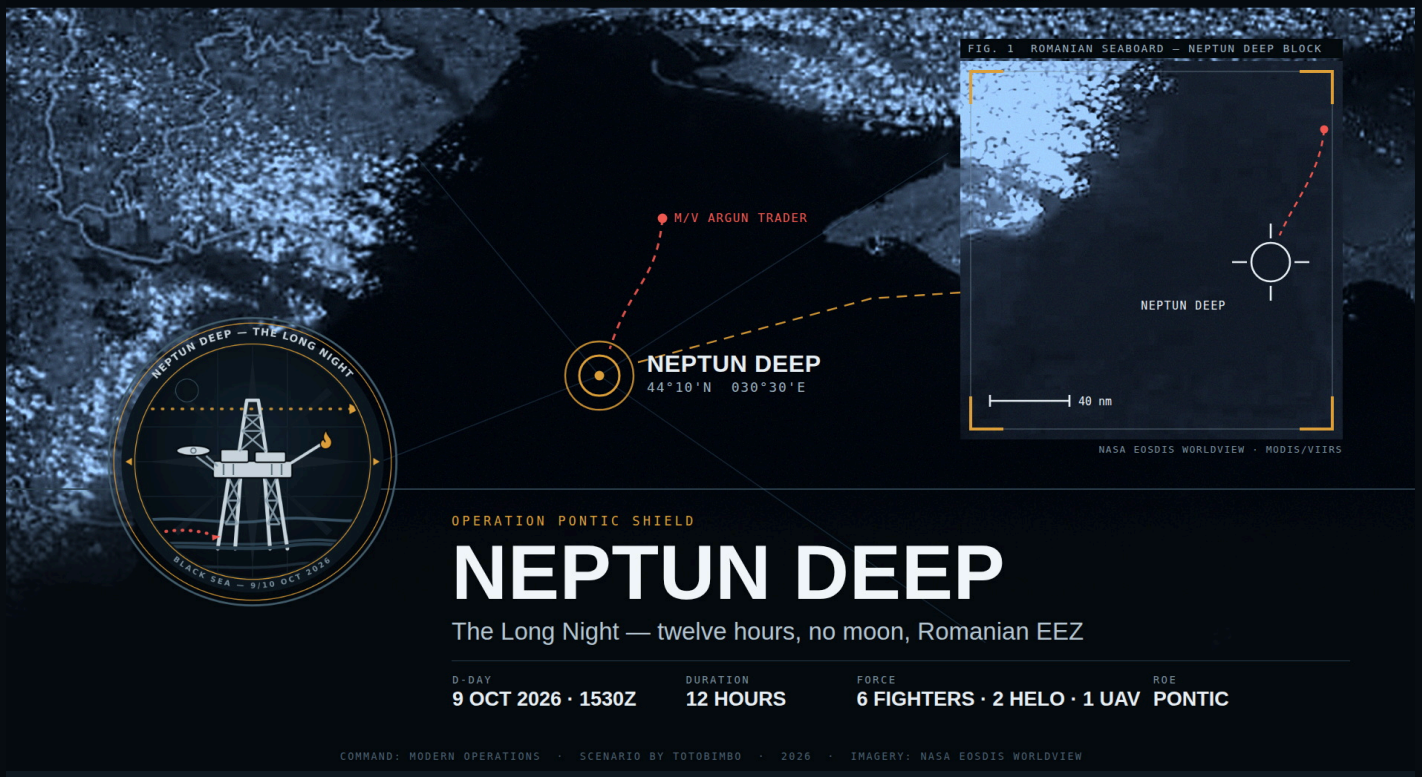
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TITLE PLATE — NEPTUN DEEP, NIGHT OF 9/10 OCTOBER 2026. SATELLITE IMAGERY: NASA EOSDIS WORLDVIEW (MODIS/VIIRS TRUE COLOUR), GEOREFERENCED AGAINST NATURAL EARTH COASTLINES AND RENDERED MONOCHROME. THE BLOCK LIES 80 NM EAST OF CONSTANȚA, INSIDE THE ROMANIAN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE.

