

FOXBAT & PHANTOM by John Fernandes

To begin with I asked every playtester I could find around SPI, "What do you think of *Foxbat*?" With thirty people I got thirty different answers. There are, however, several opinions which are held in common. I've included these as well as some of the more interesting individual thoughts expressed by playtesters.

The game suffers from something called "Rules Inertia." This is a hassle resulting from the fact that in order to simulate rapid action in three dimensions, it was necessary to use what, at first glance, seems to be a complex system of rules. The wording of these rules is long and sometimes repeats itself. But this is necessary if all aspects are to be covered. To get around this, it's a good idea to keep the charts and pieces in view while you're reading the rules. In this way the rules will make more sense. The general consensus has it that once the rules are digested, the actual mechanics of the game are absorbed very quickly.

Some players were confused as to why only high altitude combat is covered in the play of the game. Although it is explained in the rules,

I will attempt to give some further clarification to the matter. The aircraft used in the game *Foxbat and Phantom* behave in accordance with the rules of the game only at altitudes over 20,000 feet. Performance changes drastically below that altitude. It changes so drastically, as a matter of fact, that it would take an additional set of rules to cover performance at low altitudes. No, there are no plans to design a low level fighter game at this time. The aircraft chosen for use in the game were chosen because of their different abilities and because of their historical, or player interest.

Players have expressed disappointment over the game not including close support aircraft, navy aircraft, which were extensively used in Viet-Nam, or a more detailed use of large bombers, their assorted "black boxes" and other anti-fighter weapons. Of course, no game can be all things to all people. The game is a great deal of fun as it is and further R&D time would have added little to this. Besides, SPI isn't trying to produce spoon-fed consumers, but active hobbyists who have the imagination and ability to alter the games they play to suit their own tastes.

Some players think that cannon fire is not as effective as it should be. The truth is, there was no other way to portray it. Basically, it would require decreasing the scale of the game to increase cannon effectiveness. But, doing that would force an increase in the size of the playing surface to ridiculous proportions in order to allow proper maneuver.

One last opinion has it that whichever force has radar homing missiles has all the advantages. Or, if both sides have them, the side with the greater range has all the advantages. This is a sign of simple short-sightedness on the part of the players. All you have to remember is that the effectiveness of radar homing missiles drops off sharply as range *decreases*. All the alleged "weaker" player has to do is keep close enough to his opponent to reduce his opponent's power while maneuvering to get the most out of his.

To sum up, *Foxbat and Phantom* is fun. Of all the opinions of the game I received, this was the most common. Enjoy it!

STILL MORE DESIGNERS NOTES ON FOXBAT & PHANTOM

We attempted, in the game's Designer's Notes, to forestall most of the expected letters concerning aircraft performance. We still got a few. Some letters brought up interesting points. Most of these we had already covered while doing the game, and many of these points were not dealt with specifically in the game's Designer's Notes. So we will here attempt to cover a few more bases and, hopefully, keep a few more people happy.

First, we must repeat the main point of the Designer's Notes. That is, almost all the performance data needed for this game is classified "Top Secret," or worse. We did quite a lot of leg work researching the game and stand by our evaluations. With the following exceptions, of course.

First, there was an error in the Mach ratings given on the speed tracks. In terms of Mach the aircraft are going about 25% faster than they actually are. A minor point, as the speeds themselves are correct. We received a lot of flack about our evaluations of the F-4 Phantom. Keep in mind that most F-4 combat has involved (according to the USAF) superior US pilots against inferior Mig-21 pilots. Basically, the Mig-21 is a superior "dog-fighting" aircraft. A lot of USAF pilots would

like to be in a Mig-21 when it comes to a pure dogfight. The F-4 does have a few additional advantages which do not show up in the game. We do not consider any of them critical. For example, the F-4 can carry four additional heat-seeking missiles on wing hardpoints (the F-4, used mainly as a bomber, has plenty of wing hardpoints). But you don't need many missiles for air-to-air combat. Which is why most aircraft don't carry that many. As the following article points out, most air combats are relatively brief. One aircraft or the other soon realizes a distinct inferiority and bugs out.

In addition, an F-4's radar homing missiles would have superior performance because of the two man crew and a generally superior radar. This would also apply to the F-14, F-111 and, to a certain extent, the F-15. But this superiority was accounted for, oddly enough, by increasing the ECM ratings of these aircraft. This was a roundabout way of doing it. But, in the interests of simplicity, realism and playability, it works.

Some also criticized us without examining all the factors which go into an aircraft's performance. Simply because the F-14 has a variable wing does not make it more maneuverable than the F-15 at supersonic speeds. The F-15 has lower wingloading and more power. These are the factors that count

when it comes to maneuverability. The same situation applies when the F-5E and Mig 21 are compared. The Mig 21 has lower wingloading and more power. Muscle pays off.

