

## USAF Tactics in Rolling Thunder

The following diagram depicts a typical raid package from May 1967 and shows how all the support elements fit together.

### MiGCAP

Early Rolling Thunder: the CAP flight stays close to the bombers.

If jamming pods for CAP are not available, they will be forced to stand off from the target during the strike to avoid SAM attacks.

Late Rolling Thunder: the CAP flights will split. One will cover the Iron Hand flights, the other will orbit near the target to cover the egress of the bombers.

### Waypoint

The flightpath is plotted with gentle turns, or turns well away from SAM and Fire Can defenses that can exploit the temporary loss of jamming resulting from a turn.

### Strike Mission

Bomber flights fly a tightly compressed formation (or a jamming cell formation) so as to be on and off the target in a single game turn.

The lead flight usually attacks any AAA in the target hex to suppress it. The follow-on flights attack the target.

One CAP flight stays close to and behind the bombers, providing MiG protection.

### Entry

Commonly, USAF raids will enter at Medium altitude. This offers the best speed and safety. Low and Deck-altitude entry for part or all of the raid is not uncommon, but puts the force at risk from AAA.

### Egress

Egress from the combat zone is via the shortest route that avoids heavy enemy AAA or SAM activity.

USAF forces will often egress over the Gulf of Tonkin, which is free from enemy fire and closer to Navy Search and Rescue.

Offboard jamming assets are positioned to cover the exit axis.

### Iron Hand Mission

Iron Hand flights enter 1-5 game turns ahead of the Bombing strike to 'sanitize' the target area of SAMs and Fire Can AAA.

They will orbit close to the target and loiter there, playing 'cat and mouse' with any SAMs that switch on their radars.

As the forces 'first in' to the target, they are usually the last to leave, once the bombers have attacked.

### Jamming Mission

Jammers will enter at High altitude 5-15 game turns ahead of the main force and preposition themselves in a 'racetrack' orbit so their jamming covers the axis of attack.

At times of heavy MiG activity, the jammers will not enter the map and will jam from off-board.

### BDA Recon

The BDA recon flight enters at Low altitude, 5 or more game turns after the bombers. Their plan is to recon the target at least 5 turns after the last bomber has completed its attack.

