**Northern Fury #7 – Keflavik Capers**

**AAR by fitzpatv, May 2021**

In this latest instalment of the saga, the USSR swoops on Iceland in classic Clanceyesque (‘Red Storm Rising’) style in order to breach the defences of the GIUK Gap. As commander of US forces on the island, it is your job to stop them (you can only play the NATO side).

Iceland is lightly-defended. You have TG 84.1, consisting of four destroyers and frigates, on ASW patrol off the West Coast. To their N are the SSN Jacksonville and the Danish frigate Vaedderen, falling back from Jan Mayen Island along with a Norwegian fishing fleet. The AEGIS cruiser Vella Gulf is S of Iceland, escorting the amphibious dock Trenton back towards North America and there are two small Icelandic patrol craft to the N and SE of the island.

At Keflavik airbase, there are 16 US F-15 Eagles, armed with Sparrow SARH missiles, plus some Orions, tankers, AWACS planes and large numbers of transports waiting to evacuate all non-essential personnel Stateside. Iceland has a few helicopters operating from Keflavik and the patrol boats to supplement the US and Canadian whirlybirds of TG 84.1. There are also swarms of civilian evacuation flights scheduled under AI control, but these are no more than a distraction as, in practice, the Soviets will leave them alone.

Around Keflavik are some American and Icelandic base defence troops and a battery each of Patriot and Improved HAWK SAMs, but the many outlying airfields and villages have very little in the way of protection.

Coming your way are the Soviet Kiev and Kuznetsov carrier groups, plus a large force of Badger bombers and wings of transport aircraft bearing paratroops. Numerous subs are preparing to break through between Iceland and Greenland and the Spetsnaz are at large, with lots of dirty tricks in store.

Several Missions have been pre-set, but I preferred to delete most of these at the start and control things manually rather than have planes taking-off at bad moments without my say-so. I kept the ferry missions for the evacuation flights and two AMRAAM-capable Eagles which start inbound for Keflavik and also retained the recon orders for the Icelandic choppers. I modified the ASW patrols and ran F-15 CAP on a micro-managed basis.

It was reassuring that the evacuation flights from Keflavik to Bangor, Maine and Goose Bay, Labrador were scheduled on a staggered basis, as this spread the risk. Flights take-off when scheduled unless you unassign them.

I quickly decided that the Eagles’ SARH missiles put them at too much of a disadvantage against Soviet Su-33 carrier fighters, as I couldn’t ‘shoot and scoot’ the way I’d been doing in Norway without losing my aim or target multiple foes at once. Helpfully, Auto-Evade starts OFF in this scenario, saving you the trouble of adjusting it. In any event, the plan was to avoid fighters where possible and concentrate on bombers and transports, which are worth more points, anyway.

12:00 : An early report of an Su-33 generously scored me 3 VP and persuaded me to land the Vaedderen’s Lynx chopper before it got into trouble. Clearly, the Soviet carriers were N of the island, en route from Jan Mayen. A suspicious trawler was then detected sailing down Eyjafjordur towards the North Central port of Akureyri – the patrol boat Tyr was nearby, so I ordered her to intercept, but it was clear that she’d face a tough chase in order to catch-up in time. Meanwhile, a great swarm of fighters assembled off the N coast, only to mill around in circles and do little of any use to their cause.

As the island of Grimsey, at the mouth of Eyjafjordur, fell to a Russian landing, the Kuznetsov was identified by Jacksonville’s sonar, scoring another 5 VP. Though the carrier had a Kirov-class battlecruiser and other escorts, she was on the near side of them, so against my better judgement I had my SSN remain in the area and manoeuvre for the possibility of a shot.

As evacuation flights from Keflavik began, the two upgraded F-15s arrived and I began fitting them out with AMRAAMs from the base’s stores.

A report then came-in that a Danish airliner had been forced to divert from the Faroes to Hornafjordur in SE Iceland due to engine trouble, so I readied the patrol boat Aegir’s SAR chopper and, to hedge my bets, put an F-15 on patrol nearby. Before long, someone on-board got the word out that there had been a hijacking, with fatalities amongst the civilian crew. I made the hard choice and had the Eagle shoot the plane down, thwarting one special op at least. No points either way.

13:00 : Numerous Badgers then began hurling Kingfish stand-off missiles at NATO radar installations all over the island. It wasn’t easy to shoot-down the high-performance missiles, but I did manage to catch and destroy six of the bombers for 7 VP each.

