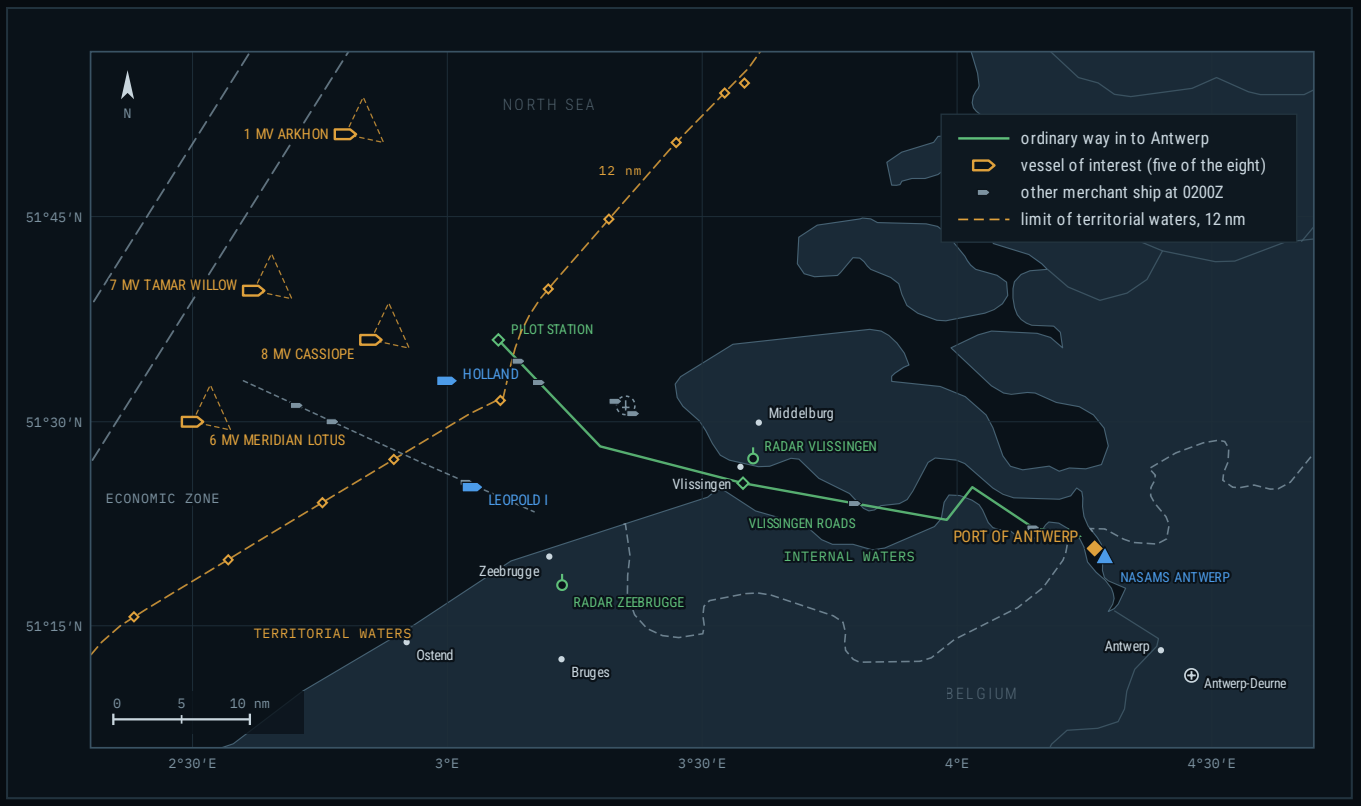


The numbers are those of the intelligence summary. The dotted amber triangle beside each vessel of interest is the small loop on which she waits, at three to five knots. The small grey marks are the other thirty-six merchant ships where they are at 0200Z; they move. The thin dotted lines are the ferry routes.

2.3 The Scheldt

Antwerp is fifty miles from the sea. A ship bound for it takes her pilot at the **pilot station**, off Walcheren, crosses the 12 nm line, passes **Vlissingen roads** and follows the river past Terneuzen to the docks. From the pilot station to her berth she makes about twelve knots and takes some four hours. Three of the vessels of interest are declared for Antwerp; nobody can tell you when each will ask for her pilot.

FIGURE 3 — THE APPROACH TO THE SCHELDT

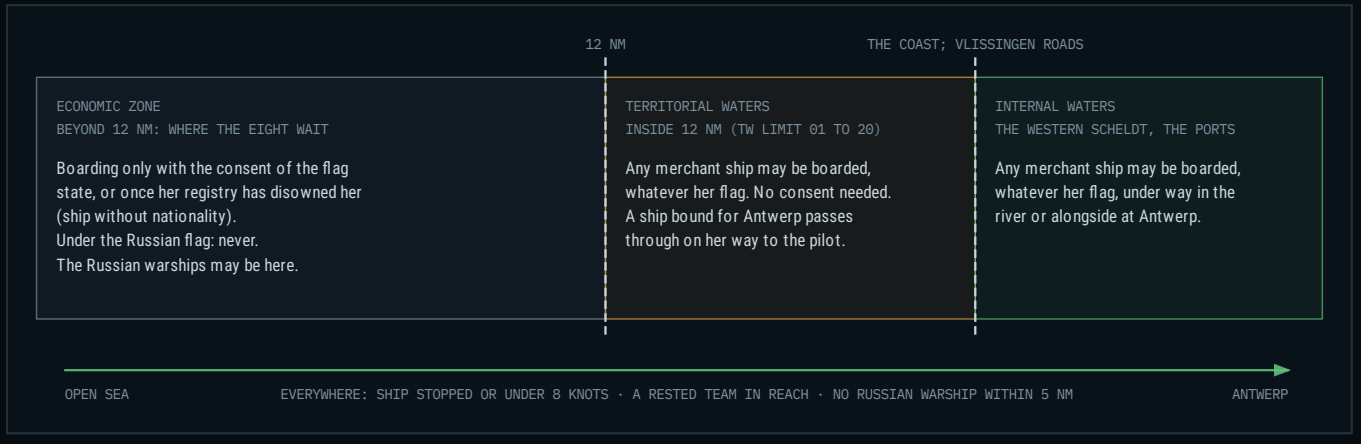


A ship that waits west of the amber line is in the economic zone. On her way in she is in territorial waters from the line to Vlissingen roads, and in internal waters from there to her berth. NASAMS ANTWERP stands one mile from the port site.

2.4 Three zones, three answers

Where a ship is decides what you may do to her. The legal adviser applies three zones, and the game applies the same three.

FIGURE 4 — THE THREE LEGAL ZONES



ZONE	WHERE	BOARDING A MERCHANT SHIP
Internal waters	The Western Scheldt from Vlissingen roads, and the ports	**Always lawful, whatever her flag.** No consent needed
Territorial waters	From the coast out to 12 nm: inside the line TW LIMIT 01 – 20	**Always lawful, whatever her flag.** No consent needed
Economic zone	Beyond 12 nm: where all eight vessels of interest wait	**Only with the consent of her flag state, or once the registry she claims has disowned her** (she is then a ship without nationality). **Never a ship under the Russian flag**

In all three zones a boarding also needs the ship stopped or making less than 8 knots, a rested team close enough, and no Russian warship within 5 nm of her (section 6.6). Stopping a ship by radio and asking her flag state are lawful everywhere and need no evidence; boarding the wrong ship is paid for.

2.5 Light, weather and the clock

Every time in this pack and in the game is **Zulu**; local time in Belgium and the Netherlands is one hour later. At 0200Z the night is dark and moonless. **First light is at about 0613Z** inland and some ten minutes later at sea; the sun rises at about **0736Z** at Kleine-Brogel and 0750Z off Walcheren, and sets at about **1530Z**. It is fully dark again from about 1653Z ashore and 1701Z at sea. A near-half moon rises in late morning and is still up when the operation ends, above the cloud. The sky is overcast all day, with light rain, about 5°C and a moderate sea (sea state 4): **helicopters can put a team aboard a ship all day.**

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3 Your forces

You command **fifty-seven units**: twenty-four aircraft on six airfields, five surface ships and a submarine, five radars, seven counter-drone systems, five missile units, three listening stations, and the seven airfields themselves. One airfield, GEILENKIRCHEN AB, is empty: it is the home of what NATO may send.

