**Northern Fury 6 AAR**

**By Joel Radunzel**

**First Post:**

It's the third day of World War III and the Russian juggernaut is churning south while the US carriers are out of position. The Russians gained control over the air in north Norway in the first day and then pushed south over central Norway yesterday, forcing the evacuation of the airbases at Bardufoss, Evenes, Tromso, and Andoya. Allied air power in Norway is now operating out of Bodo (the surviving Norwegian F-16s, Dutch F-16s, and the 18 surviving F-15s of the US 493rd TFS). Further south, two squadrons of US F-16s and British Jaguars have arrived at Vaernes and Orland, respectively, to bolster the sagging defenses.

If you read my previous (Bradufoss Blues) AAR, you know I destroyed the Soviet amphibious group that was heading south, destination unknown. Well, this scenarios postulates that my attacks were not nearly so effective. The Russians are still coming south, with a Kuznetsov CV far out to sea and as yet un-located, a battle group built around the Kiev-class carrier Baku further inland, and a surface action group close to the Norwegian coast sweeping the way ahead of a strongly escorted amphibious group following close behind. A second SAG was forced to turn back yesterday after a battle with Norwegian missile boats and F-5As, though the casualties among the missile boats was prohibitive and the survivors are proceeding south along the coast. Intelligence indicates that the RUssian amphibs are headed for Trondheim. If they get there, all of central Norway way fall.

At sea, to oppose the Russian I have STANAVFORLANT, consisting of destroyers and frigates from the US, Britain, Canada, Holland, Belgium, France, and Germany. These are heading north to confront the Russians. It's a powerful force, but not enough to take on the Soviets alone. Two Norwegian frigates are closing to reinforce them. There are also missile boats outside Trondheim, three Norwegian patrol subs, and the USS Phoenix farther out to sea.

As the scenario starts, I have two F-16s, the last two to make it out of Bardufoss, patrolling between Bardufoss and Bodo. The radar controllers on the AWACS have picked up a large group of what can only be Soviet fighters, Mig-29s and Su-27s by their radar emissions, heading south in a sweep towards Bodo. Let the action begin...

**Second Post:**

The pilots flying the two last F-16s out of the now closed base at Bardufoss received updates from the controllers on the AWACS circling 80 miles to the south over central Norway. A new Soviet aerial push appeared to be developing. The day had already seen a massive offensive by hundreds of Russian and Finnish aircraft. This one appeared to be a bull rush of a squadron of Mig-29s, followed by another squadron of Su-27s. F-15s were scrambling out of Bodo, but for now the pilots of the two lone F-16s were all that stood between the Russian fighters and central Norway. The pilots grimly turned ther aircraft north and punched their afterburners. They had fuel to burn, operating so close to their new base at Bodo, and the built up speed for the fight to come. The Soviets were using the light Mig-29s to sweep ahead of the heavier, more deadly Su-27s, and the Falcon drivers would try to mix it up with their lighter opponents to buy time for the Eagles taking off from Bodo to engage the Flankers.

The opposing fighters closed at a combined 1700kts. The Migs were divided into two groups of six, and one Falcon targeted each. As they closed, two Migs broke off from each group to engage the F-16s as the rest tried to rocket south to get in range of the aircraft rising from Bodo. The pilot of the westernmost F-16 began to launch his Sidewinders just before the two Migs hunting him launched their own missiles. While the Norwegian pilot turned into a violent evasive maneuver, the Russians bored in. Their aggressiveness ended up being a mistake, both pilots’ last. The Sidewinders exploded meters in front of both enemy fighters, shredding their fronts and killing both Russian pilots instantly. The Norwegian was able to evade the missiles pursuing him and, now free of the enemy fighters who were meant to keep him at bay, turned into the tails of the remaining Migs who were still heading south. The NATO pilot launched his four remaining missiles one after another at the glowing tailpipes of the Soviet fighters. The Russians now went into wild defensive maneuvers. Two shook they tormentors, but the other two were shredded by shrapnel from the exploding Sidewinders.

The easternmost Norwegian pilot didn’t have nearly the success of his wingman. One of the Russian pilots who had peeled off to engage him managed to evade the Sidewinder sent his way, and pulled into a high G turn to get on the F-16s tail as the NATO flier turned into the tails of the other Migs and began launching his missiles. The Russian pilot launched his own missile into the F-16’s tail, downing the NATO jet, but not before another Mig fell to a Sidewinder missile. The score stood at six Mig-29s destroyed for to one F-16, but the pilot of the Falcon was now out of missiles and facing the wrath of the six surviving Migs as well as the eight Sukois.

The Norwegian pilot began to hear his radar warning receiver beep as the Su-27s’ radars reached out to target his aircraft. Keeping his afterburner on, he banked south and ran for his life. The tone in his headset changed as pilots of the Sukois began to launch their long-range missiles. As he settled on a soutward bearing, he was startled to see the contrails of missiles in front of him heading north. He was about to jerk his aircraft into another evasive turn when he saw one of the contrails connect with a Mig-29 and explode. The others streaked past him, heading north. That was when he realized he had been hearing the calm chatter of American Eagle pilots in his headset as they rose from Bodo and began launching their AMRAAMs.

