



ENGLISH VERSION

ALPHA CHANNEL

For Operation Flashpoint
&
ArmA



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What is the Alpha Channel?

The Alpha channel is basically like a layer in a image that defines transparency when it is combined with a background. The Alpha channel consists of two main colours, white and black. If the alpha channel is completely white the background image will not be transparent, if the alpha channel is completely black the background image will be completely transparent. Think of it like a special layer telling the computer were to make the image transparent. But we will get to that a little bit later on, first lets take a look at what we will need to start.

What will I need?

To create an image with the alpha channel and be able to use it in OFP, ArmA or any other game from BIS (Bohemia interactive Studio) we will need to download a small program which will convert our image in to a format that is understood by the game. This program is called:

TexView

Note: There are two versions of this program, TexView 1.1 and TexView 2. If you are planning to make a texture (image) for OFP it is recommended that you use TexView 1.1 and if you're planning to make a texture for ArmA use TexView 2.

Download links:

TexView 1.1, can be downloaded from [this](http://www.flashpoint1985.com/docs/textview.html) page.
(<http://www.flashpoint1985.com/docs/textview.html>)

TexView 2, is included in the BI Tools pack which can be downloaded from [this](http://community.bistudio.com/wiki/TexView_2) page.
(http://community.bistudio.com/wiki/TexView_2)

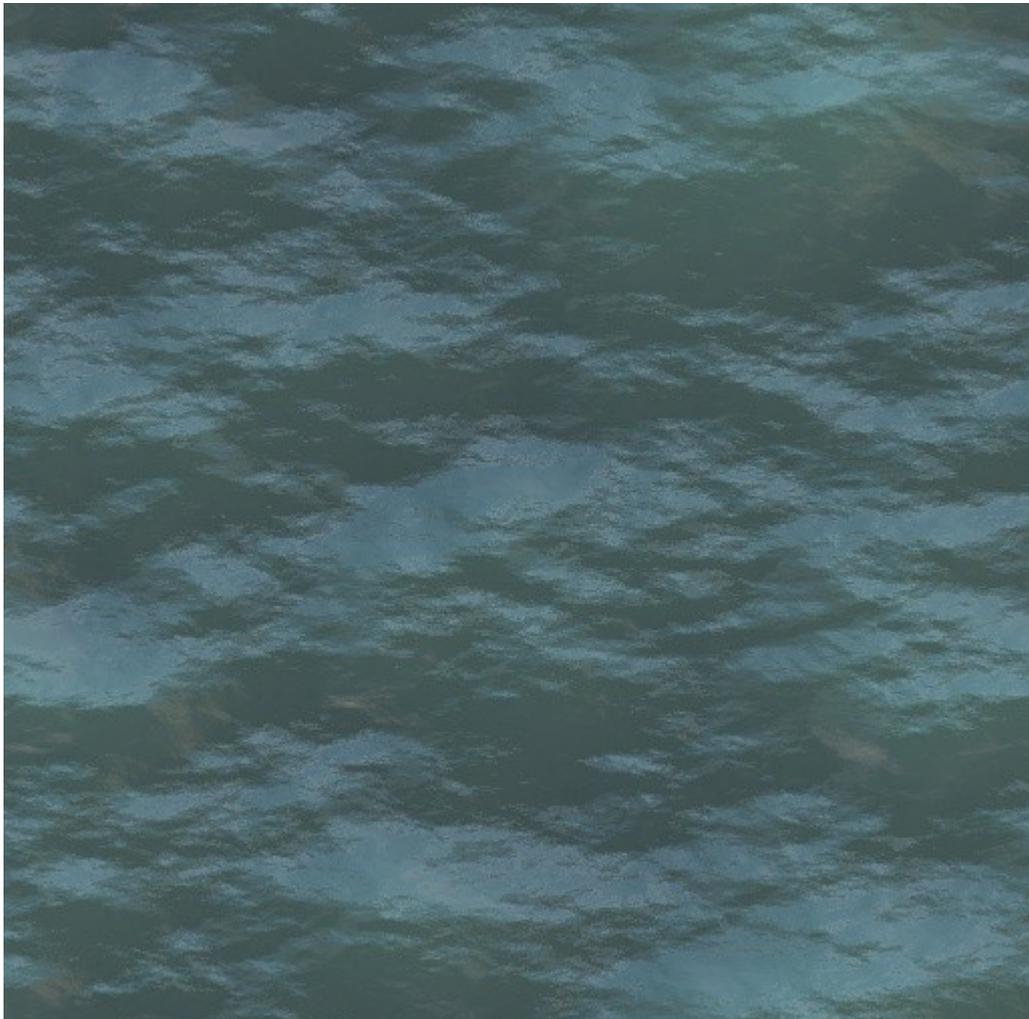
We will also need a image editing program, in this case we will be using Photoshop® CS4 (version 11.0) but you can use any other program that you want as long as you know it well enough to keep up with this tutorial and also make sure that it that it supports alpha channel.

Getting Started

So let's get started. I am assuming that you already know what textures and images are and the basics of Photoshop® or the program that you are using. If you don't know what textures or images are I don't know why you're reading this tutorial and if you don't know the basics of your image editing program you will have difficulty following this tutorial. I suggest reading some tutorials and getting to know the program first.

Anyway, back on topic. To start off we will make a simple picture semi-transparent (which means its only 50% transparent) texture and then exporting it in to OFP. If you want to make a splash screen (something like the BIS, Codemasters pictures when you start the game) or something were one area of the image is transparent and another area is not see the "[Advanced](#)" section.

