

TITLE PLATE — OGLIASTRA AND THE RUSSIAN STATION, 3 NOV 2026. SATELLITE IMAGERY: NASA EOSDIS WORLDVIEW (MODIS/VIIRS TRUE COLOUR), RENDERED MONOCHROME; DANGER AREA, CABLES AND POSITIONS DRAWN OVER IT.

OPORD 26-044 · ANNEX B (INTELLIGENCE) · SERIAL 03

Sardinia Station, 2026

The Ogliastra Watch · Operation NURAGHE · 3–5 November 2026

Originator
CINCNAV, fleet intelligence cell, Santa Rosa, Rome

Fusion support
COA · PISQ range control · MRSC Cagliari · Northwood

For
CTG 452.1, embarked ITS SPARTACO SCHERGAT

As of
03 NOV 26, 1600Z

Order
CINCNAV/OPS/TG452/26-044, DTG 031400ZNOV26

Campaign
Europe 2026 · scenario 3

CONTENTS

1 Situation
2 Four possible explanations
3 Area and geography
4 Forces
5 Constraints
6 What Rome expects
7 Special actions guide
8 The government and the press
9 Provenance
10 Glossary

For two days a Russian destroyer, an oiler and a cargo ship have sat twenty-odd miles off the Ogliastra coast, in international waters, going nowhere. The same three ships did exactly that last February, and nobody ever found out why. This time Rome wants to know, and wants it proved: a submarine on the undersea cables, ears on the Quirra firing, oil changing hands in the dark, or nothing but a flag being shown. Tomorrow NATO fires missiles from the range next door, the mistral is on its way, and the anti-submarine crews have only so many hours to spend.

THE SCENARIO, FOR THE PLAYER RATHER THAN THE COMMANDER

COMPLEXITY

3/5

A handful of ships and aircraft, fourteen special actions, a live-firing range, a mistral and a political layer. No shooting war.

DIFFICULTY

4/5

Every clue can be a false lead, the evidence ripens late, and Rome asks for an answer before you have one. The truth is not the same from one game to the next.

DURATION

36 h

1600Z on 3 November to 0400Z on the 5th: two nights and one day. Four to six hours of play at compressed time.

1 Situation

1.1 A group that does not leave

On the afternoon of 1 November the destroyer *Severomorsk*, the replenishment oiler *Kama* and the Ministry of Defence cargo ship *Sparta IV* slowed off the east coast of Sardinia and stopped. They have not moved on since. They are not transiting, not sheltering from the weather, not waiting for a strait: they hold station some twenty miles east of Arbatax, just outside Italian territorial waters, at a few knots, and they watch.

Italy cannot move them. They are warships and state ships on the high seas, and they are entitled to be there. What Italy can do is watch them more closely than they watch us, work out what they are covering, and tell the government in time for it to act. That is the task of Task Group 452.1, and it is yours from last light today.

1.2 Why Rome is worried

Three things lie within a few hours' steaming of the Russian station, and each of them would explain it. South and north of it run the power and data cables that tie Sardinia to the mainland and to Sicily. West of it, on the coast, is the Salto di Quirra range, where NATO fires live missiles tomorrow. And the Tyrrhenian is a quiet stretch of sea where a tanker without a transponder can meet an oiler at night. Or the Russians may be doing no more than being seen.

> ON THE PUBLIC RECORD, AND IN THIS EXERCISE
>
> **Real (2026, public sources):** in January NATO reported the Italian frigate *Virginio Fasan* tracking the Kilo-class submarine *Krasnodar*, escorted among others by the destroyer *Severomorsk*. From 3 to 9 February *Severomorsk*, *Kama* and *Sparta IV* held station off Ogliastra without any weather reason, then moved up to Capo Comino and the Gulf of Orosei, shadowed by *Spartaco Schergat*, then *Emilio Bianchi*, by P-72 patrol aircraft and by the SIGINT aircraft from Pratica di Mare. On 9 February *Sparta IV* switched her AIS off for most of the day. The reason for the station was never confirmed.
>
> **This exercise:** the group comes back in November. Everything that follows from here on (the intelligence, the events, the messages, the other ships and what the Russians are really doing) is invented for the game. Section 9 separates the two in detail.

1.3 This afternoon

At 1600Z the group lies about twenty-two miles east of Arbatax, round the reference point **RUSSIAN STATION**, making three or four knots. *Kama* and *Sparta IV* transmit on AIS; *Severomorsk*, as warships do, does not. **ITS Spartaco Schergat** is a few miles north-west of the group, taking over the watch as the sun sets. **ITS Virginio Fasan**, with her towed sonar and her helicopter, is to the south; the patrol vessel **Cigala Fulgosi** is off the range, where the Spanish frigate **Cristóbal Colón** lies stopped, ready for tomorrow's firing.

The sun sets at 1616Z. The moon is old and rises only after midnight: the first hours of the night are dark. The NOTAM for tomorrow's firing is published, a mistral is forecast for the Sardinian sea, and the two P-72A crews at Sigonella have a fixed number of flying hours for the whole operation.

If you come to this sequence from the Hoburg Bank and Ushant, October follows you: the mood in allied capitals, the posture of the Russian fleet, what NATO can still spare and what our own intelligence recorded carry over, and the opening message says what has changed.

2 Four possible explanations

CINCNAV's analysts have kept four explanations open. None of them is favoured in this pack, and none should be: **the truth is not the same from one game to the next**, and **more than one activity may be under way at the same time**. Each explanation is given here with what it would mean, and with what it would look like to your sensors if it were true.

