



Using all manner of cunning trickery and political manoeuvring, an evil Middle East dictator named General Killbaba has successfully launched a military attack against a small neighbouring nation. Overwhelming the peaceful country with instruments of destruction, the inhabitants are ruthlessly hunted down and enslaved. Due to the tense political geography of the area, the United Nations are unable to take direct military action against the offending nation, but there is hope...

In between wheezing, collapsing and suffering various heart attacks, the US President devises a devious plan with which to remove the dictator and send his forces packing. Sending in a lone Apache helicopter gunship with a back-up support warship, the President believes that a short, sharp series of attacks should get the job done.

Operation: Desert Strike is initiated and the warship dispatched. Once the vessel nears the shores of the occupied country, further details of the mission are revealed. It transpires that the gunship must infiltrate five occupied strongholds and use its advanced weaponry to take out various targets designated by the mission controllers.

Dotted around the map are extra supplies, consisting of ammunition, armour and fuel for the gunship. Also found around the desert landscapes are MIAs (friendly soldiers Missing In Action behind enemy lines) who are rescued for extra points and may even supply some useful information once they are returned safely to the Desert Strike HQ. Double agents whose cover has been blown may also make their presence known. Rescue these disguised fellows and some of the enemy's twisted battle plans may be unveiled.

The enemy nation have not made things easy for you. During their short occupation, they have commandeered military posts armed with massive cannons and SAMs (Surface to Air Missiles). Enemy planes and choppers may also make an appearance. Not surprisingly, finding an advanced US gunship on their newly-acquired territory causes them to fire at you without provocation. Luckily you have full authority from your superiors to use any methods available to complete your mission (in other words, you're free to blow the hell out of anything you want!).

But remember, your gunship only has a limited amount of armour and should the enemy forces get through your shielding, you're history fly boy!

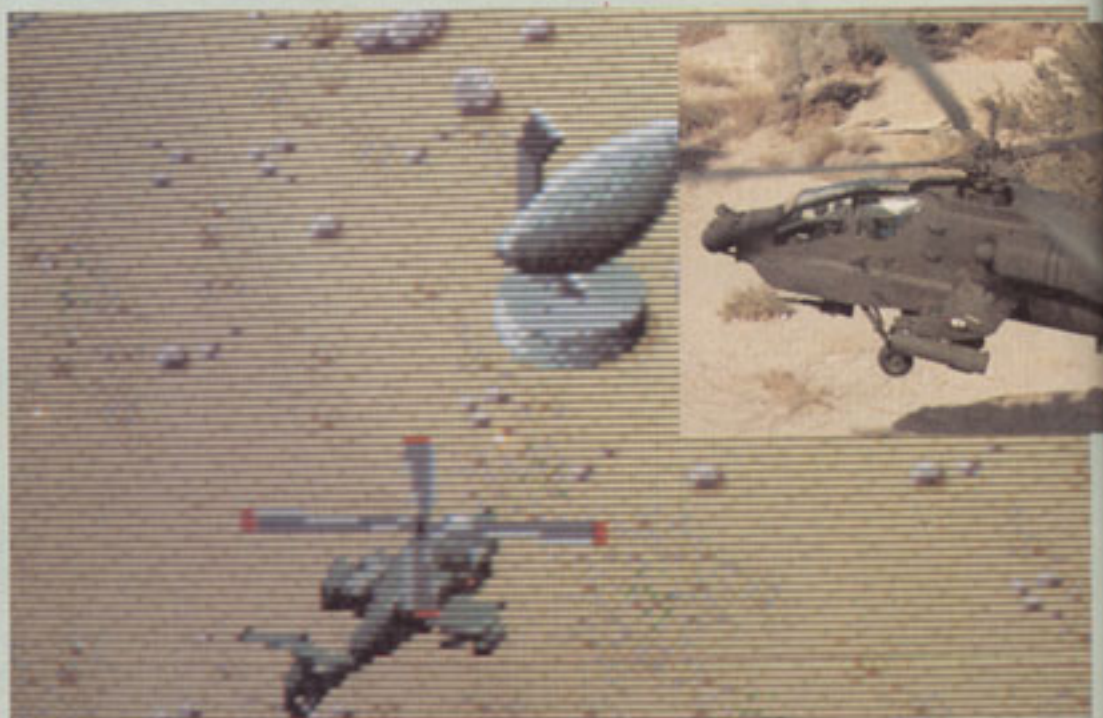
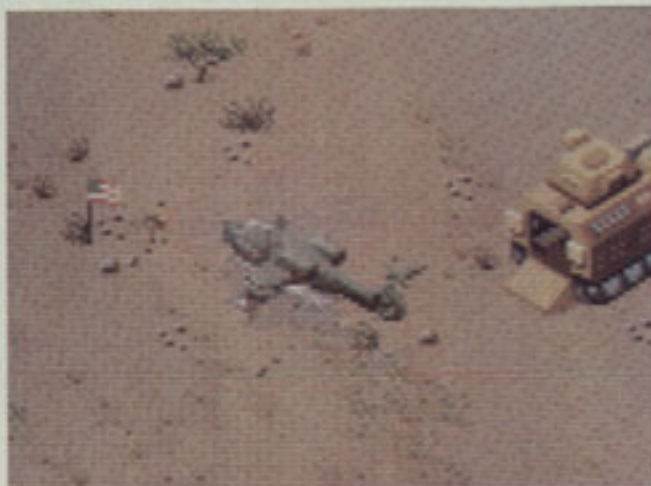


