**Northern Fury #34 – The Longest Battle**

**AAR by Ferret69, Sep 2016**

WARNING: THIS AAR WILL CONTAIN SPOILERS!

**Northern Fury 12.6: The Longest Battle AAR *[Note, scenario number later changed to NF #34]***

So I’ve never done one of these before but after reading Airborne Rifle’s Northern Fury AAR over on Groghead’s and Tailhook’s ongoing AAR on the first Caribbean Fury scenario I decided why not do one of these. Then I made a possibly fatal decision; let’s do Northern Fury 12.6! In case you don’t know Northern Fury is a collection of scenarios created by Gunner98 (full props to him) that detail a 1994 global war and the North Atlantic/Norway part of it. 12.6 details trying to shepherd convoys across the Atlantic whilst dealing with all sorts of spot crises as well. The possibly fatal part of it is its length; 1 in game month…this ought to be great fun…

The setup is a big one; I’ve got around 400+ merchants either sitting in port or milling around aimlessly without escort, I have submarines moving in to box in the Argentines who have been looking a bit opportunistic recently, I’ve also got most of Central America trying to kill me. Almost forgot; there are 60 something enemy submarines milling about the Atlantic and the Caribbean.

The way I’m going to do this AAR is a narrative based on every 6-24 hours of NF 12.6 (depending on how interesting those hours are) followed up by a status report talking plans, strategy and losses and expenditures, hope you enjoy.

On SSN 674 Trepang Lieutenant Commander Robert Galyvon was irritated to say the least, whilst the rest of the fleet was in exciting roles like protecting Strike Fleet Atlantic or preparing to see off a possible Argentinian attack here he was sailing on what seemed like a pleasure cruise between Florida and Cuba. The boat was his though and he believed in his crew to be able to serve the US Navy well whatever their role in this war. He was about to go to bed when a sonar operator shouted

“Goblin, approx 44 nautical miles to the east!”

He scrambled to the sonar operator and asked him what he thought it was. The sonar operator replied

“It’s real quiet sir, could be a new red boat, might also be a Kilo on batteries though.”

“Should we try to close and destroy it?” Galyvon asked.

“No sir I don’t think so, this thing is almost silent and we could well lose contact and get ambushed by it” the sonar operator said “No I think that we should go to periscope depth and get a Viking from the JFK group and have them safely prosecute it.” he continued.

“I agree, ok go to communication depth and signal Kennedy”.

5 minutes later an ASW armed S-3B Viking catapulted off the deck of the John.F.Kennedy and headed South.

70 minutes after the S-3B had taken off it arrived on station, talking to controllers on an E-2 Hawkeye lurking North of Cuba and began the hunt for this mystery contact. Trepang however was also closing in but had not heard a sound from the strange goblin they’d detected, this didn’t annoy Galyvon though, he’d been in the game a long time and new two things; ASW was a patient man’s game and that aeroplanes were a submariner’s worst nightmare and he’d just been informed that one had come to visit his ghost-like friend.

Meanwhile, East of Cuba, the men of TG Dale; consisting of the USS Dale (CG-19) and HMS Westminster (F 237) were busy, they’d been at General Quarters earlier having had to prepare for a possible air attack before F-14’s from the Kennedy group had splashed the intruders, now they were talking to another of Kennedy’s planes, this time an S-3 armed with Harpoon’s and a small ASW load, who was busy investigating a horde of contacts to the southwest and had just found that they were small patrol boats, no major threat to the Dale group. The S-3 did say however that a couple of missile corvettes were mixed in there and thus attacked an Osa I with one of his two Harpoon missiles. The AGM-84 speared into the small craft just under its bridge, destroying it instantly. The S-3 was then ordered to investigate more contacts further south and then, once it had expended its Anti-Surface ordinance, join the hunt for the phantom sub.

Suddenly an operator in the first S-3 that had arrived on scene off Cuba shouted

“Got a medium on number 7!”

The pilot then began to bank and readied to do a MAD run and deploy an active sonobuoy before attacking the contact with the Mk50 Barracuda’s he had on board. While he was doing this another operator shouted

“Contact firming up, he’s on a bearing of 284 and is doing 5 knots, depth still unknown.”

“He’s definitely an SSK sir, maybe snorkelling?”

The Mk50 dropped out of the S-3B on a bearing-only launch and immediately sped away, towards the as yet unwitting submarine; it was joined seconds later by another Barracuda.

Aboard the Kilo Class submarine Delfin Captain First Rank Javier Ortiz heard the cries of the sonar operators;

“High-frequency pinging to port captain!”

Ortiz cringed inside for he knew that he done so well at avoiding the imperialists! Indeed how they had even guessed he was here was beyond him. He could have sworn that he had avoided them but he also knew that he must deal with the present and that it included two Americano torpedoes. There was a problem however, he was unable to radically increase speed without losing the ability to snorkel, he could crash-dive but he knew to Yankee’s would just harass him until he had to surface.

“Bring course to 4-2 and launch 2 noisemakers!” Ortiz ordered.

The crew responded gallantly and took about their task with a quiet energy.