2.1 A submarine working on the cables

The group is cover. Its ships make noise, draw the patrol aircraft and hold the Italian frigates' attention while a submarine, quiet and deep, goes about the real business: a cable. It could be mapping it, tapping it, or preparing to cut it. The Baltic has seen cables damaged by ships dragging anchors; this spring the Arctic saw submersibles rehearsing the laying of charges on cables. A Kilo was escorted through these waters in January by the same destroyer.

What it would look like: a submerged contact that is not part of the group and does not stay with it; something slow over a cable route, far from the station; and, if nobody is there in time, a call from the operator of the cable, then a failure. A submarine that knows she has been found and held tends to leave.

2.2 ELINT collection on the Quirra firing

The group is there to listen. NATO fires live missiles from the Salto di Quirra range tomorrow, and every radar, datalink and guidance emission of a live firing is worth recording. *Sparta IV* is not only a cargo ship. The station was taken up two days before the firing.

What it would look like: receivers sweeping the frequencies of the range radars; the group, or part of it, moving closer to the range as a firing window approaches; emitters that come alive with the firing; AIS that goes quiet when it matters. None of this shows if the firing does not take place, or if nobody is close enough to see it.

2.3 An oil transfer at sea

The group is a rendezvous. *Kama* is an oiler; the shadow fleet moves Russian oil around the Mediterranean from ship to ship, away from ports and inspectors. EUNAVFOR MED Irini boarded a doubtful tanker west of Pantelleria in August; a transfer under the guns of a Russian destroyer is a safer place to do business.

What it would look like: a large contact without AIS closing the group, most likely at night; two ships lying stopped together for hours; afterwards, a tanker leaving and perhaps a sheen on the water. A photograph of the two hulls alongside is proof that nobody can argue with.

2.4 A show of presence only

The group is a message. Russia shows that it can sit off an Italian coast, next to a NATO range, for as long as it likes, and watches how Italy reacts. Nothing is hidden. Every lead leads nowhere.

What it would look like: nothing that holds up. Contacts that fade, leads that are not confirmed twice, a picture that stays empty however hard you look. Saying so to Rome takes nerve, because it is the one conclusion that can only be reached by ruling out the others.

2.5 How the intelligence reaches you

Reports come as messages from the sensor or agency that made them, each with a NATO grade for the reliability of the source and the credibility of the information. A report may be wrong, and some will be. When a sensor that was in the right place saw nothing, the message says so first: **NO SIGN OF …** is information too. Leads that go nowhere are part of every game, whatever the truth.

CINCNAV's analysts can tell you where the investigation stands (section 7): for each of the three activities, **NO INDICATION**, **WEAK**, **MODERATE** or **STRONG**. They never say which one is true. A WEAK can rest on a lead that later proves false; MODERATE and STRONG take observations that have held up. A show of presence is what remains if nothing else does.

> GRADES
>
> `A1–B2` Reliable or usually reliable source, confirmed or probably true. Act on it, but not alone if you can help it.
>
> `C3` Fairly reliable source, possibly true. A lead worth an aircraft.
>
> `C4–D4` Doubtful. Note it, and look for a second source.
>
> `E5–F6` Unreliable, improbable, or cannot be judged. Do not build on it.