The surviving Migs had no chance. Two of the potent American missiles were targeted at each, and all but one was sent burning to the snowscape below. This one did not survive the second salco sent by the Americans. The Sukois were now in a dilemma. Their own radar-guided missiles were out-ranged by the Americans, but some had already launched against the surviving Falcon. If the evaded, their missiles would lose the return from their radars. If they kept coming, they were vulnerable to the AMRAAMs. Each pilot made his own decision, some aggressively pressing the attack and the others turning away. It didn’t matter. The swarm of American missiles slammed into the Soviet formation, smashing six of the eight Flankers. The other two turned north and fled. The initial Russian play for the skies over central Norway had failed.

**Third Post:**

The captain of the Norwegian Kobben-class submarine Klinn swore as he slapped down the handles on his periscope and pressed the button to lower the tube housing the optic. He had been creeping west to intercept the Soviet SAG moving down the Norwegian coast, but he had just come to periscope depth to confirm the fear that had been growing in the pit of his stomach; he had misjudged his intercept with the Soviet formation and was now far in the wake of the four Soviet ships. They were proceeding south at 18 kts, and the best his diesel sub could make was 12. Dejected, the captain walked over to the map table where his XO was updating the positions of the other Soviet task forces based on information that had been coming in via the communication room while he had been scanning with the periscope. As he looked down at the plot, he started to see another opportunity, albeit a risky one, to redeem his mistake.

The Soviet amphibious group was following about 60 miles to the northwest of the SAG, also moving at about 18 kts. If he could proceed at full speed on an intercept course his boat might still be able get into the rear of that formation and cause some mischief. The problem was that he would have to snorkel en route to maintain his speed. The captain judged that if he snorkeled while equidistant from both Russian groups he stood a good chance of evading detection. Even so, he told the radio room to risk a transmission to higher asking for air support to try to down some of the Soviet ASW helicopters reported to be saturating the area ahead of the amphibs. The captain then gave the order, and Klinn dove and turned west.

Back in the skies over central Norway, yet another major Soviet aerial push was developing behind the remnants of the disastrous first attempt. This offensive was composed of waves of Mig-23s and Su-27s flying from captured Norwegian fields in the north. Both sides had learned hard lessons from the previous two days of deadly airborne duels, but the initial Soviet wave, which was composed of a replacement regiment flying Mig-23s, were fresh to the front and had not had the benefit of learning from their veteran comrades. Their inexperience would prove fatal.

The ready F-15s had expended their AMRAAMs against the initial Russian push and were returning to rearm at Bodo, but veteran Norwegian and Dutch pilots flying nimble F-16s were rising from the field to replace the bigger fighters. These rocketed north towards the column of Migs sweeping south. As the opposing fighters approached each other, the pilots began a deadly game of chicken. The NATO pilots with their lethal IR-guided Sidewinders were out-ranged by the Russians with their radar guided AA-7s. To compensate, the Falcon jocks flew directly at the inexperienced Russians until the tone in their helmets told them that they had been locked onto. Then they would bank wildly and tunr away from the incoming missiles. Almost without fail the Russian weapons would go wild or fall short.

After several dashes at the oncoming enemy planes the Russians were running short of missiles. The Norwegian and Dutch fighters turned back on their pursuers. The nimble Falcons flashed past the less maneuverable Mig-23s, spitting Sidewinders and even Vulcan bursts into their opponents’ craft. It was a slaughter. Two Falcons fell to Russian missiles, but sixteen Soviet fighters marred the snowy mountains below with black columns of oily smoke as well.

Just as the last Mig-23 spiraled out of the sky, a third F-16 exploded unexpectedly. The second wave, this one composed of Su-27s, was approaching on afterburner. These planes were piloted by veterans of the previous days’ fighting, and the outmatched Falcon drivers turned south and fled from the Russians coming on in superior numbers and superior aircraft.

**Fourth Post:**

The Norwegian and Dutch pilots had done their part by delaying the Russians long enough for more American pilots to get their F-15s with their long-ranged AMRAAMs into the air. Three pairs of Eagle drivers headed north to face a squadron of Flankers coming south. Both sides were veterans, and both were wary of the others’ capabilities. The Russian jets were proceeding in an electronic haze of heavy jamming support, but NATO also had EW assets in the air now, and pilots on both sides found it nearly impossible to lock onto their opponents long enough to launch a missile. Even when they managed to engage, the missiles themselves usually lost lock and flew off into nowhere.

Neither side was willing to close into the others’ effective engagement envelope. What developed was an inconclusive series of sallies by both sides which were driven back by salvos of nearly blind missiles. The Russians gained a temporary advantage with the arrival of several Mig-31 interceptors with their long-ranged AA-6 missiles, but their numbers were two small and they pressed their attack too far, downing an F-16 but losing two of their own number to AMRAAMs in the process. Then the fortunes of the NATO pilots took a dramatic turn for the better.

To the east, along the Swedish border, a Soviet EW Su-24 had been working south, directing its electronic noise towards the NATO radars and obscuring the positions of the Soviet aircraft as well as its own. On an order from the controllers in the AWACS, five F-16s suddenly turned and swept northeast, searching for the Russian jammer in the gathering dusk. They nearly missed the Russian in the electronic haze, but one of the NATO pilots spotted a glint of sunlight off of metal and turned to find his enemy fleeing north. He triggered two AIM-9s into the Russian’s tailpipes, and suddenly the Soviet jamming decreased markedly in intensity.

