Welcome to our new
ZX-DEV Game Competition entry:

By Climacus & KgMcNeil 2017

http://zx-dev-conversions.proboards.com/thread/6/star-force-megaforce

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== Retro Force ==
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  A NOTE FROM THE CREATORS:
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Another year, another competition...

Today, we present before you, a pure 48k Spectrum game, requiring no special hardware beyond the original rubber key machine made famous by Sinclair. At the time of writing, we have squeezed in 24 levels (Alpha to Omega), basic beeper tunes, rudimentary sound effects, elaborate attack patterns and plenty of enemy types, leaving less than 100 bytes left over to spare in our game.

Our game, of course, is an interpretation of an old classic shooter, known as MegaForce. MegaForce, also known as StarForce, was essentially a vertical format shooter, that relied less on power ups and more on player skill. Its a game that was converted widely to consoles and other systems, but not to our humble Spectrum.

MegaForce is old, but far from primitive. Converting this proved far from simple, with compromises obviously being made. Screen dimensions, tiles numbers, map complexity, sound effects, and music, all had to endure some form of cut or radical alteration. In the end, we had to distil the game down to what we consider the most essential factor for a decent shooter, which in our book, meant "playability". Playability determined that this game had to be highly responsive and fast, which determined our scroll engine, which determined our tile and map complexity, which determined our memory constraints, which determined our sprite variability, which determined... well... you get the idea...

In the end, what we have here is less a port and more an interpretation of the original... To that end, we thought we might also go a step further, and blend a storyline in there too, to create continuity with a previous shooter Climacus wrote, called RetroInvaders... Our game was thus named to reflect both these angles: It represents a bow to the original, and a nod towards our own direction. This game is not just a conversion then, but also our creative bridge towards a possible future sequel... But, for now, we hope that you enjoy the game that is now set out before you...

Happy Shooting,

KgMcNeil & Climacus, Oct 2017

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LOADING INSTRUCTIONS

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This game was designed specifically for the Sinclair 48k ZX Spectrum.
As such, compatibility with other systems may vary considerably, based
on timing issues and memory arrangements. Some systems, like the
Amstrad +3, for instance, are known to be incompatible with this game.
With this in mind, we summarize below the most common 3 tape loading
approaches to follow before starting the tape in your tape player:

[1] Loading from the "Tape Loader" option via the Menu system
[2] Loading directly from within a non-tokenized BASIC editor
[3] Loading directly from within the 48k-style BASIC editor

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** Using the Menu TAPE LOADER option **
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This option is most commonly used by ZX 128k based systems.
– Turn on, or Reset your system.
– Once the menu screen appears, Press ENTER, to select "Tape Loader"

If the "Tape Loader" option wasn't already highlighted, then it can be
by using the Cursor keys to select it, prior to hitting the ENTER key.

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** Using a Non-Tokenized BASIC editor **
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This option is common for clones using alternative ROMs, like SEBasic.

– From within BASIC, type LOAD ""
– After typing this, press ENTER

NB: Quotation marks are usually typed with Symbol Shift and the P key.

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** Using the 48k BASIC Editor to Load **
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To use the LOAD "" command, follow these instructions:

– Type "J" [for LOAD]
– Press Symbol Shift+"P" for quotation mark
– Press Symbol Shift+"P" again for another quotation mark
– Press ENTER

   Follow any approach, then leave the tape running until the end.
   When the tape is done, press any key to bring up the gaming menu…

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PLAN "B"

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"Alpha Squadron are gone…"

Silence descended on the hall, as we took in the enormity of what was being broadcast from an Earth-based channel that had seen little action over these last 10 years. Our cell had waited incognito, inactive, but attentive for the best part of that time, waiting for a day such as this. Ten years of waiting was agony, but not as painful as that 3 second delay.

The delay, of course, was an inevitable side effect of temporal distortion when communicating across such vast distances… Communication, as always, was to the point, and of necessity, infrequent. Today, however, marked something different.

