**Northern Fury #45 – A Rock on the Beach**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Mar 2021**

**Situation**

So, we’re doing a follow-up amphibious operation into the area between Narvik and Bardufoss, where the battered remains of the 69th MRD are hanging on. The biggest formation is probably the 303rd MRR, down near Bjerkvik, although there is two thirds of an independent tank battalion somewhere here too. I’ve got a task force offshore with numerous landing craft, large and small, and three airbases and three flat-top amphibs, with numerous helicopters and attack aircraft. Soviet air and sea interference should be minimal, so land defences are the primary concern. We’ve got 18 hours to land, link up, and drive the Soviets out of the area.

**Plan**

Nothing special. The landing sequence is essentially predefined. My main concerns (other than mines), are air-defences, artillery, and the possibility of an armoured counterstrike to mess things up. So, we’ll start with recce and a dedicated SEAD campaign, using the quick turnaround of my aircraft as often as possible, and then provide cover to the landing as necessary.

**Playthrough**

The opening moments reveal two SA-10s deep in the interior, but fortunately they turn out to be badly degraded remnant units. One gets its radars shot off by a HARM, and the other gets jumped by low-level Harriers working their way in from behind. Other than that, there’s a swarm of MANPADS down there, plus a few SA-13s to stiffen the defences. The little Pioneer drones are hard-hit by the MANPADS, with two shot down and one damaged in short order. Fortunately, the F-18s with IR Mavericks seem to be able to spot the enemy from above their ceiling, which leads to an extensive campaign of high-altitude anti-MANPADS operations using every Maverick and LGB I can muster.

One by-product of this extensive hunting operation is the detection of a series of fortifications, some small and some quite large, tucked away in the valleys inland. My attack helicopters turn out to be superb at dealing with these, hitting turrets, cupolas, and embrasures with ATGMs, and I soon use up my entire stockpile of TOWs.

As this is happening, the initial landings are underway. They are opposed by little more than occasional infantry platoons, so they go smoothly, and initial artillery and infantry lodgements are soon underway, followed by the mechanized landings at Tennevoll and Sjovegan. So far, the only major enemy formation I’ve spotted (other than some trucks at Brandvoll), is a whole bunch of dismounted infantry in the Bjerkvik/Oyord area. This is presumably the 303 MRR. There is no sign of the tank battalion so far.

With beachheads consolidated, the mechanized troops head inland, with mech inf scouting ahead of tanks. The northern group springs an ambush as they approach Brandvoll, losing two platoons of LAVs and some Abrams before they fight their way out of it. After that I get wiser, and start sending armed HMMWVs well ahead of the mech forces, as an even more advanced scout force. They find another ambush further up in the Moen Valley, and this time I am able to defeat it with minimal losses.

As Hummers and mech troops continue to advance, helicopters bring in more infantry to reinforce and hold captured areas, and to leapfrog artillery deeper into the interior. They generally don’t go directly into the objective areas, preferring to land a few miles away and walk. (Iceland is still a vivid memory.) Mech Inf and arty sweep up the dismounted 303 MRR (still no tanks), and eventually the objective areas are occupied.

**Play Observations**

The extensive array of MANPADS is nasty! If it hadn’t been for those few F-18s with IR Mavericks, this would have been a much tougher fight. Surprisingly, more advanced thermal imaging capability in F-18 pods and Harrier noses is less effective than the Maverick seekers for detection from altitude. Without them, I’d have been trying to tempt the MANPADS into taking long-ranged shots, dodging the missiles, and spotting the launch site. (To be clear, I did do that too, and you can often pull it off with a high-speed F-18, but the Mavericks did the bulk of the spotting.) Rolling back the MANPADS gave me a chance to work at lower altitudes, and that was how I found most of the fortifications.