Introduction

Welcome to Ultimate Space Commando!

This Manual will guide you through the most basic features and functions of the game, including the menu system and general squad management. For a more advanced tutorial on controls, play the Campaign with the Tutorial enabled (default), and/or see our detailed online Game Guide and Step-by-Step Tutorial at http://uscthegame.com/game-guide/.

Technical information

System requirements

OS: Windows XP SP3 (Vista / 7 / 8.1 recommended)

CPU: Intel Dual Core 1.6 GHz or equivalent (2.8 GHz recommended)

GPU: AMD Radeon HD3850 512 MB or equivalent

Memory: 1 GB RAM (4 GB recommended)

Sound card: any DirectX 9.0 compatible

Other: DirectX 9.0c (2010 June), .NET 2.0 Client Framework (or later), keyboard, mouse

User data

You can find your offline user data in "*{USC install folder}\data_user*".

The stand-alone (not Steam or Desura client) install version of the game may be forced by Windows UAC settings to make saves in *"Users\{user}\AppData\Local\VirtualStore\Program Files*\Ultimate Space Commando"* (* or Program Files (x86) on 64-bit systems).

The Steam version can also store user data from this folder on the Steam Cloud.

You may freely delete any files from this folder (or its subfolders), but do NOT delete the subfolders themselves!

Other files of interest

USC root\USC.cfg	system and game configuration file
USC root\docs	version history files, EULA, additional license documents, manual

Known issues

- Do not plug in/pull out audio devices right when the game starts to boot, as it can cause a crash to desktop with a message "unable to load sound". You can do so freely afterwards.
- If you use a desktop DPI setting higher than small (100%), set it to small or disable DPI scaling under the compatibility tab of the game's shortcut properties to ensure USC recognizes your screen resolution.

The Main Menu

Campaign

Start a new or **continue** an ongoing Campaign. You'll be asked to specify a "Campaign ID" (a unique name) that identifies it. You can have multiple ongoing Campaigns. Saving in this mode is automatic and you can't have multiple saves of the same Campaign (except for 'Drill mode'), hence you only need to provide which one you wish to play.

When you start a new Campaign, you'll also have to select a difficulty level. This only affects the combat difficulty (not available resources and such). **"Normal"** is recommended. You **can't change** it later for that Campaign. You can also select 'Drill' and/or 'Hardcore' mode here, and whether to skip the in-game Tutorial Mission.

The Campaign mode is a long, difficult undertaking, consisting of many missions, strategic tasks and choices, long-term resource and squad management, and of course, an original story.

Defend the Base!

Start a new or **load** an ongoing Defend the Base! (short: DTB) game.

Select "Load" to display the file dialog and select a saved game to resume, or choose the number of squads (players) and the difficulty level, then hit "Start Mission" to start a new DTB game.

Select "Back" to return to the Main Menu.

In Defend the Base!, you actually build and maintain your own base, and defend it against waves of aliens with your squads. You can earn permanent bonuses for your squads by surviving long enough. There's a total of 10 waves, but only the best squads can hope to see the light at the end of the last day! (Some expertise with the game is recommended before playing this game mode!)

Single Mission

Start a new or **load** an ongoing Single Mission.

Select "Load" to display the file dialog and select a saved game to resume, or set up various mission and player settings to start a new one (see Single Mission chapter for details).

Select "Back" to return to the Main Menu.

Use Single Mission mode to set up a custom game, choosing from many map, difficulty, objective, victory condition and player settings. Play by yourself or with other players (in "hot-seat" or over TCP/IP) against the aliens, create player vs. player matches, or even mix up things. Your customized squads can collect crafting materials and special blueprints and can actually evolve in gear from mission to mission. Will you be able to beat the fearsome Ultimate difficulty some day?

Network and Join

Check "**Network"** and then enter either Defend the Base! or Single Mission mode to begin hosting a network game over TCP/IP protocol. The **Network window** will appear, where you can enter your player name and optionally a password for the session (though it's highly unlikely that someone other than your friends will try to join your game on your IP address). Your own IP address will be automatically retrieved from the system and shown at the top of the window, so you can tell it to anyone who you wish to join the game. Computers in the same Local Area Network can connect as easily as any computers around the world. With **"Create & host game"** being selected (default), click OK. Then you have to set up the game session or load one as you would do in single computer mode. When loading a game, you'll have to wait for all other players to join before you can continue the game. Every player—including the host—will have to select the squad they wish to resume playing with.

Simply click **"Join"** to connect to an already hosted game. You'll need to specify the IP address of the host, as well as your player name and the session password (if any). If an open game exists on the specified host (i.e. there are still open player slots), you'll be connected automatically. When starting a new game, you'll be able to set up/load your squads asynchronously. When resuming a saved game, you'll only need to select your squad from a list.

Due to the nature of the game, if connection gets lost with any player, the game session will be terminated with an automatic save that can be used to resume the session after the connection has been re-established (you have to host a game again/players need to re-connect to host). As it is a turn-based game, all other mechanics are identical as to an "offline" game, except for a very basic chat system that can be used for communication between players. In Defend the Base! mode, the host retains all base building functions, the others may only consult with him/her.

