

WINGS: OVER FLANDERS FIELDS

Developers' comments on some of the superb new features, many not seen before in flight simulators of this kind, and how they all combine to produce a full WW1 air war experience;

AI Rules of Engagement, Craft Allocations, Directives etc.

Firstly we hope everyone understands that the AI are quite a lot more human in WOFF than in any sim that has gone before - they do not always engage and nor do they always fight to the death - like humans eventually survival instincts kick in.

There are many many factors that affect whether a Flight/AI Pilot will engage:

1) Situation - number of enemy vs number of friendlies;

- Above or below and how far above or below?
- Altitude speed direction?
- Can they catch them?
- Over friendly or enemy territory?
- How far to nearest lines?
- What are our Fuel and Ammo levels?
- Is attacking this flight the mission objective?
- Are we being attacked?
- What type of enemy craft are there?
- Has the leader spotted them?

(Note: vision acuity varies by skill rating and weather, clouds block view and haze shortens view distance).

2) Morale and Skill

- How good is the AI individually and as a group (their skills) ?
- How is their morale currently?
- If in a 2-seater do they have escort (escort boosts morale a bit)

3) Craft state and Pilot health

- How good is the craft he is flying

- What condition is his aircraft in?
- What capabilities does his aircraft have?
- What health does the AI have?

4) The Morale of the AI pilots changes over time in your squadron - either getting better or worse depending how you all fare.

5) If you want the AI to ALWAYS ENGAGE like robots, and like most sims, then by all means set this option ON in workshops. Setting is good for QC fights if you prefer but remember to turn it off for campaign normally.

6) If you want to always engage, or try to climb up to 10000 feet to catch an enemy flight when you are at 500 feet, but do not want to set the AI Always Engage setting on (it affects every AI out there) then ALWAYS LEAD the flight - setting in workshops. Or enlist in a poor Squad with no Aces and with a high rank for yourself.

But be aware your AI Squad mates may not be in a hurry to be as foolhardy as you.

What Additional factors affect the AI once in an engagement? :

- 1) The abilities of the craft he is in with regard to manoeuvres
- 2) His skills ability to execute manoeuvres
- 3) Fatigue - its tiring to keep hauling a WW1 machine all over the skies

(1 and 2 also including dynamic changes due to damage)

What Other factors can affect the AI in Transit? :

- 1) If the AI decide to RTB they may seek out the nearest friendly airfield rather than risk going all the way to their homefield - depends on craft damage and pilot health factors.
- 2) If the homefield is busy or many craft have already landed again they may divert to another nearby friendly field.
- 3) If the AI is breaking off due to morale issues they may well return to their homefield, or another field, out of formation.

Note: the AI will always land properly at a field if he is undamaged (Pilot and Machine), or in an open field, if he is has sustained Machine or Health damage but still has sufficient Machine control.

What determines the skill and morale of my AI squad mates? :

1) The historical rating of the Squad you are in and the number of historical aces in the Squad basically affects the skills that your pilots have, existing and new incomers, as well as the base morale - the base morale of your squad mates will improve or get worse depending on how the missions pan out over time - deaths rate success rate etc..

What determines the aircraft I have been given? :

1) Each Squad is allocated the historically correct craft (3 types are active at any one time) and they are assigned in order of Historical Ace and then Rank - the lower your Rank the older the craft you will be allocated - carry out successful missions and you will get a better craft when you get promoted....

2) By Manually enlisting in a squad you can enlist at a high Rank...and get access to the better craft as soon as they come off the assembly lines.

You can find this Manual Squad Deployment button by clicking Pilot Dossier Button on WOFF main menu, then click the "Enlist New Pilot" button, and then look to the bottom right of the screen.

3) You can also Transfer to another squad.

What determines the role of A Flight? :

1) The CO controls the roles of all flights and sometimes A flight may be going up with you to assist directly in the objectives or indirectly by protecting you - or they are flying elsewhere at another time and mission directive.

2) When will I be allocated to A-Flight - you won't and it is of no significance pretend A is B and B is A if you wish.

Where is the Enemy on Intercepts and Scrambles? :

1) Intercepts - generally these are reports from frontlines units over WT or telephones (not in early war) that craft have been seen coming over the lines - go to the front line sector and try and intercept them and the range can be quite far sometimes - best to loiter a bit and see if you can spot them and hit them on the way back etc. as they did in WW1

So of course the chances of intercepting them on this poor info from the relatively 'distant' frontlines is not that good with WW1 limited technology - but they are there and it's a real scenario.

2) Scrambles - these are now reports from more local 'nearby' sources - nearby observation balloons, local airfield observers and nearby ground units in a certain limited range from your airfield. So compared to Intercept these enemies are a LOT closer - but they are seldom raking you as you take off. The intended targets for these incoming raiders are now quite close to you - nearby or even sometimes your field. Note Reccy craft incoming may not even bomb their targets but are there purely to gather intell - but be sure their target is nearby or even your field.

Use this knowledge to plan your scramble mission accordingly.

So unlike OFF they will not be right on top of you every time at the start of the mission - you still have to look and seek and engage - or not.

Remember:

The enemy is moving!

If you are Allied then the Hun, if in two seaters will be high, and only two seaters will go over the lines - the Hun fighters seldom went into Allied Territory - use this knowledge when flying to your target to better help Intercept and Scrambles.

The Allied fighters on the other hand often did go over German held territory. So Scrambles from German fields can involve either fighters or two seaters and you will have more chance to catch an enemy.

