**Mediterranean Fury #1 – Road to Byzantium**

**AAR by maverick3320, May 2021**

Bottom line up front: this scenario is epic. I don't mean epic in the way people use it lately, as in "cool" or "awesome", I mean epic as an adjective. Altogether I think I've put about sixty hours into this scenario alone, including probably 6-8 hours just in planning; overall, it's been quite the experience, but I've reached a point of frustration (15 hours of game time left in the scenario) to where I'm not sure I really want to spend anymore time on it.

This scenario is played from the Warsaw Pact perspective and the objective is to seize the Bosphorus. It's basically the first two days of a theater level campaign, managing hundreds of assets, mostly Russian but quite a few Romanian and Bulgarian forces as well. The unique, at least to me, part of the scenario is the option to choose some political actions that happen in the background while the war is being fought. There are two sets of choices: first, the ability to degrade one of Turkey's military branches (air force, army, or navy) to presumably keep some forces air, naval, or ground forces, respectively, out of the fight, or try and separate Greece from Turkey and keep them out of the fight. Second, the player chooses one of three options into how many victory points the player wants to invest up front to increase the success chances of (presumably) other political actions in the background.

Intel was as follows: Turkey would probably fight, Greece was a wild card, an "aggressor" squadron at Incirlik. The Americans were in the Med, but too far away to really do anything and tied down with numerous Soviet forces there.

I chose to A) try and keep Greece out of the war, and B) invest 400 victory points (the middle choice) to moderately increase the chances of other political successes behind the scenes while I was fighting. Unfortunately neither choice seemed to have any effect. Greece deployed a decent amount of naval assets, sent numerous air strikes at my forces, and eventually apparently started running CAPs over Turkish territory (?) as I frequently saw Greek aircraft attacking my forces from the east (!) side of the Bosphorus. I did get multiple messages saying that my political actions were working and that the military forces and government were in disarray, however, it didn't seem to have any effect; Turkey was running 4-6 plane CAPs over all their airbases and also sent numerous strikes at my forces. I also received a message that rebel forces were engaging Turkish forces (or something like that), but I never saw anything happen, and the rebels don't have any losses or expenditures below.

One of the scenario notes is that, although WP has a lot of assets, no AEW assets apparently could be spared, and missile stocks were somehow in very short supply. Odd that the WP would start a war with low missile stocks and not a single Mainstay in an entire theater, but I guess you go to war with what you have (to paraphrase Rumsfeld), even if you are the one starting it. The player has a large amount of Backfires/Blinders/Badgers, but only 20 or so anti surface missiles (AS-4 Kitchen mod B). Having played other scenarios as the WP, I knew how dangerous F-16s can be (even armed with nothing but sidewinders) so I determined to try and knock out one of the main Turkish F-16 bases. I started off the war by plastering Murted AB with the 20 AS-4s, delighted that 16 or so hit the runways, approximately eight on each. About an hour later I watched F-16s take off at will from the base - apparently even though both runways showed BDA as red and "heavy damage", F-16s continued to take off. Frustrating. So I restarted and instead of going for an airfield strike targeted basically every radar in range of my air to start the scenario (since the AS-4 kitchens seemed to be the only missiles that enemy air couldn't shoot down), along with the closest naval base. This plan was much more successful, killing five 209 subs (another big worry of mine, since Soviet ASW isn't the greatest) and knocking out 8-9 radars. Yet this also turned out to be somewhat of a pointless strategy, as several hours later at least two NATO AWACs were airborne at all times over Turkish territory.

I also set up three CAP zones, West (over Romanian territory), Central (directly north of the Bosphorus), and East (over the center of the Black sea). West CAP had Romanian/Bulgarian Mig-29s, Mig-21s, and Mig-23s. Central CAP had Russian Su-15s, Mig-25s and Mig-29s from Sevastopol, and since I wasn't expecting much action in the east, that CAP had only two pair of Mig-23s from Kirovsk on station. Generally the CAPs seemed to work well, at least up to the point when I stopped playing the scenario, or up to the point when the enemy would send an alpha strike, of which there were three: one composed of 20 or so Turkish F4 phantom IIs, one composed of an equal number F5s, and the knockout blow from the Americans (more on this one later). Greece also sent several semi-alpha strikes of 10-15 A-7s at once as well, and one smaller one of F-104s.