So lets begin shall we, in this example we will be working with a 512x512 pixel image. All OFP/ArmA textures must be of a square diameter such as 128x128, 256x256, 512x512, 1024x1024 an so on... Bellow is the image that we will be working with. You can download it [here](#) or copy it from this document.



~ ABOUT THIS TUTORIAL ~

I always get people asking me to add the Alpha channel to their images so that they can use them in their OFP or ArmA missions, addons and so on or people want me to teach them to make the Alpha channel them selves because there isn't really a proper tutorial out in the community explaining everything around the Alpha channel.

So I decided to write this tutorial explaining the basics of adding an Alpha channel to an image and then get it working right in Operation Flashpoint or Armed Assault.

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Part 1

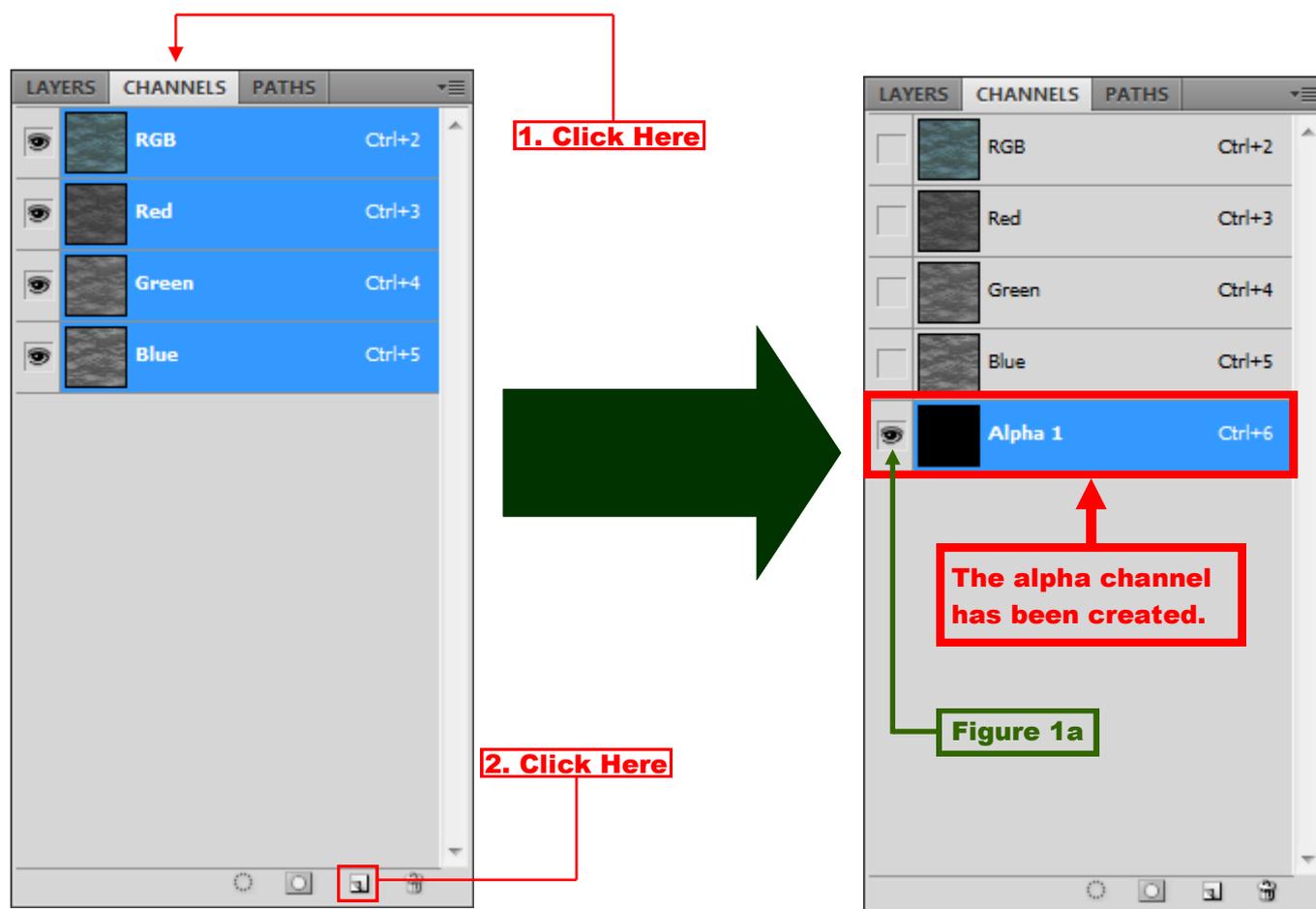
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You can download it from here or copy it from this document.

1. Open/paste the image in to Photoshop® (click File/Open... Choose the image and click OK).
2. If the file is not in RGB format, convert it. (Select Image/Mode/RGB Colour).
3. Add a new channel. See picture below:

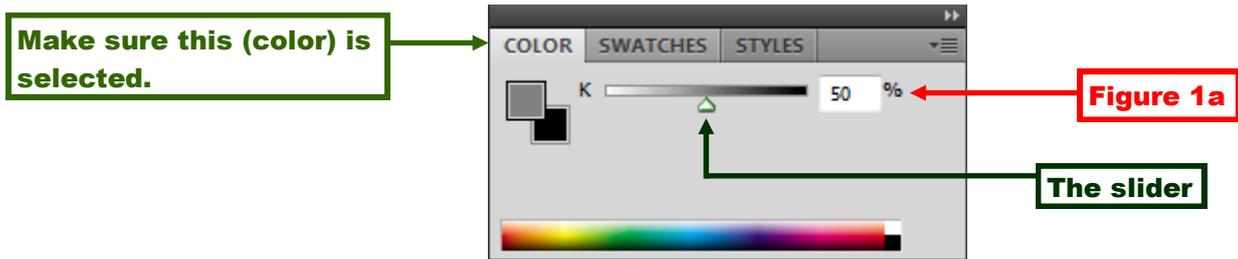


4. Click on the little eye icon (see figure 1a on the picture above) beside the “RGB”, “RED”, “GREEN” and “BLUE” channels to hide them so that only the alpha channel is visible. (make sure that the little eye icon is beside the alpha channel like in the picture above, if not click in the little box).

