**Northern Fury 1, H-Hour**

**AAR By Joel Radunzel**

Post 1

I have been playing this scenario in Command every spare moment I can steal lately, and I thought I’d do an AAR for it (my first ever!). This is the first in a whole series of scenarios that I plan to play, so probably more AAR’s forthcoming.

This is a scenario depicting the opening 24 hours of a conventional World War III on the Norwegian front. Really well-built scenario and Command does a great job of modeling it. First though, some background to the war:

Basically, the idea is that the Cold War didn’t end in 1989. The 1991 August coup prevented the Soviet Union’s demise. Germany did reunite and Poland is independent, which is the cause of the current crisis. NATO is weakened because of the “Peace Dividend” but the Communist side is strengthened. It’s February 1994, just before the Lillehammer, Norway Winter Olympics, and the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact are still going strong. What this means is they’ve mass-produced some of their better kit that was developed in the late 80’s and early 90’s. The crisis has built in recent weeks so the Soviets don’t have strategic surprise or even operational surprise in the north as the Norwegian military has mobilized their reserves and deployed their forces in anticipation of an invasion. They will likely be able to achieve tactical surprise however, given their ability to choose the time for the start of the war. Ominously, almost all of the Soviet and WP athletes have disappeared from the Olympic village, but haven’t flown home…

I’m playing the part of AFNN, NATO commander for Northern Norway. Right now my forces consist only of Royal Norwegian air, naval, and ground forces, but reinforcements have been promised if hostilities commence. My nine missile boats are at sea in the icy waters around the North Cape, deployed in two groups of three and one group of two, with the ninth boat hurrying north from central Norway. The Utstein one of the navy’s very capable Ula-class submarines is patrolling off the Cape as well with a small SAG of two frigates and an older Kobben-class submarine also en route north from the Norwegian Sea. J2 tells me we we’ll be engaging mostly Soviet coastal and patrol forces if things go hot, as the major units of the Red Banner Northern Fleet will be otherwise occupied.

On the ground, the Kirkenes battalion is deployed with a company forward near the Soviet border around the Kirkenes itself, and the most of the rest of the battalion dug in at the port of Banak, which blocks ground access to central Norway. There are also isolated infantry platoons at several small ports and airports along the arctic coast. As my J2 has noted, this is the wrong time of year for an over-land offensive by the Soviet 6th Combined Arms Army, but we will still face threats from airborne and helicopter assaults, as well as naval landings by naval infantry and special forces.

My forces are most mismatched in the air. To defend Northern Norway I have three squadrons of F-16As, based out of Bodo but with element dispersed to various smaller fields including Tromso, Bardufoss, Evenes, and Banak. Unfortunately, the longest weapon these fighters have is the AIM-9L sidewinder. Further south at Orland is another squadron of F-16As and half a squadron of F-16AMs. These latter jets have a single load-out each of the new AIM-120B AMRAAMs, but I will need to ferry them north to get them into the fight. Also at Orland is a squadron of F-5s, but these I will have to use carefully to avoid them becoming Mig-bait. Finally, I have 4 E-3B AWACS and 2 ECM aircraft to provide control and EW support. Supporting these is the NATO network of ground-based radars and ELINT sensors along the coast and across north Norway. On the other side of the ledger, J2 tells me that the Soviets have altogether about 400 front-line aircraft, including large numbers of SU-27s and MiG-29s with relatively long-range missiles to oppose my 40-odd F-16s and dozen F-5s.

I will have to decide whether to try to conduct a forward defense with these assets that will support the ground forces, or to pull my CAPs back, forcing the Soviet fighters to fight at the edge of their endurance but leaving the ground pounders to face whatever the Soviets choose to throw at them. I may get further reinforcements from the UK and Europe if the war starts, but for now this is what I have to work with. It looks pretty thin.

Ok, it’s 1300 hours on 13 February, and all indications are pointing to a initiation of hostilities at any moment. I need to decide on my strategy. First things first, I order the -16s and Tigersharks at Orland to start ferrying north. Next, I order the ready jets at Bodo and my dispersal fields into the air to reinforce the 2-ship flight patrolling the North Cape. I opt for a compromise between a forward defense and abandonment of the border areas. I can’t contest Soviet strength right along the border, so instead I set my CAPs up just outside of detection range of the Russian ground-based radars along the border. This leaves the troops at Kirkennes flapping, but allows me to still support the battalion at Banak. It also gives my fighters the advantage of operating with AWACS support while denying the same to the Russians. In the event of being confronted by overwhelming numbers, my fighters can cut and run west and south.

