**Indian Ocean Fury #1 – Persian Pounce**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ July 2017**

Multiple unidentified bogeys inbound on bearings to my dispersed patrol vessels, and the Sara miles away. Crap! Scramble what I've got, get the helicopters airborne and running ashore. We're gonna lose some ships...

Incidentally, that Badger waaay out behind me is a very nice touch. Is he just looking? Has he got a raid lined up behind him? Is he just a distraction? Do I really waste a set of F-14s to go after him?

And who the heck thought it was a good idea to sell F-14s to Iran!

We'd better clear the straits? I could walk from shore to shore on Iranian speedboats, and never see the skies through the clouds of MiGs!

Say, that's an unusual set of radar emissions for cargo ships... What are you up to Gunner?

Unless I bring in Intruders all the way from the Sara I've got nothing heavy to hit them with, except a few iron bombs on local fighters. Hmmm...

**Playthrough**

Initially my forces in the Gulf region put up a number of observation aircraft to assess the situation, and a limited number of small CAPs took off but generally stayed over the friendly coast, hoping (hah!) that the region might remain calm. The biggest change was that the Sara group was ordered to turn west and sail towards Masirah, to bring her aircraft closer to the potential trouble zone.

It didn't take long before multiple attack aircraft were detected flying south across Iran, on courses which often aimed them directly for my patrolling warships. Orders were given for a general scramble, and my land-based fighters launched to make afterburner dashes towards the incoming planes. My ships turned to run for the friendly shore (and SAM cover where possible) at flank speed, while their helicopters fled before them. First blood went to the Russians, who smashed the little Cassiopea in the Straits of Hormuz with very high speed missiles. Belatedly recognizing them as ARMs, the order went out for ships under high-speed missile attack to turn off their own radars and rely on AWACS, and this saved several of my warships (particularly the little Drogou) from a similar fate. It did nothing to help the Floreal, which was destroyed by optically guided Kazoos.

Fortunately, my own fighters were able to intercept the majority of the attackers (which turned out to be Fencers) before they could launch missiles, and in the cases where they did launch the relatively slow-moving Kazoos could be intercepted before they reached my ships. Of course the Iranians spotted the heavy fighting just off their coast and immediately went hostile, since they observed me firing at their allies. Once that happened the gloves were off, and my ships started firing ASMs at the larger vessels of the Iranian fleet, sinking most of them (including some minelayers) in relatively short order. Ships from allied members of the Gulf States did the same, but were often a little less careful about their targeting choices, flinging Exocets at anything that moved.

With the initial Russian attack defeated, I had a moment to operate over Iran with little opposition, venturing as far inland as Shiraz to cut off returning Fencers, and pick off some of the Russian ELINT/ECM planes. This worked well for a few minutes, until the Iranians responded with a heavy surge of fighter activity including, well, everything: F-4s, Mig-29s, Mirages, and F-14s. Fortunately the latter weren't equipped with Phoenixes, but I had to flee the area in the face of the heavy attack. The determined offensive chased my retreating ships vigorously, particularly in the western end of the Gulf, and my Patriots and ship-mounted SAMs came into play and accounted for several valuable kills. By the time I had mustered my fighters and those of my allies to defeat the attack I had lost several more minor naval vessels (including some Kuwaiti vessels lost to ancient Mig-19/21 clones out of Omidyeh), and had been reminded that Iranian Mirages do carry Exocets... The Cataluna barely survived the Exocet hit which blew a nasty hole in her side, and left her flooding badly as she struggled to make it to dock in Oman. Rumours that she is actually resting on the bottom at low tide are completely unfounded.

With all of this going on I was still able to mount two quick offensive actions. First was an air strike on Abu Musa by my air forces in Al Dhafra. I wanted the SAM site destroyed and the airfield shut, which was accomplished, but I should have concentrated on the docks instead. Those were only slightly damaged , which would come back to bite me later. The second offensive was a strike on the Bushehr area from Kuwait, intended primarily as a SEAD mission to get rid of the SAM sites there which were interfering with my freedom of operation in that region, and secondarily to damage the runways if possible. This worked too, and let me fly in the area without dodging missiles in the future.