3.1 The fighters

CALL SIGN	AIRCRAFT	CARRIES	BASE	AGAINST SMALL DRONES
VIPER 1–4	F-16AM, Belgium	AIM-120B AMRAAM	KLEINE-BROGEL AB	**Their radar does not pick up airframes this small.** Do not count on them
VIPER 5–6	F-16AM, Belgium	AIM-9M Sidewinder	KLEINE-BROGEL AB	The same
LIGHTNING 1–4	F-35A, Belgium	AIM-120C-7, AIM-9X	FLORENNES AB	**Find them at about 24 nm and engage on their own**
ORANJE 1–4	F-35A, Netherlands	AMRAAM and Sidewinder	VOLKEL AB	The same
ORANJE 5–6	F-35A, Netherlands	AMRAAM and Sidewinder	LEEUWARDEN AB	The same

F-16S DO NOT SEE THESE DRONES; F-35S DO

Sixteen fighters, of which ten are of use against a drone. A VIPER can fly past a small drone at a few miles and never hold it. A LIGHTNING or an ORANJE picks one up at about 24 nm and, once the contact shows HOSTILE, engages it without being told. The F-16s are not useless: they are eyes over the sea by day, and a presence. But build the barrier against a formation with F-35s.

Missiles are counted: each fighter base holds about two rearmings for the aircraft based there, and nothing more arrives during the operation. Every missile fired is also money the governments will ask about.

3.2 Drones and helicopters

CALL SIGN	AIRCRAFT	BASE	WHAT IT IS FOR
SKYGUARD 1–2	MQ-9B SkyGuardian, Belgium, unarmed	FLORENNES AB	Long watch over ships from height. Holds a ship from several miles; **never sees a small drone**
REAPER 1	MQ-9A, Netherlands, unarmed	LEEUWARDEN AB	The same
NEPTUNE 1–2	NH90 NFH, Belgium	KOKSIJDE AB	**NEPTUNE 1 carries the Belgian boarding team.** Identifies a ship by camera from close by
KAIMAN 1–3	NH90 NFH, Netherlands	DE KOOY	**KAIMAN 1 carries the Dutch boarding team.** The same

An NH90 finds a ship only from very close and does not see the drone it follows; send it to a ship that something else already holds. Mind the distances: Koksijde is 25 to 35 miles from the three ships off the Belgian coast and 45 miles or more from the others; De Kooy is 35 to 45 miles from the two northernmost ships and 65 or more from the rest.

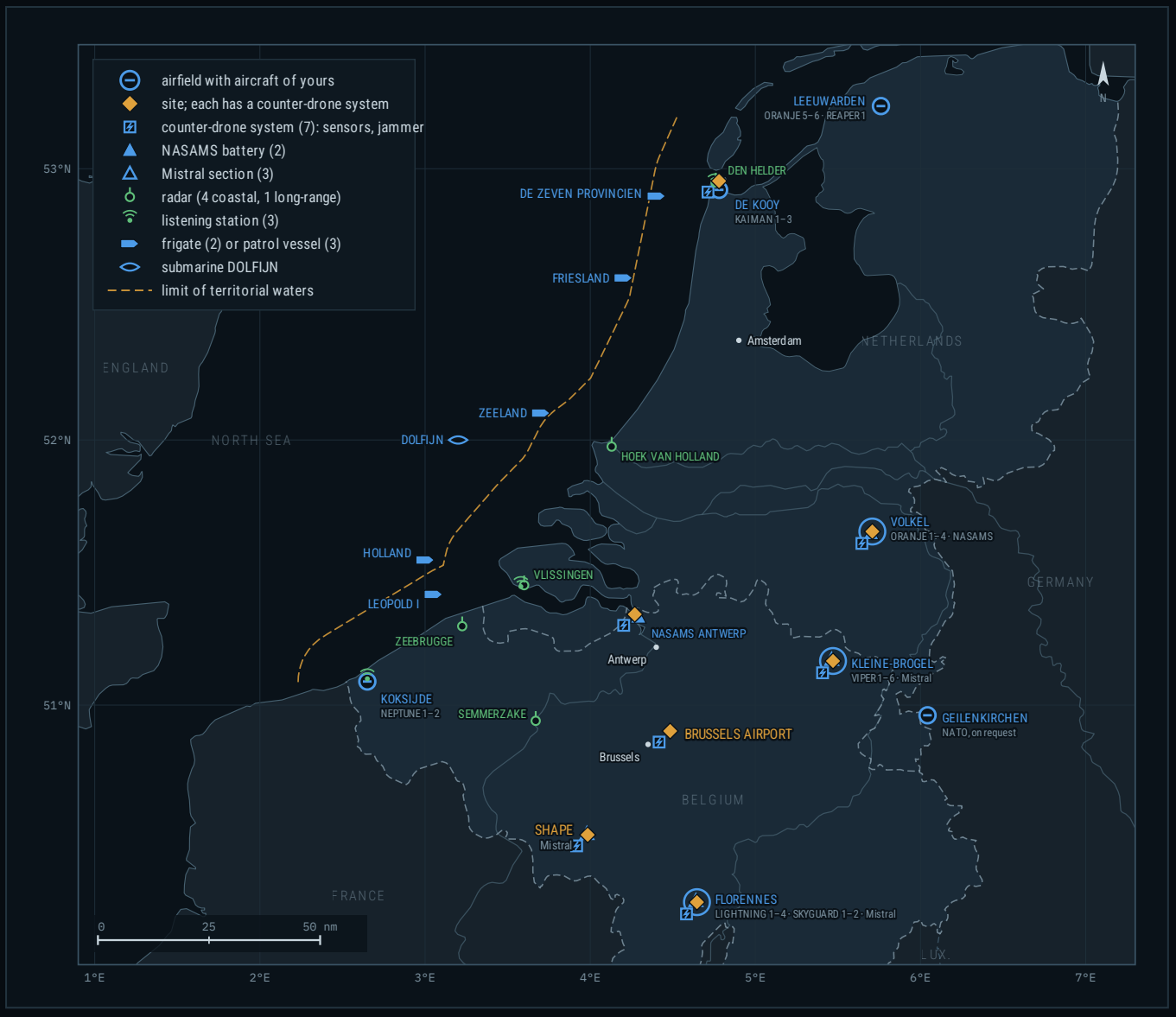
3.3 Ships and the submarine

NAME	TYPE	AT 0200Z	BOARDING TEAM
LEOPOLD I	Frigate, Belgium	Stopped off Zeebrugge, inside territorial waters	**Belgian team**
DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEN	Air-defence frigate, Netherlands	Stopped off Den Helder, inside territorial waters	**Dutch team**
HOLLAND	Patrol vessel, Netherlands	Stopped near the pilot station, just outside 12 nm	Dutch team
ZEELAND	Patrol vessel, Netherlands	Stopped off the Maas, just outside 12 nm	Dutch team
FRIESLAND	Patrol vessel, Netherlands	Stopped north-west of IJmuiden, just outside 12 nm	Dutch team
DOLFIJN	Submarine, Netherlands	Periscope depth in the middle of the area, radar and sonar silent	None

The patrol vessels are your best eyes at sea. One names a merchant ship from 9 to 10 nm, by night as well, and picks up a small fixed-wing drone at about the same distance. The frigates do the same; their missiles and guns are on WEAPONS TIGHT like everything else. **DOLFIJN is never seen by a merchant ship**: she can lie within a few miles of a vessel of interest for hours, holding her through the periscope. She sees no drone and carries no team.

HOLLAND starts six miles from MV CASSIOPE, and DOLFIJN nine miles from MT LYRA PACIFIC. Think before you move either.

FIGURE 5 — BENELUX SHIELD AT 0200Z



Every aircraft is on the ground and ready. The ships are stopped where they are drawn. A counter-drone system stands on each of the seven sites; the port of Antwerp and Volkel have a NASAMS battery, Kleine-Brogel, Florennes and SHAPE a Mistral section; Brussels Airport and Den Helder have no missile unit.

3.4 The two boarding teams

Two teams, no more. The **Belgian team** works from LEOPOLD I or from the helicopter NEPTUNE 1. The **Dutch team** works from DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEN, from HOLLAND, ZEELAND or FRIESLAND, or from the helicopter KAIMAN 1. A team goes aboard from whichever of its platforms is close enough: **within 2 nm for a warship, within 1 nm for its helicopter, which must be in the air**. A boarding takes 40 minutes; the team then rests three hours before it can go again. Over twenty-one hours that is a handful of boardings in all. Section 7.2.

3.5 Radars and counter-drone systems

Four coastal radars, RADAR ZEEBRUGGE, RADAR VLISSINGEN, RADAR HOEK VAN HOLLAND and RADAR DEN HELDER, and the long-range **RADAR SEMMERZAKE** radiate all day. A coastal radar picks up a small fixed-wing drone at 10 nm or less and a quadcopter from much closer: the coast is watched in patches, not as a wall.

Each of the seven sites has a **counter-drone system**: CUAV KLEINE-BROGEL, CUAV VOLKEL, CUAV ANTWERP, CUAV BRUSSELS, CUAV DEN HELDER, CUAV FLORENNES and CUAV SHAPE. It has a short-range radar, cameras and a jammer, and no weapon. It tells you how many drones are over its site and whether its jammer is on. **Between the coast and the final miles round a site, nothing of yours on the ground tracks a small drone**: over land, only an F-35 is known to hold one.