Hall of Fame

USC features a simple scoring system for all three types of games that can be used to compare your skills with your friends, or simply benchmark your progression as a player. Based on a lot of different factors, complete Campaign playthroughs, Defend the Base! sessions and successful Single Missions of all five main objective types are assigned a score, and the best 20-20 are displayed on a separate list along with other statistics like game time, turns spent, kills, losses, and with the merit you achieved (it's another kind of evaluation, see later).

Beside the mission type selectors, there are other options:

Import (merge): imports Hall of Fame data from the "ported data file"*, combining the best scores.

Export: creates a "ported data file"*.

Clear list: clears Hall of Fame data for the currently selected mission type.

**Ported data file: "hiscore_mis.prt"* (or *"hiscore_dtb.prt"* for DTB) in the *"data_user\saves_misc\"* folder. Copy this to the same folder on another installation to be able to import data.

Hotkey bindings

You can review and change hotkey mappings here. Using hotkeys is totally optional, but can speed up your game if you learn at least the most basic ones (like "D" for Defense mode, etc.).

Settings

Here you can alter the different display, audio and gameplay settings. Note that these settings are always stored locally in the USC.cfg file.

Screen resolution: use the arrow buttons to select a screen resolution between 1024x600 and your maximum supported one from different standard and wide-screen settings. If you find the game a bit slow, try to lower the resolution first (preferably to one of the same aspect ratio).

Full screen: check it to have the game running in full screen mode. *It is recommended to either use full screen mode with your desktop native resolution, or windowed (non-fullscreen) mode with a lesser resolution of your liking.*

Shadows: use the arrow buttons to select a shadows setting.

- *Baked only:* only unit shadows, and shadows cast by walls and map objects onto the ground will be displayed (fastest).
- *Medium:* some additional shadows are visible, providing a slightly better immersion of walls.
- *High baked:* all shadows are visible, but floor shadows are still "pre-baked", resulting in less varied floor textures in some places *(generally recommended)*.
- *Full:* all shadows are visible, and are directly cast on all available floor textures *(recommended for high-end systems only)*.

Fast minimap: check to use the enhanced minimap renderer *(default)*. Only uncheck it if you encounter graphical problems with the minimap.

Special effects: if on *(default)*, various light effects will be visible during combat and near other light sources (fires, alpha monsters, etc.).

Advanced light effects: provides additional range and intensity to light effects. *Default: off.*

Color intensity: controls the saturation of various light effects and map elements. *Default: 50%.*

Audio volume: click "**Music**" and **"Sound"** to increase volume by 10%. After 100%, 0% (off) comes. *Default: Music 70%, Sound 100%.* Can be also set during a game.

Misc.: miscellaneous **in-game settings** and **accessibility options**. These are also available from the in-game menu during mission. See later in details.

After changing particular settings, you may need to restart the game. You will be prompted.

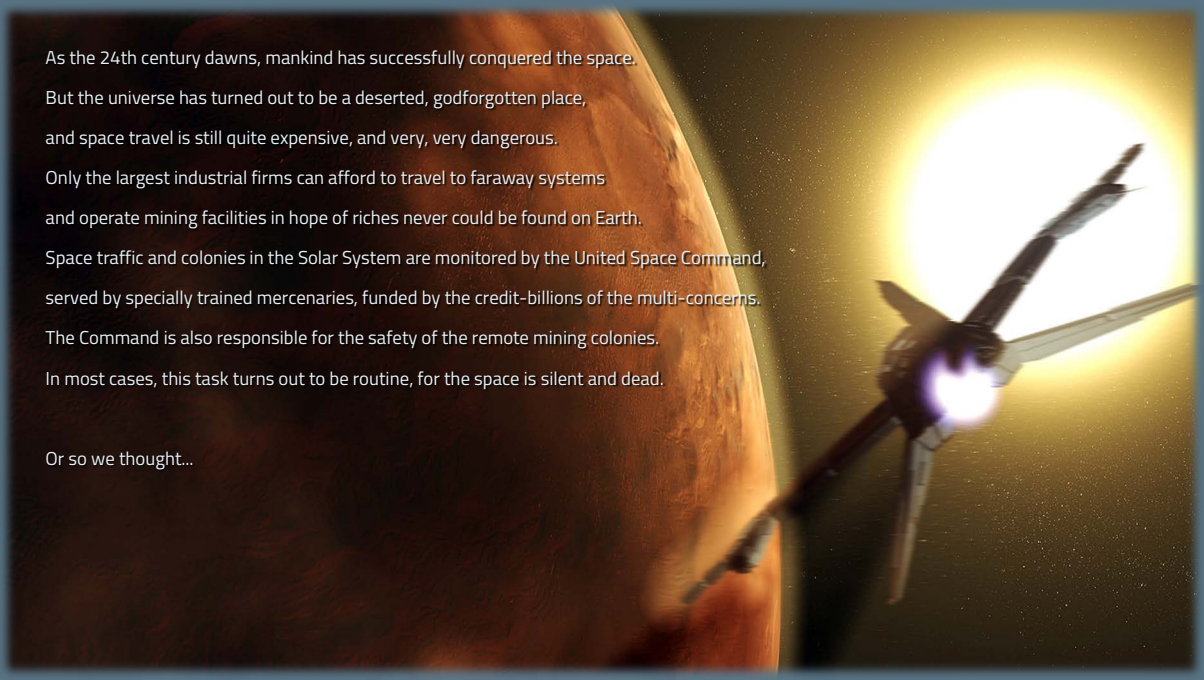
Credits

View information about the creators of Ultimate Space Commando.

