

Well, after a couple of weeks where work interfered with my Flanker training I'm happy to report I'm back in the virtual skies once again. I was definitely feeling a bit rusty at the controls and found myself stumbling over simple things such as designating targets and panning the targeting reticule around.

The mission for today is the use of the Kh-29L laser guided air-to-ground missile. The targets are a few T-80 tanks, a warehouse, and a ship. Our last training mission explored the Kh-29TE which uses the MFD TV to designate the target. The Kh-29L, as stated by the training mission instructor, is best employed against pre-briefed targets. That means the targets are already loaded up and will show up without you having to find them. Although this is a nice way to keep the busy work down to a minimum I wonder about practicality of using pre-briefed targeting for things such as tanks, armor or ships which are mobile. I suppose a tank in a revetment might not go anywhere, but I would think you'd want to be sure before firing. The other method of designating a target is visually, which I can't imagine would do much for your survivability on the modern battlefield. In addition to having to rapidly identify the target, designate, lock and fire on it you have the added difficulty of flying VERY smoothly since the designation reticule is not ground stabilized, so it will bounce around at every flinch.

So here we are with our 4 Kh-29L missiles loaded on our MiG-29:



Rolling into the the target area:



A pre-briefed tank shows up as a diamond on the HUD after I have switched to air-to-ground mode and hit the "O" key to turn on the optics (although there is no TV display for this munition). Slewing the reticule over the diamond I hit the tilde key (mapped to my X45 throttle) to lock the target up and wait for the launch cue:



Missile away!



Unfortunately my first missile is aimed short of the target and explodes harmlessly so I quickly launch a second:





Coming back around I line up on a second tank and engage:



Breaking off from the attack run I head out to sea to engage the ship target. This time, since I will be visually acquiring and designating the target, I slew the reticule to the center of the HUD so that I can just point the nose of my aircraft at the target and steer the HUD reticule onto the target to designate it. Since the Kh-29L does not track moving targets you have the added burden of having to "lead" moving targets, so I designate just forward of the ship to allow for it's forward movement. Fortunately the Kh-29L is rocket powered, so flight time is VERY short which reduces the probability of miscalculating the lead on a moving target:





Out of missiles and glancing at the fuel gauge I head for a nearby base to complete the mission:





Not a great success with a wasted missile, but not bad for having been away for awhile. At least I didn't fly into the ground with target fixation! Overall I'm still struck with the primitive targeting that the Su-27/33 and MiG-29 have to live with. Flying Jane's F-18 with its multitude of sensors and delivery systems is much more complex but gives much more stand-off distance and accuracy than Flanker 2.51. The benefit, of course, is that the systems are pretty easy and probably relatively glitch free. Still, it is disconcerting to be flying at a target and not have the benefit of ground radar to lock the target prior to committing to the attack. I suppose it is good practice for flying the A-10 in LOMAC though!

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