As the first Mk50 zoomed in at 60 knots it encountered the two noisemakers Ortiz had launched seconds earlier and it veered off, exploding harmlessly. Javier was pleased with the results and started to persuade himself that he could also foil the second torpedo that was rapidly approaching and indeed he did. On the S-3 the crew were impressed with this Russian or Cuban captain; he had avoided them for an hour and a half and then managed to dupe two of their torpedoes. This guy was clearly good however the S-3B crew planned to show him some of their tricks, the next torpedo he dropped would be close, very close. They were gonna get him.

Ortiz and his crew were delighted; they’d foiled the capitalist attack and had now put on speed, heading West however

“High-frequency pinging to port again sir!”

“How many and how close?” Javier demanded

“1 sir and 0.4 nautical miles away.” came the reply.

A wave of fear passed over Javier and the men of his crew for 0.4 nautical miles was not a lot of time for countermeasures but they would still have to try;

“Bring the ship about, hard turn to starboard!” Ortiz cried.

As the Mk50 bored in and impacted the whole ship shook but the crew of Delfin also realised that the warhead was a small one, they may survive yet!

“Damage report” Ortiz ordered

“The diesel is out sir, we’re bringing on the auxiliary and emergency systems but we must reduce speed.” replied the chief engineer

“Our sonar is also badly hit” added the chief sonarman. Javier Ortiz however was unfazed

“You heard the engineer” he bellowed “reduce the speed.”

It wasn’t fair really, the target was barely fighting but the S-3B gang was still pleased with the result as their last Mk50 impacted the Delfin and the submarine began her last, fateful dive.

Near the Panama Canal a dramatic air battle had begun. After a Coast Guard aircraft had been driven off from the borders of Nicaragua by 3 MiG-21’s a pair of Air National Guardsmen from Howard Air Force Base had destroyed the MiG’s all had seemed to be okay. However around 15 minutes after the MiG’s had entered the drink the men of TG South Carolina picked up something new; a 12 aircraft raid from Nicaragua. The sailors scrambled to General Quarters and sent of a terse warning to Panama Command. The remaining two ANG F-16’s then took off from Howard and headed in, they planned to shoot down four planes and leave the rest to the SAM’s of TG Carolina. As the two Guardsmen raced in 8 of the aircraft turned to face them. The F-16’s volleyed a pair of AIM-7’s at two of the planes; both of the AIM-7 volleys had at least one hit, knocking a pair of Mirage V interceptors from the sky. Soon the enemy formation was in AIM-9 range and all 4 AIM-9’s lanced through the air to score 4 hits. The ANG pilots were astounded; they’d downed 6 planes in under a minute! But they both knew that the job wasn’t done. Even though they had only cannon remaining the two F-16’s bored in at afterburner towards the Nicaraguan jets. One Mirage V launched a missile but the F-16 targeted spiralled upwards and launched chaff that the French-built missile detonated into. As he watched his wingman take evasive action the leader carved through the remaining Nicaraguan’s and unleashed a burst of 20mm fire at one plane whose pilot was killed in the head-on engagement. Seeing his leader dead and his hopes dashed by the seemingly invincible American aircraft the last escort tried to turn for home but the ANG crew gave him no mercy and they sped behind him, unleashing another burst. The Mirage V’s fuel line burst and the fuel began to spill into the engine, causing a spontaneous detonation that tore through the rear of the Nicaraguan’s plane. As the F-16’s cherished their kill they turned back to their original target; the strikers.

The 4 striker’s had been confident in their escorts ability to destroy the intruding American’s so listening to the radios of their comrades became more and more terrifying; eight of the best planes in Nicaragua’s Air Force destroyed? Without a single kill? The Mirage drivers then did what their Cuban trainers had taught them; go low. Aboard the South Carolina the men were amazed; this pair of so called “second-line fliers” had annihilated a fair chunk of Nicaragua’s Air Force and the rampage wasn’t yet over. As the F-16’s motored in they began to descend to attack the Mirage’s, they began to punch through the clouds, as they did so the 4 Nicaraguan’s appeared; throttling it at wave-top level. Soon however they began manoeuvring, minus two of their colleagues who was splashed in the initial pass by the Falcon’s. As the Falcon drivers ascended another Mirage was blotted from the sky, destroyed by an SM-2 from the South Carolina. However at this point the Falcons were low on fuel and out of everything so a decision was made to let one Mirage escape and “deliver the news” on the invincible American planes. As the F-16’s landed the pilots walked to the Ops Room a communications officer handed them a message from the South Carolina Group:

Beer’s on us.

Strategy:

For my North Atlantic ASW strategy I’m not going to try and blanket the whole Atlantic with buoys, rather just the areas around the convoys and other major groups or exposed ships. While this takes place my SURTASS ships will just head back and forth, calling in planes on those who they detect and my own subs will just hunt freely. In the Falkland’s I’ve found a nice strategy through which I can shoot down their planes without getting a declaration of war, that will continue until if/when the do declare war. In the Caribbean Cuba’s striking power is mostly depleted but I trashed a Kilo, their Osa’s and a bunch of their planes just to make sure. An uneasy peace basically rests between them and me now. I’ll try not to provoke Venezuela but I’m moving the P de Asturias Group (Spanish CVBG) into the Caribbean to give me a continued presence there. I really screwed up losing that RQ-2A, I’m still damning myself even now.