Alpha Channel Colours

By default the alpha channel that we have created will be filled in black which means that the background image will be 100% transparent. But we only want the image to be 50% transparent, so let's add some white to channel which will change the colour to gray. (Remember I said there are only 2 colours in the alpha channel).

In the **top right** corner of the window you should see something like this:



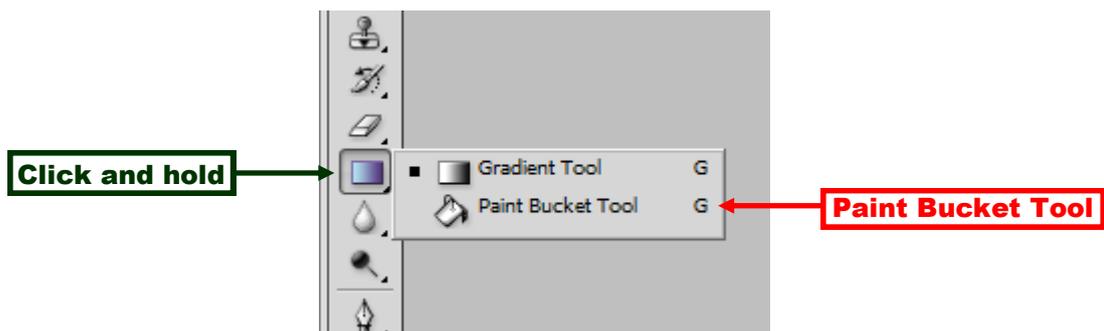
We will use this to select the level of transparency which will give us the appropriate colour with which we will replace the black colour in the alpha channel.

1. Move the slider to the middle until the little box beside it displays “50%” or simply type “50” in to the little box (figure 1a, see image above).

As you can see in **figure 1b** the colour has changed to a dark grey which consists of 50% white and 50% black. This is the colour that we will now use to fill in our alpha channel.

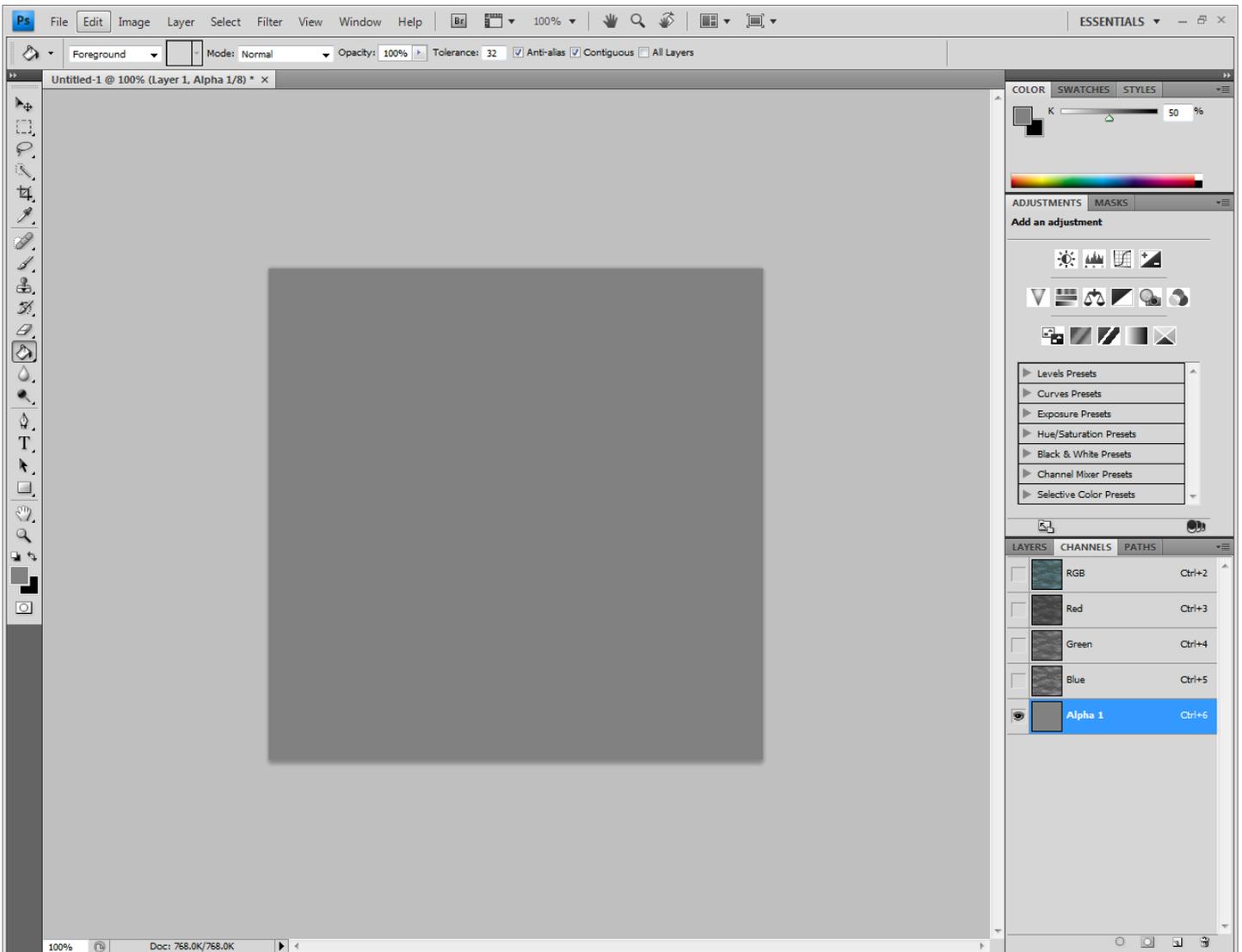
2. Next select the “Paint bucket tool” from the tool bar and fill the alpha channel up with the gray colour.

