

Flanker 2.51 – Training Mission #1

That's right! We are forging ahead with preparations for LOMAC with a bit of a look back at it's predecessor: Flanker 2.51. I will be the first to admit that I never played a heck of a lot of Flanker 2.x. The manual and included quick reference cards are outstanding however, and I'm looking forward to getting to know this beast that has been on my shelf for the past couple of years.

I'll be running Flanker on my laptop, P4 2.0 GHz, 512MB RAM and GeForce 4-460Go.

I remember loading up Flanker 2.x when I first got it and I was amazed at the graphics. The aircraft are stunning and the flight dynamics feel as good as anything a non-fighter pilot can imagine. I spent countless hours flying the Su-27 and Su-33 across the skies just having fun doing aerobatics and watching the aircraft from the external cameras. Turn the smoke on and you have a visual feast as you loop, roll and spin amongst the Crimean scenery.

Unfortunately, I was a bit put off by the Russian avionics, labeling, weapons, etc.. I never once learned how to employ the weapons or avionics properly. With LOMAC on the horizon I've decided to try to comprehend these fascinating aircraft and learn a bit more about them. The following training missions will be comprised of the stock tutorial missions and a sprinkling of user created training missions that I've been finding scattered across the net. I understand that the lack of a real campaign system in Flanker 2.x is a deterrent to many people picking it up and learning it; I know it was for me. With high fidelity simulations on the decline however, I think many of us will be revisiting older titles with even more appreciation for the hard work and dedication it takes to bring a product such as Flanker 2.x to the market.

This really will be a "from the ground up" learning curve for me. So criticize, laugh, suggest, and by all means help me out in my transition to flying the best aircraft on the other side of the old Iron Curtain.

Thanks to the Fast Jet Flight Simulations web-site for providing a wealth of Flanker 2.x add-ons and files:

<http://ham.dogfighter.com/flanker/index.htm>

The "training" skin I've adopted is by GTT – I don't know specifically who..but if anyone knows, I'd like to give them credit!

The desert terrain was downloaded at the FJFS site and is credited to Kris.

Training Mission #1

This mission is a short introduction to the Su-27. In it we learn a bit about the external features of the Su-27. Since I'm already an accomplished (errr...that's debatable) fighter pilot having flown campaigns with Jane's F-15, Jane's F-18, and Longbow 2, the fine folks at Aviation Military Industrial Group Sukhoi have released a brand new Su-27 to me to take around the pattern for a familiarization flight.

Snuggling down into the cozy cockpit I'm presented with an array of familiar and unfamiliar instruments. Flying these eastern aircraft is going to require a bit of mental adjustment: altitude in meters, airspeed in kilometers per hour, Cyrillic lettering on the warning lights and systems, and a Russian *****ing Betty. The view system in 2.x is very well implemented with the capability to pan around the pit using the mouse. Another nice feature is being able to zoom in and out on cockpit gauges and outside the aircraft allowing for wide or narrow fields of view:



Running through a few pre-flight checks I extend and retract the speed brake and lower the flaps:



With the engine already running (I'm not sure if there is even a way to turn engines OFF in 2.x) I advance the throttle and feel the raw power of the twin afterburning engines.

The Su-27 rockets down the runway and at about 250 km/h I rotate into a climb attitude and the aircraft gently lifts from the ground:

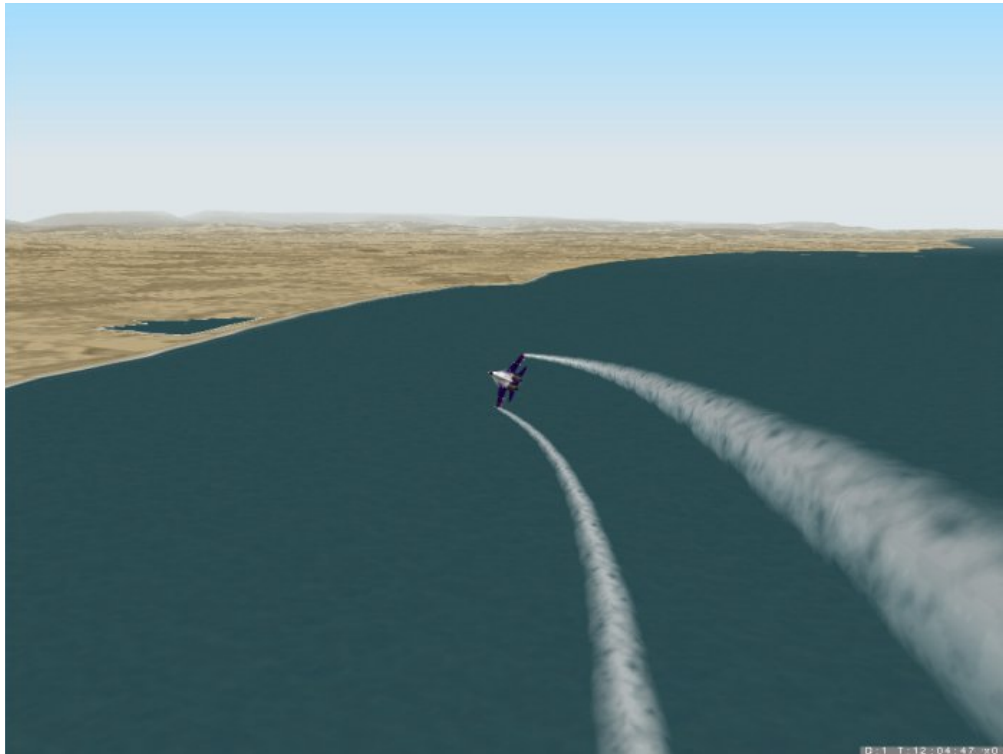


Pitch forces are very nicely modeled and you can't just haul back on the stick and expect to keep your energy in the Su-27. Graphics are simply first rate with awesome looking condensation effects blanketing the upper surfaces during high-G turns. Thanks to Semmern, I have an X45 profile to start working with, but I've not yet explored the trim options he has or has not programmed into the profile so I find that maintaining level flight requires constant stick force input. Ideally I hope there is a way to set the trim using the hat switches to input those commands.

Cleaned up on the upwind leg I make the turn to the crosswind leg:



Hitting the smoke switch to give a bit of "feel" to the external shots leaves a pleasing, believable dissipating smoke trailing from the wing-tips Here I bleed off a bit of speed as I turn the base leg toward the runway:



Coming in for a landing the aircraft handles well, though without trim controls constant stick force is required to maintain the proper attitude:



With a gentle chirp and two puffs of smoke the mains kiss the runway:



A tap on the "P" key deploys the landing chutes which aid in slowing the Flanker down to taxi speed:



The first flight ends uneventfully (with a sigh of relief). Subsequent flights will expand the flight envelope, introduce some of the features of the Su-27 and hopefully rapidly expand my knowledge of aircraft systems and avionics and the integration of my X45 with them.

Век живи - век учись.

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