In addition, we were harassed for not including "snap down" missiles (very long range radar missiles like the US Phoenix). The reason was simple. The range of the missile far exceeded the size of the game map. Not to mention the fact that these missiles have not received any real combat experience. Since the Mig 25 (*Foxbat*) was pretty much designed around such a missile (and the use of a "MOSS" air control aircraft), it had to sacrifice pure "dogfighting" ability. In much the same way that the F-4 did. The F-4's predecessor (the F-104), as well as the Mig 25's predecessor (the Mig-21) were superior dogfighting aircraft.

The "bombers" in the Point Defense Scenario are abstracted and serve mainly as a focal point for the fighters to struggle over. If you want more realism (as well as more complexity) use SU-7's or A-7's in lieu of the "bomber" counter.

All this, as we expected, is what comes from doing "near future" games. We think it's worth the hassles. Overall response to games like *Foxbat & Phantom* seem to indicate it is.

—JFD

AIRCRAFT ANALYSIS

(1) *F-104*: Many players prefer this plane over all others. It can climb better than any plane at any speed. The YO-YO method of attack works best with this plane. The trick is to get above your opponent (which isn't hard with the 104's climbing ability), get behind him, set your altitude just right and dive. While diving, go to maximum acceleration. At the end of your dive, fire a missile and on your next turn, climb like crazy (you may get a second shot).

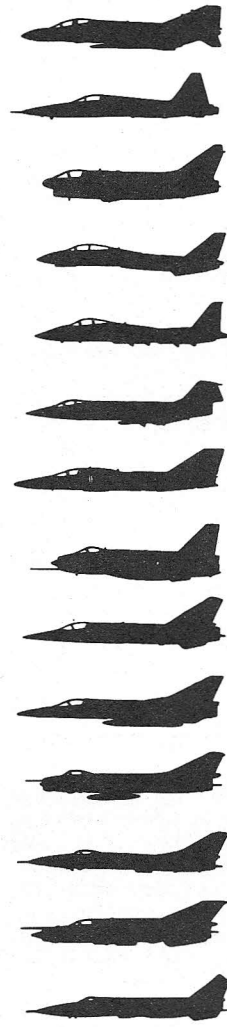
(2) *Mig-21*: Maneuver is the key to this plane and it is my favorite. To survive, keep you speed down. This makes you a more difficult target and maximizes your turning ability (your greatest asset). Your most effective maneuver is the "Climbing Turn." It makes you hard to corner and allows you to reverse direction and attack with surprising quickness. If, after all you've done, your opponent still can get above your ceiling altitude: Go Home! Nothing more can be done. Remember, with the Mig-21 you have to strike fast.

(3) *Mirage F and III*: These have the definite advantage of long range, radar missiles. They are the only planes which can effectively fire at planes flying at a higher altitude. My experience with these planes has taught me to keep my speed up for a fast getaway and at all times; keep my distance!

(4) *F-14 and 15*: These two monsters are heavily armed and have lots of "black boxes." When using these two, remember that you can always out-run your opponent. You can also turn as you vertically dive with the F-15. Lastly, when all else fails, Climb! You have with both planes the highest operational ceiling in the game.

(5) *F-4 Phantom*: This plane is called for in so many scenarios that I felt it warranted some closer inspection. Everything about this plane is mediocre with one exception. It has a high operational ceiling. So, keep your altitude up and don't be afraid to fire off a wild shot with a missile once in a while. You've got plenty!

AIRCRAFT CHARACTERISTICS SUMMARY



Acft	Level Max	HDSR	Accel Allw	Ceil	at Mach I / at Mach II			Cann	HSM RHM(RPA)	Role
					Climb	Dive	Turn			
F-4E	15	16 to 25	5	23	12 / 22	8 / 15	4 / 7	•	4 or 4(15)	Intruder Interceptor
F-5E	13	14 to 17	4	16	14 / 25	8 / 14	4 / 7	•	2 0	Intruder Interceptor
A-7	8	9 to 10	5	16	—	—	—	—	2 0	Intruder Interceptor
F-14	16	17 to 27	5	24	12 / 22	6 / 12	4 / 7	•	4 or 4(15)	Intruder Interceptor
F-15A	21	22 to 28	10	24	8 / 16	8 / 16	3 / 6	•	4 or 4(15)	Intruder Interceptor
F-104	16	17 to 27	6	18	18 / 35	6 / 12	5 / 8	•	2 + 2(15)	Intruder Interceptor
F-111	21	22 to 31	3	19	14 / 26	8 / 15	5 / 9	•	4 or 4(15)	Intruder Interceptor
Lightning	16	17 to 24	4	19	11 / 21	8 / 16	3 / 6	•	2 or 2(12)	Intruder Interceptor
Mirage F	16	17 to 26	4	21	12 / 23	6 / 11	3 / 7	•	2 + 3(18)	Intruder Interceptor
Mirage III	16	17 to 27	5	24	12 / 22	6 / 12	4 / 7	•	3 or 3(18)	Intruder Interceptor
Su-7	12	13 to 20	5	19	13 / 24	6 / 11	6 / 12	•	0 0	Intruder Interceptor
Su-11	18	19 to 28	6	19	14 / 27	9 / 16	4 / 8	—	2 or 2(10)	Intruder Interceptor
Mig-21	14	15 to 24	5	21	16 / 30	6 / 11	3 / 5	•	4 0	Intruder Interceptor
Mig-23	19	20 to 30	6	19	9 / 17	8 / 15	4 / 8	•	4 or 4(10)	Intruder Interceptor