I start the simulation on normal time, and things start to happen very quickly. My coastal radars immediately pick up six groups of enemy ships; two groups of four patrol frigates (one of Nanutchkas and one of Tarantuls) northeast of the cape heading west at around 30 kts, a pair of massive Zubr-class hover craft moving west at 60 kts, a formation of 6 Osa II missile boats closer in to the shore almost within range of my first groups of missile boats, a convoy further east of what looks like a collection of small fleet auxiliaries escorted by an older coastal frigate, and finally a group of landing craft obviously making their way to the small port of Vardo escorted by another obsolete frigate. There are also a lot of Russian aircraft up and more taking off at an alarming clip, but exact numbers, locations, and designations are challenging due to heavy jamming, an ominous sign. They have two A-50 Mainstay AWACS up and radiating as well.

Then things get serious. Artillery and Grad rocket rounds begin to impact the ELINT and radar sites east of Kirkennes right on the border. I haven’t received and communication or authorization to begin active operations against the Russians, but I assume at this point I can take whatever action I need to in self-defense. Not that it will help my radar sites, which are quickly demolished by the barrage. Then my GLOBUS radars begin to pick up a number of Scud rockets lofting into their ballistic arcs, all coming from one spot just across the border but radiating outward towards my more powerful radars. The Russians are obviously trying to do their best to blind my forces and slow our reaction times. Of the six Scuds, four hit their mark, with devastating results. My radar net is seriously degraded (and I won’t be able to reliably detect future Scud launches). So the war’s really on, I suppose.

A few seconds later two tight formations of Russian aircraft turn west. The one in the north is at low altitude, about 1000 feet, while the southern one is up at 36,000 ft but will have to cross Finnish airspace to get to Norway. The AWACS quickly identifies these as Su-27s, eight in each group. It’s about to get interesting.

Post 2

It quickly becomes apparent that the northern group of Soviet Su-27s is making for my AWACS flying off the northwest coast. I send my AEW birds west at best speed. My two-ship CAP is closest to this northern group as well, and I set them on an intercept course. The Russian jets are flying over the water right now and haven’t technically violated Norwegian airspace, but it’s only a matter of time. I don’t think my two F-16s can handle eight Su-27s in a head-on fight, so I have them descend into the clouds that are at 20k-23k feet and swing around to the north to try to sneak up on the Russian’s tail. This will be complicated by the fact that what looks like a squadron of Mig-29s is also coming west on afterburner in a loose formation just south of and well behind their bigger cousins.

As the aircraft close, my headquarters receives a message from the Norwegian Ministry of Defense at the Akershus Fortress in Oslo telling us that the Soviets have violated Finnish airspace (I can see this with the southern group of Su-27s on my map) and that the Finns appear to be complicit in the attack, or at least not resisting. This is bad news. Now the Soviets have a much broader front on which to attack me. I’m authorized to violate Finnish airspace in self-defense only, but I intend to interpret this rather loosely.

I manage to get my F-16s (each with six Sidewinders) around behind the northern group of Su-27s just before they make landfall and the AWACS begins to lose them in the rough terrain and jamming. The Falcons go to afterburner, turn on their radars, and dip through the clouds. They quickly acquire the Russian intruders, one of whom is beginning to ascend, likely to loft a long-range missile at the fleeing AWACS. We don’t have much time. The two F-16s begin launching Sidewinders at the Flankers as fast as the missiles can lock on to their targets, and fighters with red stars on their tails begin cartwheeling into the snowy mountains below. The Russians appear to be completely surprised, and seven of the eight enemy fighters fall to my own pilots’ 12 missiles. They then close in and finish off the eighth with 20mm Vulcan bursts. Overall, a pretty satisfactory first engagement of the war.

One my pilots don’t have much time to savor the victory however. The trailing Mig-29s are screaming northwest on afterburner to avenge their brother pilots, and my F-16s are at low altitude and out of missiles. They get an evasion course from the AWACS (northwest towards the Cape), turn on their afterburners and start clawing altitude to try to get away. It’s going to be close.

Just then headquarters receives another message from Akershus Fortress informing me that Sweden has declared neutrality and will forcibly resist any violations of their airspace, interning any violators. If any of my forces stray into Sweden I am instructed to order them not to resist internment. I imagine most of my soldiers, sailors, and airmen would rather not spend the conflict as guests of the Swedes (we Norwegians don’t really like them), so we’ll try to avoid that.