The F-15s who had been ineffectively sparring with the Flankers up to this point now turned and started lofting their remaining AMRAAMs at the targets which now came clearly through on their radar screens. The Russians had no choice but to flee or die. Many died anyway. In addition, the decrease in jamming effectiveness revealed several pairs of Su-24 fighter bombers attempting to infiltrate south at low altitude. These were pounced on and destroyed Norwegians and Dutchman in their F-16s.

Now, however, Russian numbers began to tell. The Eagle jocks were out of missiles and the Russian pilots were turning to try to press their advantage. No more F-15s were ready on the ground at Bodo. Another F-16 fell to an AA-10 as the NATO fliers yielded airspace. Then the Russians turned back as well. They had detected the approaching radars of American AMRAAM-equipped F-16 Block 50s. These were from 77th TFS and had just arrived in Norway from England. They were speeding north to reinforce their comrades. The Russians, content for now to control the air above Bardufoss, withdrew again.

Fifth Post:

Aboard the Spruance-class destroyer USS Moosburger, flagship of STANAVFORLANT, Captain Miller, commodore of the polyglot squadron, was in a bind. He was steaming north with the eight ships under his command and would be joined soon by two more Norwegian frigates, but his force was badly positioned. If he continued on his northward course his ships would be sandwiched between the strong escort of the amphibious group to the west and the SAG moving down the coast to the east. Farther to the west were the two Soviet carrier groups. That, and there had to be Soviet subs lurking out there as well. His force had a strong helicopter compliment, and birds from several different countries were searching the sea in front of and around his flotilla for the underwater threat, but Miller was concerned. He needed a strategy to deal with the Russian task groups one at a time.

He had assets. The Royal Norwegian Air Force had gathered all of its surviving F-5As and F-5Bs, almost 40 aircraft, at Orland and the ground crews there were readying these for a maritime strike. However, these aircraft were only capable of strikes in daylight, and the long arctic night was fast approaching. If the Russian amphibs maintained their current speed, they would be almost at the entrance of the Trondheim fjord by daybreak. The two American squadrons of F-16s that were arriving at Vaernes east of Orland could protect his ships from aerial attack, but they were not trained or equipped for the anti-ship mission. His one airborne anti-ship asset were the twelve Jaguars of RAF No. 54 squadron, which, equipped with their TIALD targeting pods and laser-guided GBU-24s, could conduct a night strike.

For now, Miller decided to turn his ships south towards Trondheim. He transmitted the order to the other captains. The remaining missile boats of the Norwegian Navy were concentrated around the fjord mouth, as well as the frigate Oslo, and the two diesel subs. At the same time, Miller sent a message to the USS Phoenix, lurking somewhere to the west, to start a speed run eastward to get in front of the amphibious group. However the Russians came, he wanted to meet them with a concentrated fist rather than piecemeal.

As the NATO ships reversed course, the towed array sonar on one of the ships picked up a submerged contact astride the formations previous course, and the ship’s sonar operators quickly identified it as an SSN. There were no surviving NATO subs nearby that Miller n\knew about, so this had to be a Russian. It was still too far away to be a threat, and with his ships moving away at 20kts it wouldn’t become one any time soon. For now the ASW screen coordinator concentrated the task group’s helicopters on sanitizing the sea around STANAVFORLANT’s new course.

Just as the NATO formation was settling onto its new course, Miller heard his chief ASW officer report excitedly, “Sir, Perseo reports transients…two torpedoes dead ahead, range seven miles, she’s evading. Wandelaar reports they’ve picked up an SSN on that bearing as well!” The American captain looked at the tactical display and saw the symbols for three separate helicopters already converging on the new submerged contact. Miller swore. He couldn’t afford to lose ships before even coming to grips with the Russian surface groups.

The captains of the Italian Lupo-class frigate Perseo and the Belgian Wielingen-class frigate Wandelaar, both in the path of the oncoming torpedo spread, reversed course again and cranked their engines up to flank speed in an attempt to outrun the weapons, which had apparently been launched at nearly extreme range. Meanwhile, the rest of STANAVFORLANT continued southward to the west of the torpedoes and Moosburger’s helicopter was the first to arrive over the reported position of their Russian assailant. The chopper’s crew lowered their dipping sonar and immediately picked up the signature of a Victor III SSN. The pilot marked the spot with smoke, then put the Seahawk’s nose down and circles around to drop a MK54 torpedo directly into the sub’s wake. The Russian crew barely had time to react before the torpedo slammed into the port side of the boat, tearing a whole in the boat and flooding the crew compartment. The sub’s captain managed to compensate and start ascending, but a second MK54 ended any hope of survival for the sub and its crew.

The death of the Victor robbed its torpedoes of the guidance that had been passing down the command wires, and both weapons immediately transitioned into S-pattern searches with their onboard active sonars. Perseo and Wandelaar’s crews altered course to the west and managed to escape the detection envelope of both weapons before turning back south and jogging to catch up with the rest of the formation.

