

## **Alien Assault (1983) – Anschuetz/Weisgerber/Anschuetz**

### **Game Play**

Alien Assault is clearly influenced by Atari Missile Command. The object of the game is similar - missiles rain down from space onto satellites that must be protected by a laser fired by a central base. You start the game with 35 protective lasers, as indicated by the "Energy" counter at the bottom of the screen. The "Destroyed" counter shows how many of the satellites have been destroyed. Unlike Missile Command, only one missile comes down at a time, but the screen can be scrolled "West" and "East" (left and right) to observe the missile and shoot it down. When you shoot down all of the missiles in a set, another set appears with a different colored background, which is another homage to Missile Command. Once all of the bases are destroyed or you run out of energy, your game ends.

The following description of the gameplay was written by the A/W/A Team to be submitted to a computer magazine along with the game.

*You have been stationed on the moon in the year 2136. The reason? To protect solar collectors from possible destruction. You will do your protecting from within a super-advanced, armed battle tank. The tank is made of a very strong alloy that cannot be destroyed. Think you are up to the task?*

*The moon was discovered to have a vast resource of area available that is ideal for the positioning of solar collectors. These collectors provide much of the earth's energy and are mandatory for the survival of humanity. Your mission: protect the moon, and more specifically, the solar collectors from the ongoing ALIEN ASSAULT.*

*You begin your mission in the eeriness of night. Intelligent radar indicates that you will have to continue your frenzious attack on the alien bombs on through the spectacular lunar sunrise, onto midday, through the next sunset, and onto another day. Before you begin your mission, you received a supply of 50 units of energy. As you shoot at the alien bombs with your lasers, however, your supply of energy will rapidly begin to decrease at the rate of one unit per each laser fired.*

*Earth intelligence has revealed that on the first series of attacks, the aliens will send out ten missiles aimed to destroy ten of the solar collectors. During each successive onslaught, five additional missiles will be sent until the maximum total of 40 is reached. In addition to more enemy bombs to worry about, on every other wave of bombings, the amount of solar collectors that the aliens have to destroy is decremented by one. This is due to the fact that the solar technicians are too busy fleeing back to earth to have time to make the necessary repairs. Malfunctions do happen occasionally even in this advanced age.*

*As each alien missile is launched by the alien armada toward the solar collectors, the indicator in the lower middle of the display will indicate whether the missile is in the west (left) or to the east (right) of your tank. To shoot a laser at one of the alien missiles, position your crosshairs on top of the missile and press the fire button. A laser will be sent from your tank toward the spot in space directly in line with where the crosshairs are aimed.*

*If you manage to line the crosshairs directly on top of the alien missile, the missile will be destroyed. The number of missiles remaining to be sent will be decremented by one. If you should miss the missile, one of two things may happen. First, the missile may hit a solar collector. If this should happen more than the amount of times allowable for each ambush, your game will be over. Second, the missile may crash harmlessly on the surface of the moon, in which case nothing happens. At the end of each set of ambushes, the color of the background will change to indicate the rising or setting of the sun. Every few sets, the missiles will speed a bit in their descent.*

*ALIEN ASSAULT is a difficult game which requires manual dexterity as well as a strategy. Here are some hints. Always keep an eye on the indicator in the middle of the screen. This will tell you which direction to begin moving in. Always begin moving immediately. This will help you get to the enemy faster.*

*Keep a mental note of where you are in relationship to the entire playing field. If you find you cannot travel any more in the direction in which you wish, you have reached the outside boundaries and should change directions immediately. As you become more advanced in ALIEN ASSAULT, you will have a feel for when you have begun to travel too far in a particular direction. Sacrifice a solar collector if you feel you are drifting a long way away from the center of the playfield. This may mean many collectors saved in the long run.*

*Keep an eye out for the energy remaining. This means take carefully placed shots instead of machine-gun style. If you do shoot machine-gun style, you will find that your energy supply will quickly run out and you will be forced to watch helplessly as your last remaining solar collectors are destroyed.*

*Also watch the number of collectors destroyed in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. Always compare this to the number of collectors that are permitted to be destroyed in the particular ambush. Remember, this number starts at ten and is decreased by one on every other wave.*

*One final suggestion is to always keep your crosshairs positioned near the bottom. This will give you that all-important last shot. This may prove to be the difference in lasting another ambush or not.*

## Recollections

Alien Assault was one of the early A/W/A games written before the team had a disk drive. How do we know that? Because the code overwrites the area of the disk drive handler, and therefore doesn't work if you run it off the disk! It wasn't until 2017 that Eric Anschuetz discovered this major flaw, and re-wrote the BASIC code so that it runs in a protected area of memory and can now run on disk some 30 years later! The BASIC code listings show both the original code (circa 1983) and the updated code (2017).

The missile coming down from the screen is a Player/Missile graphic, as is the target indicator controlled by the joystick. The laser that is fired at the satellite is another Player/Missile graphic. This game makes use of parallax scrolling, which means that the satellites in the foreground scroll at a faster rate than the mountains in the background. This mirrors the effect in Williams Moon Patrol, and may have influenced the game a bit.