Quit

Exit Ultimate Space Commando.

Campaign mode



In Campaign mode, you follow and control the fate of the crew of a small reconnaissance vessel, the U.S.C. Wraith, as a first encounter scenario with a strange alien species unfolds and escalates into something much bigger and—well, more dangerous. All your strategic and tactical decisions will matter in shaping the story and its end, if not else, in a subtle way. You'll have a total of 16 soldiers in 4 squads with total control over them. You'll have to explore, fight battles, survive, scavenge for equipment, discover the truth behind the events, and make a final stand.

Game saving in Campaign mode is semi-automatic. On exiting the game at any point, your progress will be always automatically saved, overwriting previous data. Outside of actual missions, you can't reload a "saved game" to "select the other choice". Your decisions are all permanent. While in a mission, you get to decide when to save the game, but this will overwrite your progress as well. You can reload your last (and only) in-mission save indefinitely to try to overcome a tough situation, but once you save or advance forward in the story, there's no turning back to before that point.

The Campaign will start with an **introductory/tutorial** mission. If you play the game for the first time, it's advised to carefully follow the instructions.

The Campaign consists of two main parts, **management** and actual **missions**.

Management

Between missions you will spend your time on the Campaign Management screen. Here you can overview and choose your next mission, read log entries, assign repair and research tasks, view the roster, customize squads, and setup your gear.



Mission selection panel

Review mission status and briefings here, and select which squads you wish to deploy.

During your journey, you'll encounter many situations when you may (and should) deploy more than one squad at once, so make sure your squads are always geared well and can be deployed.

To begin a mission, select the squads you wish to deploy, and hit **">>> Start Mission <<<"**.

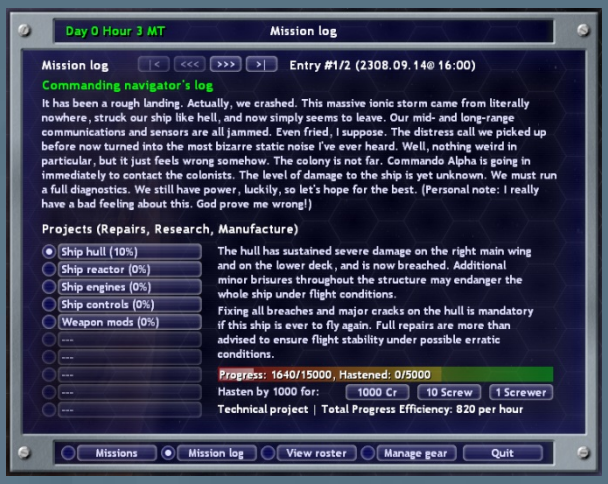
Later in the Campaign you'll also have an option to **"skip an hour"**, letting all your squads to recover. Use this wisely, as if you become too passive, the aliens may pay you a visit!

Mission log panel

Here you can review your crew's log entries, and assign **Projects**, either ship repairs, weapon upgrades, or anything else that may become available over time.

All the Projects have two phases, a **"halfway milestone"** and a **full completion.** You must reach at least the milestone for the Project to have any effect on your actual progress, and if you don't plan to fully complete it, don't waste more resources on progress between that and the full completion.

The current Project progresses over time based on the total sum Electrotechnics and/or Biochemistry skills of your crew, and you may spend additional resources to hasten any project until a limit.





Squad management panel

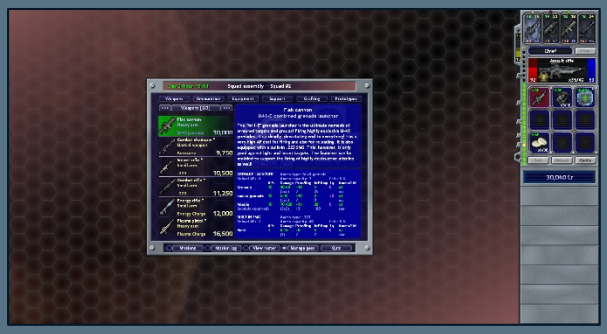
Organize your units and squads here. Select a unit from the list to view his/her statistics, assign available skill points, or change the callsign. You can also move your soldier up/down in the roster by pressing the **<<<** and **>>>** buttons below the squad logo, or can even swap him/her with another unit by right-clicking on that one. Slots 1-4 are for Squad 1, 5-8 for Squad 2, etc., as you can see from the squad-colored backgrounds.

Sometimes your squads will not return to HQ right after a mission. Units **"currently on mission"** or their gear can't be modified until they arrive.

You can also change squad names, logos, and coloring.

Gear management panel

This is almost identical to the Squad Assembly screen you use to configure a squad for DTB or Single Mission games (see later). You can buy, sell, craft or disassemble equipment as you like. Note that in Campaign mode you won't have access to as many weapons and gadgets until you find **manufacturing blueprints** for them! You may also find prototype blueprints (as in Single Mission mode) for crafting. In the Campaign you also have a **Stash** that can store up to 9 items for fast sharing between different squads.



Defend the Base!