In the meantime, Miller had ordered the squadron’s helicopter screen to close prosecute the SSN following in the formation’s wake. Three helicopters from three different NATO nations’ ships converged on the contact and quickly localized the position of the Sierra-class SSN Kostrama. A pair of MK54s ended the lives of this boat’s crew as well, and STANAVFORLANT proceeded south towards Trondheim, linking up on the way with the two Norwegian frigates.

**Sixth Post:**

In the meantime, F-16s from 77th TFS had been pulling CAP over STANAVFORLANT. The Soviets had been maintaining their own CAP of Su-33s far out to the west ahead of the Kuznetsov group, and the two groups of fighters had mostly ignored each other. Now two pairs of F-16 pilots took their jets low and dashed towards the Soviet amphibious group and SAG. As they passed within 20 miles they began launching AMRAAMs at the Helix and Hormone helicopters sanitizing the sea in front of each formation. The hapless Russian helicopters into the sea one by one, leaving burning slicks on the surface. The pilots of the Su-33s turned east to try to intervene, but too late. The Falcon drivers were already back under the protective umbrella of STANAVFORLANT’s SAM envelope. Then a more serious threat developed.

ELINT on the NATO AWACS circling south of Bodo began to pick up indications that a significant number of aircraft were launching from the Kuznetzov. Over the next several pictures the controllers on the AWACS began to put the picture together; a dozen Su-33s at various altitudes were heading straight for the ships of STANAVFORLANT. The F-16 pilots on CAP climbed to altitude and turned to intercept. The ready birds at Vaernes launched to pack up their comrades.

Radar jamming from the Soviet ships made long-range engagement in the dark difficult, and the Falcon jocks had to close to within five miles to launch their AMRAAMs and Sidewinders, but the Russians were suffering from the same disadvantages, and their pilots couldn’t pick the Americans out of the electronic haze. As the American missiles began to connect the Soviet formation fell apart. USS Moosburger added several SM-2s to the fray, and within a few minutes the Soviet raid had been turned back with heavy losses. Kuznetsov’s air group had been significantly reduced.

In the meantime, another Soviet push was developing over north Norway, but AFNORTH was preparing their own attack against the Russian surface forces. The ground crews for the twelve SEPECAT Jaguars of No. 54 RAF squadron had completed their arming and fueling of the attack jets and the pilots had completed their mission briefs and were climbing into the cockpits. The target for this first strike would be the Russian SAG moving south along the coast. If this force could be neutralized than the landward flank of the Russian offensive would be exposed, and STANAVFORLANT would be free to duel with the escorts of the amphib group.

The strike by Norwegian F-5s the previous day had been less than successful and had incurred heavy losses, but the British jets had some advantages the Norwegian pilots did not. First, they were equipped with GBU-24 Paveway laser guided bombs that could be lofted at their targets from up to eight miles away. Also, four EF-111 Spark ‘Varks had flown into Vaernes from England. These would provide jamming support for the attack. Finally, STANAVFORLANT would support the attack with an SSM strike from the southwest. The British attack planes started rolling down the runway at Orland and the pilots pointed their aircraft north, out to sea.

**Seventh Post:**

The dozen British pilots in their SEPECAT Jaguars flew north accompanied by a big EF-111. Captain Miller on board USS Moosburger had come up with part of the plan of attack. His force was well equipped with anti-ship missiles, but since he commanded a multi-national squadron his weapons were of disparate type and capability. The majority of his missiles, thirty-two in all, were American-made Harpoons with 75 nautical mile range, but ships in the squadron also carried shorter-ranged Exocets and Penguin missiles, and eight of the hundred-nautical-mile-ranged Italian-made Otomats. Trying to plan a coordinated strike with weapons of such varying capabilities was a tactical conundrum, and Miller had agreed to contribute his eight Otomats to the strike on the Russian SAG. He would reserve his Harpoons for the battle with the amphib escorts and the short-ranged missiles for the transports themselves if all went well. The SAG, composed of two Kashin class-destroyers tailed by a Kresta-class cruiser and a Sovremeny-class air defense destroyer, was by far the weakest of the Soviet task forces in the Norwegian Sea.

Night had fallen as the Jaguar strike neared the Russian ships. On order from the strike leader, the Italian frigate Perseo turned and her crew launched the warship’s eight Otomat missiles in quick succession at the Russian ships ninety miles to the northeast. At the same time, the EW technician on the EF-111 switched on his jammers and started filling the scopes of the Russian radar operators with white noise. The missiles transited the space between the opposing formations in less than ten minutes. The jamming prevented the Russian defenders from detecting the incoming missiles until they were within ten nautical miles, so focused were they on the attack jets approaching from the south at 3,000 meters altitude.

Once detected, however, the Russian air defenders responded to the threat swiftly. The air defense officer on the Sovremeny began lofting his potent SA-N-7 missiles at the incoming column of sea-skimmers. Several of the SAMs missed in the electronic haze, but other began to connect. The eight Otomats dropped to six, then five, then two, and then the Russians were out of time. One of the surviving missiles was lured away by a chaff cloud and plunged into the sea, but the final Otomat tore into the front of the Kresta’s superstructure and exploded, killing the group’s commander and his staff and starting fires inside the ship.

