**Northern Fury – Vagar Vengeance**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Mar 2016**

Aha! Now that I've got the events going this scenario makes much more sense. Get the Upholder in there with those SBS and go all Pebble Island on their ass! Hello Mr. Open Parking, please shake hands with my good friend Mr.C-4! What's in this kit-bag? Why it's a laser designator! Gosh, whatever shall we do with that?? Bwahahahaha!

Aaaaand done!

I actually wound up playing this one in a bunch of chunks, due to technical problems on my end which were preventing some of the events from happening, but if it had run from end to end I think it would have gone something like this.

Both carrier groups were ordered to swing ENE along the British coast to fall in behind the amphibs, rather than making a direct approach to the Faroes. The range was short enough that getting aircraft over the target was not an issue, so there was no need to get much closer. The amphibs were to head due N in column, with ASW cover from the Nimrods, while TG de Ruyter was to head NW towards the amphib landing zones on the E side of the islands. ELINT aircraft, CAP, and ASW patrols were sent out in the usual directions. Upholder headed for its drop-off point, while the geriatric Nordic Narwhal closed in to do a bit of spying.

Things start happening fast. As the French CVBG swings around the front unit reports torpedoes in the water! An ASW torp is shot back down the bearing, the carrier, its close escorts, and the target turn to run, and the other ASW escorts work the target. It turns out to be a very dangerous Sierra, but this close in my ASW aircraft can react rapidly, and the contact is surrounded and killed. (Love those big French ASW helicopters - 4 torpedoes!) After that I split the group in two, pushing the ASW screen further ahead, and proceed up the coast. Other than a couple of Exocets lobbed at a patrol boat, and some Alize ESM work, the French played no other significant role in this fight.

In the air my Harriers take the lead role at first, with their long range AIM-120s being my best air-to-air weapons. They come sneaking in at low level to the east of the islands, keeping in the radar shadow to get close enough to engage the Russian AEW and surveillance helicopters, which I'm very concerned are going to get a solid detection on my ships. (So much so that I turn their jammers on to try and delay the detection.) The low level AMRAAM attack works quite well, and gets rid of ASW helicopters too, but its quite risky because of the Mig-23s that are angrily swarming up, and I have to rely on my Phantoms to bail me out from time to time as I run away. (Which does not always end well for the British Phantoms, with their poor missiles.)

I've detected several patrol boats (and a merchant) around the islands by this point, and an attack with Sea Eagles and Exocets carried by Harriers, Buccaneers, and Super Etendards manages to deal with the isolated units. (Again, staying low to hide in the radar shadow of the islands, so the SA-12s don't slaughter me.) This allows the Upholder to get to its unloading position and unleash the SBS. The Narwhal tries sneaking in on the other side of the island, but it detects another sub first, and at very close range too. This is considered genuinely bad news, because the Narwhal has no ASW torpedoes! All she can do is try and get in the enemy's baffles and disengage, but she's out-sonared, out-gunned, out-dated, and out of luck. The Kilo kills the Narwhal, but then the Nimrod kills the Kilo, so honour is satisfied.

The SBS teams, which are now heading inland, are crucial to this situation. So far the pair of SA-12s and associated SA-15s have been keeping me at bay by staying hidden with radars off until the moment of engagement. But now a series of mysterious explosions start plaguing the Russian radars. Muffled footsteps, shadowy figures, and WHAM!, another radar gone. One team even manages to get one of the SA-12 surveillance radars, while the other makes it to the airbase and finds that demolition charges work very nicely on parked aircraft too!

With their main surveillance radars down the Russians are forced to start using their SAM radars, which allows my incoming Buccaneer and Tornado raid to pop up from behind terrain and engage with ALARMs and Martels. The number of hits on the SAM sites isn't high, but the raid does consume a lot of enemy missiles, and the EO Martels do some useful damage to parked aircraft on the airbase.

With the SAMs down the first airdrops manage to deliver more special forces and artillery. Then, with no high altitude SAM defences left, my airforce is free to roam around with LGBs above the clouds, relying on the special forces below the clouds to designate targets. It takes a lot of hunting around, but the "night of terror" is very productive, eventually clearing the area before the main paradrops the following morning.