OPORD 26-241 · ANNEX B (INTELLIGENCE) · SERIAL 02

Neptun Deep

Briefing pack · Operation PONTIC SHIELD · night of 9/10 October 2026

ORIGINATOR Air Force Staff / Air Operations Centre	COMMAND National — outside the NATO chain	PERIOD 1530Z 9 OCT – 0330Z 10 OCT
AREA Romanian EEZ, NW Black Sea	MOON 2.7% → 0.3% (new moon 10 OCT)	SEA 2, rising 5, easing 3

Four hundred and twelve people are finishing the fit-out of a gas platform eighty miles offshore. You have six fighters, twelve hours of darkness and no moon. Two of those fighters can see the water. This pack is what you know at 1530Z. Some of it is wrong, and that is the point.

CAMPAIGN

This night is the **prologue (S0)** of the campaign *Europe 2026 — Below the Line*. It is the first scenario played, five days before *Baltic Sentinel*. Nothing is inherited; how the night ends is carried into the scenarios that follow. It also plays on its own.

CONTENTS

01 Situation
02 Enemy
03 Sensors, and the loadout decision
04 Provenance

01 Situation

Thirty-six violations of Romanian airspace have been recorded since the start of the war, and the rate has not been constant. Between 24 and 26 July the Air Force shot down three drones in three days, the last of them twelve nautical miles north-east of Sulina, over territorial water.[B] The President called the breaches intolerable and the Russian ambassador was summoned. Nothing changed.

On 20 August the problem moved from the air to the sea. At 0628 a merchant reported an unmanned surface vessel drifting a few hundred metres from the Neptun Deep platform, eighty nautical miles east of Constanța, inside our exclusive economic zone. Two F-16 were scrambled. One destroyed the craft with its internal 20 mm cannon — the first combat gun engagement in the history of this air force, and the first anywhere against a maritime drone. The response was commanded nationally. NATO was informed, not consulted.[C]

WHY THAT MATTERS TONIGHT

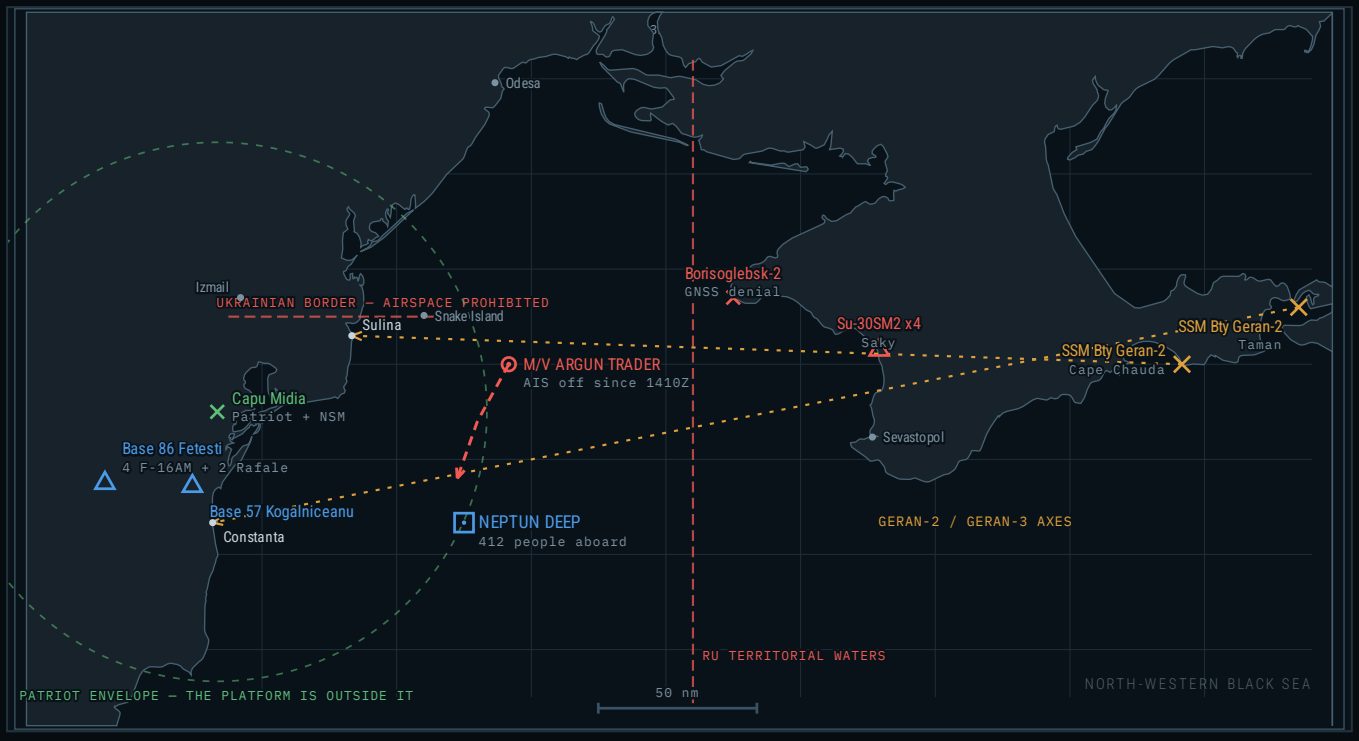
The 20 August precedent is the legal and political frame you inherit. It established three things: that an unmanned craft inside the EEZ may be destroyed; that cannon is the proportionate means; and that this is a Romanian matter.[C][E] All three still hold at 1530Z. None of them will survive an incident involving a manned Russian aircraft.