3.6 Missile units, and their limits

UNIT	WHERE	WHAT IT HAS TODAY
NASAMS ANTWERP	The port of Antwerp	A full battery with its reloads. **One missile per target**
NASAMS VOLKEL	Volkel air base	A peacetime alert detachment: **six missiles ready, no reloads**, one missile per target, **and it does not fire beyond 8 nm**
MISTRAL KLEINE-BROGEL	Kleine-Brogel air base	**Four missiles ready, no reloads**, one per target. A few miles of reach
MISTRAL FLORENNES	Florennes air base	The same
MISTRAL SHAPE	SHAPE, Mons	The same

These are alert detachments, not a wartime defence. They fire, like everything else, only at a contact shown HOSTILE. **A site's own missiles will not stop a formation by themselves**, and Den Helder and Brussels Airport have none. What stops a formation is F-35s, over the sea or over open country, before it arrives.

3.7 The listening stations

SIGINT KOKSIJDE, SIGINT VLISSINGEN and SIGINT DEN HELDER see nothing on the map by themselves. While drones are in the air they hear bursts of the control link and report the bearing of each. Section 5.3 says what the bearings are worth.

3.8 What NATO can add

NATO holds a small pool of reinforcements for you. One Special Action asks for them, one at a time and in a fixed order: first a **P-8A maritime patrol aircraft**, with you 90 minutes after the request, from the north-west; then an **E-3A** from Geilenkirchen, 60 minutes after the request. Each costs one from the pool. The P-8A watches and names ships over a wide area; the E-3A gives you a radar picture over the whole theatre for hours. Both recover to GEILENKIRCHEN AB. Section 7.5.

3.9 What you see but do not command

The merchant ships are NEUTRAL contacts of a side of their own. **The drones** are UNFRIENDLY contacts named UAV-01, UAV-02 and so on, in the order in which they appear. **The two Russian ships** are UNFRIENDLY. **Map markers** appear for 45 minutes where something has fallen or

exploded: orange for a drone brought down (DRONE DOWN) or wreckage on a town (WRECKAGE), red for an explosion on a site (EXPLOSION). They show as contacts and they are not targets. **Listening bearings** appear as pairs of reference points named SIG with the station and the time, and disappear after 40 minutes.

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4 The adversary, as known

4.1 Three roles

The staff believes that three ships work together, and that each does one thing.

ROLE	WHAT SHE DOES	WHAT GIVES HER AWAY	FOUND ABOARD, IF SHE IS BOARDED IN TIME
The launcher	Sends the fixed-wing drones off her deck, in pairs for surveillance, together for a formation	A launch seen by one of your units; a close inspection	A launch rail, fuel, airframes
The recoverer	Takes the drones back aboard when they come home	A recovery seen; a drone followed home; a close inspection	A recovery net, airframes just flown
The relay	Passes the control link between the pilots and the drones; she can also fly small quadcopters over a port from close by	The listening bearings, which point at her; a launch seen; a close inspection	A control cabin, relay aerials, men who are not on the crew list

Nobody knows which ship plays which part. The intelligence summary narrows it to eight names.

4.2 The eight vessels of interest

The game gives the same list in its first message, with the flag each ship claims today. Flags are not printed here: read them in the game, because **the flag decides whether and how she can be boarded**.

NO.	NAME	TYPE	LAST REPORTED	WHY SHE IS WATCHED
1	**MV ARKHON**	bulk carrier	31 nm north-west of Westkapelle	AIS switched off for thirty hours; drifting with no declared destination
2	**MT LYRA PACIFIC**	tanker	37 nm west of Hoek van Holland	Owner under EU sanctions; waiting “for orders” for three days
3	**MV NORD VARANGER**	container ship	32 nm west of IJmuiden	AIS switched off; slow box courses clear of the traffic lanes
4	**MV HALDEN FJORD**	supply vessel	31 nm west of Den Helder	Chartered through a shell company; no offshore work declared in this area
5	**MT AURELIA SPIRIT**	tanker	37 nm north-west of Hoek van Holland	Changed name and flag twice this year; loitering
6	**MV MERIDIAN LOTUS**	container ship	23 nm north-west of Ostend	Declared for Antwerp; has refused two earlier pilot slots
7	**MV TAMAR WILLOW**	bulk carrier	28 nm north-west of Ostend	Declared for Antwerp; unexplained aerials reported by a pilot last month
8	**MV CASSIOPE**	ro-ro ship	21 nm north-west of Zeebrugge	Declared for Antwerp; crew list changed at sea, AIS intermittent

Every one of the eight is in the economic zone and waits there at a few knots. Numbers 1 to 5 have no declared destination and no reason to come closer. Numbers 6 to 8 are expected at Antwerp: each will, at some hour of her choosing, take a pilot and go up the river, through territorial and then internal waters.

A reason to be watched is not evidence. Most of these ships are what their papers say. Section 5 is about telling them apart.

4.3 The Russian corvette and the intelligence ship

The corvette **RFS STOIKIY** and the intelligence ship **SSV-175 VIKTOR LEONOV** are in the economic zone, some fifty miles off the Dutch coast, shown UNFRIENDLY. They are warships of a state with which nobody is at war, in waters where any navy may sail.

	THEY MAY	THEY DO NOT
Where	Sail anywhere in the economic zone, as close to any ship as they please	They have not entered territorial waters and are not expected to
A merchant ship	**Stand close to her.** While RFS STOIKIY is within 5 nm of a ship, no team of yours goes aboard, by sea or by air	They do not board, stop or fire at anyone
You	Watch you, listen to you, and report	**They do not fire first.** Fired on, they defend themselves against anything of yours within reach, for as long as the firing lasts and some time after

The corvette carries a helicopter. Watch where the two ships go: a navy does not escort a stranger. But their presence beside a merchant ship is no evidence in law, and **nothing is ever fired at them** (section 6.5).

4.4 The surveillance drones and the quadcopters

OBJECT	ON YOUR SCREEN	FLIES	WHAT IT DOES
Fixed-wing surveillance drone	UAV-nn UNFRIENDLY	about 60 kt, about 300 m	Leaves a ship in the economic zone, usually as one of a pair; takes more than an hour to reach a base; circles it within a few miles for an hour or so; flies back to sea to be taken aboard. Seen so far over Kleine-Brogel, Volkel and Brussels Airport
Quadcopter	UAV-nn UNFRIENDLY	about 45 kt, about 120 m	Short-legged: half an hour in the air. It can only come from a ship a few miles away. The place for it is the port of Antwerp, and the ship is one in the river or alongside

Both depend on their control link. Neither is armed, as far as anyone knows. **They are not hostile and nothing fires at them unless you order it** (section 6.2).

4.5 A formation that heads for a site

The staff fears something else: **several fixed-wing drones leaving a ship together and flying straight at a military site**, faster than the surveillance drones, low, in a group. It could happen in either night, and more than once. The military sites are the obvious targets.

Nobody knows what such a formation carries. It may be a rehearsal with cameras; it may carry warheads. It does not depend on its control link: **jamming does nothing to it**. From the waiting area to a site it has between half an hour and two hours to fly, most of it over the sea and then over towns. You will first see it where your sensors are: an F-35 or a patrol vessel at sea, otherwise only the final miles round the site.

> WHAT THE STAFF DOES NOT KNOW
>
> — Which of the eight launches, which recovers, which relays; and whether the list is even right about all three.
>
> — When the next drones leave, and for which site.
>
> — Whether a formation will come, when, how many drones, at which site, and what they carry.
>
> — When each of the three ships declared for Antwerp will go up the river.
>
> — What the Russian ships have been told to do.

5 How to find them

5.1 What sees what

The whole operation turns on who can see whom, and from how far.

FIGURE 6 — WHAT SEES WHAT



Nobody sees a launch as a radar event: a drone appears when a sensor that can hold it is close enough. A drone leaving a ship fifty miles out is seen at once only if an F-35, a patrol vessel or a frigate is near that ship.

To hold drones: F-35s in the air (about 24 nm each), a patrol vessel or a frigate at sea (10 nm or less), the coastal radars along the shore and the counter-drone systems round the sites.

To hold ships: the patrol vessels and frigates (they name a ship from 9 to 10 nm), the MQ-9s from height, the submarine through her periscope, the P-8A if you ask for it, and the helicopters from very close. **You must hold a ship as a contact for anything to be recorded against her**: a launch nobody was watching, bearings that cross on an empty patch of your picture, count for nothing.