Select the **paint bucket tool** by clicking and holding your mouse on the **Gradient Tool** icon until a little menu open were you can select the **paint bucket tool**. (See image below).



Once you have selected the **paint bucket tool** click anywhere on the black square to change its colour to the one we have selected just like in any other painting program.

Finally you should end up with something like this, see screen shot below.

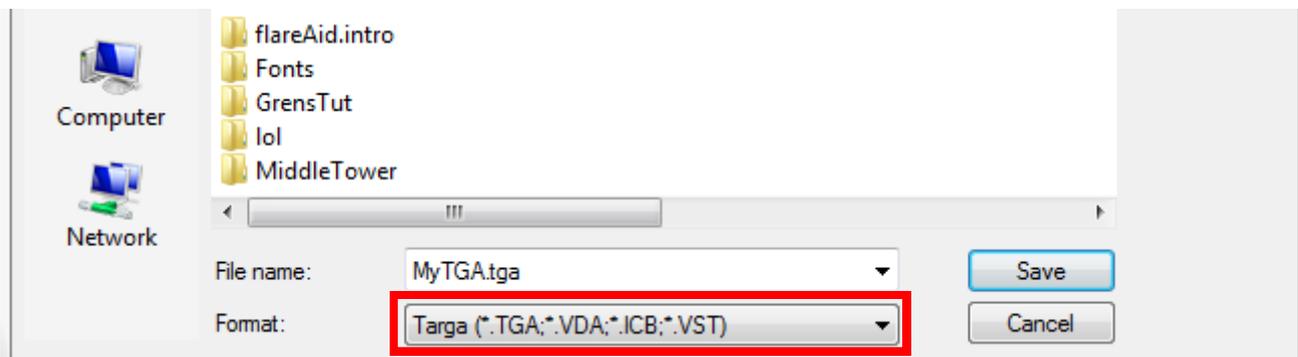


Now if you choose to view all the RGB channels with the alpha channel together you will notice that the image is red as the red colour defines areas that will be affected by the alpha channel.

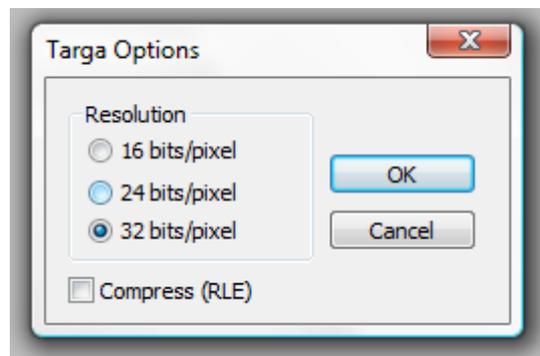
Saving

Now all we have to do is save the image in to a format that can be understood by the **TexView** program. No this does not mean .jpeg but **.TGA**.

1. Click File > Save As
2. Give the file a name, I will name it "MyTGA" and save it to my desktop.
3. Make sure you have selected to save it as **.TGA** (see picture bellow).



Note: When saving this window appears (see image bellow). Make sure that you have selected “**32 bits/pixel**” and that the “**Compress (RLE)**” check box is **NOT** checked, just like in the picture bellow otherwise it will cause serious errors in TexView!