Neptun Deep is not yet producing. Domino and Pelican South sit under a hundred to seventeen hundred metres of water, a hundred and seventy kilometres off this

coast; four billion euro of development is meant to return eight billion cubic metres of gas a year for about a decade, out of roughly a hundred recoverable, and to make Romania the largest gas producer in the European Union when the field comes on line in 2027.[A]

That last sentence is why you are here. A field that ends Romanian dependence on imported gas is a political object before it is an economic one, and it is being built two hundred kilometres from a war. Tonight it is a construction site with four hundred and twelve people aboard and nothing to defend but them.

FIGURE 1 — THEATRE, NORTH-WESTERN BLACK SEA, 1530Z



The Patriot envelope drawn from Capu Midia is the first thing to look at. Neptun Deep sits outside it by a wide margin. Whatever protects the platform tonight will be flying.

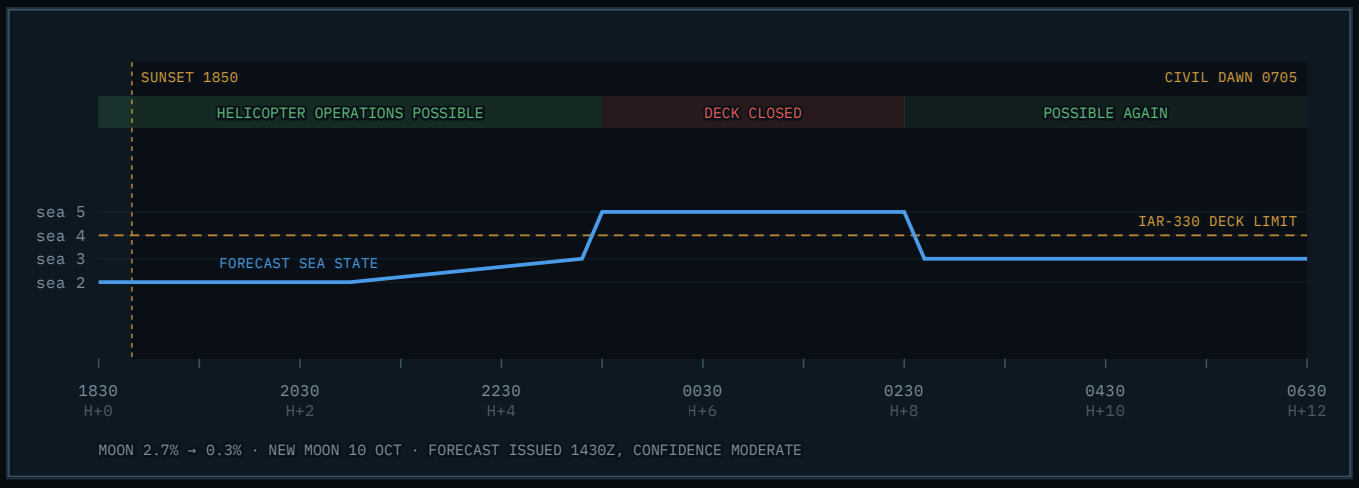
1.1 Weather, and why it is the third party