With the missile attack complete, the Russian air defenders were now free to concentrate their fire on the Jaguars, which were even now lofting their GBU-24 bombs at the Russian ships, four bombs per vessel. The Sovremeny continued to fire SA-N-7s as fast as the ships launcher could cycle up and receive a fresh missile from the magazines. The Jaguar pilots, now free of their bombs but still lasing their targets through the darkness via the thermal sights in their TIALD pods, jinked and turned violently to evade the incoming weapons. Most were successful, but one of the missiles exploded abeam of the fifth Jaguar and shredded the aircrafts tail, causing it to tumble into the sea. There was no parachute. The, suddenly, the Russian air-defense destroyer was out of missiles, and the bombs continued to arc downward through the night.

The other ships now added their SA-N-1s and SA-N-3s to the fray, but these missiles were wholly ineffective in the electronic blanket thrown out by the EF-111. The first GBU-24s crashed into the two lead Kashins, penetrated several decks, and exploded. The effect of the 500lb warhead of the Otomat missile exploding in the Kresta had been deadly. The effect of four bombs containing 2,000lbs of high explosives striking the smaller ships was catastrophic. The northern horizon lit up in successive strobes as one bomb after another demolished the two leading warships of the Soviet formation. One had taken four hits, the other two, since the two bombs being guided in by the now destroyed Jaguar impacted the in the destroyer’s wake. The result was same for both ships, however; they were literally blown apart.

The damaged cruiser suffered the same fate several seconds later as a bomb found the magazine for the ship’s anti-aircraft missiles and ignited them in an incandescent volcano that lit up the dark ocean for miles around. Last to die was the trailing Sovremeny, the most dangerous ship in the group but now also the most impotent, having expended all of its defensive missiles. The four bombs impacted in quick succession, completely destroying the warship from bow to stern, and with that the Russian SAG was gone. The seaward flank of the Russian sweep into the Norwegian Sea was wide open for STANAVFORLANT.

As the eleven Jaguar pilots formed up for their short return flight to Orland to rearm for another strike, their elation at their victory was tempered by the loss of one of their own, and also when some of them reflected that they had just killed around 1,200 Russian sailors. The destruction, viewed through their targeting pods, had been amazing, and the death of the Sovremeny had been visible to the naked eye because of the light cast by the exploding Kresta. The pilots also understood that their night was not done. Their next strike would hopefully be a coordinated attack on the Soviet amphibious group in conjunction with the ten warships of STANAVFORLANT.

**Eighth Post:**

As the ground crews at Orland rearmed and refueled the eleven surviving Jaguar Gr.1s, the Soviets continued to pressure the air defenses around Bodo in the north. The Norwegian and Dutch pilots in their nimble F-16s, backed up by the American Eagle jockeys of the 493rd TFS, were able to hold their own throughout the night against the Soviet pilots operating at the limits of their range, though heavy jamming support meant that the Russians were able to close on Bodo on several occasions. The F-16 drivers also dropped down to low altitude on several occasions to destroy or turn back low level raids by formations of Su-24s, Tu-22s, and Tu-16s trying to take advantage of Norway’s mountainous spine to infiltrate south. The NATO squadrons sustained losses, but the ratio of friendly to enemy aircraft destroyed was heavily in the allies’ favor. Then, in the early hours of the morning the stocks of AMRAAM missiles for the F-15s ran out, and the American pilots were forced to fall back on stocks of AIM-7M Sparrow IIIs, which performed extremely poorly in the face of Soviet jamming. NATO losses mounted, but by 0500 on 15 February the Soviets seemed content to accept the status quo and only keep steady pressure on Bodo.

While the NATO fliers up north were holding Soviet air power at bay, the Jaguar pilots were preparing for their second maritime strike of the night. Aboard USS Moosburger, flagship of STANAVFORLANT, Captain Miller had been planning how to crack the difficult nut the Soviet amphibious group’s tough escort. It consisted of no less than two Sovremeny-class air defense destroyers, by far the most dangerous ships in the formation, two more Kashin-class destroyers that would be dangerous if the closed with his formation, an Udaloy, a Kresta II-class cruiser, and two Krivak-class frigates. Miller had been running south with his formation all night to stay out of range of the Soviet formations SSMs.

During the night Miller had rendezvoused with three of the surviving frigates of the Norwegian navy as well as a sizeable number of Norwegian missile boats. Overhead, pilots flying F-16s of the US 77th and 79th TFSs, newly arrived from bases in the UK, flew CAP. Soviet pilots flying Su-33s from the Kuznetsov somewhere out to the east declined to test the NATO task force’s air defenses after their costly raid earlier in the night. The Falcon pilots had spent much of the night dashing into the air defense envelope to shoot down successive Russian AEW helicopters launched by the Kiev in preparation for the planned raid.