As night approached there were two developments. First was an enormous stream of Russian fighters flying into the heavily defended Bandar Abbas airport, and it became clear that I needed to trap them that night before they could ready for action. The second was the enormous stream of hundreds of Boghammar speedboats and other patrol boats which came pouring out of every dockyard and coastal inlet in the Straits area. (Remember that set of docks I didn't bomb?) Strafing runs and cluster bomb attacks by my aircraft damaged some of them, but there was no way to stop them all, and tankers in the area were quickly swarmed and often brought to a halt by the speedboat scourge. Allied patrol boats fought back, but they too succumbed to the fast-moving swarm. The little Drogou did what she could, but had to withdraw with her magazines empty and the swarm only somewhat reduced. It wasn't until the Leftwich and the Aliseo arrived later that night, and engaged in 5" gunnery practice by radar, making systematic use of their large magazine capacity, that I started making significant inroads against the speedboats.

The speedboats were very good at swarming and stopping tankers, but not so good at sinking them. However, the arrival of several Iranian container ships with a battery of 5" guns lined up on deck changed the situation significantly. Fortunately their radar emissions had given them away early, and Mirages out of Al Dhafra managed to sink one and cripple another with iron bombs (at the cost of one of their own) before they could make it to combat. However the two survivors pressed on and in true 'yo-ho-ho' style they lined up to trade broadsides, and began sinking the damaged tankers. It took the arrival of Intruders from the Sara to LGB them from altitudes their MANPADs couldn't reach.

As the speedboat fight got underway plans were made to deal with the Bandar Abbas problem. The sole objective of the airfield attack was to shut the two runways, with all else being secondary to that end. Prior to the attack fighter sweeps were made to clear the vicinity, along with a long-range F-14 attack which targeted the Iranians' only AWACs. Then a cruise missile strike was timed to arrive with heavy ARM support from all airbases in the theatre. An initial wave of TLAMs was targeted on various aimpoints across the airfield, to draw SAM fire and act as decoys. Any damage they did would be a bonus. The second wave, following roughly a minute behind, was a focused strike on the two runways only. There was no thought of going in with planes - there were simply too many SAMs in the area. The attack hit shortly after midnight, and not only shut down the runways, but also managed to cripple two of the nearby SA-10s. With the large Russian fighter force trapped on the ground a passage of the straits became a lot more practical.

This was not the only set of attacks that night, and aircraft attacks on Omidiyeh, Busheher, and Char Bahar managed to shut down runways there using large LGBs. My B-1s made an appearance over the Busheher nuclear facility, wrecking the reactors and other structures. The Iranian coast and coastal islands also got some attention, as there turned out to be a variety of SAMs emplaced there, which kept popping up to interfere (claiming a plane or two during the previous day's fighting). During the night my ASW forces managed to sink three SSKs, by flying low and radar off to avoid Iranian attention, which made the situation somewhat safer for my support ships. The Montgomery and Crommelin were sent to escort the T-AK out of the west end of the Gulf, joining up with the Tripoli and other logistical vessels in Bahrain, while the minesweepers were sent ahead to be ready to clear the straits.

Morning saw the ships approaching the Straits of Hormuz, with passage probably late afternoon. I wanted to clear out any SSM batteries lurking in the area, but that wouldn't be possible so long as the surviving SAM defences still dominated the Bandar Abbas area. Therefore another strike was made, this time for SEAD purposes, with my remaining TLAMs shot at the airbase to draw SAM fire, and my remaining ARMs and SLAMs used to tackle the diminished SAMs in the area. This went relatively smoothly, with a few exciting moments when unidentified SAM sites turned on their radar. Fortunately these were less capable models (SA-2s), and they were dealt with without further casualties. Sweeps of the area revealed several SSM sites which were then bombed and destroyed, and attacks continued on remaining airfields (Shiraz, etc.).

With the SAMs down I can place a very heavy CAP over the retiring Tripoli and support ships, and join them up with the 6 ships (3 Spruance, Belknap, Aussie Perry, Aliseo) waiting just the other side of the straits for a well-escorted trip out of the Gulf.

(I have 1 day 3 hours to go, and very few forces left to oppose me, so I think it's safe to call it here. Miscellaneous comments to follow in next post.)

Well, this was another very interesting scenario, with plenty of things happening. The political disorganization on both sides is very well done, and the gradual assignment of coalition units is very immersive. Forces are strung out due to peace-time patrol requirements, and it takes time to assemble into useful wartime formations. Aircraft aren't all ready with loadouts, and an early decision may result in having the wrong munitions at hand when the time comes. All these things are well worth simulating, and definitely add to the real-world feel of the situation. Thanks for writing these interesting and involved scenarios.