The met service gives sea state 2 at last light, deteriorating through the evening, a trough at sea state 5 from about 2030Z (2330 local) until roughly 2330Z (0230 local), then moderation to sea state 3 for the rest of the night. Wind 040/18 backing 340/30 through the trough.

Two consequences follow, and they are not symmetrical. Our IAR-330 do not fly off a platform deck in sea state 5. Neither do small unmanned surface craft operate in it — they are five metres long and they broach. The trough protects the platform and closes our options at the same time.

Moonrise is immaterial: the new moon falls on 10 October. Illumination is 2.7 per cent at last light and 0.3 per cent by the end of the night. Sunset 1850 local, civil dawn 0705.

FIGURE 2 — MET FORECAST FOR THE NIGHT, ISSUED 1430Z



This is a forecast, not a schedule. The green bands are where the deck stays open to the IAR-330 if the forecast holds; nobody will tell you when the first one closes, and the met officer puts his own confidence at moderate.

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02 Enemy

2.1 The mother ship

At 1410Z the container vessel **M/V ARGUN TRADER** (IMO 9276541, Cameroon flag, 3,000 TEU, last declared port Novorossiysk) switched off her AIS forty-six nautical miles south-east of Snake Island. Signals intelligence places emitting equipment aboard inconsistent with a merchant hull. Her last track brings her sixty miles north of the block around 1800Z.

She is a civilian vessel in international waters, and nothing she has done so far is a hostile act we could put in front of a court. What follows from that is in the rules of engagement, not here.