"…the last of their ships were swallowed by the event horizon…"

It took only half a second for us to process that message before the hall erupted in jeers of celebration.

I could barely hear over the jubilation of my comrades behind me, finding it necessary to shout over them for confirmation.

"We won?… Mission successful?…"

Even before he uttered the two words that would prove to be my correction, and the reason for this mission, we fell silent again at the sight of our commanders serious glare.

"Phase One…", was all he said.

Operation "Silent Night", as we all knew consisted of two phases.
The first of these involved the wholesale destruction of a string of mother ships guarding the infamous wormhole. For almost half a century, mankind endured continuous attacks originating beyond that celestial gate, from a faction known only as "The Unity". Phase One meant we got to finally nail that door shut.

Phase Two, however, was an entirely different matter. Phase one bought us peace, but only the completion of Phase Two could sustain it. A "Peace that will last" meant only one thing to our kind – radical death to "The Unity". Such a Final Solution is a tall order for an under equipped cell such as ours, but was well within the remit of the Alpha Squad, whose main objective, was the delivery of a warhead that would make that possible.

Ah, the warhead… What a marvellous weapon… Salvaged from 40 years of alien technology meant for our destruction, scientists had constructed something that could effectively wipe away a whole solar system… Its use was never going to be something our species could witness first hand though…

And therein lies the problem: we have no way to verify whether the payload had been delivered, without compromising our assets.

Which brings us to Plan B and the activation of our sleeper cell…

On this glorious day, we are to lead an assault team deep into enemy territory to take out as much of their infrastructure as possible. Anything we destroy, Alpha won't have to; anything we leave, might compromise their ability to deliver the payload. Ultimately, we are the pointman for a human incursion that will finish the job. We are to clear the way for logistic craft, which will later seed the area with hardware that will lay dormant for any surviving Alpha team members who do make it across. Failing that, we are the last chance for mankind to strike deeply and directly at The Unity. Ideally, Alpha team will finish the job; failing that, we'll at least go down in history as those who extended the Peace in our Time…

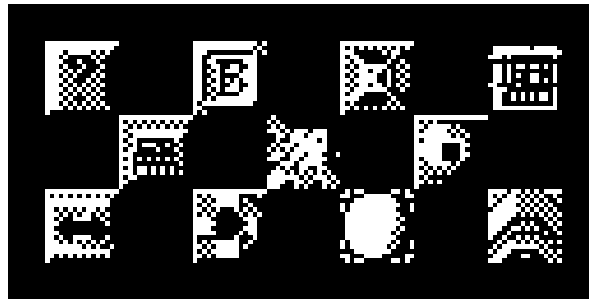Before the big boys can find their way into this part of the galaxy with their explosive payloads, your job is to clear away all targets and resistance found within the next 24 sectors ahead.
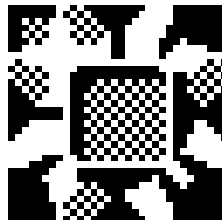
Targets are typically embedded within the sectors infrastructure, and can be many and varied. But this isn't a sight seeing tour solider!!

Each of the 24 sectors, Alpha to Omega, have a designated number of targets that must be destroyed, before you can get a crack at destroying that sectors guardian ship. This designated number, representing a percentage of the sectors industrial infra structure, and can be found on the right hand side of your control panel – for instance:

Failure to destroy the designated number of targets before level end, will force the player to have to replay that sector from the beginning again. Success in destroying all such targets however, will activate the sector guardian, who must be destroyed before proceeding further…
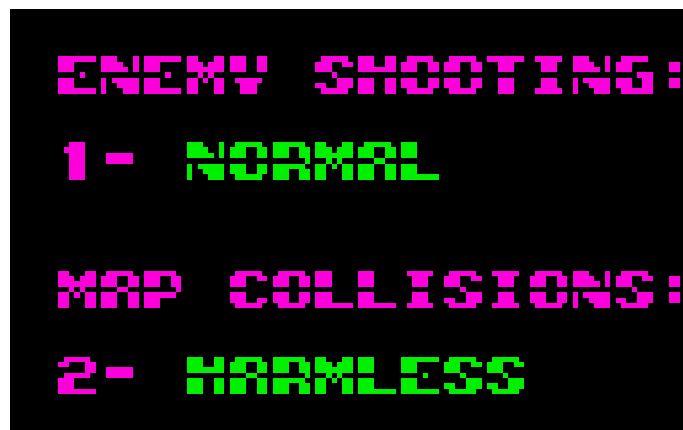
By default, this game involves both energy drainage and loss of life
systems during play. This means contact with enemy shots will drain
shield strength, but won't necessarily prove fatal until your shield
runs dry. Direct collision with enemy craft, however, will prove
immediately fatal. The number of ships you have remaining, and a
visual representation of shield strength, can both be seen together on
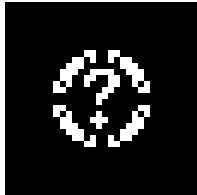the bottom right of your control panel:

For die-hard players with more skill, the options screen allows users
to determine difficulty of game play by tinkering with how the game
treats enemy shot and target collisions. Enemy shots can be made
fatal, faster & more accurate, while map target collision detection
can be turned on to add more avoidance to game play.

Neither of these settings should not be touched by players who are
prone to fits of rage, panic attacks or unaccustomed to the masochism
that comes from playing ZX games written before the 1990s... ;)

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:::: Opposing the Odds ::::
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R-Type never made it this far out into the galaxy, so don't expect
heavy armaments in this game… ;) That being said, your not totally
defenceless… Flashing pickup icons do exist…

Typically, picking one of these up will grant one of the following:

1) **Auto Fire** – Perhaps the most useful asset your player can have,
   and the only weapons upgrade in this game.

2) **Smart Bomb** – An EMP blast that will immediately destroy all
   kinetic cybernetic craft.

3) **Ground Blast** – A smart bomb to clear away all ground based
   industrial targets.

4) **Bonus Points** – Not immediately useful… but save enough of these,
   and you might just get an extra life…

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::: BASIC GAME PLAY TIPS :::
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- Don't be afraid to dive into enemy fire to avoid enemy ships.

- Sacrificing a life, to collect missed targets *is* worth it...

- Memorize those attack patterns!

- Players who linger at the back, risk everything in later levels.

- Weaving & dodging become essential in later game play levels.

- Get up close & personal when confronting level end guardians.