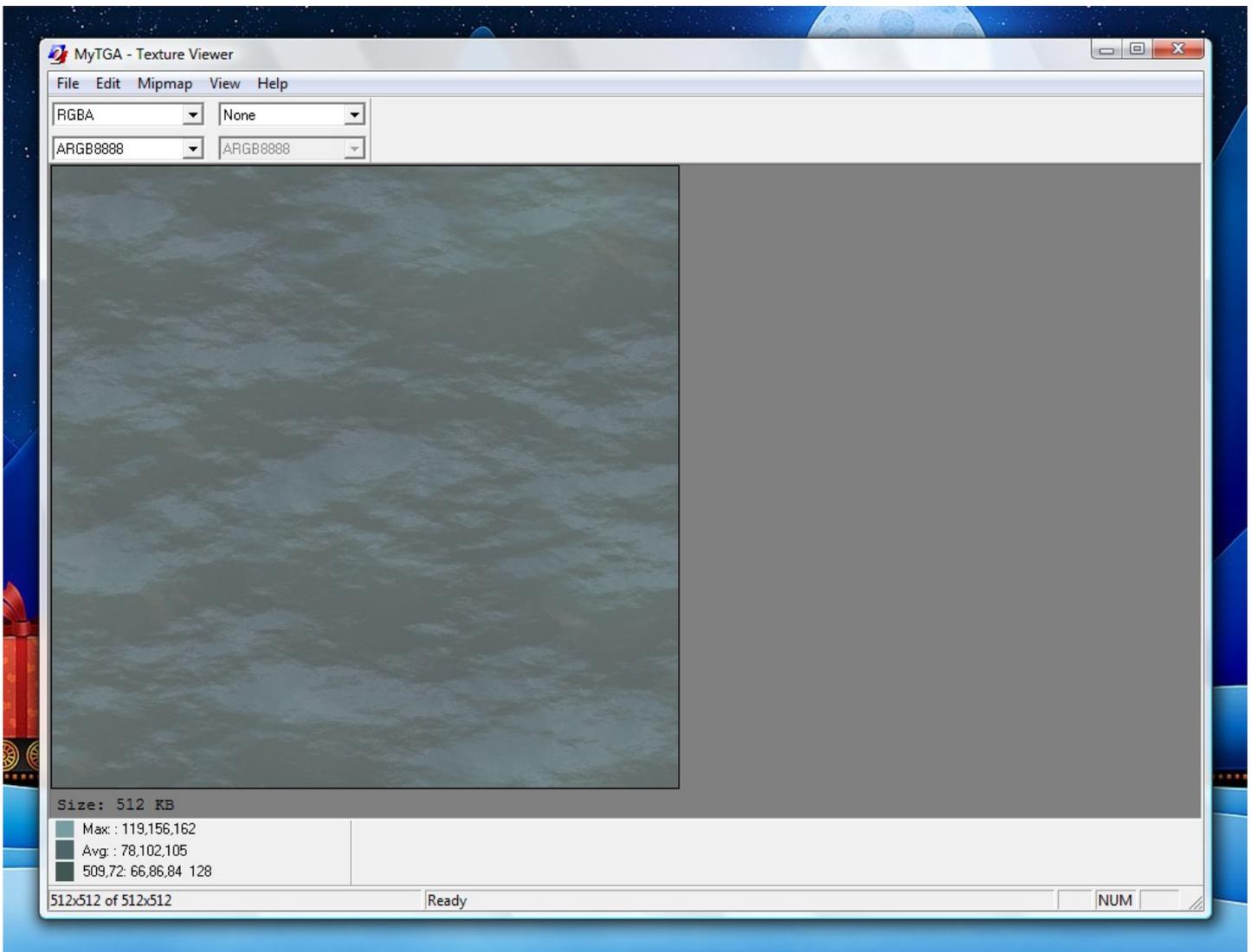


Using TexView

Now it is time to convert our image in to a format that can be understood by Operation Flashpoint/Armed Assault.

1. Start **TexView**.
2. Click **File and Open**.
3. Locate the image we have created and press “Open”.

The image will now load in TexView and will look like in the screen shot bellow. If it doesn't, it means you've done something wrong.



Note: TexView does tend to crash when you are opening/saving files and you want to browse to another folder so the best thing to do is open images with TexView by right clicking them and selecting “Open with” and “TexView”. For saving files the best thing to do is to save them in the folder that TexView open by default and then moving the images to a different folder in Windows.

4. Click **File > Save As**

5. Give the file a name or leave the current one and at the end of the name type “.paa” so in my case it would be “MyTGA.paa” because .paa is better at handling transparent textures in OFP than the other format, .pac.

And that's it, the texture is now ready to use in OFP.

Advanced Alpha Channel

Welcome to part 2 of this tutorial, if you've managed to keep up with me it means you're getting the hang of it. But now let's get a bit more complicated.

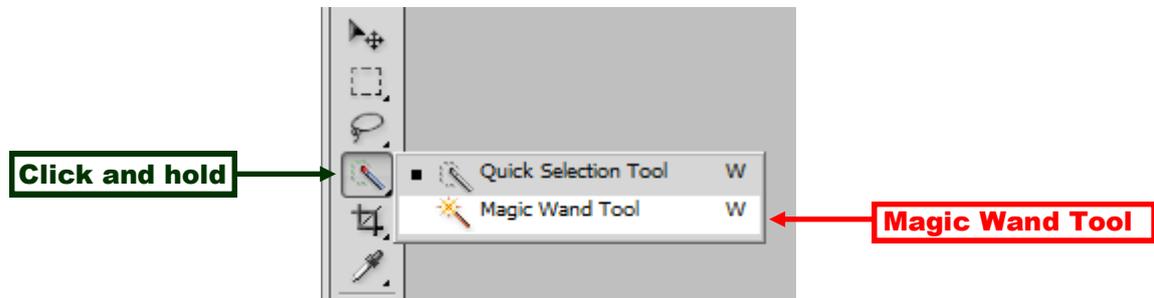
Let's say we have a picture that we want to use in a briefing but we want to make some areas of it transparent. Bellow is the picture that we will be using, it's the soviet logo at a diameter of 477x549 pixels so we will have to resize it later. It is better to work with higher resolution, undersized images in this case.