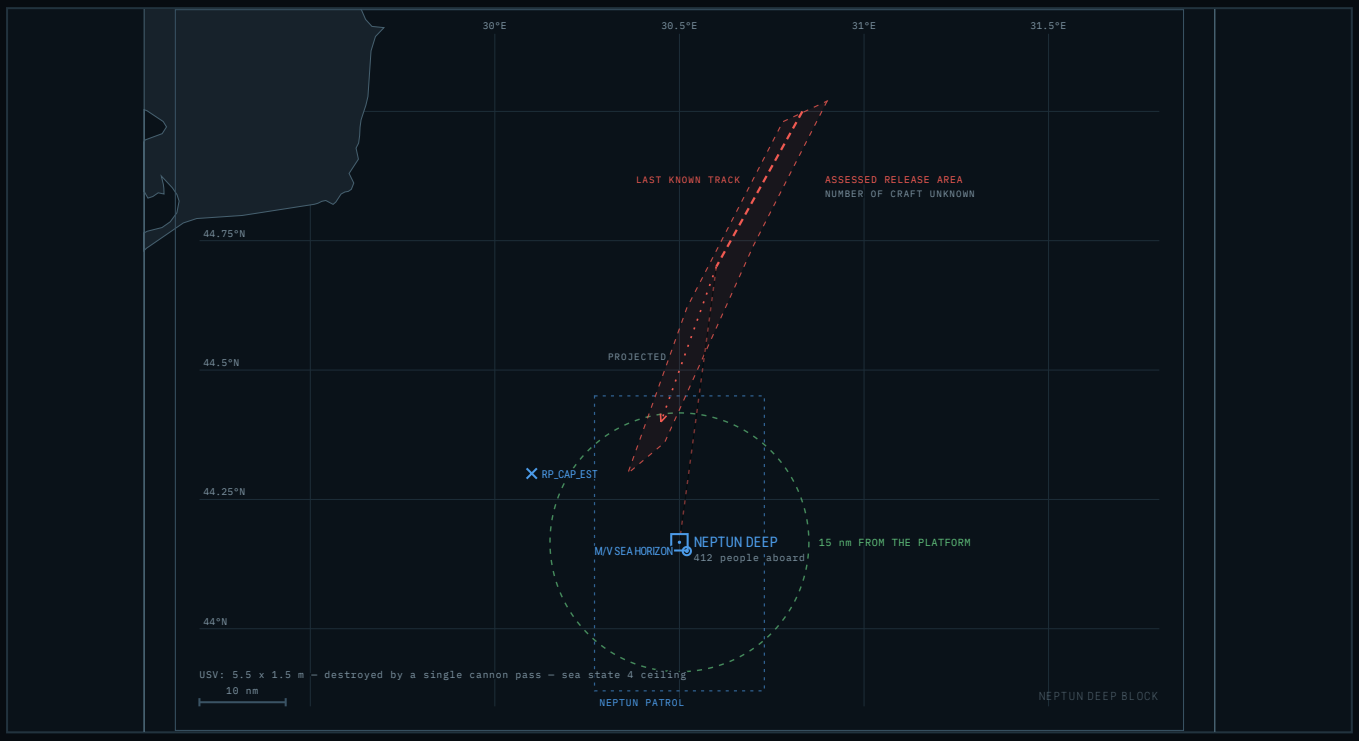
ASSESSMENT	CONFIDENCE	BASIS
ARGUN TRADER is operating as a launch platform	PROBABLE	AIS blackout, emitter fit, track geometry, 20 August precedent
She carries between three and eight craft	POSSIBLE	Hull volume and the single comparable event. No count.
Craft will be released in more than one wave	PROBABLE	Weather window forces it. Sea state 5 grounds them as surely as it grounds us.
She will not fire on our aircraft	CONFIRMED	No weapon fit observed on this hull class in this role
Attribution to the Black Sea Fleet	POSSIBLE	Inference at 1530Z. Expect confirmation late, if at all.

2.2 The craft themselves

Five and a half metres by one and a half, explosive-laden, thirty knots, sitting at wave height. Radar return is marginal against sea clutter. Structural tolerance is negligible: one cannon pass destroys one. A missile destroys one equally well, at four times the cost and at the expense of the air picture.

They cannot operate above sea state 4. This is not a tactical preference, it is a physical limit of the hull.

FIGURE 3 — THE BLOCK, THE ASSESSED RELEASE AREA AND THE FIFTEEN-MILE RING



The shaded box is where the staff assesses craft could be put in the water, given the projected track and the sea. It is an area, not a count, and it is an assessment, not an observation. The