▲ Your commander-in-chief gives you the full low-down between each mission. As you can see, he doesn't mince his words...



▲ This is one of two landing sites.

DESE STRIKE RETURN TO THE



▲ These radar towers must be annihilated!

DESERT STRIKE



PROFILE AH-64 APACHE



The gunship you control in Desert Strike is the McDonnell Douglas AH-64A Apache, the final word in helicopter gunship technology.

LENGTH: 17.77m

HEIGHT: 4.67m

WING SPAN: 5.24m

WEIGHT: 4,885kg

POWER: 2 x General Electric T700-GE-701 turboshaft engines

MAXIMUM SPEED: 227 mph

ARMAMENT

Your Apache gunship is equipped with three forms of offensive weaponry:



CANNON

Obviously, this is far weaker than the missiles, but it's just the ticket for taking out smaller targets. One thousand rounds of ammunition come as standard.



HYDRAS

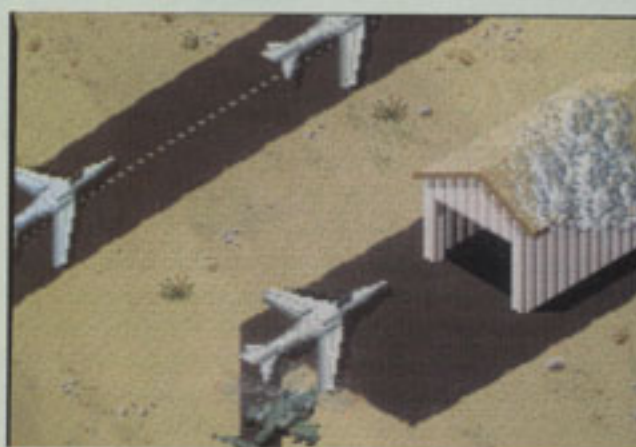
Although not as powerful as the Sidewinders, these missiles are perfect for taking small cannons or SAM sites. Unfortunately, their range isn't quite as impressive as the Hellfire's either.



HELLFIRES

These missiles are the most powerful weapon packed on-board your Apache gunship. Their range and destructive potential cannot be beaten by anything the enemy throw at you. The supplies of Hellfires are very limited, so use these with care.