Altitude Gauge

9	0	1
8	Max Alt: 19	2
7		3
6	5	4

Foxbat & Phantom Aircraft Control Chart

Climb Vector:	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7
Steps Climbed:	4	5	7	9	11	12	14	16	18	19	21	23	25	26	28	30	32	33	35	37	39	41	42	44	46	48	49	51	53	55
Level Flight:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Dive Vector:	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	7														
Vertical Dive:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17	18														
Turn Mode:	1	2	2	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	9	9	10	10	11	11	12	13	13	14	14	15	15	16	17	17	18

F-111E (made in USA)

Die Roll	4 to 8	9 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 20	20 to 24	25+
1	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
2	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
3	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
4	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
5	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
6	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
7	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
8	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
9	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt

Acceleration Gauge

9	0	1
8	Accel Allow: 3	2
7		3
6	5	4

Cannon Combat Results

Die Roll	1	0	1
1	Hit	Hit	Hit
2	Hit	Hit	Hit
3	Hit	Hit	Hit
4	Hit	Hit	Hit
5	Hit	Hit	Hit
6	Hit	Hit	Hit

Heat-Seeking Missile Combat Results

Die Roll	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more
1	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
2	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
3	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
4	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
5	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit
6	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit

Radar-Homing Missile Combat Results

Die Roll	4 to 8	9 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 20	20 to 24	25+
1	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
2	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
3	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
4	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
5	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
6	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
7	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt
8	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt	Nt

Weapons Systems

0	1	2	3	4
missiles remaining	missiles remaining	missiles remaining	missiles remaining	missiles remaining

ECM Scale

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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Horizontal Dive Acceleration Multiples

0	1	2	3	4
0 or 1 (see 6.7)	0, 1, or 2	1, 2, or 3	2, 3, or 4	3, 4, or 5

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SCENARIOS

The following scenarios were added to the game by some friends and me.

(#1) 2 Phantoms protecting 2 A-7's on a tactical bombing mission. 3 Mig 21's intercepting.

Intruder secretly chooses an area with a radius of six hexes in a hex pattern no less than 24 hexes (center measurement) from any board edge. This is the target area.

A-7's (which may not fire) enter the board at level five and speed five. These drop to zero altitude and disappear in this "Target" area (drop below the cloud cover) for one turn. The A-7's then reappear at "0" altitude and attempt to leave from same map edge they arrived on.

Phantoms enter the board at level "15" at 2 less than level maximum speed and must leave the board before game's end. Phantoms are bound by intruder sighting regulations and follow a preplanned flight pattern until they sight a Mig-21.

Mig-21's arrive at any map edge at any altitude desired one turn after the A-7's arrive.

Victory Conditions: The interceptor player receives 2 points for each intruder A-7 he shoots down before it reaches the target area. He receives 1 point for any other plane (including returning A-7's). The intruder

gets 1 point for each A-7 that gets back from the target area and 1 point for each Mig-21 shot down. For this scenario you had better plan your moves far in advance. One false move can be fatal.

(#2) 2 Phantoms try to protect choppers attempting the rescue of a downed pilot. 3 Mig-21's try to prevent the rescue and so capture the pilot.

Both players stake out a target area like the one in Scenario 1. This is staked out in blank counters. Neither side is considered the intruder for spotting or movement reasons.

2 Phantoms arrive at the South edge of the map at 2 less than level maximum at level 10.

3 Mig 21's arrive 2 turns later at level maximum speed and level 10 (north board edge).

Victory Conditions: The Mig-21 player receives 2 points for each Mig-21 that reaches "0" altitude in the target area (getting back makes no difference). Mig-21's are obliged, however, to attempt to return to the north edge. The Mig-21 player also receives 1 point for each Phantom shot down. The Phantom player gets 1 point for each Mig-21 shot down. This scenario is difficult for either player.

(#3) Point defense scenario: 3 Mig-23's are intruding.

3 F-104's or three British Lightnings are intercepting.

Special Rules: Instead of the normal bomber formation, use 4 SU-7's. They arrive at level 5 and speed 5. They may move in any manner the player desires, but they must move in formation (i.e., all planes must make the exact same maneuvers at the same time). No fire is allowed from the SU-7's unless the formation is reduced to one plane. Victory conditions are the same as normal point defense (1 Mig-23 pilot is inexperienced).

(#4) 3 Mirage III's intruding.

3 F-104's intercepting.

(#5) 3 F-5 Tigers intruding.

3 SU-11's defending (SU-11 may not use radar missiles).

Both players have 2 inexperienced pilots. This scenario is very tricky and unpredictable.

(#6) 3 A-7's intruding.

3 SU-7's intercepting (just for fun).

This scenario is really wild and reminds me of *Flying Circus*.