Miller’s plan was a repeat of the scheme that had taken down the Soviet SAG earlier, but bigger. STANAVFORLANT’s ships carried an agglomeration of anti-ship missiles. They had Perseo had expended its Otomats in the earlier engagement, which left Harpoons as the weapons with the longest reach in the task force. Miller had thirty of them, along with a number of much shorter-ranged Exocets and Penguins. Thirty Harpoons was likely enough to overwhelm the Russians’ air defenses and score some hits if the attack was properly synchronized, and the earlier battle had shown how devastating the Jaguars’ smart bombs could be if they followed the missiles in. The attack would be supported by two EF-111s from 42nd ECS for jamming and the surface search radar on a Norwegian P-3 for surveillance of the Russian ships.

Miller’s ships had been steaming south all night. Now he ordered a course reversal to his task force on a reciprocal bearing with the Russians. At Orland, the British pilots were finishing their mission briefings as the ground crews completed the final checks on their attack jets and ordnance. The eleven men braved the cold night to walk to their aircraft, climb into the cockpits and start their engines. By twos the British jets taxied and took off for the short flight north.

Miller, coordinating the attack from USS Moosburger’s CIC, ordered his ships to launch their Harpoons in two waves. Fiery arcs leapt from the NATO ships as the missiles exploded out of their containers before settling into their wavetop flight profiles. On their course the missiles passed beneath an EF-111, which was supporting this axis of the attack by jamming the Russian radars. The Harpoons approached within eight miles of the Russian ships before SA-N-7s began to explode of the two Sovremenys’ launch rails.

The Russian defenses did very well, particularly considering that they quickly had to divide their fire between the incoming missiles and the eleven Jaguars approaching at low level from the east under the electronic protection on the second EF-111. But it wasn’t enough. Two missiles struck one of the Kashin-class destroyers, starting fires that quickly became uncontrollable. Three more hit the Udaloy, wrecking the anti-submarine ship above the waterline. The two final missiles impacted the hull of the eastern-most Sovremeny, but damage control crews quickly brought the resultant fires and flooding under control, and the ship remained in the fight. Then the Jaguars began popping up to 10,000 feet in the arctic darkness to loft their laser-guided payloads.

SA-N-7s smashed one Jaguar, then another, before the British pilots could release their bombs. A third Jaguar exploded and tumbled into the sea as the weapons followed their laser beams towards the Russian ships. Then the bombs began to impact, and if anything the results were more devastating than in the previous attack. Multiple strobes stabbed the night as 2000 pounds of high explosives blew apart ship after ship. As the British pilots turned for home on afterburner, they left in their wake devastation. Every Russian escort except for a lone Krivak-class frigate was sunk or sinking.

The severity of losses can be relative. The Soviet Navy had now suffered two crippling victories at what most would call negligible casualties to NATO. For the Jaguar squadron, however, the cost had been high. Two more jets had fallen to Russian missiles in the final seconds of the engagement, raising the cost to the squadron to six jets in two raids. In other words, half of the British pilots in the unit had been killed in a six hour span. But their loss wouldn’t be in vain. With the Russian transports stripped of their escort, Captain Miller ordered his nimble Norwegian missile boats north on an intercept course at flank speed.

**Ninth Post:**

As the missiles boats pounded north across the Norwegian sea, the NATO air forces over Bodo achieved a coup that significantly altered the equation of combat over north Norway. To date one of the greatest impediments to the NATO pilots had been two Soviet An-12 jammer aircraft circling just north of the upper border of Sweden. The operators onboard had been filling the air with electronic noise, preventing the techs on the NATO AWACS from gaining a clear picture of the Soviet airborne deployments and also keeping the NATO fighter pilots from exercising their advantage in long-range radar guided missiles. This latter problem became particularly acute after the stocks of AMRAAMs at Bodo ran out and the F-15 drivers were forced to rely on the much less capable Sparrows.

The Russians continued to keep pressure on Bodo with desultory thrusts by pars of fighters. These attacks had fallen into a more or less comfortable rhythm for both sides during the night. Then in the early morning hours the two An-12s were relieved by two more. The air ops officer on the E-3 Sentry south of Bodo saw his chance and spoke a codeword into his radio handset. Two Dutch F-16 pilots had been circling south of the airbase waiting for just this order. They switched off their radars and dove for the rugged mountains which formed the spine of Norway along the Swedish border, heading north. Russian attack aircraft had made good use of this route heading south earlier in the day, remaining undetected until they were almost past Bodo. The ops officer hoped his fighters could have the same success.

As the two Falcon drivers dipped and bobbed through valleys and over icy ridges, high above a pair of F-15 jocks occupied the Russian fighter pilots’ attention by lofting Sparrow missiles into the electronic haze at long range, forcing the Russians to take evasive action. The Dutch fighters continued north, apparently undetected, until the lead pilot judged that they were just beneath the Soviet EW aircraft. At this point, both pilots flipped on their afterburners, nosed up, and lit on their radars. The nimble fighters rocketed up through the clouds into the cold starlit sky as the pilots scanned for the two Russian planes which had ill advisedly been flying in loose formation. The radar on one of the Falcons finally burned through the Russian jamming and the Dutchmen split up, orienting their craft on the now diving Soviets. The nearest Russian fighter was dozens of miles to the south.