There are up to 256 craft in the theatre at any given time depending on your workshop settings, so if you miss the Intercept or Scramble objective (don't worry it happened a lot

in WW1!) the theatre is still alive with flights so if you are leader or want to lone wolf it - go for it and explore.

What determines when I lead B flight? :

1) Rank determines when you lead B Flight - if you are the highest Rank in the flight that mission then you will lead. Historical Aces can sometimes create exceptions to this.

If you are in a poor squad you may find yourself leading quite early on and to start with maybe not every flight - all depends who is up there with you and their Rank.

In an Elite Squad it may take some time, if ever, before you get to lead - Manually enlist in an Elite Squad if leading is not your forte.

2) In Workshops you can select Always Lead if you want to override the Historical Rank and Squad Rating system.

I have been given a Mission that I don't like:

1) There are a few options available to you though although of course in WW1 you had no choice and you could be shot for LMF.

In workshops set Campaign Date Advance from Auto to Auto/Manual.

Now in the main Campaign interface bottom right you will be able to advance time so when in the briefing room simply go back to the main campaign screen and advance time.

However note that often you may see the same mission again that has to be done - sorry that's war and Patrolling is probably one mission you wont get away from.

But there are some rarer mission types that you may elect to skip.

My Missions are very repetitive:

1) War is hell and sometimes war is even repetitive - patrol patrol patrol until you die this is how it was - especially for the German Fighter Pilots who seldom went very far into enemy territory.

There is non historical option available to you in workshops to tailor this to be a bit more variable.

In workshops set Historical Mission Types from On to Off (look to the bottom right of the

Workshop options screen).

This will add extra mission variations for pilot/flight but is no longer historically representative of the Squadron's operations in WW1.

Why don't we always go home in formation? :

1) In WW1 the concepts of formation flying and maintaining formations was in its infancy. Often the pilots would end up disoriented after a dog fight or ground attack mission and due to many issues would break off and head for home singly or in pairs or sometimes in smaller groups - fuel ammo and other factors could make them do this or simply a feeling that the job was done so RTB.

Often they would lose sight of their squad mates and again simply go on home alone - shaken and wary of attack.

This is how it is in WOFF often formations are no longer adhered to after a bitter episode of fighting or attacking ground targets and the AI will simply dribble in back to land. Factors that can affect this individual RTB are:

Fuel and Ammo levels

Pilot Health less than 100%

Craft Damage levels

Morale Levels

Other times especially on Routine Patrols etc the formation keeping is maintained and they all go home in their formation - especially if no action took place.

I see AI Sometimes Colliding with each other? :

Collisions in WW1 were a real everyday risk - along with mechanical failure - and they happened between friendlies and in the heat and swirl of dogfighting between friend and foe.

Whilst it is possible to make the AI like 'robots' that never collide and never make mistakes - we have not chosen to do this.

Rather as an example: take two opposing AI, they might choose to turn in the same direction to avoid each other in a head on - same as what can happen in real life.

Sometimes the AI take over and lead the formation - I am leader what gives? :

If the AI perceive that you are in trouble and think you are no longer able to lead properly a new leader takes over to carry out the mission.

In trouble might mean:

You have a mechanical problem - your engine has a malfunction and you are looking to land - note that the AI don't know if you have actual engine trouble or not but determine this if you are flying too slow or losing altitude too quickly for a certain time period.

The Fighters/2 seaters that I am meant to be escorted by/escort are not at the rendezvous point - where are they? :

Sometimes the flight that you are meant to link up with are jumped or suffer mechanical failures and turn back so yes they are not always there to meet up with you.

Also if flying full real you may battle to locate them - the TAC and other aids can help - but yes it was not easy in WW1 either.

Try loitering around the rendezvous point to see if you can locate them - the 2 seaters are often performing a fairly large circle depending on machine type.

Finally switching on Auto pilot is another way to get a bead on them.

If you fail to link up don't feel bad - it happened in real life too - and there will be more opportunities later.

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General comments on commanding AI using TAC and views.

(Enemy and Friendly aircraft how can I spot view them?)

Several ways in WOFF;

1) Bring up your TAC 'Shift+T" (toggle)

Press 'TAB' to select an enemy Target or 'Shift-TAB' to select a friendly - the 'item' will go yellow in the TAC.

Now cycle/switch the view pressing 'F1' a few times until it says at the top: Player Target View.

Now 'V' will toggle the view between player \diamond target, and player \Downarrow target.

Notes: (Pressing T also changes target types to narrow a search to only certain object types. Pressing "tilde" (~ or ´ on some keyboards) will padlock this target if you are in the cockpit when you select a target first).

Also if you wish you can now remove the TAC and Tab key will still cycle through targets easily whilst in Player Target views. Now you can press A to force an attack (they will chose enemies that are with the one you selected, however that one is YOURS. i.e. you are telling your flight to attack other members of the enemy flight.

2) Use the Observer view mode (a new free camera mode).

Observer mode is experimental NEW mode.

To use observer view, press J, now **rotate view with twist Z axis rotate joystick** and push forward back to move forward and back, **use numpad 8 and 2 (up down arrows, with numpad enabled)** to climb/dive view.

Note rotate with the joystick is for twist sticks. It may be your rudder that controls the rotate.

And remember it is experimental if it doesn't work well or you find rendering problems far away from the player please do not report them we cannot respond or discuss - please don't use it if this bothers you.