---

3 Area and geography

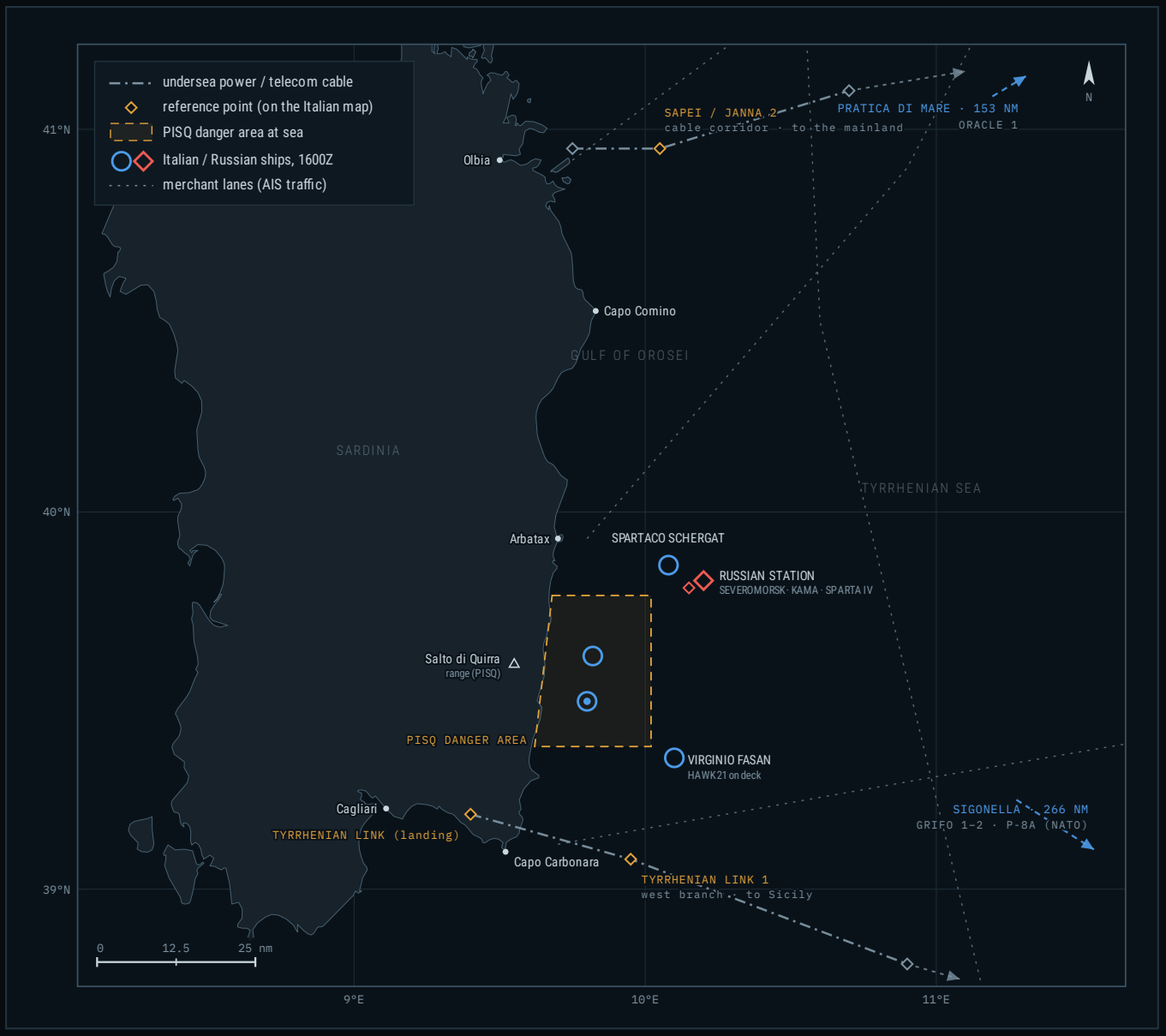
3.1 The east coast of Sardinia

The operation takes place in the Tyrrhenian Sea east of Sardinia, from Cagliari in the south to Olbia in the north. The Ogliastra coast, round Arbatax and Tortolì, is steep and thinly populated; the water deepens quickly offshore, and within a few miles of the coast there is room for a submarine to work. North of Ogliastra the coast turns into the Gulf of Orosei and the headland of Capo Comino; south of it lie the Salto di Quirra range, the Sarrabus and Capo Carbonara, at the entrance of the Gulf of Cagliari.

Ferries and merchant ships cross the area on four lanes: Olbia and Arbatax to Civitavecchia, Cagliari to Naples and Palermo, and the north–south route from Genoa to the Sicilian Channel. They transmit on AIS and the traffic never stops. Fishing boats from Arbatax work close inshore and often do not transmit at all.

The air bases are off the map. The P-72A patrol aircraft and the US Navy P-8A fly from **Sigonella**, in Sicily, a long transit away; the SIGINT aircraft ORACLE 1 flies from **Pratica di Mare**, near Rome. Every hour spent in transit is an hour not spent on task.

FIGURE 1 — THE THEATRE: THE STATION, THE RANGE, THE CABLES AND THE BASES



The reference points are those on the Italian map in the game. The two highlighted cable points mark the stretches judged most exposed. Neither cable runs under the Russian station itself; both are within a night's run of a submarine.

3.2 The cables

— **Tyrrhenian Link, western branch.** TERNA's high-voltage direct-current link, 1,000 MW, from Quartu Sant'Elena near Cagliari to Termini Imerese in Sicily, laid at the end of 2025. On the map: TYRRHENIAN LINK (landing), **TYRRHENIAN LINK 1** and TYRRHENIAN LINK 2.

— **SAPEI and Janna.** The SAPEI power link from Fiume Santo to Latina on the mainland, and the Janna and other telecom cables, operated by TERNA and SPARKLE, cross the sea north-east of the island; on the map they share one corridor: SAPEI / JANNA 1, **SAPEI / JANNA 2** and SAPEI / JANNA 3.

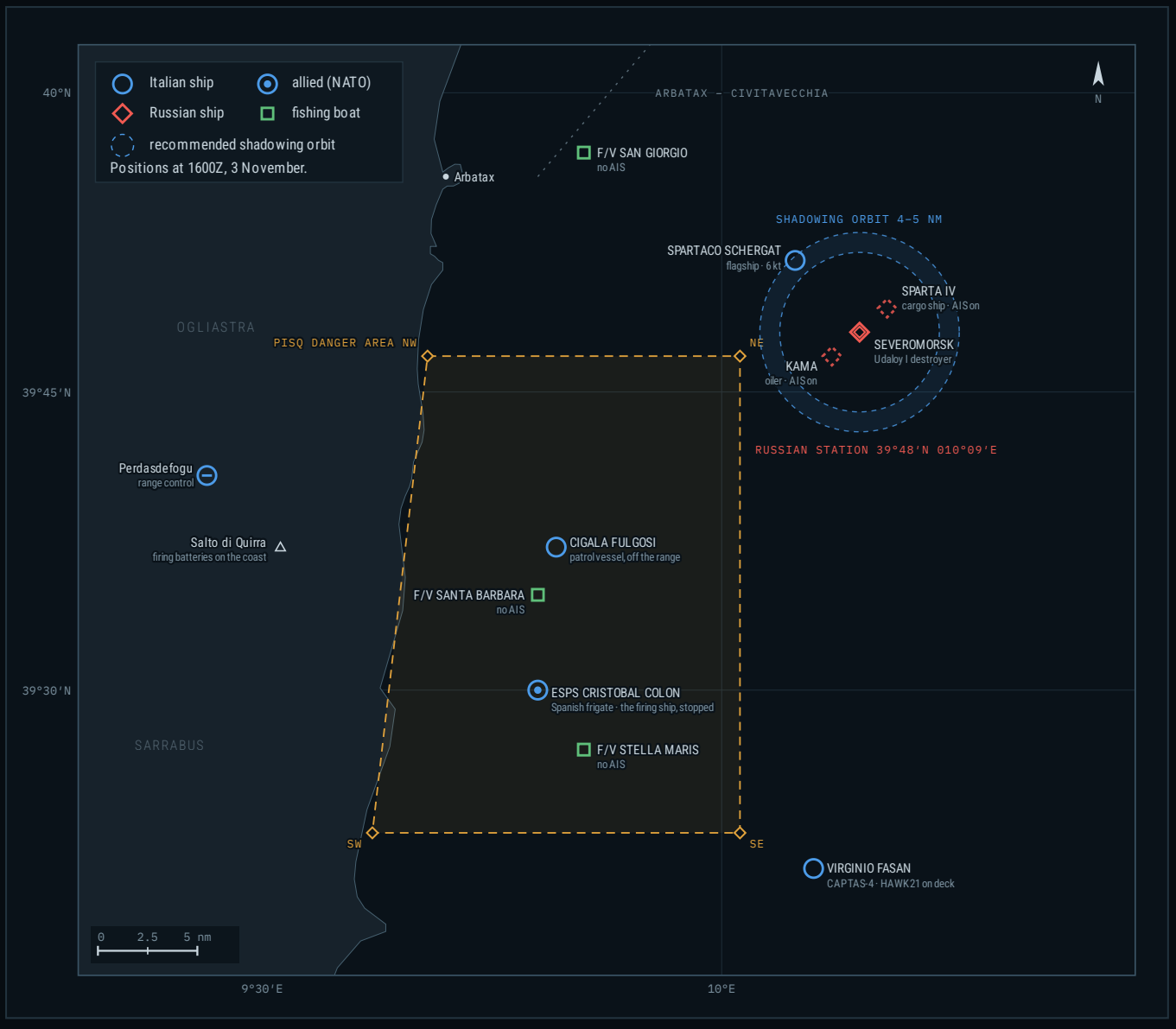
The operators watch their own cables and will report a fault, but they learn of damage after it is done. A cable is protected by being watched, not by being guarded.