▲ *This is what happens once you lose all of your armour. You start with 600 points. A normal gunshot takes off one or two points. A well-aimed SAM or guided missile deducts up to 100!*



COMMENT



JULIAN

Similar in concept to a superb old C64 computer classic called *Raid on Bungeling Bay*, *Desert Strike* is another absolutely cracking title from Electronic Arts. It's basically a very sophisticated shoot 'em up with loads to do. The gameplay is brilliant and I love the way you can tackle things in any order you like - searching for MIAs first, destroying a power station or taking out the airport! You've also got to think ahead and work out optimum routes so that you leave yourself with enough fuel and ammunition to be able to complete all the assignments in that mission. Things get very tense when supplies are low and you've still got an assignment to finish AND return to the frigate to complete the level! The graphics (particularly the helicopter sprite) and the sound are both excellent and the whole game is beautifully presented with cut-screens, mission details and map screens galore! But how long will all this excitement last? Ruddy ages, that's how long! There are five main missions, each with ten sub-missions, and later ones are incredibly difficult. And even if you get through them all, you still return to see whether you can score more points and find things that you might have missed. *Desert Strike* is the one of the finest Megadrive blasters yet seen, and you'd be bonkers to miss it.



▲ On level two, prisoners must be busted out of a top security enemy installation. Use your weapons to blow away a wall and winch up the survivors.

THE STRATEGY MAP

Pressing START brings up the overall campaign map. Using the simple controls, you can find out what targets make up the entire mission, along with the positions of other enemy strongholds that may cause a problem. Intelligence also keeps you briefed on the whereabouts of MIAs, double agents and supplies.



1. RESCUE THE
2. RESCUE COLT-PAK 5-SATC
3. DESTROY THE POWER STATION
4. DESTROY THE CHEMICAL PLANT
5. CAPTURE SCUD COMMANDERS AND DESTROY THEIR LAUNCHERS
6. RESCUE POWS FROM THE CAMP



▲ These tanks first appear on level two. As you can see, they're dead!

CUT SCENE ACTION

At the start of the game, you're treated to a brilliant attract sequence, where General Killbaba reveals his plans for Middle Eastern domination. He also drowns a traitor in a vat of boiling water (!) and slaps his deputy around the face for the sheer fun of it! Between each level, yet more Killbaba-related action is revealed!



GET THE PLANS TOGETHER OR I WILL SEE THAT YOU SUFFER THE SAME FATE AS MY LAST DEPUTY.



YOUR GREATNESS. I WANT TO SEE MY CHILDREN GROWN. BUT YOUR PLANS MIGHT CAUSE THE END OF ALL THE WORLD.



LESLEY MANSFORD
 EANN REPORTING LIVE

THE PRESIDENT HAS ORDERED THE SPECIAL FORCES' BEST CHOPPER TEAM TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION.



▼ You can choose a number of decent co-pilots at the start of the game but the best is missing in action. Scour level one!

COPILOT SELECTION



JAKE IS MISSING IN ACTION. REPORTS SAY HEAR A PLANE CRASH. RESCUE HIM AND YOU'LL HAVE A CRACK GUNNER AND SUPERB WINCH MAN. HE ALSO KNOWS THE BEST PLACES FOR A AND A.

PRESS START TO EXIT

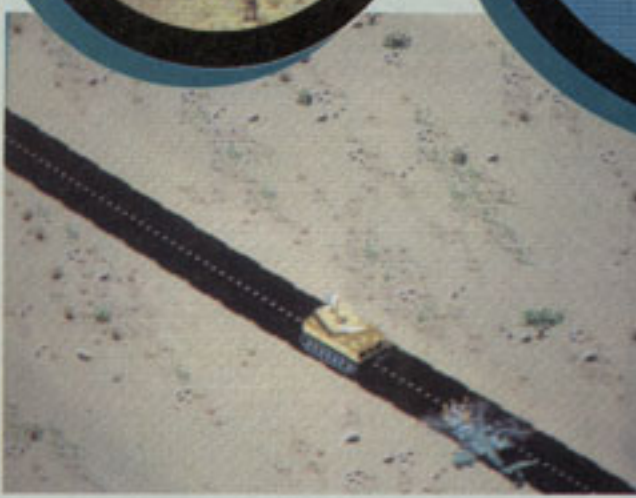
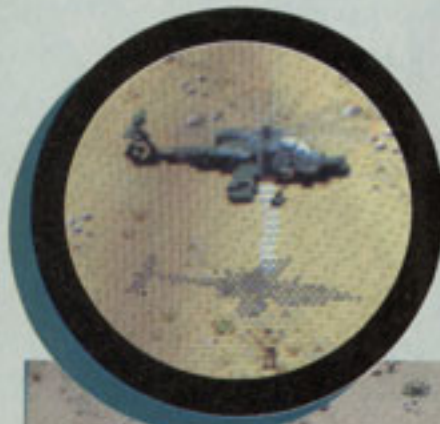
CO-PILOT THRILLS