Spetsnaz then landed from an Echo-class SSN off NE Iceland and seized the village of Bakkafjordur, before heading-off to neighbouring airfields in stolen transport. There wasn’t a lot I could do about this, nor a landing at Akureyri from the dodgy trawler before Tyr could intervene. Yet more commandoes began attacking civic infrastructure around Reykjavik and, with all my ground troops out of reach at Keflavik, I had to leave these to the local government authorities.

More Badgers then arrived and launched Kitchen missiles at the Keflavik base, co-ordinating this with a mortar attack by another Spetsnaz company. These attacks were countered by CAP, Patriots and HAWKs and Base Defence troops in APCs. Most of the missiles were shot-down, but one of the base’s two runways was critically-damaged. Happily, the other was fine and sufficed to keep the place open. Two Badgers were destroyed by CAP and the Spetsnaz were fought to a standstill by the US troops. Unable to finish them off due to a lack of ammo, I called-in a second Base Defence company from a few miles away.

Four Badgers were sneaking around the S coast of Iceland in an apparent run at the Trenton group, which was being shadowed by a recon Badger that had overflown Greenland. Some F-15s intercepted and splashed three of the bombers, the fourth turning-tail. Another Eagle later caught and disposed of the recon plane.

While I was watching this engagement, the Russians detected and then sank Jacksonville without warning. One of those things, but it only cost 10 VP. Should probably have been more cautious with her.

14:00 : I was awarded a very generous 100 VP for the first evacuation flight making it to North America.

As bases in E Iceland began falling into Soviet hands, formations of transport planes were detected approaching from that direction. The first few reached their airfields before I could intervene but, from that point onward, I stationed a few F-15s in the area and these proceeded to take a heavy toll of the vulnerable Antonov Curls, blasting 20 of them for 4 VP apiece.

15:00 : The Soviet carrier CAP made no attempt to interfere, but did not remain entirely supine. A quartet of Yak-141 Freestyles spotted an Icelandic Super Puma chopper and heroically shot her down (5 VP lost) before heading on towards Reykjavik. An F-15 gave chase and managed to destroy three of them for 2 VP each, whereupon the fourth ate a Patriot.

Not long after this, orders arrived to evacuate Iceland, starting with multi-engined aircraft. TG 84.1 and the Trenton pair were to help by picking-up choppers from Keflavik, then pull back to the SW. I began to carry these directives out, sending a couple of Stratotankers on ahead and following-up with the remaining transports. Tankers already at Goose Bay were sent to help, parking just S of the tip of Greenland. All available Orions and choppers were told to cover the path of TG 84.1, which had to increase speed from Creep to 20 knots as part of the operation.

By now, the Base Defence reinforcements had finished-off the Spetsnaz at Keflavik, not that it scored any points.

16:00 : The Icelandic patrol boat Aegir was told to head for Scotland, as she wasn’t serving any useful purpose. Similarly, the Tyr, which had run out of ammo in a vain effort to sink the covert ops trawler, was detailed to head back to the open sea and edge around the NE coast before making for British waters.

TG 84.1 then detected an Alfa-class SSN trying to break-out into the Atlantic at 32 knots. Rather worryingly, she was travelling at a depth of some 2,000’ and was out-of-reach of both Mk46 and Barracuda torpedoes, so I could do no more than shadow her for a while. An Orion had to break-off from this and, lacking the fuel to reach Labrador, was diverted to Western Greenland.

17:00 : Another recon Badger was downed for getting too close to Trenton, which had managed to take four evacuee choppers on-board and could now get clear. The other choppers from Keflavik were by now accommodated by TG 84.1, which had some space after the AI miscalculated the fuel for a Seahawk that had been chasing the wretched Alfa (5 VP lost).

19:00 : With the Russians finally establishing a CAP E of Iceland, it was time to begin pulling-out the Eagles from Keflavik. As it turned-out, they could reach Goose Bay given tanker support en route. Before long, Soviet paras of the 76th Guards Airborne Division began landing in the E of the island.

20:00 : A missile attack by Badgers was stopped by the remaining Patriots, accelerating the evacuation of the F-15s.

23:00 : A Victor II SSN tried to attack TG 84.1, but her skipper lacked the Alfa captain's skill and she was sunk by a Canadian Heltas chopper from the frigate Montreal for 15 VP.

Not long after this, with most aircraft safe in Canada and Maine, the game ended in a Triumph, with a score of +326. NATO lost an SSN, two choppers and 12 ground elements. Soviet losses came to an SSN, 19 fighters and attack planes (including 15 Su-33s that the AI somehow managed to run out of fuel), 15 Badgers, 20 transports and 25 Spetsnaz elements.

Triumph or not, wars are not won by retreats and evacuations and the USSR now had the grip it desired on Iceland.