3.3 The Salto di Quirra range

The Poligono Interforze del Salto di Quirra (PISQ) is Italy's joint test and training range, run from Perdasdefogu, with firing positions on the coast and a **danger area at sea** off it: on the map, the four reference points PISQ DANGER AREA NW, NE, SE and SW. Tomorrow NATO fires live missiles at target drones from the range and from the Spanish frigate *Cristóbal Colón*, in **two firing windows**, one in the morning and one in the evening. Their times are in the NOTAM published at the start of the operation.

A firing window opens only if the danger area is clear. Fishing boats wander into it; a Russian ship may choose to. Section 5 explains how it is kept clear.

FIGURE 2 — THE RANGE AND THE STATION, 1600Z



The danger area at sea, the Russian group round its reference point and the ships of both sides as they are at the start. The blue ring is the shadowing orbit recommended in section 5.2. When the group moves, the RUSSIAN STATION reference point moves with it.

3.4 Light, weather and the clock

All times are ZULU. Local time is CET, one hour ahead: Italy left summer time on 25 October.

AT 39°48'N 9°54'E	3 NOVEMBER	4 NOVEMBER	5 NOVEMBER
Nautical dawn	—	0452Z	0453Z
Sunrise	—	0552Z	—
Sunset	1616Z	1615Z	—
Nautical dusk	1716Z	1715Z	—
Moon	Waning, about a quarter lit	Rises about 0045Z	Rises about 0150Z

The weather starts fair: a light breeze, a slight sea, good visibility. It will not last. METEOMAR will issue a **mistral** forecast for the Sardinian sea during the first evening, with an expected onset and its margin. The mistral comes down the west of Sardinia and round both ends of the island: north-westerly, force 7 to 8, a rough to very rough sea, for most of a day. At the height of it no helicopter works from a ship's deck, a dipping sonar cannot be worked, and the sea noise blinds sonobuoys and hull sonars alike.

FIGURE 3 — THE THIRTY-SIX HOURS



Two nights and one day. The first night belongs to the anti-submarine hunt and to Rome's first question; the day to the range and the mistral; the second night to whatever has not yet been settled.

4 Forces

4.1 Task Group 452.1 and support, 1600Z

UNIT	TYPE	WHERE	REMARKS
ITS Spartaco Schergat (F 598)	FREMM, general purpose	North-west of the group, 6 kt	Flagship. Shadows the group. Radar, cameras, hull sonar
ITS Virginio Fasan (F 591)	FREMM, ASW	South of the group, 8 kt	CAPTAS-4 towed sonar. HAWK 21 on deck

UNIT	TYPE	WHERE	REMARKS
HAWK 21	SH-90A (NH90 NFH)	On *Virginio Fasan*	Dipping sonar, sonobuoys, torpedoes (held). The only helicopter
ITS Cigala Fulgosi (P 490)	Offshore patrol vessel	Off the range	For the danger area and the fishing boats
GRIFO 1, GRIFO 2	P-72A maritime patrol	Sigonella	Radar, cameras, sonobuoys, torpedoes (held). Flying hours counted
ORACLE 1	SIGINT aircraft	Pratica di Mare	Listens to emitters; the eyes on any collection effort

4.2 Allies and partners

— **ESPS Cristóbal Colón (F 105).** The Spanish frigate is the firing ship of the NATO exercise, stopped inside the range. She is not under your command and she stays where the exercise needs her.

— **POSEIDON (US Navy P-8A).** CTF 67 at Sigonella can provide P-8A sorties on request: long endurance, a large sonobuoy load, a first-class radar. A limited number are available this week (section 5.6).

— **EUNAVFOR MED Irini.** The EU operation, headquartered in Rome, patrols further south. It can take over the track of a suspect tanker and check her flag, as it did west of Pantelleria in August.

— **Guardia Costiera, MRSC Cagliari.** Search and rescue, fisheries and pollution. It talks to the fishing boats.

— **MARCOM, Northwood.** Wants the picture, and will share it with the Alliance.