Defend the Base! is a unique, mid-term game mode in which you have to build, maintain and defend a base on the planet surface against waves of aliens with your chosen squad(s). There a total of 10 waves (growing in strength) in a day/night cycle, with special bonuses awarded after every second (the night) mission. These bonuses are permanently carried over by the customized squads that earned them, making them more versatile for a new DTB session (if you aim higher), or for *any* Single Mission, including PvP! Bonuses include crystals (Wave #2), damage bonus with a weapon (#4), extra Credit limit (#6), high level weapon blueprints (#8), and additional skill points (#10), and they worth more by each difficulty level.

To be able to keep these bonuses, just make sure you save your squad before starting the game (there's even an option for this in the launch mission dialog for your ease), or use an already existing squad (i.e. load a squad instead of creating a new one).

Bonuses are only granted if you survive the session, though. This, however, does not mean that you have to fight through Wave #10. After each Wave, you have the option to **abandon the base**. This will earn you a moderate high score and all bonuses that you already achieved, and concludes that game session. Only try to survive the next wave if you feel that your squad and your base is still in a shape to withstand the Horde!

Configuring your squad(s)

The same customized squads can be used for both DTB games and Single Missions, either in single player or any multiplayer mode. All things you earn and collect in any of these modes is saved with your squad, enabling progression over time!

When starting a new DTB game, you'll have to load or configure your squad(s) just as when you start a Single Mission, but since this game mode has been carefully balanced for challenge, there are a few restrictions regarding what type of squad configurations can be used:

- you have 100,000 Credits (plus bonus if any)
- weapons and items are available as per the "Normal" loadout setting
- squad strength is also "Normal" (800/700/600/500 skill points, plus bonus if any)

This means that if you load a squad that doesn't have a configuration for these settings, you'll have to set it up from the ground (BUT since it's an existing squad, you can earn bonuses). The **default configuration** for Single Missions matches the parameters above, so don't worry about it too much!

During the DTB game session, you'll never get the opportunity again to return to the Squad Assembly screen and make changes (or buy new items). You'll be able to replenish ammo and gain new items another way. So pack smart at the beginning!

Base controls



After starting the game and before each Wave you'll have the option to build and maintain the base using this screen. On the right side you can see a brief overview of the game status, your units, some deployable objects in your inventory, and your **Base Points (BP)** that can be spent on buildings, repairs and objects. You'll start with a fair amount of these, and you will earn about 800-1500 per Wave, but it is still recommended to not spend it all in one place if you needn't.

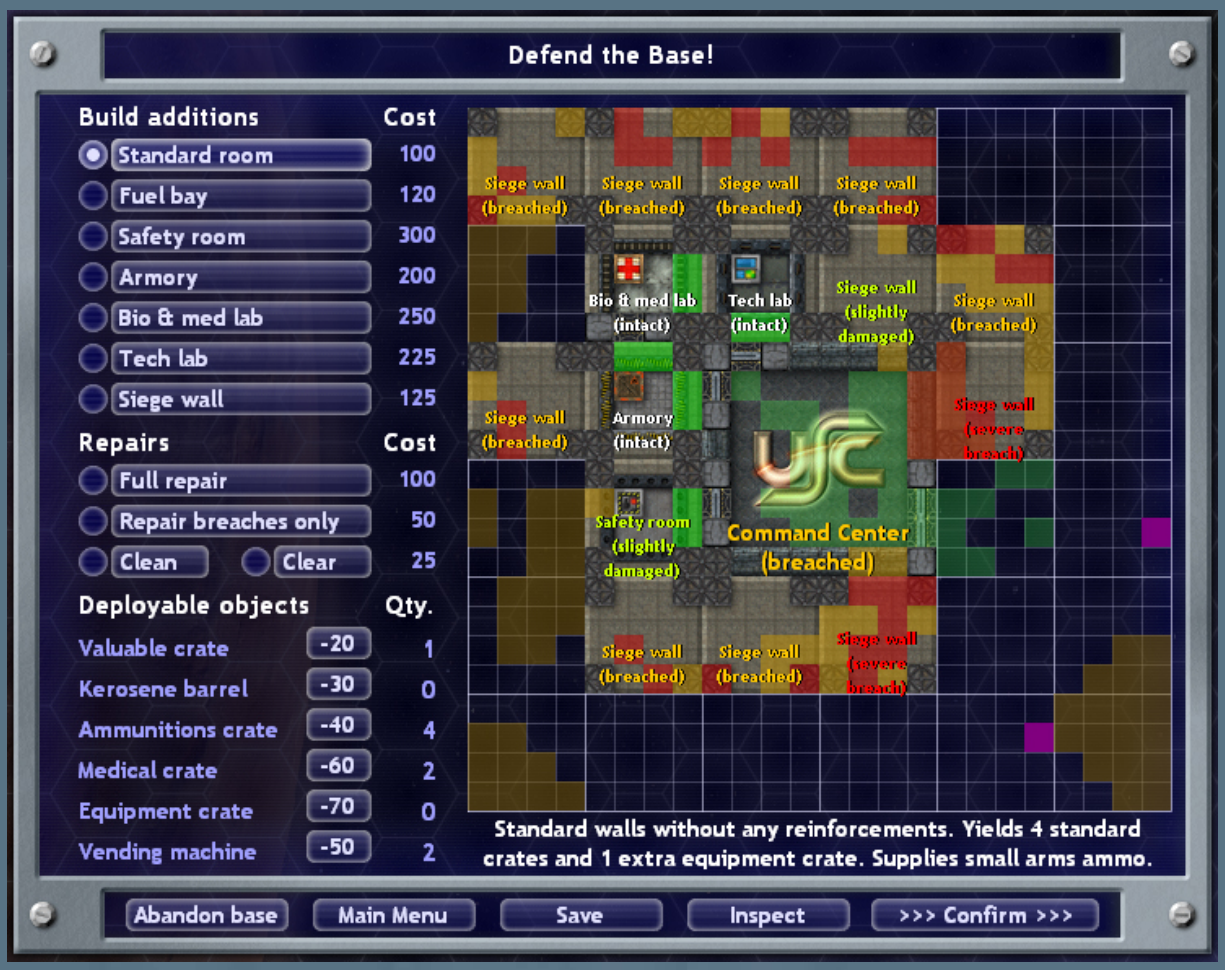
The center panel consists of two main parts, a **list of additions** ("rooms"), **repair operations** and **deployable objects** that can be built, performed or bought on the left, and a **grid overview** of the base and its surroundings on the right, with the *"Command Center"* always in the middle. It is 8x8 grids large room with fairly strong walls, and will mostly act as the central hub of your base (but you don't need to specifically defend it). *You'll have to place at least one entrance for it.*