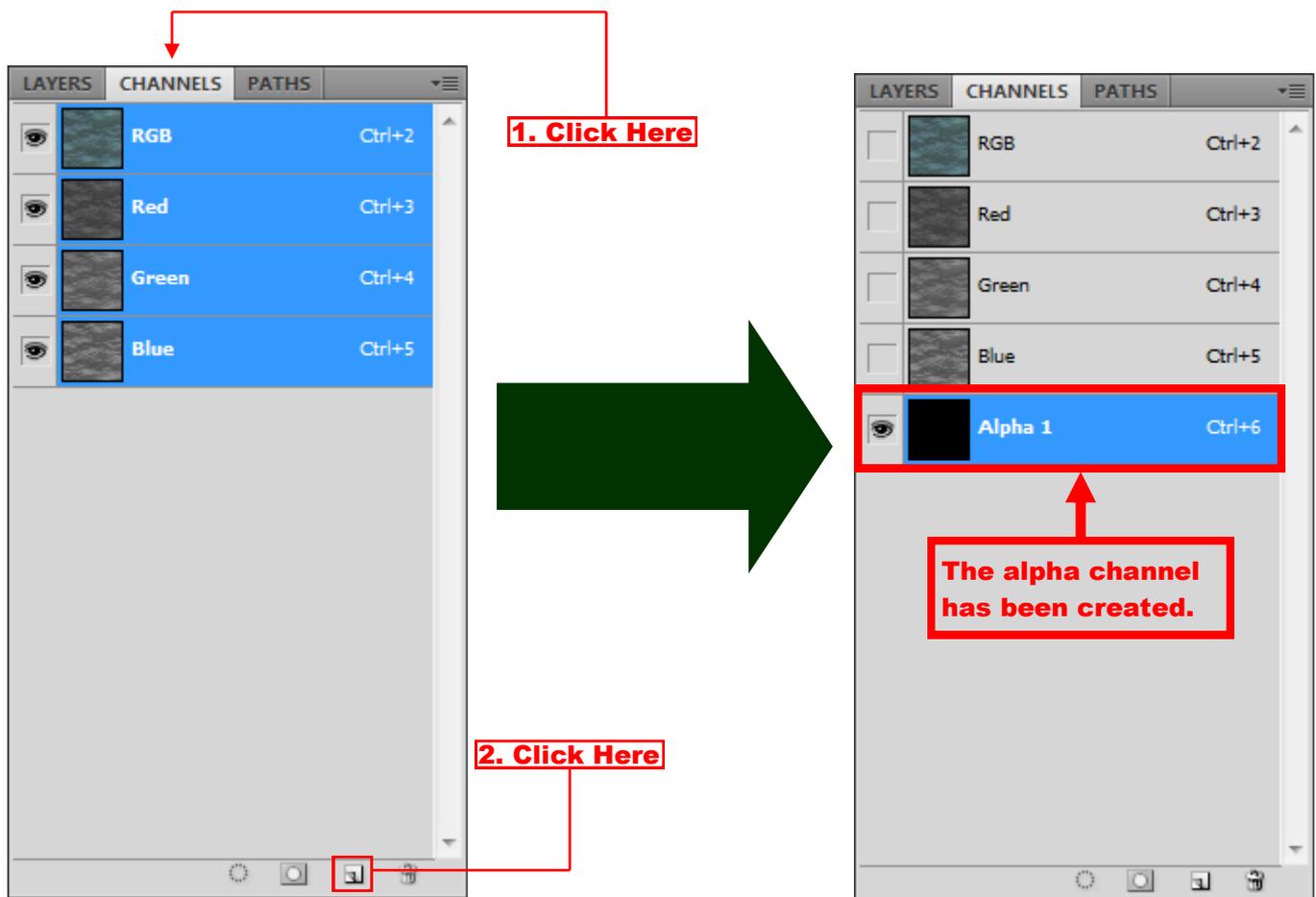
You can download the image from [here](#) or copy it from this document.

Once you have gotten the picture in to Photoshop®:

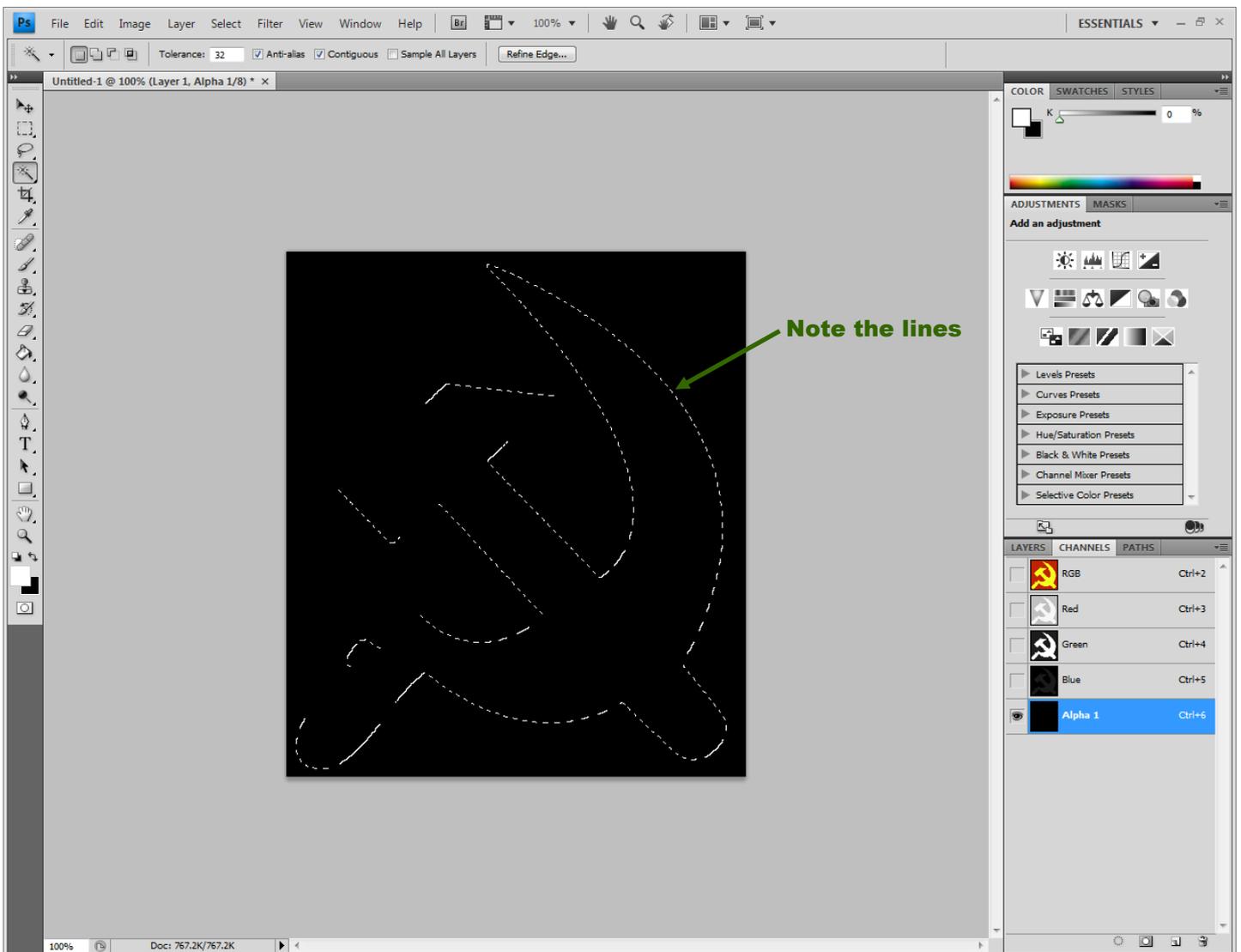
1. Select the **Magic Wand Tool** in the tool bar by clicking and holding the “Quick Selection Tool” icon until a menu appears and then selecting “**Magic Wand**” (see picture bellow).