Each An-12 ate a Sidewinder before trailing fire and smoke into the dense clouds and then the snowfields below. Before the burning airframes had hit the ground one of the F-16s was rocketing north towards the circling A-50 Mainstays west of Banak, and the other turned west, hooking in behind the Bison tankers that had been supporting the Russians’ southward thrusts. The NATO fighters burst in among the Russian support aircraft like a fox in the henhouse, twisting this way and that, loosing AIM-9s and Vulcan bursts and sending wide-bodied planes with red stars on their tails tumbling through the clouds below. Two Mainstays died first, then several tankers, and finally several ELINT Su-24s and Tu-16s.

Further south, the Russian fighters were now stripped of their jamming support and suddenly vulnerable to the long-armed Sparrow missiles carried by the American F-15s. In minutes Russian air strength north of Bodo and south of Banak had collapsed. The Russian air offensive against central Norway had been broken.

**Tenth Post:**

As the NATO air forces counterattacked north of Bodo, the ten Norwegian Storm and Hauk class missile boats loosed by Captain Miller on USS Moosburger closed with the Soviet amphibs, which were not stripped of all but the thinnest veneer of an escort. The small Norwegian craft had swung west and then formed into line abreast to sweep into the seaward flank of the column of Russian LSTs and LSMs centered on the large LPD Mitrofan Moskalenko. After the strike by the British Jaguars, these were now escorted by a single Krivak-class destroyer, which was now leading the column.

Unsurprisingly, the Soviet formation was in disarray after the crippling losses to their screen. The Russian amphibious commander had been frantically radioing the senior admiral on Kuznetzov for permission to turn back. The admiral had refused and instead promised air cover for the vulnerable transports, but both the Admiral Gorshkov and the Kuznetsov had already lost significant portions of their air groups and no Russian jets had as yet appeared over the ships. Confusion and inertia drove the Russians southward into the jaws of Miller’s trap.

The IR and thermal signatures began to appear on the scopes of the Norwegian crafts’ advanced optics. As they drew closer the Norwegians began to pick out the different ships that composed their prey. The crews on the missile boats still respected the capabilities of the surviving Russian frigate. Accordingly, the captain of one of the newer Storm-class boats surged ahead once the frigate’s position in the column had been confirmed and launched his four advanced Penguin Mk. II missiles at the Russian. The sea-skimming weapons roared out of their containers and quickly covered the dozen miles that sperated the combatants.

The crew of the Russian ship never had a chance. They had expended all of their SA-N-4 SAMs during the air raid earlier, and without the powerful radars on the now-sunk Sovremenys they didn’t even detect the threats until the first Penguin popped up in its terminal maneuver and dove towards the warship’s superstructure. The performance of the Penguins was perfect. All four missiles ripped into the enemy ship in quick succession, wrecking everything above the waterline, igniting fires that quickly spread out of control, and allowing flooding that caused the ship to quickly settle.

With the threat from the Russian frigate eliminated, the other Norwegian missile boats closed with the transports and began to ripple fire their shorter ranged IR-guided Penguin Mk. Is. Missiles dove and wrecked transports across the column. The Moskalenko took four hits but the big craft kept steaming, its crew trying as best they could to fight back with the ship’s small caliber weapons. As the NATO craft swept into the formation like cavalry into a wagon train the Norwegians began launching their torpedoes—each boat carried two—to finish off the burning ships. Massive explosions sent water columns rising into the air as the big underwater weapons ripped apart ships from which Russian sailors and naval infantrymen were already spilling into the icy sea. Out of torpedoes and wanting tp preserve their remaining Mk. II missiles, the Norwegian crews finished off the last Russian transports with their rapid-firing 76mm deck guns. The pyres lit the surface of the Norwegian Sea marking the death of each Soviet ship along with its crew and passengers began to wink out one by one as each transport succumbed and sank beneath the waves. The NATO crews left three boats behind to rescue survivors, the rest turned to rendezvous again with Captain Miller and STANAVFORLANT.

With the annihilation of the amphibious convoy the threat to Trondheim and central Norway had been eliminated. This victory, along with the success over Bodo, opened up possibilities in the NATO commander’s mind at AFNN to turn a Russian defeat into a rout. The Soviet naval flank along the Norwegian coast had been completely caved in. The Kiev-class carrier Admiral Gorshkov with its depleted air component and a screen optimized for anti-submarine rather than anti-air defense lay tantalizingly close as it continued south through the Norwegian sea.

STANAVFORLANT was running out of weapons. The force still has some short-ranged Exocets, but in reality Captain Miller did not have a long-ranged punch with which to get at the Russian carrier group. No, the blow against the Russian carrier would come from the pilots of the nearly forty F-5As, reinforced F-5Bs from the training squadron, who had been readying at Orland and waiting for daylight. And now dawn was breaking on the southeast horizon…

**Eleventh Post:**

The Norwegian F-5s, lacking a radar and any form of long-range missiles, had suffered during the first days of the war, so much so that they had all been withdrawn south to Orland to serve as a reserve while the more modern and capable fighters bore the brunt of the air-to-air engagements. The surviving F-5As, joined by the two-seat F-5Bs of the Norwegian Air Force’s training squadron, now formed a numerically powerful striking force at Orland air station. The pilots had been preparing all night for a strike on the amphibious group, but with that force destroyed the staff officers at AFNN had shifted their sights further out to sea and onto the Soviet task force centered on the Kiev-class carrier Baku.