4.3 The Russian group, as known at 1600Z

CONTACT	CLASS / ROLE	POSITION 1600Z	CONFIDENCE	BASIS
Severomorsk	Udaloy I (Pr.1155) destroyer. Guns, SAM, ASW helicopter, powerful hull sonar	39°48'N 010°09'E	CONFIRMED	Visual and radar hold since 1 Nov
Kama	Replenishment oiler	39°47'N 010°07'E	CONFIRMED	AIS on; keeps station on the destroyer
Sparta IV	Russian MoD cargo ship (RO/RO)	39°49'N 010°11'E	CONFIRMED	AIS on; switched it off for hours in February

Nothing else Russian is held in the picture this afternoon. There is no submarine contact, and no other ship is known to be associated with the group. That is a statement about what we hold, not about what is there.

4.4 How the group behaves

In February, and again since the 1st, the three ships have kept close together round their station at very low speed, shifting position every hour or so. *Severomorsk* does the talking. When a ship of ours is close she crosses our bow a few hundred metres ahead and orders us on channel 16 to keep

clear. She jams: patrol aircraft that come close to her find their radar and sonobuoy picture degraded. And groups like this one have been seen to make sudden moves that draw the watchers after them.

Russia's ships on the high seas are as free as ours. *Severomorsk* may enter the range's danger area if she likes; the NOTAM is a warning, not a wall. She is unlikely to leave it for a radio call.

4.5 What they are likely to do

MOST LIKELY COURSE OF ACTION

Stay, watch and protest. The group holds its station, harasses the ships and aircraft that come close, and Moscow calls every Italian approach provocative shadowing. Whatever the group is covering, it will not be done where we are looking.

MOST DANGEROUS COURSE OF ACTION

An Italian ship closes *Severomorsk* once too often and there is a collision, or an Italian weapon is used. Everything after that is Rome's crisis, not the Navy's investigation. **Both begin with something we did.** A close second: a cable fails while every sensor we own was watching something else.

---

5 Constraints

5.1 Rules of engagement

```
1   Weapons tight in all domains.
```

In practice: nothing is engaged that has not been positively identified as hostile, and nothing Russian is hostile.

```
2   Subsurface weapons held.
```

In practice: no torpedo goes into the water. A submarine is hunted to be found, held and shown that she has been found, never to be attacked. The order is re-asserted to every ASW unit throughout the operation.

```
3   Italy does not fire first.
```

In practice: any Italian weapon that hits a Russian unit, for any reason, is the incident Moscow is waiting for, and the Russian group turns hostile. A bow crossing, a jammer or a hard word on channel 16 is not an attack; do not answer it as one.

4	No interference with the Russian ships' navigation.

In practice: they are warships and state ships in international waters. They are watched, photographed, followed and asked to keep clear of the range. They are not boarded, blocked or herded.

5	The range is kept clear by hailing and escorting, not by force.

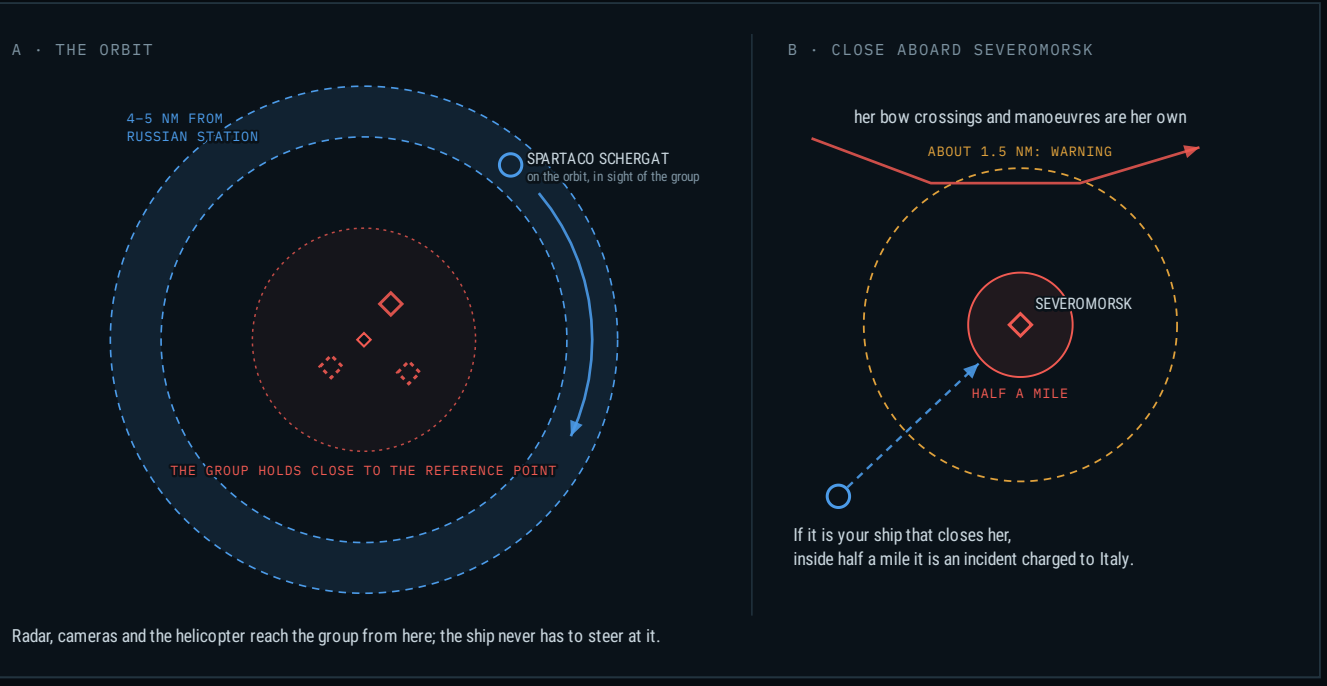
In practice: a fishing boat is called up and escorted out; a Russian ship is shown the NOTAM by a warship alongside and asked to turn out. Nobody is fired across.