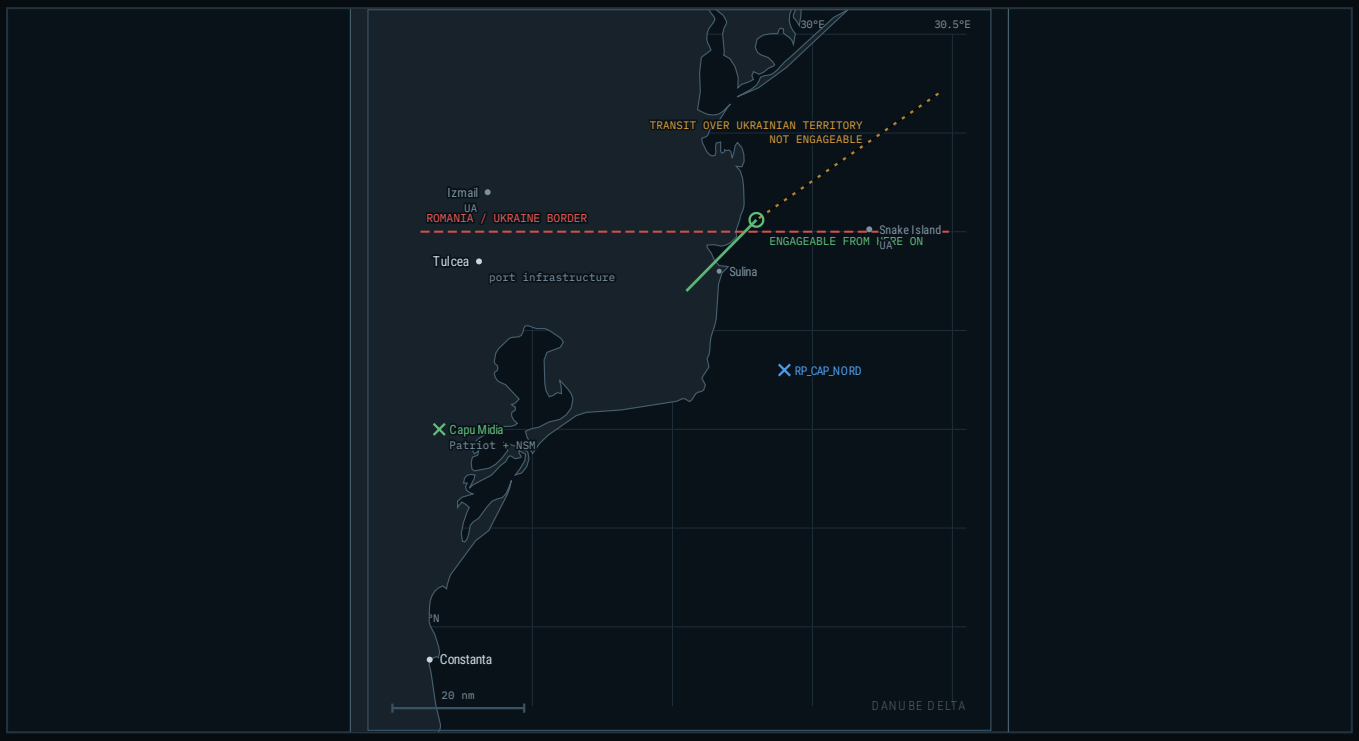
dashed ring is fifteen miles out: a craft met outside it is met with room for a second pass, and a craft met inside it is met once.

2.3 The air axis

Two Geran-2 batteries are active, at Cape Chauda in Crimea and in Krasnodar Krai, with a Geran-3 element held in reserve; between them they reach the delta and the whole Romanian seaboard. These weapons cruise at roughly sixty metres above the sea on a direct track. They do not loiter and they do not manoeuvre. There is no identification problem on this axis and there is no doubt: what there is, is an intercept geometry that punishes late scrambles.

The regiment at Saky holds Su-30SM2 at readiness, and a Borisoglebsk-2 electronic warfare complex is reported at Cape Tarkhankut. Expect a deterrent CAP on the boundary and expect it to stay on its side. Expect GNSS to be denied across the operating area without warning, at the worst moment, because that is what the complex is for.

FIGURE 4 — THE DELTA, AND THE LINE YOU DO NOT CROSS



Geran transiting over Ukrainian territory are not yours. They become yours at the border and not one second earlier. The temptation to meet them early is the single most expensive mistake available on this axis.

03 Sensors, and the loadout decision

Six fighters at Fetești, two helicopters and a TB2 at Mihail Kogălniceanu, one French transport inbound. That is the whole of it, and the detail of it is in Annex A to the order. What matters here is not how many aircraft you have. It is how few of them can see.

THE CONSTRAINT THAT SHAPES EVERYTHING ELSE

The F-16AM carries an APG-66(V)2 MLU radar and an SPS 1000 ESM set. It has no infrared sensor of its own. At night, over water, against a five-metre hull, it is blind unless it carries the Sniper XR pod — and the Sniper pod is only available in the strike fits, which carry bombs and keep only two AMRAAM and two Sidewinders — fewer missiles for the Geran barrier. Three Sniper pods are held in the Fetești magazine with the bombs that go with them: the fit is available on the ground from the start and is chosen in CMO's normal ready/arm dialog.