Building additions

Select an addition from the list and click on any free (yet not built) large grid (with 4x4 small grids in it) on the map to build it instantly. Though you can't place it on top of another addition, you can build it onto *rocks* or *crystals* (tan and magenta grids), removing those. Building rooms next to/onto rocks can be a good practice since those will act as an impenetrable perimeter to your base.

When building an addition, you'll also get some extra deployable objects (**yields**), depending on the type of the addition. An info bar below the map will show details about this. Different additions also **supply** different types of items: *equipment crates placed in them will spawn that kind of item every Wave (if emptied or re-deployed).* This will be your main—and only!—option during the session to replenish ammo, supplies, or get new equipment, so make sure you build every kind and a big enough of an addition to meet your needs.

Additions you build must be also **connected to the base**. If you hover your mouse over an addition, its four connection areas will be highlighted. *Click these to toggle* between *wall / single-sided door / double-sided door / free connection* (corridor). After the Wave starts, you can't modify existing doors or corridors (only delete the whole addition), but you can always build new doors on walls.



Use the **"Inspect"** button to see the actual map before proceeding to the next phase (**"Confirm"**).

Maintenance

Make no mistake, your walls and doors will sustain heavy damage during each Wave, and after a while, they will even get breached. Even the floor will become contaminated with radioactive goo. Yellow (damage), red (breach) and dark green (rad pool) highlights will show you the level of damage. You have four options to maintain your additions:

- **Full repair (100 BP):** will clear all contamination and restore walls to their full integrity.
- **Repair breaches only (50 BP):** will only rebuild walls that have been destroyed.
- **Clean (25 BP):** will only remove all kinds of contamination.
- **Clear (25 BP):** ***removes the whole addition*** with all items and objects left in it, and thus enables you to build a brand new addition at full integrity and with its yields.

Deployable objects

You also get to populate your base with all kinds of objects. Beside the yields you get from building additions, you can manually buy objects at the "Deployable objects" section. It also shows how many you already have of each. You can use them as per their purpose or even to make barricades, etc. As we've mentioned before, **equipment crates** are the most important of all. They spawn a random item (or stack) of the types defined by the addition they've been placed in at the beginning of each Wave. Always have at least 10-15 equipment crates to ensure you don't run out of ammo—or if you do, you have alternate weapons—or other supplies. *The objects can be deployed in a separate phase before the Wave starts, after confirming buildings!*

Object deployment



In this phase you can:

- deploy or pick up any deployable objects;
- move your units into position and activate/deactivate their items freely.

Select an available object from the list on the right-hand panel, then left-click on a free grid on the map to place it. Click an object on the map to pick it up. *Already consumed vending machines and doorlocks can't be picked up.*

When placing a new **vending machine**, click on it repeatedly to toggle its type (Health/Morale/APs) or to pick it up. Vending machines are only usable once, but afterwards they are still very useful as a barricade, as they can sustain more damage than most crates.

Doorlocks can be placed on walls next to doors, and are automatically assigned to control that door. After placing the lock, the door stays unlocked, so you can use the lock to seal a room or a corridor when the need emerges. After that, you'll need a circuit cracker or a manual override to unlock the door. Doors locked (and not just closed) this way are very useful as even the smartest enemies can't open them, and must break through it, which may take a while.

Place your **equipment crates** in rooms whose supply you need most. It is generally a good practice to have a lot of these in the early Waves and stock up on different weapons, ammunition and other supplies, as later your base is likely to get breached and even equipment crates won't be safe. Open the crates, pick up their content and put it down somewhere on the floor to save it for those times. *Emptied equipment crates will automatically spawn another item at the start of the next Wave.* If you haven't emptied a crate, but don't need its content, you can pick up the crate in the deployment phase and re-deploy it, forcing it to spawn a new item!

Databanks are exceptionally useful as barricade, as they are the sturdiest objects. Additionally you can salvage them, and any crafting materials or prototype blueprints you have when winning the session or abandoning the base will be added to your squad's pool.