5.2 Launch seen, recovery seen

The best evidence is the act itself. If one of your units is within a few miles of a ship, and you hold that ship as a contact, when a drone leaves her deck, the unit reports it:

```
HOLLAND [B2] - LAUNCH SEEN at 1712Z: 2 small aircraft left the deck of MV …
Recorded.
```

The same holds when a drone is taken back aboard: **RECOVERY SEEN**. A warship, a helicopter or a fighter must be within a few miles of the ship to see either; an MQ-9 or the P-8A sees it from further off; the submarine only from close. There is a second way to a recovery: **follow a drone home**. An aircraft of yours that is right behind a drone you hold as a contact, when it is taken aboard, reports the ship that took it.

A report marked **Recorded** is evidence that stands: it supports a request for consent, and it supports a name in your report.

5.3 The listening bearings

While drones are airborne, each of the three stations reports from time to time the bearing of a burst of the control link:

```
SIGINT VLISSINGEN [B2] - Control-link burst on bearing 287° at 0233Z
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Each bearing is drawn on the map as two reference points, one at the station and one seventy miles along the bearing, and stays for **40 minutes**. Draw the line between them in your head, or with the distance tool.

One bearing is a line. Two that cross give an area, not a name. A bearing is good to a few degrees, and at fifty miles a few degrees are several miles of sea with several ships in it. The listening cell says so itself the first time: "One crossing names nobody: the cell needs the same result again, several times, before it puts a name on a hull." It names a ship only when the crossings have fallen on the same contact several times over, **and only if you hold that contact**. That takes hours, not minutes, and it takes drones in the air: when the sky is empty the stations are silent.

What the bearings do at once is tell you **where to put your eyes**: which patch of sea, and which two or three ships in it, deserve a patrol vessel at ten miles or the submarine.

5.4 Close inspection

A warship or a helicopter that stays **close alongside one of the eight for several minutes** looks at her decks and reports, without any order from you:

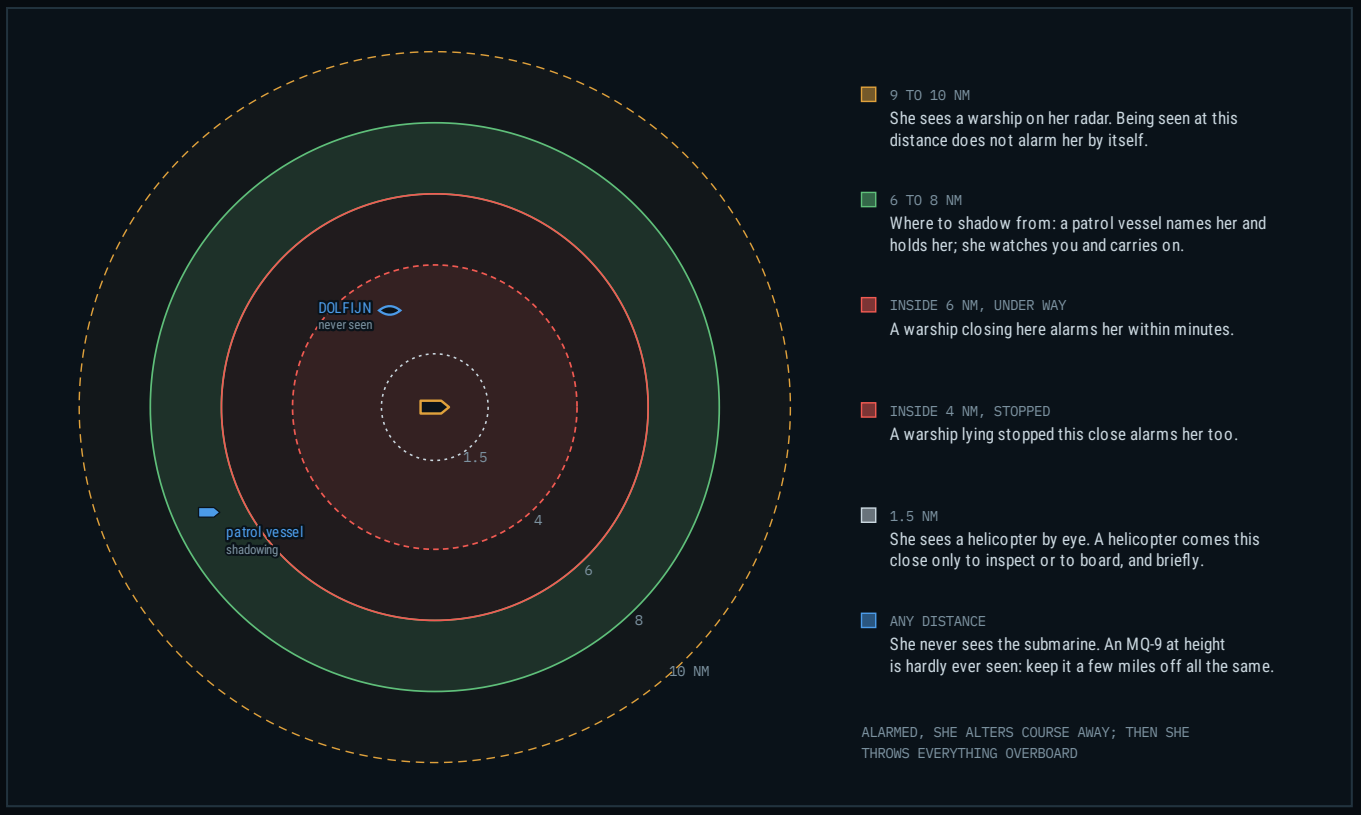
```
NEPTUNE 2 [B2] - Close inspection of MV … at 0921Z: a cleared after deck, a short
ramp under a cover and aerials that are not on her plans; nobody on the bridge wing
would look at us.
```

or, marked [B3], "deck cargo as declared, nothing out of place". An inspection is a look, not a proof. **It can miss what is under a tarpaulin, and it can take an innocent deck cargo for something else.** A positive one is worth having when you ask a flag state for its consent; it is thin ground for a name. The same ship is not inspected again for some hours. And an inspection is made from inside the distance at which she sees you (section 5.5): by day, with a helicopter, briefly.

5.5 How a watched ship reacts

A ship with something to hide watches her radar and her horizon. **A warship closing inside 6 nm, or lying stopped inside 4 nm, alarms her within minutes.** So does a helicopter that lingers close to her. An order to stop alarms her at once.

FIGURE 7 — DISTANCES ROUND A SHIP WITH SOMETHING TO HIDE



First she alters course. If you hold her and have a unit near, it tells you: "... has altered course away at ... and is working up speed. She knows she is watched." She runs to seaward and settles somewhere else. While she feels watched she launches nothing and takes nothing back: drones on their way home find no deck. Leave her alone and she calms down.

Then she throws everything overboard. If the pressure goes on, the crew put the crates over the side: "Whatever she carried is going to the bottom: a boarding will find nothing now." From that moment she is an ordinary ship, and you have lost her for good. **A launcher that reaches that point first sends off everything she has left**: you will have destroyed your evidence and brought on the attack you were trying to prevent.

An innocent ship does none of this. She does not care who watches her.

SHADOW FROM 6 TO 8 NM, AND BOARD BY HELICOPTER

Shadow with a patrol vessel at 6 to 8 nm, with the submarine at any distance, or with an MQ-9 standing a few miles off. Do not steam at her. Do not stop beside her.

Board by helicopter. A warship that closes to 2 nm to put a team aboard is seen coming for half an hour. A helicopter is seen only in the final mile and a half: bring NEPTUNE 1 or KAIMAN 1 in fast, once everything else is ready, and give the order as it arrives. A ship that waits at three to five knots is already slow enough to board: she needs no order to stop.

5.6 The evidence a boarding or a name needs

WHAT YOU HAVE AGAINST HER	WHAT IT IS WORTH
A place on the INTSUM list; a radar switched off; a Russian warship near her	Nothing in law. A reason to look
A positive close inspection	A little. It helps a request for consent; it may be wrong
A launch seen, a recovery seen, or the listening cell naming her	**Solid.** Flag states seldom refuse on this; a name given on it stands
A boarding that finds the material	**Conclusive.** Ship and crew are held for the prosecutor

For a boarding in the economic zone you need the consent of the flag state, and a flag state weighs what you show it: the more you have recorded against the ship when you ask, the likelier the answer is yes. Some registries answer yes easily, some seldom; a registry that has never heard of the ship makes her a ship without nationality, which may be boarded; Moscow always refuses. After a refusal you may ask once more, and only if something new has been recorded since. Asking costs nothing: **ask early, and ask about more than one ship**.

For a boarding inside 12 nm or in the river you need no consent at all. But you still need to be right: an innocent ship seized is paid for wherever it happens.

For a name in the report you need nothing but your own conviction, and the governments will judge it on what was recorded. A ship boarded and held is the best name there is. A ship caught in the act and never boarded is still a good one.

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6 Rules of engagement and the law

6.1 WEAPONS TIGHT everywhere

Every unit of BENELUX SHIELD starts on **WEAPONS TIGHT**, in the air, on the surface, under it and on land: it fires at a contact shown as HOSTILE and at nothing else. At 0200Z nothing on your screen is HOSTILE. This is peacetime, over two countries that are not at war, and the two governments have kept for themselves the one decision that changes that.

RULE 1 · NOTHING IS FIRED AT A SHIP

Not a merchant ship, whatever she has done, and not a Russian ship. A ship is taken by a boarding team or she is not taken.

RULE 2 · SURVEILLANCE DRONES ARE NOT HOSTILE

They are shown UNFRIENDLY and stay so. Nothing fires at them unless you order it yourself, drone by drone, **and never over a town**.

RULE 3 · A FORMATION IS RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENTS, FIVE MINUTES AFTER YOU FIRST TRACK IT

It then shows HOSTILE. **Engage it over the sea or over open country, never over a town.**

RULE 4 · WHERE IT FALLS IS YOURS TO ANSWER FOR

A drone brought down within 4 nm of a town puts its wreckage on the roofs, whether you shot it or jammed it.

RULE 5 · A SHIP IS BOARDED ONLY WHERE THE LAW ALLOWS IT

Anywhere inside 12 nm; beyond, with the consent of her flag state or once her registry has disowned her; never under the Russian flag out there; never with a Russian warship within 5 nm.

6.2 Surveillance drones

A surveillance drone does no physical harm. You may leave it, jam it or shoot it down.

Leaving it costs you with the parliaments and the press for every minute it circles a site, and puts an open airport at risk if it passes near one. But a drone in the air is also what makes the listening stations talk, and a drone that flies home leads to the ship that takes it aboard.

Jamming it (section 7.3) brings most drones down within two minutes; a few turn for home. No missile is spent, and the wreck goes to the technicians, who learn from the first one they can take apart.

Shooting it down needs your own order: mark the contact hostile yourself, or order a unit to engage it. The game sets these contacts back to UNFRIENDLY every minute, so a mark does not last: units on WEAPONS TIGHT will not go on firing at the others by themselves. Look at what lies under the drone before you do it.

Either way, **every drone brought down is one less thread to pull**: no more bearings from it, no recovery to watch. Protecting a site and finding the ships pull in opposite directions all day, and the balance is yours.

6.3 The release of a formation

When you first hold as a contact any drone of a group flying together towards a site, the CRC announces it:

```
CRC - NEW FORMATION at …: slow contacts flying together, low, … This is not
surveillance. The governments are being asked for a decision; hold your fire until
it comes.
```

Five minutes later Brussels and The Hague release it: “ENGAGEMENT AUTHORISED”, with the number of contacts, their heading and the region they seem to be making for. The whole formation

then shows HOSTILE, and every unit on WEAPONS TIGHT within reach engages it without further order.

— **The five minutes start when you first track it.** A formation nobody tracks is never released. The earlier you see it, the further from its target it is when you are free to fire: that is the case for F-35s and a patrol vessel well out to sea, between the waiting area and the coast.

— **Do not mark it hostile yourself before the release.** It does not hold, and it is not your decision.

— **You are never told what it carries.** Treat every formation as armed.

— **Jammers do nothing to it.**

6.4 Towns

Fourteen towns count, with the port of Antwerp: Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels, Mechelen, Hasselt, Eindhoven, Breda, Rotterdam, The Hague, Middelburg, Den Helder, Mons and Charleroi. **Anything brought down within 4 nm of one of them falls on it.** Two sites are next to a town: the Den Helder naval base is in the town of Den Helder, and SHAPE is on the edge of Mons; whatever is shot down in the final miles there falls on houses. The port of Antwerp is a built-up area in itself. Kleine-Brogel, Volkel and Florennes stand in open country.

You can choose for the fighters, by where you put their patrol. You can hold a missile unit for the minutes a track takes to clear a town: select it, open its doctrine window (Ctrl+F9) and set Weapon Control Status, Air to HOLD, then back to TIGHT. A formation engaged over the sea falls into the sea.

6.5 Ships, and the Russians

Nothing is fired at a ship, merchant or Russian. No warning shot, no disabling fire. Units on WEAPONS TIGHT will not do it by themselves, since no ship is ever shown HOSTILE; it can only happen by your hand, by marking a ship hostile or ordering an attack. Do neither.

A merchant ship hit by your fire is a disaster for both governments, whatever she was carrying. A Russian unit hit is worse: “Moscow speaks of an act of war; every allied capital is on the line.” And the Russian ships then **go to action stations and return fire** against anything of yours within reach, for as long as they are fired on and for a while after. They do not fire first. If one of them is sunk, the governments order all weapons held and **the operation is over**.

6.6 The law of boarding

Section 2.4 gives the three zones. In practice:

— **A ship waiting in the economic zone** can be boarded only after her flag state has said yes, or her registry has said it does not know her. Ask with **Vessel - Ask flag-state consent**; the answer takes 20 to 50 minutes.

— **A ship under the Russian flag** cannot be boarded out there at all, and Moscow does not change its answer. If she comes inside 12 nm she is boardable like any other.

— **A ship on her way up the Scheldt** needs no consent once she has crossed the 12 nm line; but she is making about twelve knots under pilotage, and must be stopped or alongside before a team can go aboard.

— **RFS STOIKIY within 5 nm of a ship** forbids any boarding of that ship, by sea or by air, for as long as the corvette stays that close. You cannot make her leave. You can wait, or board the other ship.

6.7 What mistakes cost

Brussels and The Hague follow the operation together, and three things hold them up: their **international legitimacy**, **public opinion** at home, and **allied cohesion**.

WHAT	WHO JUDGES IT	WHAT DAMAGES IT
International legitimacy	The flag states, the shipowners, the courts, Moscow	An innocent ship boarded, above all in the economic zone; an innocent ship named; **anything fired at a ship**
Public opinion	The parliaments, the mayors, the press, the airports	Wreckage on a town; an explosion on a site; a near miss between a drone and an airliner at an open airport; airports closed for hours; drones filmed over the bases night after night
Allied cohesion	NATO, the allied capitals	A site struck; an innocent ship seized or named; an aircraft of yours lost; anything fired at a Russian unit

What mends them is the opposite: **a lawful boarding that finds the material** helps all three at once; formations shot down clear of towns help at home; a ship named on evidence helps abroad.

During the day the capitals ask questions: parliaments, mayors, airport operators, shipowners, the harbour masters, the press, NATO, Moscow. Nobody waits for an answer in words. Each looks at the record half an hour later and draws its own conclusion: a question that finds a clean record helps you, one that finds a bad one hurts.

The governments warn you when one of the three is eroding fast, again when it is critical, and say what it takes to mend it. **If one of them collapses the governments fall**: the caretaker cabinets order all weapons held and the operation is over.

7 Special Actions guide

7.1 How they work

Command cannot ask a flag state for its consent, put a boarding team on a merchant ship or close an airport. Those acts are **Special Actions**, in the Special Actions window of the **Game** menu. There are **nine**, in **four families**: the selected vessel, the sites, the airports, the authorities. The answer to each comes back as a message, and when an action cannot be carried out the message says why.

Four of them act on a merchant ship: select her first. Click the ship's contact on the map, one ship only, then run the action. With nothing selected, or something that is not a merchant ship, the action answers "Select one merchant vessel on the map (click its contact), then run the action again." The two jammer actions look at the selection too: they act on the CUAV units you have selected, or on all seven sites if none is selected.

Three of them need two clicks: Vessel - Board, NATO - Request reinforcement and Report - Name the selected vessel. The first click changes nothing: it checks the conditions, shows what would happen and ends with "To CONFIRM, run this same action once more within 10 minutes." The second click, on the same action (and, for a vessel, with the same ship selected), carries it out. Wait more than ten minutes, or run another of these three actions in between, and the confirmation is forgotten: start again.

Before the clock is started every action answers "Start the clock first."; once the operation has ended, "The operation is over." There is **one action per state, never a toggle**: one to switch on, another to switch off. The names below are exactly those of the game.

FAMILY	ACTIONS	SELECT FIRST	CLICKS
The selected vessel	Vessel - Ask flag-state consent Vessel - Order to stop Vessel - Board	One merchant ship	1 1 2
The sites	Sites - Jammers ON Sites - Jammers OFF	One or more CUAV units, or nothing for all seven	1 1
The airports	Airports - CLOSE Airports - REOPEN	Nothing	1 1
The authorities	NATO - Request reinforcement Report - Name the selected vessel	Nothing One merchant ship	2 2

7.2 The selected vessel

Vessel - Ask flag-state consent

Asks the state whose flag the selected ship claims to confirm her registration and to consent to a boarding. The request goes through the Foreign Ministries.
Needs: a merchant ship selected. Nothing else: no unit near her, no evidence. She does not know you asked.
Answers: at once, the time window in which to expect the reply; **20 to 50 minutes** later, one of three: **consent** (“She may be boarded in the economic zone”); **refusal** (“it finds no ground for one”); or **no record of the ship**: she is then a ship without nationality and may be boarded.
After a refusal: one renewed request is possible, and only if something new has been recorded against her since: a launch or a recovery seen, a close inspection report, bearings that cross on her. A second refusal is final. Moscow refuses once and for all.
Costs: nothing.
When: early, and for every ship you may want to board in the economic zone; the answer is slow and the consent, once given, stays. Better still after something has been recorded against her. Not needed inside 12 nm: the adviser tells you so if she is already there.

