**Northern Fury – Shield of Faith**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ July 2018**

I can't believe I missed a Northern Fury! I must have been seriously distracted at the time. I played the V1.2 (hopefully that's the latest), so here's a mini AAR even though its waaay late. (It doesn't feel like Northern Fury if I don't write down something afterwards. )

**PLAN**

I have operational choices to make at the beginning, which is interesting. I decide that the F-18s coming in from Iceland will be sent to Sumburgh. The flight time is shorter, so they will be in action sooner, and they'll be closer to the enemy, enhancing their reaction time. My support ships coming in from the Atlantic will therefore go to Lerwick, with P-3's patrolling the area and my British diesel subs moving to the meet them in the approaches. The Manchester will also head to this area, rather than covering the Oslo convoy.

The Oslo convoy will get CAP from the Tornadoes out of the UK instead, as well as Nimrod patrols to check their path. Surface ships in the area will converge to join the convoy, and subs will proceed to patrol the 'elbow' near Torp, in an effort to keep anything from sneaking through to hit the ferry bridge. F-15s and F-16s in the UK will ferry over to Norway, with all the F-15s and half the F-16s going north to Flesland, and the rest of the F-16s going further south to Sola.

**PLAYTHROUGH**

ELINT, CAP, and MPA start spreading out in the usual fashion, and it's not long before the Russians are in action.

Sub launched missiles appear from the north, heading for TG Wright, a lone high-value logistics ship which only has a single Perry to defend it. Fortunately the sub's only firing two at a time, so the Perry's single-arm launcher is enough to defeat the attack, and the Perry's helicopter hurries to the scene and finds and sinks the Charlie. Several hours later TG Wright is under fire again, when incoming torpedoes are detected dead ahead. My own torpedoes are fired down the bearing as the ships turn and run, and the Perry's helicopter proves its worth again by finding and killing an SSN almost immediately. My ships turn aside, and with no sub to provide guidance upates, the heavyweight torps go churning by on their old course and miss. Yet another sub is found in the area when an SSK is spotted on radar snorkelling near the east side of the Orkneys. It gets sunk by a combination of one of the ancient British O-boats and a passing Nimrod from nearby Kinloss.

In the air there's some skirmishing with Mig-23s north of Flesland, and then reports of activity at the far end of the Baltic. I end up in a several-hour long fight with groups of Foxbats and Fencers escorted by Flankers, which seem determined to hunt down my picket ships (and possibly my Oslo convoy) off the Soviet-occupied coast of Jutland near Esbjerg. The battle rages over Zealand, and the streets of Copenhagen are littered with fallen aircraft parts. A few of their fighters (although fortunately none of the attack planes) get past me to press on towards my ships, threatening the Nimrods and the passing cargo planes heading for Oslo, but fortunately the Tornado CAP is able to deal with the leakers with the assistance of the F-16s and F-15s transiting to Norway. I become convinced that the Soviet surveillance radar in the area is cueing the enemy in to my planes in the area, so I send my ground attack Tornadoes with ALARMs to try and deal with it. What they find is that there's an SA-20 in the area, which handily defeats my missile salvo, and I hold off on any plans to cut across Soviet-occupied Jutland.

As this is going on I start getting warnings of increased recce activity up north near Kola. A few of my long-range Tornado fighters are directed to head further north with tanker support, radar off and staying discretely out of Soviet radar cover in the long winter night. At first they have good pickings, creeping up on isolated jammers and ELINT planes, but then one of them tries creeping up on something that turns out to be a fighter, not a bomber, and it gets dealt a harsh lesson. I have to give the coast a wider berth than I thought, and several times I get chased away by prowling Mig-31s. Nevertheless, a combination of AWACS and tankers lets my fighters rack up a good score in the northern darkness by the time the scenario is complete. Fears that the recce activity was a prelude to heavy bombers turns out to be unfounded. Other than a few recce Backfires there is no sign of them.

Things are going reasonably well in Norway itself, in the sense that I'm not losing airplanes. I'm staying well away from the heavy defences in the Orland area, and I can see Mig-31s and Flankers patrolling there. If I had F-14s I'd push in, but not with planes with shorter-range missiles which would cede a 40 mile advantage to the enemy. So I stay put in my own area, just like the Soviets want me to. However, they eventually change their mind, and decide to advance, with a dozen each Mig-23s and Mig-29s heading south to fight. I rush in AMRAAM fighters from the coast, but I also have to try and resist with Sidewinder-armed F-16s, which will be problematic. Theoretically my Patriots could contribute, but in practice the nimble Migs have time to dive below radar cover if I engage at anything other than extremely short range, so my SAMs don't help much at all. In the end it is heavy expenditure of AMRAAMs which wins this one, though it's not unusual to need four or more to get a hit on a Mig-29; ultra-agile at low altitude with good jammers and chaff. If the American fighters hadn't flown in already this would have been a very different fight.

Around dawn I make a try at doing some recce of the occupied airbases in Norway. My Tornadoes manage to knock down one of the surveillance radars at Sandane using ALARMs, but their missiles can't get through the defences at Sogndal. The recce F-5s make a game try, using terrain masking and cloud cover to every possible advantage, but only one (barely) makes a successful run, two others are shot down with ease, and the fourth is waved off before it can commit suicide. The Soviet low-level air defence environment is not to be trifled with...

Not long after, the Soviets make another push in the air, this time with 10 Mig-31s supported by some Flankers. I gather a big AMRAAM force to meet them, but this time my pilots know the boot is on the Russian foot. My SAM gunners disagree, however. The Foxhounds aren't very agile to begin with, and they're up very high. So high, that they can't dive into the dense lower atmosphere in time to turn well. They only have old DECM, and they don't have chaff. So my pilots are ordered to retire behind the SAM belt, and the Patriots begin executing the Foxhounds. A two missile salvo is a very reliable hit, and the Patriot warhead is big enough that it's an auto-kill. Suddenly I have 8 Mig-31 kills, and the battle is very much in my favour.

The Russians make no big moves after that, and my ships close in to their harbours. The final moment of excitement comes when an SSK is spotted snorkelling very near the mouth of the inlet to Oslo, but the two Nimrods in the area are able to pounce on it. After that everyone got safely to their destinations, except for some of the cargo planes with airborne troops. I fumbled the landings a little, and some had to turn back for lack of ramp space, although it was close.

Fun! Interesting to make operational level decisions about squadron deployments. Most scenarios don't allow that.