Single Missions

Single Missions are custom set-up games with many configurable parameters, played on randomly generated maps either in single player, or in local or network-based multiplayer mode. There are two main "types", full **PvAI** (Player versus Computer) or **PvP** (Player versus Player, which may still include computer controlled opponents). PvAI games are considered "official", which means they are always evaluated, and based on your performance, you get a **Score** and a **Merit**. For purposes of gameplay balance, some parameters of these missions can never be modified. PvP missions, on the other hand, can be played with any parameters and mix-ups, since they pose a total different kind of challenge. (Note: scoring/achievement systems for both modes may get enhanced in the future of USC.) Completing a Single Mission generally takes 1-2 hours based on your skill level and the number of players.

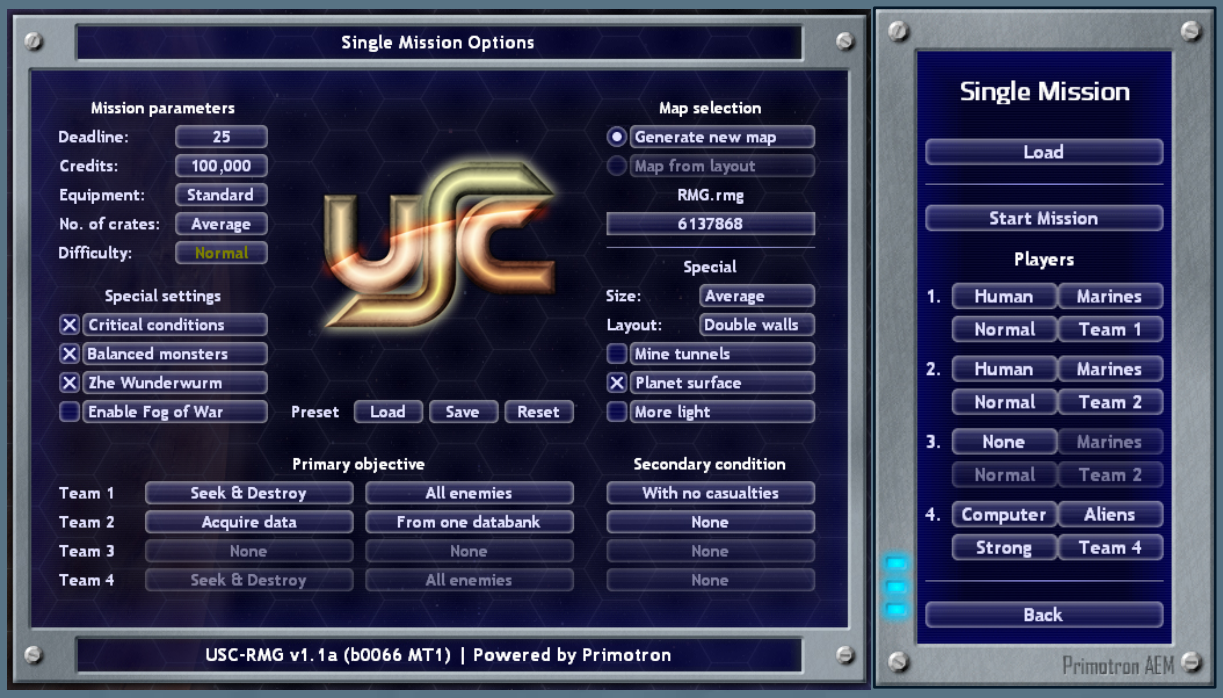
Single Missions can be played on **seven difficulty levels:** Beginner, Novice, Easy, Normal (default), Hard, Extreme and Ultimate. Customized squads *do make progress* by collecting crafting materials and blueprints: *crafted items* do not cost Credits, thus you can replace items you bought with them, enabling you to spend some more Credits on something else; and *prototype weapons*, though they also cost Credits, have special properties that can make them much more powerful or usable, giving your units quite an edge. Squads completing Waves of Defend the Base! can also earn additional bonuses. One thing you won't get in Single Missions are experience points: your units won't gain levels. This is to ensure the basic integrity of PvP and the balance of the difficulty levels (i.e. using crafted items and prototypes does have its limits due to the inventory space available and combat mechanics, but letting units gain XP indefinitely, evolving into a "super-soldier", would only give a huge advantage to players who play a lot, not necessarily with higher skills).

So how Single Mission (and DTB) squad progression works? The gear you set up for the mission will be available to you again after the mission. You dropped an item? Used a lot of ammo? It doesn't matter: your configured gear will remain the same for the next mission! BUT crafting materials and blueprints you collected *will be added* to your resources pool. (Note: other items you may pick up during a Single Mission (weapons, gadgets from crates) won't stay with you after. This is the biggest difference compared to Campaign mode, where your gear depletes, but anything you find is yours for real.)

Remember to save a NEW squad before starting the mission. Even the "Start mission" dialog has an option to automatically save the squad. Already existing squads you have LOADED don't need to be re-saved to be able to progress. Only re-save them if you want to commit to gear changes.

Squad files (*.sqd in "*{USC root}\data_user\squads*") can store multiple configurations of the same squad by Credit limit, player (unit) strength (handicap) and equipment availability. For most cases you will probably use the default 100,000 Credits, normal strength and normal equipment setting, but if you ever play on other settings, you can save your configuration in the same squad file without problems. The appropriate one will be loaded (if applicable) when playing a new game.