Vessel - Order to stop

Orders the selected ship by radio to stop and wait.
Needs: a merchant ship selected, and **one of your warships or helicopters within 4 nm of her**.
Answers: an ordinary ship acknowledges, stops her engines and **waits 90 minutes**, then gets under way again. A ship with something to hide may not answer and run for the open sea instead, and from then on she knows she is watched. A ship under pilotage in the Scheldt fairway may answer that she cannot stop.
Costs: nothing by itself; but the harbour masters and the shipowners count the orders, and the ship you were shadowing is no longer in doubt about you.
When: seldom. To board a ship that is making more than 8 knots, inside 12 nm, when you are sure enough of her to go aboard at once. **A ship waiting at a few knots does not need it.**

`Vessel - Board`

Puts a boarding team aboard the selected ship. **Run it twice**: the first click checks the conditions and shows them, the second confirms.
Needs, in the order in which they are checked: the ship **stopped or under 8 knots**; a **rested team in reach**, within 2 nm aboard a warship or within 1 nm aboard its helicopter, airborne (Belgian team: LEOPOLD I, NEPTUNE 1; Dutch team: DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEN, HOLLAND, ZEELAND, FRIESLAND, KAIMAN 1; no helicopter boarding above sea state 5); a **legal basis** (always in internal or territorial waters; in the economic zone, consent of the flag state or a ship without nationality, never a ship under the Russian flag); and **no Russian warship within 5 nm** of her.
Answers: first click, which team is ready aboard which unit, the legal basis, and the time of its report. Second click, "The … team is away from … and going aboard …". The ship is stopped while the team is aboard. **Forty minutes later** the boarding party reports one of three things: she is yours, with what was found, and ship and crew are held for the prosecutor; or nothing was found, "empty lashings on the after deck, a wet rail, and a master who smiles", and there is no ground to hold her; or she is what her papers say, and she is released with a claim from her owner.
Costs: the team, for 40 minutes aboard and **three hours of rest** afterwards. An innocent ship boarded is paid for, more dearly in the economic zone.
When: when the ship is slow, the law is on your side, the helicopter is arriving and the corvette is elsewhere. Keep the platform in reach between the two clicks.

7.3 The sites: jammers

`Sites - Jammers ON`

Switches ON the jammer of the site whose CUAV unit is selected, or of **all seven sites if no CUAV unit is selected**. Several CUAV units may be selected together.
Does: breaks the control link of any surveillance drone or quadcopter that comes **within 3 nm** of the site. Most come down within two minutes; some turn for home. The CUAV unit reports each one: "DRONE DOWN" with an orange marker, or "It has not come down: it has turned away and is leaving the area."
Does not: anything to a formation heading for a site.
Costs or risks: jamming disturbs civil satellite navigation and airport systems round the site and costs for every hour it stays on; the broadcasters notice. A drone that comes down within 4 nm of a town is wreckage on the roofs: at the port of Antwerp, always.
A second click: answers that the jammer is already ON.
When: at the site that is being overflown, for as long as it is, and with the selection made: an order given with nothing selected lights all seven.

`Sites - Jammers OFF`

Switches OFF the jammer of the site whose CUAV unit is selected, or of all seven sites if no CUAV unit is selected.
For: ending the cost and the disturbance; and letting drones fly again when you want the stations to hear them or a ship to take them back under your eyes.
Answers: the list of sites switched off; "No jammer is ON." if there was nothing to do.
When: as soon as the sky over the site is empty.

7.4 The airports

`Airports - CLOSE`

Closes Brussels Airport, Antwerp-Deurne and Eindhoven together. Flights divert.
For: a closed airport cannot have an incident with a drone. While an airport is open, a drone within 8 nm of it can cause one: an airliner on final passing a drone at less than a hundred metres.
Costs or risks: every hour of closure costs money, and public patience after three hours in all. The airlines ask how long.
A second click: answers that the three airports are already closed.
When: while drones are over or near Brussels Airport and its jammer has not cleared them; not as a precaution for the day.

`Airports - REOPEN`

Reopens Brussels Airport, Antwerp-Deurne and Eindhoven together.
For: ending the cost of the closure.
Costs or risks: while an airport is open, a drone within 8 nm of it can cause an incident.
When: as soon as the drones near the airports are gone or down.

7.5 The authorities

`NATO - Request reinforcement`

Asks NATO for a reinforcement, one per request, in a fixed order: **first a P-8A** maritime patrol aircraft, arriving from the north-west **90 minutes** later; **then an E-3A** from Geilenkirchen, **60 minutes** later. **Run it twice**: the first click shows what would come, when, and the cost; the second confirms.
Needs: something left in your reinforcement pool. Each request costs 1; the first click tells you how many you have.
Answers: on arrival, “The P-8A (NATO P-8A) is entering from the north-west … heading for the middle of the economic zone. It is yours; it recovers to Geilenkirchen.” The E-3A (NATO E-3A) takes off from Geilenkirchen and heads for the Antwerp–Eindhoven area. Both are then ordinary units under your orders: give them a patrol.
Refused: when the pool is empty; when both have already been asked for; and when it is too late for the aircraft to arrive before the operation ends.
When: the P-8A early, while there are ships to sort; the E-3A before the evening.

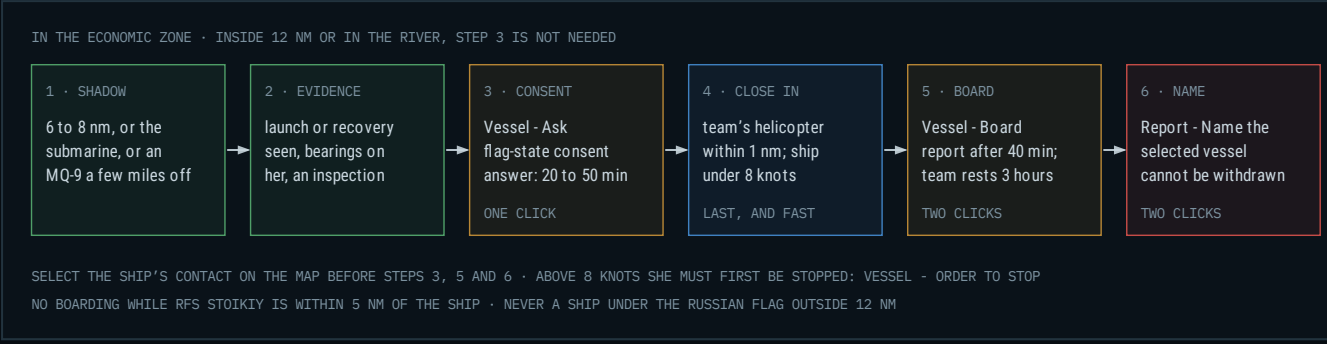
Report - Name the selected vessel

Names the selected ship to the governments as part of the drone operation. **Run it twice**: the first click asks ("You are about to name … to the governments (name 1 of 3). A name cannot be withdrawn."), the second confirms.
Needs: a merchant ship selected. Any merchant ship can be named, at any time, wherever she is, boarded or not.
Limits: three names at most, and a name cannot be withdrawn. At the third name the report is closed and goes to Brussels and The Hague.
Judged: when the operation ends, name by name, on what was recorded against each ship.
When: a ship boarded and held: at once. A ship caught in the act: when you are sure you will get nothing better. A guess: never. **Give your last name well before 2300Z**: the report is read a few minutes before the end, and a name given after that is refused.

7.6 A worked sequence

An example, in the economic zone, with a ship called here MV EXAMPLE. Every game is different: the ship, the hours and the answers will not be these.

FIGURE 8 — FROM THE SHADOW TO THE REPORT



1. **Shadow.** The bearings of two stations cross twice near the same group of ships. You send ZEELAND to lie seven miles from the group, moving slowly, and an MQ-9 to circle a few miles off. You now hold MV EXAMPLE as a contact, by name.
2. **Evidence.** At dusk two drones leave her deck: "ZEELAND [B2] - LAUNCH SEEN at …: 2 small aircraft left the deck of MV EXAMPLE. Recorded."
3. **Consent.** You select MV EXAMPLE and run **Vessel - Ask flag-state consent.** The legal adviser gives the window for the answer. You order KAIMAN 1 to start up, and keep ZEELAND where she is. Thirty-five minutes later: "… confirms the registration of MV EXAMPLE and consents to a boarding. She may be boarded in the economic zone."
4. **Close in.** RFS STOIKIY is twenty miles away. MV EXAMPLE is still on her loop at four knots. KAIMAN 1 flies straight at her, low and fast.

5 **Board.** As the helicopter comes inside one mile you select MV EXAMPLE and run **Vessel - Board**: “The Dutch team is ready aboard KAIMAN 1, 0.8 nm from MV EXAMPLE. Legal basis: consent of … The team will report at about … and then rests three hours. To CONFIRM, run this same action once more within 10 minutes.” You run it again at once. Forty minutes later: “MV EXAMPLE is ours. Found aboard: a launch rail, fuel, and airframes of the type seen over the bases, some still crated. Ship and crew are held for the prosecutor.”