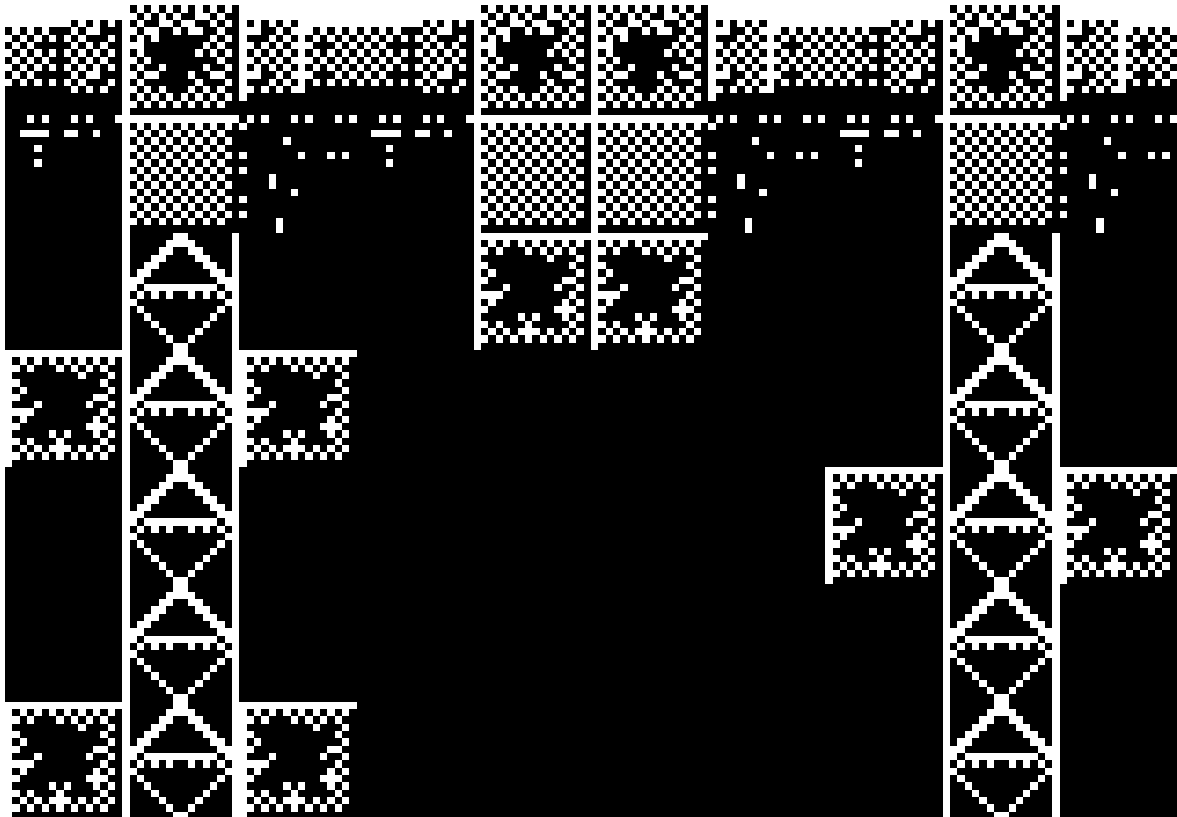- Chose wisely between enemy craft or ground based targets...

24 Sectors are believed to exist just prior the area believed to house
the species known only as, "The Unity". Their demise won't be
accomplished by your craft though. You are tasked with clearing the
way to secure safe passage for those that will fly ahead...

The first 11 sectors are partially known by navigational intelligence
gathered over the last nine years, but sectors beyond LAMBDA are
essentially unknown to humankind. It is believed that sectors MU
onwards are color coded according to function, representing
industrial, cybernetic and organic environments, but little can be
said with certainty at this stage…

Beyond sector Omega, nobody can say what awaits…

Thankfully, it won't be *your* team that has to conduct that level of
infiltration…

Good luck soldier… you'll need it…

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:::::: TOOLS USED ::::::
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FOR SOUND:
Beepola v1.08.01   By Chris Cowley

FOR GRAPHICS:
ZX-PaintBrush v2.6.4   By Claus Jahn 2017
SevenUp 1.20   By MetalBrain 2006
Bmp2Scr Exp v2.11a   By Leszek Chmielewski 2004
MAME32 v0.34   By MAME Team 1998

FOR EMULATION:
SpecEmu v3.1   By Mark Woodmass 2015
Spectaculator   By Jonathan Needle 2011
EmuZWin 2.8   By Vladimir Kladov 2006

FOR ASSEMBLY:
Pasmo v0.5.4.Beta2   By Julian Albo 2005
ZX-BlockEditor v2.4.3   By Claus Jahn 2017

FOR COMPRESSION:
Z802TAP v3.0   By Lunter 1994
Exomizer v3.0   By MetalBrain 2012

CUSTOM TOOLS:
Mapeador.exe v1.0   By Climacus 2017


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:::::: SOURCE MATERIAL AND INSPIRATION ::::::
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GAMING CONCEPT:
MAME: Mega Force   By Tehkan 1985

SPRITES:
MAME: Mega Force   By Tehkan 1985

LOADING SCREEN, TITLE & FONTS:
Font adapted from original   By Karl McNeil
Material from RetroInvaders   By Karl McNeil

MUSICAL SCORES:
NES: StarForce via MusicBox   By Climacus
DelicateOoz via MusicBox   By emax/trsi 1994