Setting up a game



The center panel and right-hand menu of the Single Mission setup screen. User is creating a mixed (PvPvAI) game with different objectives for each human player, with a strong alien horde hostile to both.

Setting up players (squads) and teams

You can set up players on the right-hand menu below the "Start Mission" button, in the **"Players"** area. Click **human/computer** to toggle the type of player. Currently humans can only play with USC marines and the AI is always playing with the aliens, so these settings will automatically change. Click **weak/normal (default)/strong/deadly** to set the strength of a player. For humans it will mean more (stronger) or less (weaker) Skill Points per unit. For the aliens it will mean more/less units. Click **Team #** (where # is 1-4) to toggle the team the player is in. A team may consist of one or two players. Player 4 is always assigned to Team 4; if you want to set up an ally for them, simply set another player to Team 4.

At the bottom part of the center panel, below **"Primary objective"** and **"Secondary condition"** you can set up the objectives for the teams. A team containing an AI player may only have the standard Seek & Destroy objective. For other teams you can set up anything (see later).

Setting up mission parameters

On the left side of the center panel, below **"Mission parameters"** and **"Special settings"** you can set up various parameters for the mission. Hovering the mouse over each button will give you detailed information.

Here we only wish to point out the importance of the **"Difficulty"** setting. It is the main parameter controlling the difficulty of the game, especially if you have an AI opponent. Light level, wall integrity, the number of special objects such as vending machines, and some *combat rules* change with each level. Higher difficulties (Normal+) may reward you with blueprints, and more crafting materials (and of course, a higher Score and greater Merit!). *Hard, Extreme and Ultimate* settings have all been carefully tested for playability, but you won't succeed on them without crafted equipment and field-tested, sophisticated tactics! But if you ever find the game too easy ☺, you can also turn up the AI player strength to *Stronger* or *Deadly* for even more Score, bonuses and challenge.

Setting up map parameters

On the right side of the center panel, under **"Map selection"** you can choose between a completely random-generated new map, or a semi-random map based on a "layout" (especially useful for PvP). In both cases you can also specify a **random seed**, a number of 1-16 digits. Using the same seed AND the same mission parameters will always give you the exact same map and mission! The seed changes automatically by default.

Under **"Special"**, you can:

- set the *size* of the map (always "Average" [32x32 grids] for PvAI).
- set the *layout* of the map (you may need slightly different tactics for each setting). Maps with single walls are smaller and action escalates more quickly on them. "Board style" maps are completely different from the other three settings in terms of room/corridor layouting, making them very difficult to play especially on higher difficulty settings.
- set the *type* of the map: **base** (nothing selected), **mines** ("Mine tunnels" selected) or **surface** ("Planet surface" selected). These are distinct environments meaning different atmosphere, tactical possibilities and crafting material yields.
- enable **"More light"** if you want to override the darkness that comes with higher difficulty settings for a mild Score penalty.

Objectives and conditions

There are five main objective types: Seek & Destroy, Survive, Collect, Acquire Data and Reach point. For each there are multiple sub-settings in PvP mode. (In PvAI, these details are fixed to maintain the balance of the game.) All five require different tactics.

You may also set a "secondary condition" for each team. If the option **"Critical conditions"** under "Special settings" is set, meeting these is also *required* to achieve victory, and failing them would result in an immediate defeat. If "Critical conditions" is not set, meeting the secondary condition will only mean a Score bonus.

Hovering the mouse over the buttons will give you detailed information.

Presets

You can save and load mission configuration settings easily here. The game will also remember your last settings so you don't need to configure things again if you want to play another mission. You can find the preset controls at the middle of the center panel, right under the USC logo. "Reset" will load the default (Normal PvAI) settings.

Starting the mission

After everything is set, you can start the mission by clicking the **"Start Mission"** button on the right-hand panel. The Squad Assembly phase will commence. You can always return to mission setup and alter a parameter, but then you will have to restart Squad Assembly (not a big thing if you have a saved squad and only need to load it).

Loading/continuing a mission

If you want to load an ongoing mission or just to revisit a save to analyze it, you don't need to bother with any settings, just use **"Load"** on the right-hand panel. Saves store their settings, naturally.

Squad Assembly



The Squad Assembly screen in Single Mission (or DTB) mode (there are only minor differences for Campaign) with major function areas and buttons explained. Currently browsing weapons.

Setting up your squads either in Single Mission or Campaign mode is an integral and very important part of USC. You can't rely on items you find during a mission—you have to "go in" prepared for any situations as best as you could, and with a firepower enough to withstand the alien horde and do accomplish your tasks. Thus preparation, choosing weapons, gadgets, armor and weapon upgrades, assigning your skill points properly, crafting special items and the most useful prototypes is not something to be taken lightly. There are a total of 18 distinct weapons and 36 ammunition types (counting subtypes) in the game, accompanied with more than two dozen special usage or supply items. Each weapon has its advantages and disadvantages, many a very special usability. Gadgets all serve different, important tactical uses. A universal "how-to" thus doesn't exist about setting and gearing up a squad. Here we will discuss how the interface works, and explain basic game rules concerning the items, and show you some very basic, but important general practices.

Quick interface overview

Please study the image above for a basic overview of the Squad Assembly interface functions; most things are quite self-explanatory. If you're confused about unit properties, skip to the Units chapter first to familiarize yourself with general game concepts.