6 **Name.** With MV EXAMPLE still selected you run **Report - Name the selected vessel**, twice. “MV EXAMPLE named at … (1 of 3).” The Dutch team is available again three hours after its report.

Inside 12 nm or in the river the sequence is shorter and harder: no step 3, but the ship is under way at twelve knots. Either stop her (**Vessel - Order to stop**, with a unit within 4 nm, and she may refuse in the fairway) or wait until she is alongside at Antwerp, where a helicopter within one mile is all it takes.

7.7 Common refusals, and what to do

THE GAME ANSWERS	IT MEANS	DO THIS
Nothing usable is selected …	No contact, several contacts, or one of your own units is selected	Click the merchant ship’s contact, one only, and run the action again
… is not a merchant vessel	You selected a Russian ship, a drone or a marker	The vessel actions and the report work on merchant ships only
STOP ORDER REFUSED - No warship or helicopter of yours within 4 nm …	Nobody is close enough to give the order; the message names your nearest unit and its distance	Close to 4 nm, knowing she will see you, or do without the order
… answers that she is under pilotage in the fairway and cannot stop	A ship in the Scheldt that will not stop for you	Follow her to her berth; board her alongside
… does not answer on channel 16. She alters course to seaward and works up speed	She had something to hide, and now she knows	Fall back to shadowing distance and let her settle; a boarding needs her under 8 knots
BOARDING REFUSED - … is making … knots: too fast for a team	She is above 8 knots	Wait for her to slow or berth, or order her to stop
BOARDING REFUSED - No boarding team in reach …	The message says which: a team resting until a stated time, or no platform close enough, with the nearest and its distance	Bring a platform of the other team; a helicopter must be airborne and inside 1 nm, a warship inside 2 nm
BOARDING REFUSED - No legal basis …	She is in the economic zone and her flag state has not been asked, has not answered yet, or has refused	Ask; wait for the answer; after a refusal, gather something new and ask once more; or wait until she is inside 12 nm
BOARDING REFUSED - … flies the Russian flag and is in the economic zone …	She cannot be boarded there, ever	Shadow her and collect evidence; name her if it is solid; board only if she comes inside 12 nm

THE GAME ANSWERS	IT MEANS	DO THIS
BOARDING REFUSED - RFS STOIKIY is … nm from …	The corvette is within 5 nm of her	Wait until the corvette moves on, or turn to another ship. Never force it
… has refused for … A renewed request needs something new against her	Nothing has been recorded against her since the first request	A launch or a recovery seen, a close inspection, bearings that cross on her; then ask again, once
NATO - REFUSED: your reinforcement pool is empty	Nothing left to ask for	Do with what you have
NATO - REFUSED: too late …	It would arrive as the operation ends	Ask earlier next time: the P-8A needs 90 minutes, the E-3A 60
REPORT - The report is closed …	Three names have gone	Nothing: a name cannot be withdrawn or replaced
A first click that seems to do nothing	Board, NATO and Report wait for a second click within 10 minutes	Read the message, then run the same action again

THREE THINGS THAT ARE EASY TO GET WRONG

Jammers ON with nothing selected lights all seven sites. Select the CUAV unit of the site you mean first. The same goes for Jammers OFF.

A consent is for one ship and a boarding team is for one boarding. Asking costs nothing and can be done for several ships; boarding spends a team for nearly four hours. Board the ship you are surest of.

A name cannot be taken back. Three guesses are worse than one name with evidence, and worse than two.

7.8 What they do not do

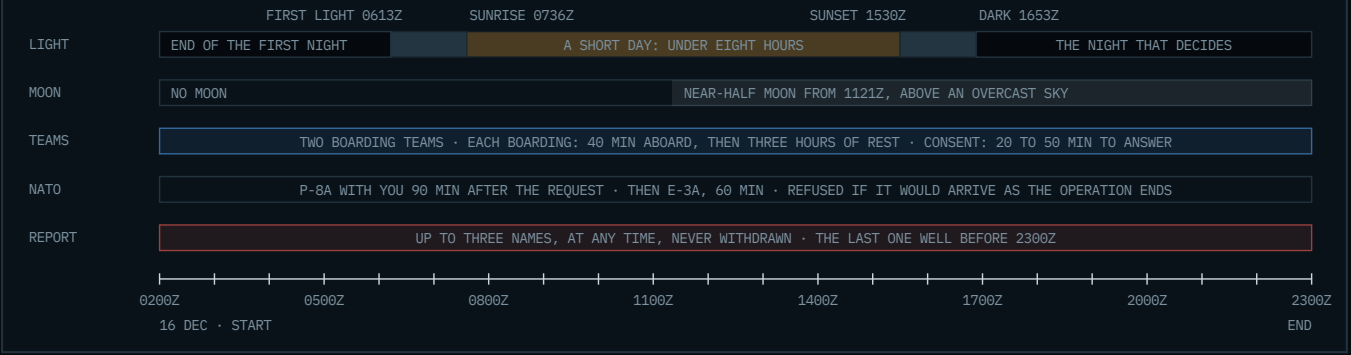
No Special Action finds a ship, identifies a contact, marks a drone hostile, launches an aircraft or builds a patrol. None fires a weapon. The picture is your sensors'; the decision to shadow, to ask, to board and to name remains yours.

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8 The twenty-one hours

The operation runs from **0200Z to 2300Z**: the end of one night, a short day, then the night that decides. Nobody can give you the hour of a launch, of a formation or of a ship's move up the river. What is fixed is the light, the delays of your own means, and the end.

FIGURE 9 — THE TWENTY-ONE HOURS



Times of light are for Kleine-Brogel; at sea the sun rises a quarter of an hour later and sets a few minutes later. No time is shown for a launch, a formation or an arrival: none is known.

PERIOD	LIGHT	WHAT TO EXPECT	WHAT TO DO WITH IT
0200Z – 0613Z End of the first night	Dark, no moon, overcast, light rain	Drones over the bases now; more may come, and Brussels Airport has been visited before. The stations report bearings while drones fly. Drones go home before day: somebody takes them aboard. **A formation is possible in any hour of darkness**	Get eyes to sea without alarming anyone; F-35s airborne on the seaward side; decide site by site on the jammers; read the bearings; ask early for the consents you may need, and for the P-8A
0613Z – 0736Z Dawn	First light to sunrise	The last drones leave or are recovered. The sky empties, and the stations fall silent with it	Watch the recoveries if you hold the right patch of sea; bring fighters home to rearm and rest
0736Z – 1530Z The short day	Daylight under cloud, under eight hours	Probably no drones: the overflights of the past year came after dusk. The ships wait. The Russian ships move as they please. The ships declared for Antwerp may begin to move	**The time for the sea.** Sort the ships, shadow, inspect from a helicopter, obtain consents, board what the night has proven. Rest the crews you will need after dark. Have both teams fresh by dusk if you can
1530Z – 1653Z Dusk	Sunset to full dark	The hour at which drones have come before. Bearings start again with them	F-35s and patrol vessels in place before sunset, not after; eyes on the ships you suspect when the first drones leave
1653Z – 2300Z The night that decides	Dark, a half moon above the cloud	Surveillance over the bases and the airport again. Ships arriving at Antwerp, and with them the risk of quadcopters over the port. **If a formation has not come yet, expect it now**	A barrier of F-35s to seaward for the whole evening; CUAV ANTWERP ready; board in the river what could not be boarded at sea; your names in the report in good time

Twenty-one hours are longer than any crew's day and any fighter's fuel. Ten F-35s cannot be airborne all the time; decide when you need them most and let them sleep the rest. The same is true of the two boarding teams: a team spent at 1500Z on a doubtful ship is not there at 1830Z.

The game ends at 2300Z. Its closing report is written a few minutes earlier: **anything you want counted, and any name you want read, must be done by about 2250Z.**

9 The first thirty minutes, and how you will be judged

9.1 A checklist for the first thirty minutes

Pause the game after the first minute, when the opening message and the intelligence summary have arrived, and work through this. Menu names are those of Command: Modern Operations 1.10 and may differ slightly on your build.

1. **Read the opening message to the end.** Note the flag of each of the eight vessels of interest: it is given there and nowhere in this pack. A ship under the Russian flag cannot be boarded where she waits.
2. **Find the eight on the map.** They are among forty-four NEUTRAL contacts or not yet in your picture at all. The INTSUM gives a last reported position for each (section 4.2, figure 2).
3. **Deal with the four drones overhead.** Select CUAV KLEINE-BROGEL and CUAV VOLKEL and run **Sites - Jammers ON**; or leave them, for the bearings and the recovery they will give you. Decide on purpose.
4. **Put F-35s in the air on the seaward side.** Open the Mission Editor (**F11**, or the **Missions + Ref. Points** menu), create an air patrol, give it an area between the waiting ships and the coast (the BARRIER reference points are there for that), and assign a pair of LIGHTNING or ORANJE. Keep pairs in hand to relieve them. The VIPERs are not for this.