As night descended across Europe the men of TG Papa were watching a sunset as an alarm sounded; two torpedoes were headed for the Alfonso Cerqueria. The men of the group rushed to battle stations only to see the aging Portuguese frigate have its back broken by the two Russian torpedoes. The site both saddened and enraged the crew of the Vasco De Gama who were pleased to hear that a helicopter had been launched from a nearby American frigate to wreak vengeance on the Soviet dog who’d dared to attack their brethren.

Aboard the Soviet submarine Novosibirsk Captain First Rank Alexei Ferozov was pleased; he’d just torpedoed an imperialist frigate and gotten away with it, as he was preparing to attack the next imperialist his sonar operator shouted a terse warning;

“Helicopter overhead, high-frequency pinging next to us sir”

Ferozov went cold but immediately issued an order to his crew to take the Novosibirsk deep and try to run. The American SH-2G wasn’t shaken off that easily though, instead he continued to drop sonobuoys around the Soviet sub as he prepared his attack. As he went in the pilot released his two Mk46’s and was not pleased with the result; one Mk46 failed on launch and sunk but the other flew through a hole in the water made by the Kilo. However a Lynx from the Vasco De Gama soon arrived and its Mk46’s did not malfunction.

Further North much the same pattern was playing out. A Kilo Class had been caught trying to stalk and strike a convoy by an Atlantique I MPA who promptly closed and destroyed the contact. The convoy commander was feeling quite pleased until he received a message detailing the loss of the Alfonso Cerqueria. His face was impassive but inside it was a boiling point, the main one being, how many more?

Over the Panama Canal another two ANG pilots were up, preparing to escort an AC-130 that was going to fly over Nicaragua to hit targets, somewhat for revenge after the Nicaraguan’s tried to strike TG South Carolina. They were talking to each other about the success of the other two pilots when a quick transmission from Howard AFB ordered them to prosecute some Nicaraguan targets who were getting a bit too enthusiastic around a reconnaissance aircraft. The two pilots banked their planes and headed out to greet their new guests.

Aboard an E-8A JSTARS aircraft the crew were resting, the Cuban’s hadn’t sent anything in hours and this flight was simply a one-off ELINT and recon mission so that Air Force strikers could come later, soon the two E-8’s would be deployed as well, to a role more fitting of their considerable talents. This then was the atmosphere when one specialist on bard shouted “I’ve got a Goblin!’’. Everyone turned their heads at that; Goblins were underwater, how the hell did they find one? The crew soon realised though that how they found it didn’t matter, the fact they had found it did. “Send a message to the JFK.” the pilot ordered.

Ten minutes later the following message appeared in the hands of the John.F.Kennedy’s captain;

//FLASH//

FR:16 ACCS E-8

TO: Cmdr, John.F.Kennedy

SUBJ: POSREDFLTSUB

1. @2336 FEBURARY 23 A GOBLIN WAS DETECTED @ N26.007654, W77.40941.

2. GOBLIN WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CLASSIFIED AS A REDFLT SUB.

3. REQUEST SUPPORT TO PROSECUTE TARGET.

16 ACCS E-8 SENDS.

OUT.

“Interesting, a Sov sub taking a cruise in the Bahamas?” the captain said.

“Seems so, maybe he wants to swim with the natural sharks.” the messenger joked.

“Anyway, I’m backing the Air Force pukes, get an S-3 there.”

“Yes sir!”

As the pilots of an S-3B took off and headed for this mystery contact the two ANG pilots were up to their knees in Nicaraguan goons. 2 had already bitten the dust and 3 more would go swimming in the next couple of minutes. The two pilots knew that they still, and probably never would, equal the destruction of the 16 aircraft raid they also knew that they were some of the highest-scoring pilots in NATO and certainly the Air National Guard. As they turned to Nicaragua’s coast they heard a single transmission;

“Spooky inbound”.

Aboard the S-3 the pilot looked out of the cockpit and saw an incredible sight; a Russkie sub ran aground! No wonder the E-8 picked it up, it was beached on a Bahamas’ sandbar. Didn’t mean it didn’t need to die though and one quick Mk50 convinced the sailors of Vyborg that further attempts to save their ship was futile and soon the crew of the S-3 saw scores of Soviet submariners pour out of the hull to wait internment as POW’s.

Strategy:

My plan for blanketing the convoys with AS assets has done well, with 2 subs dead in 6 hours as they tried to hit the convoys (the Romeo and the Victor I FYI). Whilst the loss of Alfonso Cerqueria hurts she’ll be replaced by more capable frigates over the coming days, I think I’m getting a German one soonish. The Argentinian’s have been very docile since their two recce birds disappeared, so that’s good. Nicaragua continues to have an Air Force not even worth the name.