At the start of the game, you choose your co-pilot for the mission. The co-pilot's job is to work the winch and aim the weapons you fire. Watch out though, because some co-pilots may be excellent marksman but could be complete imbeciles when it comes to using the winch. The best co-pilot in the game is missing in action, but you should be able to find him during the game.



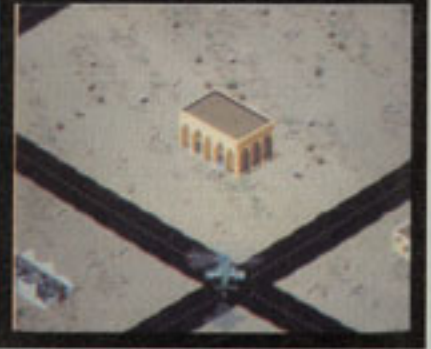
THE DANGLY BITS

Being able to find extra fuel and weapons isn't much good unless you're able to pick them up safely from the air. Luckily, the Apache is kitted with out with a ratty winch that automatically lowers itself when you rover over a box of supplies. This winch also comes n handy for picking up double agents and MIAs.



A DANGEROUS ASSIGNMENT

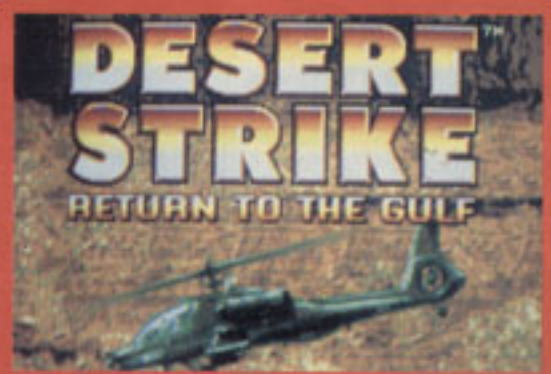
Mission targets should be destroyed in the order suggested by Desert Strike Command HQ. Should you attempt riskier targets without taking out previous threats, you are instantly in high danger. You can usually tell, owing to the large number of bullets whizzing through the air in your general direction.



RICH

COMMENT

Desert Strike begins well with an excellent introduction and some brilliant Rob Hubbard tunes. This quality extends to the game itself. It's not an all-out shoot 'em up as such. Of course, there are loads of enemy soldiers and targets to blow up, but the limits to your missiles, fuel and ammunition make you think before you blast. Adding variation are the sub-tasks, like picking up the MIAs and returning them to base. The graphics are excellent. Although some of the backdrops look a bit repetitive, this is more than made up for by the brilliant definition and animation on all of the sprites. The gunship in particular is excellent. Desert Strike is also a very challenging game. You should be able to complete level one during your first session, but after that things get incredibly difficult with enemy tanks, SCUD missile launchers and bazooka-toting soldiers making things a bit trickier! Definitely the best Megadrive game this month, Desert Strike is a worthy purchase.



BY: EA

PRICE: £39.99

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

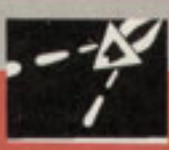
GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

LIVES: 5

CONTINUES: 3

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: SUPER



PRESENTATION 96%

A fab opening sequence, cut screens, brilliant in-game presentation and a choice

GRAPHICS 91%

Minutely detailed and well-animated sprites along with decent backdrops.

SOUND 89%

Completely brilliant music and atmospheric effects.

PLAYABILITY 95%

The chopper is easy to control making for some excellent blasting action.

LASTABILITY 92%

Five stages might seem meagre, but there are loads of sub-missions and later levels are extremely tough.

OVERALL 94%

A brilliant, original Megadrive game that will keep blasting fans entertained for weeks. Grab it before it sells out!