5.2 Shadowing without an incident

You will spend thirty-six hours close to *Severomorsk*. The rule that matters is simple: **her manoeuvres are her own; ours are ours.** When she crosses our bow, however close, that is her doing and Moscow cannot charge it to Italy. When one of our ships closes her, by the Italian ship's own movement, to within about half a mile, that is an incident, and it is charged to Italy: Moscow protests, Rome pays for it. The ship is warned when she closes to about a mile and a half by the Italian ship's own movement; that warning is the moment to open out, not to hold on.

Practical note. Shadow the group from an orbit of **four to five miles round the RUSSIAN STATION reference point.** The group stays well inside that ring; radar, cameras and a helicopter reach it easily from there, and the ship never has to steer at a Russian hull. The reference point moves with the group when it moves: keep the orbit on the reference point, not on your last plot.

FIGURE 4 — SHADOWING WITHOUT AN INCIDENT



Left: the recommended orbit, well outside the area in which the group holds its station. Right: the two distances that matter round *Severomorsk*. Her bow crossings are never ours; our closing is.

5.3 Keeping the range clear

Before each firing window, range control lists everything inside the danger area, with the positions of the fishing boats. A fishing boat without AIS does not read NOTAMs: in the run-up to a window she leaves when she is hailed and escorted out, either by a warship close to her or by an aircraft flying low and close. More boats drift in during the day, as they always do. A Russian ship inside the area leaves only when a warship comes alongside her and shows her the NOTAM.

If the area is not clear when a window opens, the firing is postponed; if it is still not clear, it is cancelled. A Russian ship inside at the opening means the window is cancelled outright. Every postponement is noticed in Madrid and in Brussels; a cancellation is asked about in Rome.

5.4 Electronic harassment

Aircraft that come close to *Severomorsk* will be jammed a good part of the time: their radar and sonobuoy picture degrades and what they report is less reliable. The first time, a message states the rule. If Moscow's posture has hardened after October, expect the jamming to be heavier and to reach further out. Ships are not affected in the same way.

5.5 Weather

Plan for the mistral (section 3.4). When it sets in, recover HAWK 21 before the height of it: a deck landing in that wind is dangerous. Until it eases the helicopter stays on deck, and the whole underwater picture gets worse. A loss in the mistral is a loss all the same.

5.6 Anti-submarine hours, sonobuoys and the P-8A

— **Flying hours.** The two P-72A crews have **22 flying hours between them** for the whole operation, counted while the aircraft are airborne. You will be warned as they run low. When they are spent the aircraft are ordered home, and whatever they were watching is no longer watched.

— **Sonobuoys.** Sigonella holds sonobuoys for **four P-72A sorties**. Each take-off uses one load; a sortie flown without one has radar and cameras only and cannot hunt a submarine.

— **P-8A.** NATO can provide **two P-8A sorties** on request, with a delay before the aircraft is airborne; each sortie is under your control for about 5 hours, transit from Sigonella included, then goes home. If October has stretched NATO, only one can be spared. A third sortie is possible only if NATO still has something in reserve and the allies are content with Italy's handling of the affair. NATO notices sorties that find nothing useful.

— **The ships.** *Virginio Fasan*'s towed sonar and HAWK 21 are the only ASW assets that do not run out; the frigate is slow to reposition and the helicopter is grounded by the mistral.

The dilemma is the heart of the operation: the same hours must look for a submarine that may not be there, cover the range, and watch the second night. Hours spent chasing a lead that goes nowhere are not refunded.

6 What Rome expects

Rome wants one thing from CTG 452.1: an assessment it can act on. What is the Russian group doing off Sardinia, and can the Navy show it?

6.1 An interim assessment, during the first night

Some time in the first night Rome will ask for an **interim assessment** for the morning security council, and the request will say by when. You can name one of the four explanations, or answer that the question is **not yet determined**. The interim view does not bind your final report. Saying nothing at all is also an answer, and it is the one Palazzo Chigi likes least. Once Rome has your interim view, the next assessment you confirm is your final one, even before the interim deadline has passed.

6.2 The final assessment, before the end

Your **final assessment** names one of the four explanations. It must reach Rome before the operation ends at **0400Z on 5 November**; Rome will remind you, and then call a last time. Outside the interim request, the first assessment you confirm *is* your final one, whenever you send it: a report confirmed early in the first night, before Rome has asked for an interim view, is final. Once sent, it stands.

6.3 A second activity

If you believe that more than one thing is going on, you may add a **secondary assessment** after your final one, naming a different activity. It is optional, and like the final it is judged on what turns out to be true. A show of presence cannot be a secondary assessment: it means there is nothing else.

> SELECT, THEN CONFIRM
>
> Each assessment is sent with one of the four **Report assessment** special actions, and each is **run twice**. The first run only *selects*: Rome's message repeats what you are about to send and whether it counts as interim, final or secondary. The second run of the same action *confirms* and sends it. There is no time limit between the two. If you change your mind after selecting, run a different Report action instead: it replaces the selection. A selection that is never confirmed is never sent.

6.4 What makes an assessment good

The right answer, first. Then the evidence behind it at the moment you send it: an assessment that the investigation already supports carries more weight in Rome than the same words sent on a hunch. The analysts' summary (section 7) tells you where the investigation stands, how many hours and sorties you have left, and how Rome's request can be answered at that moment.