While all this is going on the amphibs and escorts continue to head north and then close in on the east side of the island, with TG de Ruyter leading. By this point I've pushed AWACS up NE of the Faroes, and they detect vampire launches from open water. SSGNs! With multiple missiles inbound my CAP burners to intercept, and the ship radars light up to engage. Fortunately, the missiles all seem to be aimed for my lead ship, the little Niels Juel, so they miss the main body of the task group, and I'm able to shoot them down without damage as the TG retires to get away from the shore. There's either a sub there or an observer on land, so the Upholder (which has come around the S side of the island by now) and a helicopter with FLIR are sent to scour the area, but nothing turns up, even when the amphibs start landing their advanced teams by helicopter. Three infantry-men and a radio dug into an invisible hole somewhere, I expect.

I eventually go back, drawing more missile fire, but since my AWACS can see where the missiles appear I have good hunting with my Nimrods. The crews get a little nervous as their fuel gauges drop, and I have to rush a tanker up in support since the Nimrod's tanks are nearly dry (60 km left!) by the time I'm finished.

After this the amphibs arrive, and I redeploy most of my long range SAM ships very near the E side of the island, with a screen of short range SAM ships a few miles further out to sea. The amphibs go in to their respective destination zones and anchor there, each accompanied by a single Sea Wolf ship for final close-in defence. (I've stripped the British carrier group of most of its assets, so the carrier only has one good destroyer and one good frigate in attendance, in order to provide these extra defences for the amphibs.)

A couple of hours later, when unloading is underway, my ESM crews start reporting jamming to the NE. Bomber raid inbound! And most alarmingly, it's escorted by a large number of powerful fighters that outclass anything I've got. I try sending some of my Phantoms around in flanking attacks, hoping I can stay outside their radar arc, but it doesn't work, and the escorts detect the Phantoms and chew them up without loss. I should have kept my Phantoms all back with the Harriers, which are setting up for anti-missile duties. When the missiles arrive, out of the Russian jamming cloud, my CAP gets a few, but it falls to the SAM ships to handle the bulk of the engagement, which they once again manage without loss. (Although a couple of the smaller frigates are now out of missiles, after last-ditch engagements only a mile out.)

I could try and persue the retiring bombers, but they've already turned back with a hundred mile lead, and they're faster than I am unless I go to burner, so my odds of catching them are poor. And then there's the escort... I decide discretion is the best policy and I let them go. My troops are unloading now, and the mission is accomplished.

General Comments

This one's tough because of the timing. The game starts at 3:00, but it's dusk by 5:30 and night by 7:30. So all your optical attacks (the EO Martels and visual bombing) are going to be rendered much less effective before you have a chance to do any recce with the SBS, who probably don't arrive until 6:00 or so. Since the Hercs are going to get themselves shot down at 7:30, you're almost forced to do a rushed blind attack to try and clear their way. I actually switched sides and orbited the arty drop for approximately half an hour in order to clear out some remaining opposition before allowing them to proceed. I wonder if I'd have had good luck with an immediate concentrated strike rushed in in the daytime, but I suspect it would have been a very high casualty operation if I'd included the planes with conventional munitions. (As it was I never actually used them, because it was dark before I had found anything to bomb. Martels, ALARMs, and LGBs were the only munitions expended.) I think either starting earlier in the day, or postponing the initial air-drops would probably be helpful. I suspect in reality the SOF would be in a day or two in advance of the actual operation, although I can see how that would make for a very boring and extended scenario. (Wait! Wait! Now - wait more!)

These concerns aside, this is a very interesting scenario, because of all the different things you can do. Night-ninja attacks with SOF, sub vs sub hunting, pop-up SSGN attacks, anti-shipping, SEAD, bomber raids, zooming around nape of the earth - the works! Heck, I was even looking up the satellite maps of the islands so I could find where the roads were, so my guys could manhandle their air-dropped artillery around. What other scenario gets you to do that? (I restricted them to 2 knots only on actual roads, which is probably optimistic, but much more realistic than 30 kts the game will let you do on the assumption you've got prime movers. I don't even want to think about how they moved all that ammunition!) So all in all I think you've got a winner here with a bit of time tuning.

***Note: This is a playtest report, so several things have been adjusted, including the para-drop timings.***