**Northern Fury – Ant Eaters Revenge**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Dec 2015**

In other notes: They're sending me up against SA-20s with Mk82s! I'm gonna die!

Well, the sparring between the F-15s and their west CAP is underway, and the two AGIs are underwater, but I don't think I'm making meaningful progress yet.

***Maromak****: How did you take down the AGIs? Did you use the P-3s or an F-117?*

It was the P-3s. After dealing with the AGIs one went up around the north coast, while the other went along the south coast to look for other ships. The one down south hasn't found anything else, but now it's running away from the residue of a dogfight, anxiously hoping the remaining Russians won't pursue too far. It's still got a couple of missiles, but probably won't be able to use them, except maybe as a BOL decoy. The one up north found a Russian merchant and put its last two missiles into it, setting it on fire but not sinking it. Hopefully it will burn out. The P-3s are being sent to the Greenland base after their mission is done.

One of my F-15s cleverly identified the Sovremenny by collecting one of its missiles, before I grew a brain and used the TR-1's radar to find the ships in the bay. I doubt I'll be able to sink the DD/CG group with missiles, because I can't generate enough Harpoons at once, but I may be able to get rid of the PCF or the FF with them, and I should be able to finish off the freighter.

So far I've managed to destroy the radars on the northern arm, including the SA-20's set, by sneaking down through the fjords from the north, and keeping the ridge between me and trouble. Then once the ridge was "clear" (I suspect there's actually more short range stuff still there) I was able to get the Reykyavik SA-20 as well by popping up over the ridgeline, firing my HARMs, and then scurrying back down into cover. The radar on the volcano hasn't started transmitting yet, and the Keflavik SA-20 is still keeping its silence also.

The air war has gone well so far, with two main waves of defenders destroyed, but I've essentially run out of AMRAAMs and Sparrows, so I have no real offensive capability until the final bunch of F-15s and F-16s show up just before the F-111 strike. This means I'm in run-away mode for now. I got two of the Mainstays by sending F-15s over the center of Iceland while the defenders were busy elsewhere, which should help. I've left the F-117s on the 'ground' for the moment, to simulate a later strike, along with some F-15s to escort them. Based on the briefing the environment was just too dangerous to send them in at first. If I can get the Keflavik SA-20 I may send the F-117s in before the F-111s arrive. The TR-1 has found so many 'MOBILE' units on the Kef airfield that the F-111s would be absolutely slaughtered at low level, but the F-117s may be able to clear some of those defences for them. Unfortunately, that would mean I can't use the F-117s on the various building targets, where I think they would really shine.

It's an interesting scenario, that's for sure.

I've kept playing the initial version to see how it was going.

Skirmishing continued while I waited for the next group of strikers (the next SEAD package) to arrive. With only a few Sidewinder toting F-15s left I was able to draw off a few Su-27s (relying on tankers to outlast the enemy), and even got a few by burnering up behind them as they returned to base, but for the most part I was driven back. My P-3s spent so much fuel running away at military power that they couldn't get back to the fight, and they had to take their Harpoons home. Tankers and AWACs fled for their lives. Even the TR-1, which could ignore the Mig-29s, had to run away.

When the SEAD package arrive I brought it across Iceland from the NW to the center (well escorted with jammers), and sent the main body of it south to try and hook around at Keflavik from the SE. My hope was that by coming in over the water I could hide behind the ridgeline from the Keflavik SAM forest until I was extremely close, and thus deny the SAMs time to react. Unfortunately the southern SA-20 was well sited to deal with that, and it engaged me at ~ 30 nm. I shot back with everything, and of the massed salvo of HARMs only two managed to get through. That was enough to destroy the Tombstone, joy joy! And then the next Tombstone lit up in Keflavik. And then another one after that!

I did like the self-escorting SEAD package, in the form of the F-16s, and their AMRAAMs were very useful for picking off isolated fighters that straggled in to try and attack. I had also sent a few SEAD planes to tackle the central surveillance radar and the SE surveillance radar near Hornafjordur. I got that one by lobbing HARMs up over the glacier in BOL mode, and then scurrying down the valley to escape to the NE, but the moment it went down the central Big Bird radar lit up, and I really didn't need that. The Maverick F-16s had been very useful for knocking off the isolated short range air defences up there (as well shooting down planes as they lifted off from Reykjavik), and they quickly got rid of the Big Bird. And then everything lit up, including yet another Tombstone, which I needed even less!

My F-117s (which I had delayed from the original schedule) were inbound at this point, and they skirted the Keflavik SAMs to the N, and then curved around to approach Reykjavik from the NE, so they could come in from as far away from Keflavik as possible, using a very tight jammer escort. One got too far away from its jammer and was nailed by an SA-10 from Keflavik, but the others managed to deliver their bombs, sinking both freighters, destroying all three runways, and blowing up the control tower. Then they ran for it, pursued by angry Su-27s from Keflavik, at exactly the time my AMRAAM toting F-16 reserve decided to fly away and refuel! Two remaining F-15s did their best, but they couldn't save them all. (I actually had more F-15s, and I had specifically planned to use them as escorts for the F-117s, but then I second guessed myself and postponed them to escort the F-111s. Lesson learned! Always cover your extraction!)

At that point I made the decision to call off the F-111 strike, and I flew them directly to England. Reykjavik was shut, but still had potent close range defences, and there wasn't much more to be gained from hitting it again. The Keflavik SAM forest was simply impossible. Hornafjordur had at least one SA-20 and one SA-10, which would probably have meant heavy losses. Akureyri was a possibility, since I hadn't spotted much up there, but there may have been hidden things, and I didn't think there was much to be gained from hitting a small field. (Looking at it afterwards, I should have made a better recce with the TR-1, and then I would have known I was able to tackle it. Another lesson learned! Recce!)

In the end I had shot down most of the flyable Russian aircraft (not counting the Su-24s and tankers), wrecked the runways at Reykjavik, sunk three merchants, sunk three AGIs, destroyed three Tombstones, and a number of other radars and SHORADS. I tried a few more things afterwards, rerunning the SEAD attack to see if I could have any effect on the main Keflavik air defences. I could never get a missile through, and every single HARM was invariably shot down. I couldn't find an effective way to terrain mask in close enough to it either.

Despite the difficulty this was a challenging and interesting scenario. It really pointed out that you can't just 'wing it', and you need to plan and coordinate your strikes and support. Flight times must mesh! If I had properly timed my escorts, tightened up the coordination of my F-117s and SEAD, kept my support aircraft in safer zones, and used my recce properly, then my progress would have been much better. It pointed out that you have to very carefully plot your flight paths to take advantage of terrain masking, and to be prepared for when the enemy has anticipated your terrain routes and plugged them with a SAM. It also makes you face a situation where you need to be willing to recognize and admit when something's not going to work, and to call it off before it becomes a disaster. I don't think (in its initial version) it would be everyone's cup of tea, but I'm glad I played it.