Naval forces I generally re-routed from their pre-planned paths, as from previous scenario experience subs just seem to love and hide along those paths. I sent all my amphibious assets to land on the west side of the Bosphorus, along with all of my airborne assets. I didn't want to attack both sides of the Bosphorus at once and figured I could provide better air cover on the West side. Overall, my land strategy seemed to work well; by the time I left the scenario I had cleared all the enemy land forces from the west to Sakarya in the east. One note is that enemy artillery was very effective and was responsible for about 90% of the losses my land forces suffered. I understand that the game isn't designed around ground warfare but it seemed like enemy artillery could pinpoint my land forces even in the forested areas and really didn't ever miss. Enemy artillery would routinely destroy my mech forces while my artillery struggled to damage infantry and other enemy forces and never seemed to run out of ammo. Perhaps the NATO M109s are just better? Also, a large portion of my ground assets were "landed detachment" units that had no weapons (?). I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do with them, so I drove all of them up to Romania and left them there.

My surface naval forces worked their way to the Bosphorus with no losses; I figured the SAG centered on Slava would help provide air defense for the landing, while the other various ships would provide gunfire along the coast line. The strategy didn't really work. Of the 30 or so SAMs fired by the Slava group I think only a few ended up hitting aircraft, which seemed to be a common theme in the scenario. My three SA-5 gammon sites in the west that I thought would provide a decent air defense net didn't hit a single enemy aircraft the entire scenario. Not one. The only effective land SAM that I had was the Gecko Mod 1, which I think actually took out three enemy aircraft. The gunfire support strategy didn't really work, either. Regardless of the ship, type of ammo, or target, I rarely damaged enemy surface forces with the ship's 57mm/76mm/100mm gunfire. I probably shot at least near 1500 rounds but only hit a few targets.

My strategy seemed to work well, at least up until the end. I had killed 57 Turkish F16s, along with 9 Greek F-16s and 70 Phantom IIs; as best I can tell I had wiped out the bulk of the Turkish naval and ground forces as well. What finally did me in was the Americans. I suspected the Americans would eventually make an appearance (not including the TLAM strike on several of my airbases out of the blue), as it would be hard for any scenario designer to leave them out, right? What I didn't realize was the scope. With around 17 hours left in the scenario my ELINT picks up five Jammer aircraft heading toward the bosphorus. Then four F-14 Tomcats show up, and start throwing AIM-54s everywhere around Romania, scattering my ELINT and CAP. Not a huge deal, but certainly got the heart rate going. I sent up additional air assets, knowing that jammers probably weren't sent out for no reason, and then a short while later I detect 24 bogeys in groups of four. My CAP at this point is around 20 aircraft; unfortunately, only eight of those were Mig-29s. I should point out that at this point in the scenario I'm down to about 20 total Alamo missiles on my Mig-29s, not that they were a huge asset anyway - I think only about 10% of those fired actually hit. The bigger problem was at this point several of my Mig-29 bases were also running out of AA-11 archers, which really was the only effective AAM any of my aircraft carried. I started basing Mig-29s all over the theater to try and keep them reloaded with Archers, which meant longer transit times to the CAP. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the complete - and I mean complete - worthlessness of the Mig-21/Atoll AAM combo, which was probably about 25% of my air forces. Not a single enemy plane was hit by an Atoll; in fact, it was rare for the Mig-21s to even be able to fire one, even from a few miles away and directly behind an enemy aircraft on a straight course. Mig-29s were fairly effective, but in a straight up fight against F-16s I learned early on that they lose every time, so I never fought F-16s on fair terms and tried to use my Mig-21s as meat shields (somewhat effectively). Mig-23s were mostly ineffective, as well. Mig-29s probably had 75% of my kills, followed by the Mig-25/Acrid combo with another 15%.

So my CAP engages the US alpha strike, but of course eight more Tomcats show up, along with several Greek Mig 2000s, Greek F16s, and just to throw salt in the wound, four F4 Phantoms strike in the east at the same time. It was a slaughter; the strike was composed of F-18s and I lost basically every aircraft I had. The US carrier in the Med just threw basically the bulk of it's air wing at me. Seems like a curious decision for the Americans, as I thought they were tied down with Soviet forces in the Med and too far away to make a difference....guess not. Off with the intel guys' heads. Quite frustrating, as I really had no way to deal with it. I lit up my SA-5 gammons to try and assist my CAP, but as mentioned before, every SA-5 fired missed.

To sum up the Warsaw Pact frustrations:

1) Awful SAMs

2) Mostly useless AAMs (with the exception of the Archers)

3) Mostly useless naval gunfire support

4) No AWACs

5) Extremely limited ASMs and AAMs

6) Horrible intel

7) Mostly useless political actions

8) End up fighting Turkey, Greece, and the US

I did have a lot of fun playing this scenario, at least up until the American strike. Credit has to go to Gunner98 as I'm sure it took a ton of time to put this together. It just got a bit frustrating when Greece didn't stay out, Turkey wasn't affected, the Americans came in force, and the WP air, missiles, and SAMs were so ineffective. It seemed like every major event/decision in the scenario worked against WP - perhaps that is by design. If anyone has any tips on how they successfully completed this scenario I would love to read about it.