The Norwegian aircraft were not ideally equipped for a maritime strike, being armed with a mixture of old and short-ranged AGM-12B Bullpup missiles and Mk82 500lb iron bombs, but neither was the Baku group well configured for air defense, being composed of the Baku itself, two Udaloy destroyers, a Kresta, a Kashin, and three Krivak frigates. This major engagement of a 1990s World War three would pit the belligerents against each other with technology from the 1970s.

The Norwegian pilots would not be alone, however. American F-16s from the 77th TFS would be flying top cover to protect the F-5s from any Su-33s trying to interfere from the more distant Kuznetsov group. Perhaps more importantly, the two EF-111s that had supported the British Jaguars on the amphib strike would provide EW support to this strike as well. Finally, the 688-class submarine USS Phoenix had been keeping pace to the east of the Baku group throughout the night and would contribute its four Harpoon missiles to the attack. Even with all this, the Norwegian pilots felt trepidation. A smaller strike by F-5s on a Soviet SAG the previous day had incurred heavy losses, though that group had contained one of the dangerous Sovremenys. Regardless, as the weak winter sun started to brighten in the southeast, the pilots climbed into their cockpits, started their engines, and taxied towards the runways. Putting forty-one fighters into the air took time, and the first to launch loitered (though not yet with intent) until all the F-5s could proceed northwest in one large strike formation. As the last pair of Freedom Fighters lifted off from Orland the circling jets turned northwest on a direct course for Baku.

As the F-5s approached from the south, USS Phoenix rose to communication depth and received the codeword from AFNN to initiate the attack. A few moments later four Harpoon missiles launched from the sub’s torpedo tubes, exploded out of their canisters and settled into their courses, protected by an electronic cloud provided by the EF-111s. Several miles behind came the Norwegians in their F-5s, skimming above the frigid Norwegian Sea wavetops.

Lacking an effective air defense radar and hampered by the American jamming, the Russian crews didn’t see the missiles coming until it was almost too late. The SAM operators on the two ships marked for attack, too Krivaks at the perimeter of the formation, reacted as best they could, launching SA-N-4s. All told, the four Harpoons performed poorly. One was knocked down by a SAM, and another passed through the stack of its target without exploding, leaving a neat hole but no further damage. But it wasn’t enough. The two surviving missiles plowed into their respective targets and exploded, crippling both small ships. AGM-12s fired by the leading F-5s completed the destruction, and the remainder of the strike swept through the gaping hole in the Soviet formation’s perimeter.

Past the outer perimeter, the helicopter carrier Baku and a Kresta-class cruiser formed the center of the Soviet formation. The bulk of the Norwegian strike now closed in on these two ships while others spread out north and south to widen the breach in the perimeter. The next Norwegian Bullpups plowed into the easternmost Udaloy, leaving that ship without power and burning. Then the SA-N-9s and SA-N-4s launched by the Baku and its surviving escorts began to find their mark as the Russian radars began to burn through the jamming. One F-5 was smashed down into the sea, then two more. Then the Norwegian weapons began to plow into the Soviet capital ships.

AGM-12s impacted both Soviet ships in quick succession, their 500lbs of high explosive detonating and ripping apart steel and men. The two dozen weapons wrecked the Kresta above the water line, leaving that ship burning furiously. Baku took multiple hits to its hull and began to take on water, but remained relatively intact and able to fight topside. This was bad news for the F-5 pilots following the Bullpups in. SA-N-9s exploded off the carrier’s launchers and 30mm rotary cannons spit flame, ripping apart three more jets along with their pilots, one of whom was just releasing his bombs as he was hit. Then the surviving Norwegian jets swept over the carrier and Mk82 bombs arced downward.

The Soviet defensive fire had an effect. Not a single one of the more than a dozen bombs meant for the Baku scored a solid hit. Several were near misses, however, buckling hull plates and exacerbating the already severe flooding on the Russian ship. The Russian guns continued to track the NATO jets as they dropped back down to wavetop level and baked for home, knocking down two more. SA-N-9s continued to chase the Norwegians as they passed through the southern gap of the Soviet formation that had just been opened by the demolition of the Kashin destroyer moments before.

The Norwegians left a shattered task group in their wake as they withdrew. As the last F-5s passed outside the perimeter of the formation, the Kresta at the center blew up spectacularly as fire reached its missile magazines. The Baku was dead in the water with a list to port that was growing more sever by the minute. The carrier wouldn’t survive more than two hours. One of the two Krivaks hit had already slipped beneath the waves, and the other was burning wouldn’t last much longer. An Udaloy-class and Kashin-class destroyer were in similar states of destruction. Only one Udaloy and a Krivak remained unscathed by the Norwegian strike.

The cost had been high, however. Eight single-seat F-5As and two F-5Bs had been lost, along with their twelve crew. Altogether this amounted to almost a quarter of the forty-one aircraft committed to the attack. But they had had dealt the Red Banner Northern Fleet another hammer blow, their third in twenty-four hours. The Soviet Naval thrust towards central Norway had been decisively defeated as the remaining ships turned to withdraw north.

Alongside the defeats suffered in the air, Soviet designs on Trondheim had been thoroughly defeated.