**Northern Fury – Decapitation**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Jan 2017**

Wow! Nothing says "you've been working your planes too hard" like a hangar full of red...

My first strike wave is coming back now, and most high priority targets have been destroyed (sing the praises of the TALD - Hallelujah!). First I tried sneaking some TLAMs through the valleys before the strike, and it actually worked reasonably well. For ~ 27 TLAMs at 2-3 per target I was able to pick off ~ 8 or so high value targets before engaging the defences. If I'd gone all in it would have worked better, but I still have some in reserve for a second attack. For the aircraft strike, jammers fuzzed things up, TALDs soaked up SA-20s, then SLAMs were able to deal with the SHORADS at Kef and Ryk, my few HARMs knocked off a surveillance radar or two, and then the small LGBs did a reasonable job on the remaining lower priority targets. Then we hastily buggered off when the SA-20 proved it had reloaded.

I left the emitting central surveillance radar alone for the most part, preferring to let it see me while I hid behind the ridgeline from the SA-20, rather than kill it and have everyone turn on like happened in the previous scenario. I actually think the defences are tougher when they don't bother to hide, because when they do hide I can often get munitions close enough undetected to get inside their OODA loop. I wonder if having one SHORADS radar emiting at each site would be a good compromise for a more effective defence, preserving some units hidden while maximizing warning time? I eventually did bomb the surveillance radar, so now everything's lit up, which was probably a mistake. Some of the units that lit up seem inappropriate - for example the freighter turning on its radar to announce its presence seems counterproductive. (How would it even know?)

The main strike wave did wait for the proper time to cross the line, but some of my fighters went in early. This wasn't by design. At the start some of the Russians zoomed out to attack my ASW helicopters, which lead to a fighter engagement that transitioned northwards as more and more units were fed into the fight by both sides. No plan survives contact with the enemy, etc.

Now I'll pull back, recycle my strikers, and prepare for round 2, this time against a reloaded SA-20 with its radar on from the beginning... Hopefully I'll be able to deal with it for good, and then run in with the Greenland bombers to deal with various warehouses etc.

Mission complete!

More air-to-air skirmishing went on while I waited for wave 2, mainly because I went north to do CSAR 1, and then sent the helicopter's CAP looking for trouble after the pickup was accomplished. They got the AN-12, but that Su-24 jammer was made of solid horseshoes, casually ignoring missile after missile, until it eventually died late in the game.

The Scranton completed its rampage in the same timeframe. It had already removed the Sovremenny with Harpoons, and then torpedoed the cruiser, followed by the two patrol boats, and then headed north to sink the freighter, before coming back to patrol the Kef/Ryk bay. The AGI was eventually dealt with by one of the Greenland fighters, and two more Russian attack subs were detected and sunk when they sprinted near my surface ships.

Wave 2 went well. I sent most of my remaining TLAMs up through mountain valleys, and then hooked them W along the N side of the arm towards the northern SA-20, trying to keep the ridge between the missiles and the SAM site. It worked too - until the Mig-31s swooped in to deal with them. Fortunately the very last one popped over the mountain and flattened the SAM site before it could get shot down. My aircraft mounted a coordinated TALD and HARM and SLAM strike on the central SA-20, but the site declined to fire as we got closer and closer and closer, holding its fire and refusing to waste missiles on decoys. But then it turned out it was out of missiles after all, having used its last few to take potshots at the tail end of retreating Wave 1. So much for my massive carefully planned assault on empty missile tubes! With the long range SAMs down the rest of the aircraft were able to work over the remaining targets at their leisure, getting most of them. (Some of the Hafnarfjordur strikes had to be waved off because the targets were too close to Civilian buildings. We blew in a few windows, but fortunately didn't cause major damage before we stopped.)

As this was going on CSAR 2 and 3 were called in. The one in the bay was fairly straightforward, since the main strike was in progress there, so there was plenty of support already in place. The one over by Hornafjordur was another story, very close to three active SAM sites. I diverted the few strikers I had left on the tail of Wave 2, but that only gave me 2 SLAMs, 4 HARMs, and 8 TALDs, and that wasn't enough to pay the price of admission. All were shot down to no effect, even trying to terrain mask to get in closer. So I sent one helicopter and two EA-6s in on the deck from the SSE, making sure my jammers and helicopter were always arranged so they were colinear with the jamming strobe to the SA-10 and SA-20. As I got closer you could see the illumination radar flickering orange as the SAM sites tried to engage, but they kept getting shut down before the missiles could guide all the way. I kept my F-14s lurking further out on the same jamming axis, and a good thing too, because I had to pry a pair of Mig-23s off the retreating helicopter after the pickup was complete.

I kept my SAG as a screen between Kef and my carrier groups, rather than sending them north on blockade. They had already been useful for providing jamming support and shooting down a few Soviet fighters that were pursuing retreating aircraft, and I wanted to keep them in that role during Wave 2. Besides, the Scranton was already operating up north, and I had reasonable radar coverage there, so I wasn't worried about Russian ships sneaking in before I could deal with them. As a result the SAG wasn't in the bay when the Special Onshore Surprise revealed itself, which was a Good Thing, especially as I didn't have a clue that Captain Ramius II as lurking out there as well. Being in the middle of the bay would probably have resulted in the loss of a ship or two.

After all missions were done I was able to clear the area just before the deadline, and returned to the carriers.