2. If the file is not in RGB format, convert it. (Select Image/Mode/RGB Colour).
3. Once you have selected the **magic want tool** click on the yellow part of the picture which will select it.
4. Then add a new channel as we done before (see image bellow).

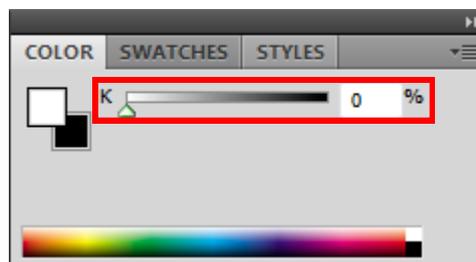


If you did everything correctly you should have exactly the same as is in the screen shot bellow, if not you've done something wrong.

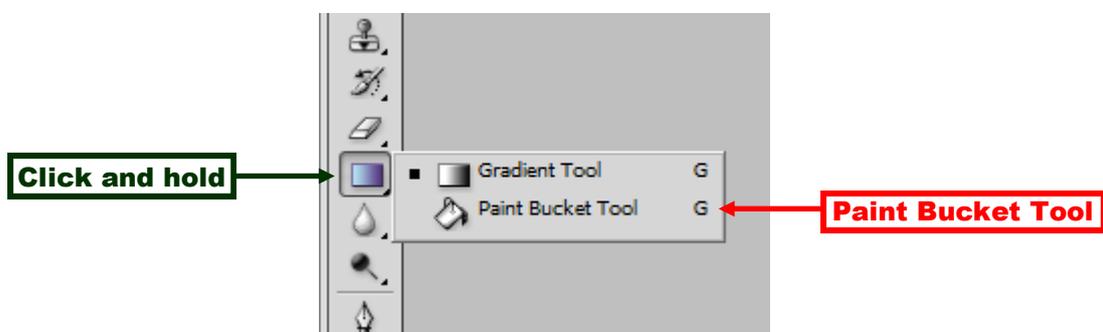


Now we don't want the area outside of the yellow shape to be visible we only want the shape itself to be visible, so we will leave the area outside of the shape black which means 100% transparent.