Training your units

All units have a certain amount of **Skill Points** they can spend on the *nine skills*. In Campaign mode, most of these have been already assigned, but when you create a new squad for a Single Mission or DTB game, you can freely distribute all of these points (and can even completely re-assign them later, any time). It is very important to follow a concept when assigning skills. What kind of weapon will this unit use? How fast he must be? And how tough she should be? Will she need expertise in technics? And so on. Your units only have a fairly limited amount of points, they can't be expert in everything. *It is generally recommended to have one (and only one) weapon skill at 90-100%, a fair amount of Health, some Morale training, and adequate stamina (thus Action Points).* Higher ranking units will still have some spare points to learn sciences, upgrade their reaction, etc. In SM/DTB try to spend *all* points—you can always change your configuration. In Campaign mode you can't revert changes, so plan more carefully (but here units will gain ranks and new Skill Points over time).

Every unit also has a **specialization.** There are also nine of these, correspondent to each attribute, but not necessarily dependent on it (e.g. the small arms spec. is indeed only useful if you have small arms skill, but the biochemistry spec. "Stimulant hero" can be useful for any unit, even if they don't have a single point on the biochemistry skill.) Hover the mouse over any skill to learn about both the specializations and the skill's role in game mechanics in detail. In SM/DTB you're free to choose or change your units' specialization: click the **"Set specialization"** button, then click a skill. The current specialization is highlighted in yellow. In Campaign you can't change specializations. If you need an expert, re-organize your squads to include the necessary unit (and don't lose them!).

Left-click the skills to add points. Right-click them to undo points. For practical reasons, in SM/DTB you can do this in stacks of 5.

Arming up

Weapons (and ammo) are undoubtedly the most important items in the game; without weapons, you don't stand a chance. Weapons come in three main **classes: martial** (or melee) **weapons, small arms** and **heavy arms.** There are also a few hybrid weapons that are both ranged and martial. *It is utterly important to always use a weapon class your unit is proficient in.* Make no mistake, however: your units CAN use non-proficient weapons, but their accuracy and damage becomes so random that you can't rely on them on the long run. Anyway, a non-proficient weapon is still better than no weapon if it comes down to that—but as far as you have the option to choose, bring weapons your units can use well!

Also keep in mind that you can only have one weapon active per unit at a time. Carrying multiple weapons may have its use under some circumstances, but swapping weapons costs Action Points. You have four units in a squad: try to choose four weapons that work well together.

The class of a weapon is displayed right under its name in the list. Hybrid weapons (those that also have a melee mode despite being ranged) do require some melee proficiency if you wish to use that mode effectively.

Most weapons also require ammo to function. *The type of ammo a weapon uses is also displayed in the list, and also in [brackets] if you hover the mouse over them in the inventory.* Some hybrid weapons may use two kinds of ammo, one for each mode they have. When you hover the mouse over a weapon in the vendor list, you'll see ALL details about a weapon, including this. Please see the Weapons chapter for further explanation of combat/weapon mechanics.



You can buy ammo on the **Ammunition** tab. Ammo have a *main type* (e.g. High calibre bolts or .223) and a *subtype* (e.g. Standard Issue or Full Metal Jacket). All ammo subtypes of the appropriate main type are compatible with a weapon. Non-standard subtypes give combat bonuses; hover the mouse over them to learn about this. *Also shown are the amount of bullets/charges and Credit price per pack.*

For example, twenty bullets of .223 Standard Issue would cost 200 Credits. To decide how much is enough, you'll have to know your weapons. As a general advice: take 5-10 packs of ammo for a weapon. Some weapons fire multiple bullets every attack, these need more; slow-hitting, single fire weapons generally need less.

Weapons also need to be loaded. Of course you can do it after starting the mission, but having your weapons already loaded will help you in the initial turn. To load a weapon in the Squad Assembly screen, take an ammo in your inventory (left-click it), and simply put it in the weapon (left-click the weapon with the ammo being selected). You'll hear the weapon being reloaded, and you'll see the main weapon icon under the portraits displaying new values. (E.g. on the big image: x40/40 (+100), meaning 40 of 40 bullets are in the clip, and another 100 remain in inventory.)

Note: loaded weapon can't be sold until unloaded. Select (left-click) them and then click **"Unload"** to do so, then sell the weapon and if you want, the ammo separately. Also note that you cannot sell your currently equipped weapon, and that one weapon must be always equipped. Change the current weapon by right-clicking on that you want to use in the inventory.

Items, gadgets and prototypes

Items of the **Equipment** category include:

- upgrades that have to be activated (right-click in inventory): armor upgrade, weapon range, usability (speed) and accuracy boosters, cloaking device, etc.;
- items that provide a passive bonus without activation: scanner bonus, weapon extension modules;
- items that need to be activated when used: circuit cracker, hand grenade, smart mine, armor repairs.

Usage Action Points requirement of these items always depend on the **Electrotechnics** skill.

Supply items include medikits, anti-rads, Health, Morale and speed (Action Point) stimulants. The efficiency and usage AP cost of these always depend on the **Biochemistry** skill. There are also six very special items that are only available via crafting, after specific conditions have been met. Unlocking and using these may also give you an edge when storming higher difficulties.

Prototypes are special weapons with bonus properties. They cost both Credits and crafting materials. If you're sure you don't need a prototype plan, right-click on it to *disassemble for materials.*