The Rafale has OSF-IR organically, alongside an AESA radar and a laser rangefinder, and keeps its MICA. It is the only aircraft on this list that can search and fight at the same time. There are two of them, and they hold a quarter of the cannon rounds an F-16 carries — which matters less than it reads. The Giat burst is four times longer than the Vulcan's: **both aircraft get five passes and no more.** What is scarce on this list is eyesight, not ammunition.

A gun pass is flown low. Above roughly a thousand metres the weapon is not offered against a craft five metres long, and an aircraft that has come down to gun has stopped holding the picture. Keep one high to see and bring one down to shoot; a single aircraft cannot do both at once.

FIGURE 5 — WHAT EACH AIRCRAFT CAN SEE, AT NIGHT, ON THE WATER



The loadout decision is made before last light, before the first craft is detected, and before anyone knows how many there are.

3.1 What the ground cannot do for you

Every ground-based system on this coast — the Patriot battery at Capu Midia, the AN/FPS-117, the HAWK at Fetești, the Chiron section at Kogălniceanu — defends the coast, and none of them reaches Neptun Deep. Figure 1 draws the Patriot envelope so that the gap is not a matter of opinion. The FPS-117 will not see a weapon at sixty metres beyond its own horizon either. **The platform is an air problem tonight and it will stay one.**

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04 Provenance

This pack is written from inside the operations centre at 1530Z on 9 October 2026. Its assessments are what the commander believes at that moment. Where they are wrong, that is the design.

OPEN SOURCES BEHIND THE SETTING

The letters are the callouts used in section 01.

— [A] Neptun Deep gas field project, Black Sea, Offshore Technology — the field itself: OMV Petrom and Romgaz since Romgaz bought out ExxonMobil in August 2022, Domino and Pelican South, ten wells on three subsea drill centres, 100 to 1,700 m of water, a 160 km pipeline to shore, $4.37bn of investment, about 100 bcm recoverable and 8 bcm a year for a decade from 2027. **One departure is deliberate:** the real development is an *unmanned* shallow-water platform. The four hundred and twelve people aboard tonight are a fit-out crew, and they are the scenario's invention — without them there is nothing to defend and no night worth flying

— [B] Romania shoots down third Russian drone as President calls breaches intolerable, The Moscow Times, 26 July 2026 — the three shoot-downs, the thirty-six violations, the summons

— [C] Romanian F-16 guns down a sea drone in the Black Sea, 20 August 2026 — the cannon engagement near Neptun Deep, and the national command arrangement

— [D] Romania scrambles F-16s as a Russian drone crosses the Danube border, Kyiv Independent

— [E] Romanian lawmakers adopt law to shoot down drones breaching airspace — the legal basis for weapons free inside the EEZ

— [F] Déploiement MORANE en Roumanie, French Ministry of the Armed Forces — three Rafale and an A400M to Base 86 Fetești at short notice, October 2023

— [G] Mission AIGLE — Dynamic Front 2026 — the standing French presence in Romania

— [H] Side-enablers and GNSS disruption, Matrix Games — how GNSS denial is modelled, and what NOGNSS does to a weapon's CEP

DATABASE

Every platform, sensor, weapon and loadout named here was read out of DB3K_515.db3 by SQL query on 20 September 2026, not assumed: the absence of an infrared sensor on the F-16AM, the 515 and 125 round cannon magazines, the two

structural points and sea state 4 ceiling of the surface craft, the 60.9 m cruise altitude of the Shahed-136. The method and the queries are in the verification note that accompanies this scenario.

Prepared for the Command: Modern Operations scenario **Neptun Deep, 2026 — The Long Night**. Every assessment in this pack is written from inside the air operations centre at 1530Z: it is what the commander believes, which is not the same as what is true.

The civilian vessel names (ARGUN TRADER, SEA HORIZON), the IMO number and all intelligence products here are invented. Military units, bases, weapon systems and their characteristics are real; their presence on this date is a projection. Coastline from Natural Earth 10 m, equirectangular projection scaled on 45°N, WGS 84.

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