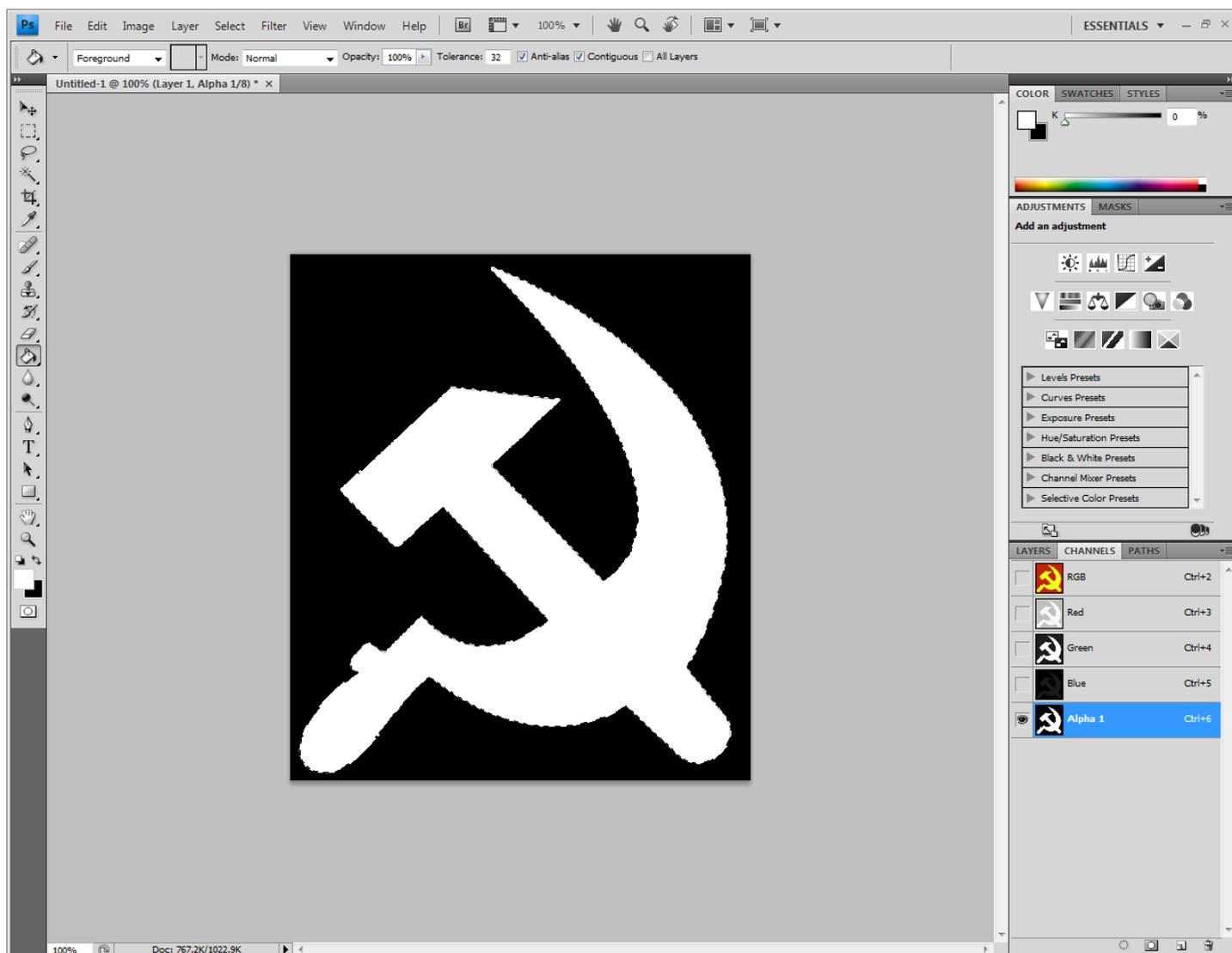
5. Change the colour to **white** or 0% like we done before (see picture bellow).



6. Now select the **Paint Bucket Tool** and click anywhere inside the shape to change its colour to **white** which will make it 0% transparent.



If you did everything correctly you should end up with the same as is in the screen shot bellow.

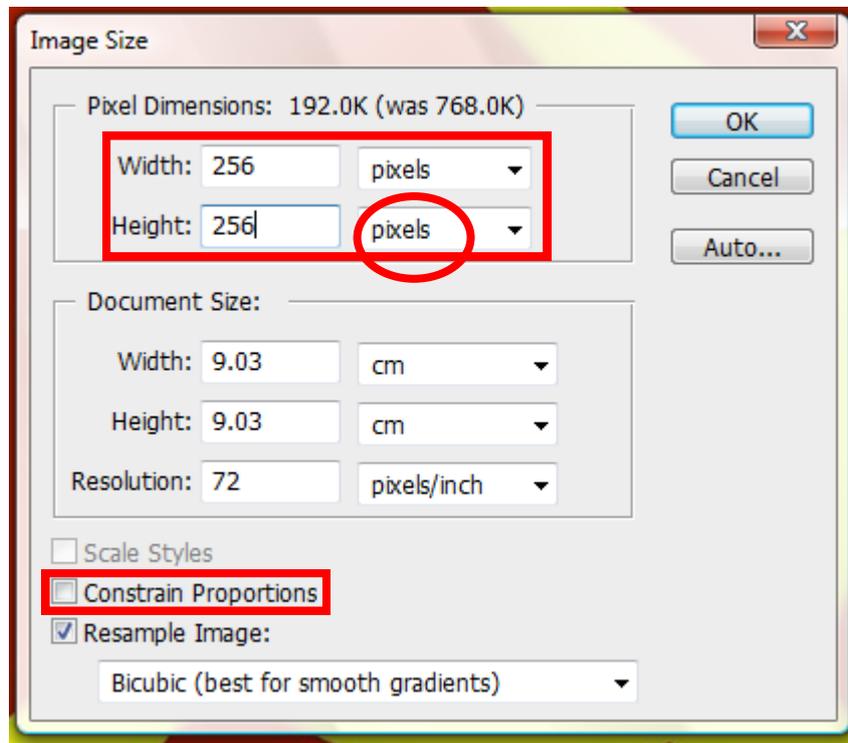


Note: it is recommended that you save your work as a .tga file like we done [before](#), before you go to the next step!

Resizing

We're almost done, all we have to do now is resize the image in to a square diameter. The diameter of the image is now 477x549 pixels so since I am planning to use this example in a mission briefing/overview we will resize it to 256x256 because anything bigger wouldn't fit in to the notepad in OFF.

1. Click **“Image”** and **“Image Size”**.
2. In the window that opens make sure **“Constrain proportions”** is **not** checked. Then in the top of the window type in 256 and 256 and make sure **“pixels”** is selected. See picture on the next page.



When your done filling out the window click “OK” and the image will be re-sized. Then once again save it as a .tga image and then open it in TexView and save it as a .paa texture, just the same way as we did [before](#).

And that's it, you're all done, I'd say that was pretty easy. Now you can use the picture in a briefing, mission overview and so on so lets take a look how it should look in OFP if you did everything correctly. (See screen shot bellow).



Thank you for reading my tutorial and I hope it has helped you. If you have any questions or suggestions please send me an e-mail to:

OFPBase@Seznam.cz

Also visit:

Www.OFPBase.co.nr (www.OFPBase.freehostyou.com)

For more great tutorials, addons, islands and so on.

THE END