5. **Send an MQ-9 to sea.** A support or patrol mission for SKYGUARD 1 over the southern ships and REAPER 1 over the northern ones; they take time to arrive and can stay for many hours.
6. **Move the patrol vessels with care.** Plot a course (**F3**) that takes each to 6 to 8 nm from the ships you want named, at low speed for the final miles, and no closer. HOLLAND is already six miles from MV CASSIOPE.
7. **Place DOLFIJN.** She is nine miles from MT LYRA PACIFIC and can go where she likes unseen. Keep her at periscope depth: deep, she sees nothing.
8. **Watch for the first bearings.** They arrive within minutes as SIG reference points. Note where two of them cross, and which ships lie there.
9. **Ask for the P-8A if you want it. NATO - Request reinforcement**, twice. It needs 90 minutes.
10. **Ask for a first consent.** If a ship already stands out, select her and run **Vessel - Ask flag-state consent.** It costs nothing and the answer takes 20 to 50 minutes.
11. **Keep the helicopters on the ground** until there is a ship to inspect or to board. NEPTUNE 1 and KAIMAN 1 are the only two that carry a team.
12. **Leave everything on WEAPONS TIGHT.** There is nothing to change.

9.2 How you will be judged

At the end the governments weigh the day under three heads: what happened to the sites and the ships, what it did to them politically, and what it cost. No figures are given here. What they want is this.

THE GOVERNMENTS WANT	WHICH MEANS
The sites not struck	No formation reaching a site. A formation shot down over the sea or open country is a success; an explosion on a site is a failure, and a site hit several times a grave one
No wreckage on towns	Nothing shot down or jammed down within 4 nm of a town. Better a drone that circles ten minutes longer than a drone in a street
The ships taken, lawfully	A ship boarded with a legal basis while her material is still aboard is the best result of the day; the launcher above all, then the recoverer, then the relay
Ships named on evidence	Each right name counts, more if something was recorded against her; each wrong name costs more than a right one gains; no name at all is a failure too
No innocent ship seized	A wrongful boarding is paid for in legitimacy and in allied trust, and more dearly in the economic zone
Nothing fired at a ship	The gravest fault of the day. Fire at a merchant ship or at a Russian unit can undo everything else; a Russian unit sunk ends the operation
The bases not left to the drones	Every minute a surveillance drone circles a site whose jammer is off is noticed. So is the first wreck handed to the technicians, in your favour
A bill they can defend	Missiles fired, hours of jamming, hours of closed airports and incidents at open ones all cost; so does an aircraft of yours lost, to anything, running out of fuel included

Shooting the formations down and finding nothing at sea is not a success: the ships are still there tomorrow. **Taking a ship and letting a site be struck is not one either.** The order asks for both, and the day is long enough for both.

If you play the campaign, what the governments think of you at 2300Z, what is left of NATO's pool, what you lost and what the boardings brought to light go with you to the next operation.

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10 Setting up, versions and credits

10.1 Building the scenario

The scenario is not delivered as a file: it is built in a minute by a script, the **builder** ("Kleine-Brogel, 2026 - Builder.lua"), which creates the sides, the units, the reference points, the Special Actions and the engine. There is one version of the scenario and no training version.

1. Start Command: Modern Operations and open the **Scenario Editor** with a **new, empty scenario** on the DB3000 database, v519.
2. Open the **Lua script console** (Editor menu), paste the whole text of the builder into it and **run** it. Run it **once only**: a second run on the same scenario stops by itself.
3. Read the end of the console output. Every line begins with **[S07]**. The last line counts the operations and must show no failure; the control line above it must show **57** units created for the player and **44** merchant ships.

4. Check the manual settings of section 10.2.
5. **Save the scenario as "Kleine-Brogel, 2026.scen" without starting the clock.** The game sets itself up during the first minute of play: a save made after the clock has run is a game in progress, not the scenario. To play again, start again from the save made here.
6. Load the save in normal play, on the side BENELUX SHIELD, and start the clock. The opening message arrives within the first minute.

10.2 Manual settings to check

WHERE	SETTING	VALUE
Scenario time	Current time **and** start time	**16/12/2026 02:00:00 Z**. The script sets them and says in the console whether it succeeded; check both
Scenario time	Duration	**21 h 00 min**
Scenario	Title; player side	Kleine-Brogel, 2026; BENELUX SHIELD
Scenario	Complexity; difficulty	5 / 5; 5 / 5
Editor > Scenario Features & Settings	Unlimited base magazines	**Not ticked**
	Aircraft damage	**Ticked**
	Detailed gun fire control	**Ticked**
	Communications disruption	**Not ticked**
Editor > Add/Edit Sides	SHIPPING, INTRUDERS, RAID ONE, RAID TWO, RUSSIA, DAMAGE REPORT, IMPACT REPORT	Each set to **"Computer-only"**
	BENELUX SHIELD	Awareness **Normal**

DAMAGE REPORT and IMPACT REPORT are the two sides that carry the orange and red map markers. If you ever see units of yours aiming at a red marker, set the land Weapon Control Status of BENELUX SHIELD to HOLD; nothing else in the scenario needs it.

10.3 Versions

ITEM	VERSION
Command: Modern Operations	v1.10, build 1900.20
Database	DB3000 v519
Builder	v0.2.1
Campaign	Europe 2026, scenario 7; played after scenario 6
In-game text	English; console output of the builder in French

Stand-ins in the game. The small fixed-wing drones, surveillance and formation alike, are played by an Orlan-10 of the database; the quadcopter by a generic quadcopter. The counter-drone systems are played by a database unit with a radar and cameras; their jammer and its effects are the scenario's own. The listening stations detect nothing by themselves: their bearings are written by the scenario.

10.4 Words used in this pack

AIS The automatic identification signal every merchant ship is supposed to transmit.

CRC Control and Reporting Centre: your command post, at Glons. Signs its messages CRC GLONS or CRC.

CUAV Counter-drone system of a site: sensors and a jammer, no weapon.

Economic zone (EEZ) The sea beyond 12 nm: foreign ships and warships sail there freely.

Flag state The state in whose registry a ship is entered and whose flag she flies.

HOSTILE A contact that units on WEAPONS TIGHT will engage.

INTSUM Intelligence summary: here, the list of the eight vessels of interest.

Internal waters The Western Scheldt from Vlissingen roads, and the ports.

Mistral Very-short-range air-defence missile.

NASAMS Ground-based air-defence system firing AMRAAM missiles.

NH90 NFH Naval helicopter: NEPTUNE (Belgium), KAIMAN (Netherlands).

P-8A, E-3A Maritime patrol aircraft; airborne early-warning aircraft. From NATO, on request.

SIGINT Signals intelligence: here, the three listening stations and their cell.

Ship without nationality A ship whose claimed registry does not know her: she may be boarded on the high seas.

Territorial waters The sea within 12 nm of the coast.

UNFRIENDLY A contact that is watched but not engaged on WEAPONS TIGHT.

WEAPONS HOLD / TIGHT The unit does not fire / fires only at contacts shown as hostile.

[B2], [B3], [C2], [C3] Reliability of a report: the letter for the source, the figure for the information; B2 is good, C3 is to be confirmed.

ZULU UTC. Local time in Belgium and the Netherlands in December is Zulu plus one hour.

Kleine-Brogel, 2026 — Swarm Line, seventh scenario of the *Europe 2026* campaign for Command: Modern Operations. Designer: totobimbo. Written from inside the picture of Commander, BENELUX SHIELD, at 0200Z: what the commander is told, not what is true. The day of 16 December 2026, its orders, ships, events, messages and quotations are invented; the real-world reporting recalled in section 1 is summarised from the scenario's design notes. State borders and coastlines: Natural Earth 1:10 m. Title plate imagery: NASA EOSDIS Worldview.