7 Special actions guide

7.1 How they work

CMO cannot ask Rome a question, call Northwood or brief the press. Those acts are special actions, in the **Special Actions** menu, fourteen of them. Each run is one order, given now and recorded with its time. Answers come back as messages, some at once, some after a delay. When an action cannot be carried out, the message says why: not yet asked for, too soon since the last time, nothing to act on, already done. None of them acts on a selected unit, and none can be undone.

Their names below are exactly as they appear in the game. For each: what it is for, what it needs, and what it risks.

7.2 Picture and intelligence

`AIS picture`

Lists every vessel transmitting on AIS in the area, with her position and speed. **For:** telling the merchant traffic, *Kama* and *Sparta IV* from the contacts that do not transmit. **Needs:** nothing; it can be run whenever you like. **Risks:** none. It shows only what ships choose to say about themselves: a ship that has switched her AIS off is simply absent.

`SIGINT - Request analysis of recent intercepts`

The intelligence staff read what has been intercepted recently and send a graded assessment. **For:** a view from outside your own sensors, which may point at something they have not seen. **Needs:** patience, as the analysis takes time; only a small number of requests are available for the whole operation. **Risks:** the reading is graded and may be wrong. Weigh it by its grade, and do not make it your only evidence.

`Intel - Evidence summary`

CINCNAV's analysts state, for each of the three activities, NO INDICATION, WEAK, MODERATE or STRONG, and remind you of what you have left: anti-submarine flying hours, sonobuoy loads, P-8A sorties, and Rome's deadline, with how Rome's request can be answered at that moment. **For:** knowing where the investigation stands before you commit, and not losing count of your resources. **Needs:** a short delay for the answer, and a rest period between summaries. **Risks:** none in itself, but it never says which activity is true, and a WEAK can rest on a false lead. Summaries are kept for the debrief.

7.3 Allied assets

NATO - Request P-8A sortie

CTF 67 launches a US Navy P-8A from Sigonella, which comes under your control once airborne. **For:** the best anti-submarine aircraft in the theatre, with sonobuoys of its own, when the P-72A hours and loads are running out or two areas must be searched at once. **Needs:** sorties left in the week's allocation; a delay before take-off; for a third sortie, a NATO reserve to spare and allies who are satisfied with Italy's handling. **Risks:** a sortie that finds nothing useful is noticed. A refused request can be made again later, after the allies have been briefed.

EUNAVFOR Irini - Hand over the shadow tanker

Passes to EUNAVFOR MED Irini the track of a tanker seen leaving the Russian group after a transfer, so that an Irini frigate can check her flag further south. **For:** turning an observation into action against the shadow fleet, and a gesture that Brussels and the allies appreciate. **Needs:** such a tanker leaving the group, still held by one of our ships or aircraft close enough to keep her track; once only. **Risks:** none, if the conditions are met; the message says when they are not.

7.4 Reports to Rome

Report assessment - Submarine near the cables

Tells Rome that the group covers a submarine working on the undersea cables. **For:** an interim, final or secondary assessment, depending on when it is sent (section 6). **Needs:** to be run twice: the first run selects, the second confirms. **Risks:** a final assessment cannot be taken back; a wrong one costs the government's trust and sends Rome after the wrong problem.

Report assessment - ELINT on the Quirra firing

Tells Rome that the group is collecting intelligence on the NATO firing at Salto di Quirra. **For:** an interim, final or secondary assessment. **Needs:** to be run twice, select then confirm. **Risks:** as above. An ELINT charge made public is a charge against an ally's firing too: Madrid and Northwood will want to see why.

Report assessment - Oil transfer at sea

Tells Rome that the group covers a ship-to-ship oil transfer with a shadow-fleet tanker. **For:** an interim, final or secondary assessment. **Needs:** to be run twice, select then confirm. **Risks:** as above. A transfer reported but never seen is hard to defend in Brussels.

Report assessment - Show of presence only

Tells Rome that nothing is hidden: the group is only showing the flag. **For:** an interim or final assessment; it cannot be added as a secondary one. **Needs:** to be run twice, select then confirm. **Risks:** the heaviest if wrong, because it tells the government there is nothing to act on. It closes the question: no second activity can be reported after it.

Interim to Rome - Not yet determined

Answers Rome's request for an interim assessment without naming an activity: the council is told the investigation continues. **For:** the honest answer when the evidence is not there yet. **Needs:** Rome's request to have been made, and its deadline not passed; nothing already sent. **Risks:** a little public confidence. Saying nothing at all costs more.

7.5 Communication and diplomacy

Media - Release shadowing photos

The Navy publishes photographs of the Russian group shadowed by *Spartaco Schergat*. **For:** public opinion and allied cohesion, at once. **Needs:** nothing; once only. **Risks:** it puts the government's name to the affair before you know what it is. When your final assessment is proved right, the release looks wise; when it is proved wrong, the photos are played back against Rome.

Communication - Press briefing

The Ministry of Defence tells the press that the Navy is on the scene and that the cables and the range are watched. **For:** public opinion, and an answer to the press and regional events. **Needs:** a rest period between briefings. **Risks:** little; words do not replace results.

Diplomacy - Summon the Russian ambassador

The Farnesina summons the ambassador and asks what the group is doing off Sardinia. **For:** international legitimacy, a little allied goodwill, and an answer to Moscow's statements. **Needs:** a longer rest period between summonses. **Risks:** little beyond the ritual: he will speak of routine activity in international waters.

Diplomacy - Brief the allies

Northwood, Madrid and Brussels are given the Italian picture. **For:** allied cohesion, an answer to allied events, and the goodwill a third P-8A sortie depends on. **Needs:** a rest period. **Risks:** none; allies who are not told remember it.