Post 3

The initial Soviet strategy is becoming clear. Their two squadrons of Su-27 Flankers are the flanking elements (flankers?) for their aerial offensive. Between and behind these two groups are two squadrons of Mig-29 Fulcrums that constitute the balance (fulcrum?) of a massive fighter sweep over northern Norway that appears to be trying to clear the way for several groups of strike aircraft. It’s an effective strategy. Already Su-25 Frongfoots are going feet dry and hitting coastal radars near the Russian border. More ominously, other strike groups appear to be on vectors for my surviving radars in Finnmark and at the North Cape, or even to hit my airfields at Banak and in Central Norway. Including my two F-16s that splashed the eight Flankers in the opening minutes and are no running for their lives, I now have eight Falcons airborne. Two from Tromso are heading north to cover the AEW birds, and four from Bodo are flying northeast to turn the corner around Swedish airspace into Finnmark. The rest of my jets are will launch as fast as the ground crews can get them ready.

There is action aplenty off the coast as well. So far my easternmost missile boat group has identified the Osa missile boats heading west at high speeds, but they don’t appear to have identified my boats yet. They choose to stay incognito for now. My North Cape patrolling submarine, the Utstein, receives the war warning and immediately alters course north and increases speed to intercept the group of four Nanutchka patrol frigates rounding the cape. It will have to burn up some battery charge to do this, but as these frigates aren't supposed to have sonar I am reasonably safe from detection. I ensure my remaining naval assets are exercising strict EMCON to avoid any unwanted attention from the Soviets’ long missiles on their frigates and boats.

Ministry of Defense decides this is as good a time as any to inform me that a war is on. This information does not come as a complete surprise. They also inform me that the Warsaw Pact offensive is general across central and southern Europe, that the NATO council is calling an emergency meeting in Brussels, and that the Norwegian Parliament is meeting in special session to formally place the armed forces under NATO control. The King will be addressing parliament shortly.

Post 4

Back to the air battle. The initial ambush of the northern squadron of Flankers went so well that the AWACS directs one of the flights coming north from Bodo to try a repeat with the southern squadron, this time hugging the Swedish border to the south and flying low to get behind them. The second two-ship flight will also try to slip behind the Russians to take a crack at the following attack aircraft. I will still have my two falcons defending the AWACS as a backstop if this fails. I think this will be possible because Russians have moved beyond their own Radar coverage and my own AWACS can direct my Falcons to stay out of the Su-27s’ radar arc.

Up north, the lead Mig-29 gets within range of my fleeing CAP to launch a spread of long-range semi-active radar homing missiles at them, but these end up falling short for no effect, but more Migs are coming on. Just when it seems things are going to get ugly for this pair, the Russian fighters begin turning back, reducing power, and heading for home. The short-legged Fulcrums are going Bingo fuel! After a few more minutes of running, my northern CAP slows and begins circling over the Cape, though their cannons are the only weapons remaining. Just in time, too! A flight of four Su-24Ms are heading for the Radar station at the North Cape, and the Mig-29s are all heading home, leaving them naked. The AWACs vectors these hard-worked F-16s back southwest and onto the tails of the Soviet fighter-bombers. Complicating factors further for this intercept are two squadrons of Mig-23s that are coming west to take the place of the agile but short-ranged -29s. Looks like this will be another ambush and run.

My Falcons splash three of the four Su-24Ms heading for the North Cape with cannon fire, but this leaves one of the birds completely dry and headed for home, and the other with only enough ammo for one more burst. The pilot closes carefully and spits his final rounds into afterburners of the fourth Sukoi, sending it careening into the icy arctic waters below. My vital coastal radars are safe…for now.

Back down south, my lead flight of Falcons manages to get behind the Su-27s, pop up through the clouds, and start launching sidewinders up their rears. The ambush is going great, once again, but then two of the Flankers bank and start launching missiles off bore at their pursuers. My pilots have already expended all their missiles, which have either found their targets, missed, or are still in the air, and so they are free to evade, which they do quite effectively. Even so, the numbers of missiles the Russians can launch and the angles at which they can launch them is overwhelming. Just as the last Soviet Flanker explodes, one of the Russian missiles finds pay dirt, and the first Falcon goes down in flames. The loss is bitter.

But not in vain. The second pair of Falcons has managed to slip south of the Sukois and Migs (the latter of which are now pursuing the single survivor of the first flight as he rockets west on afterburner) and splash the six strike aircraft that appear to be headed towards my vital backstop radar. Unfortunately, downing this raid ends up trapping this flight between a cloud of oncoming Mig-23s and the Swedish border, with nowhere to run. The only option is to turn and fight, which they do valiantly, but the numbers are overwhelming. After evading numerous missiles, both F-16s are blotted from the sky, taking three more Migs with them. My paltry forces cannot afford to face Russian fighters on such unequal terms.