The last three also answer the political event open at that moment, when they are among the answers it lists (section 8).

---

8 The government and the press

The government measures three things it will not show you as figures: Italy's **international legitimacy**, **public opinion** at home, and **allied cohesion**. You will see them move through events. Moscow speaks of freedom of navigation and provocative shadowing; TASS accuses the Navy of harassment; the Kremlin warns Italy not to follow others into confrontation. Northwood wants the picture; Madrid asks whether the firing is safe with a Russian group off the range; Brussels

wonders whether Irini should watch for shadow-fleet tankers. At home, ANSA leads the evening news with the Russian ships, *L'Unione Sarda* gives the Ogliastra mayors a page, the President of the Region asks for a briefing, the fishermen of Arbatax protest at the closures, COPASIR asks whether the cables are protected, TERNA and SPARKLE want a threat assessment, and the power markets twitch. Palazzo Chigi's spokesperson needs a line.

Each event comes with a short window to answer and the answers that would serve: a press briefing, the ambassador summoned, or the allies briefed. Answered well, it helps; left unanswered, it costs. What you do at sea, and what you tell Rome, moves the three far more than anything said in Rome.

> THE LINE YOU DO NOT CROSS
>
> If any of the three falls too far, the government falls and the operation ends there. Palazzo Chigi will warn you twice before it happens. Take the warning. A government that watches passively for thirty-six hours does not survive them either.

---

9 Provenance

Everything before this section is written as though it were real. This section takes the mask off.

9.1 The facts the scenario is built on

DATE	FACT (PUBLIC SOURCES)	WHAT IT CONTRIBUTES HERE
27 Jan 2026	**NATO MARCOM: *Virginio Fasan*, flagship of SNMG2, tracks the Kilo *Krasnodar*, escorted among others by *Severomorsk***	The submarine explanation, and the destroyer
3–9 Feb 2026	***Severomorsk*, *Kama* and *Sparta IV* hold station off Ogliastra, then move to Capo Comino and the Gulf of Orosei**	The station itself, the group and its unexplained purpose
Feb 2026	**Shadowed by *Spartaco Schergat*, then *Emilio Bianchi*, P-72 aircraft and the SPYDR from Pratica di Mare**	Your task group and its aircraft
9 Feb 2026	***Sparta IV* switches her AIS off from 0722 to 1355 UTC**	A ship that goes quiet when it matters
Feb 2026	**Shadow-fleet activity off Sardinia puts NATO on alert**	The oil-transfer explanation
Spring 2026	**A GUGI operation near Svalbard, submersibles rehearsing the laying of a weapon on undersea cables, foiled by the UK, Norway and the US (made public 10 Sep)**	Why a submarine near a cable is taken seriously
2 Aug 2026	***Thaon di Revel* boards the tanker *Toa Payoh* by helicopter west of Pantelleria, under UNCLOS art. 110, within EUNAVFOR MED Irini**	Irini and the Italian stance on the shadow fleet
Oct 2026	**Live firing resumes at the Salto di Quirra range**	The ELINT explanation, and the range to keep clear
Late 2025	**Tyrrhenian Link western branch laid (TERNA, 1,000 MW); SAPEI and Janna already in service**	The cables

9.2 What is real and what is invented

— **Real:** the military units and their types, the bases, the Salto di Quirra range, the cables (Tyrrhenian Link, SAPEI, Janna) and their operators, EUNAVFOR MED Irini and the Guardia Costiera. Their presence and actions on these dates are a projection.

— **Invented:** the real reason for the February station was never confirmed; the four explanations are projections. Also invented: the return of the group in November; Operation NURAGHE, Task Group 452.1 and OPORD 26-044; the NATO firing on 4 November; every intelligence product, event, message and quotation; the fishing boats and merchant ships named in the game; any other ship that may appear, and what the Russian ships are really doing. The ORACLE 1 aircraft stands in for the Italian Air Force's SIGINT aircraft, which the game's database does not carry.

9.3 Sources

ItaMilRadar, *The Maritime Executive* and *L'Unione Sarda* (February 2026 station); *Il Sole 24 Ore* and Army Recognition (*Virginio Fasan* and *Krasnodar*; the *Toa Payoh* boarding); Decode39 (shadow fleet off Sardinia); *Defense News* and Euronews (GUGI near Svalbard); TERNA's public material on the Tyrrhenian Link; SAPEI; Russian shadow fleet; UNCLOS, article 110.

10 Glossary

AIS Automatic Identification System: the name, position and track a ship broadcasts about herself.

CINCNAV Commander in Chief Naval Fleet, Santa Rosa, Rome: the originator of your orders.

COPASIR The parliamentary committee for the security of the Republic (intelligence oversight).

ELINT Electronic intelligence: the collection of radar and other non-communication emissions.

Farnesina The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Irini EUNAVFOR MED Irini, the EU naval operation in the central Mediterranean.

Kilo Russian diesel-electric attack submarine (Improved Kilo, Project 636.3).

Mistral The strong, cold north-westerly wind of the western Mediterranean.

Palazzo Chigi The seat of the Italian Prime Minister.

PISQ Poligono Interforze del Salto di Quirra, the joint range on the east coast of Sardinia.

Shadow fleet Ageing tankers under flags of convenience, often without AIS, carrying Russian oil around sanctions.

Sardinia Station, 2026 — The Ogliastra Watch, third scenario of the *Europe 2026* campaign for Command: Modern Operations. Designer: totobimbo. Written from inside CTG 452.1's picture at 1600Z: what the commander believes, not what is true. Intelligence, events and quotations are invented; units, bases, the range, the cables and Irini are real, their actions on these dates a projection. Coastlines: Natural Earth 1:10 m.