I also have been unable to intercept all of the Russian strike aircraft. Other raids destroy the SOSUS terminal in Finnmark, damage the backup facility further south, and hit various other ELINT and radar stations. My ability to see into Russian airspace is being steadily degraded. Perhaps more ominous is what the Russians are not hitting: the airfield and port facilities for the various towns along the arctic coast leading to the North Cape. At each of these places commercial aircraft are beginning to take off carrying a last load of evacuees south. The Russians let them go, even as they pass yet more formations of fighters and fighter bombers heading west.

Post 5

At this point the situation in the air looks like this: The initial two waves of Mig-29s are headed home, having used up their fuel in their afterburner pursuits of my fleeing F-16s. The Su-27s have all been destroyed, but two large groups of Mig-23s have now replaced the Mig-29s, effectively establishing air superiority over the northern third of the country for now, since I just don’t have enough planes airborne yet to challenge them. They can’t stay up forever, though, and I’ve got fighters taking off from Bodo and Banak to try to even the odds somewhat. Time is short, however, as the AWACS detects another raid of six fighter-bombers bearing down on the Backstop radar facility in Finnmark, and more Russian aircraft are taking off all the time.

Further north, the Utstein completes its sprint and is now sitting astride the course of the Russian frigates. The captain comes to periscope depth briefly to be sure of his targets, the dives again and looses a spread of four torpedoes, one for each enemy target. These are homing torpedoes, but in this case guidance is almost unnecessary, as the Soviet Nanutchkas keep a steady bearing and speed until the moment that the Utstein’s torpedoes detonate under each of their keels, obliterating the four small ships.

Further east, my first missile boat group decides to loose their eight Penguin Mk1 and Mk2 missiles at the six Russian Osa IIs speeding west. The two boats turn, acquire with their long-range cameras, and launch. Strangely, the Russians don’t return fire, though they do try unsuccessfully to knock down the incoming Penguins with gunfire and shoulder launched SAMs. The eight missiles fly true, picking off the Russian boats one by one until none are left. The exultation on the Norwegian boats is cut short, however, by a warning from the AWACS that four supersonic missiles are inbound to their location along the bearing to the distant Russian Tarantul-class frigates. My sailors alter course and try to evade, but to no avail. Two more fireballs light up the arctic coast, and my boats join the six Osas on the bottom.

In retrospect, the decision to engage the Osas was a mistake. My missile boats had apparently been detected but not identified by the Russians. Had they continued east they would have soon been in range of the Russian convoy whose destination I don’t yet know. While sinking the missile boats was satisfying, I tend to think the contents of those transports will be more damaging to the NATO war effort, and now there is absolutely nothing that can intercept them any time soon.

Other events start to indicate more of the Soviet strategy. My company at Kirkenes reports being attacked by fighter bombers, followed by Mi-24 gunships. They take a toll of the Russian aircraft with their RBS-70 rayrider SAMs, but they are soon out of missiles and subject to savage strafing, rocket, and missile fire from the Hinds. The last transmission from Kirkenes reports Russian transport helos disgorging infantry, then nothing.

A similar story unfolds across the bay at Vadso, where an infantry platoon is defenseless against fighter-bomber strikes, a flight of attack helos, and finally heliborne infantry. This platoon also goes off the air. Further north at the port of Vardo the motley convoy of Russian landing craft and fishing trawlers moves in and begins landing infantry south of town. The platoon there reports that they won’t be able to hold for long. The Russians seem to be methodically occupying all the ports along the coast towards the North Cape. This likely means that the targets for the Russian convoy and for the two Zubr-class hovercraft will be Mehamn and Batsfjord, the two remaining significant ports along the arctic coast east of the cape, other than Banak which sits at the end of a long fjord and is not threatened from the sea as yet.

Post 6

The situation in the air is starting to improve. The flocks of Russian Mig-23s that have been sweeping across north Norway are now turning for home, probably low on fuel. At the same time I am starting to get some respectable numbers of my own F-16s into the air. Encouraging news comes from Akershus fortress as well. NATO command has assigned the American 493rd Tactical Fighter Squadron from RAF Lakenheath with twenty-four F-15Cs to reinforce Norway, and their first flight will be wheels up in minutes, headed for Bodo. It will be several hours before they can take part in the action, but for now it’s good to know at least that I will have some very capable replacements for my losses.

As the Russian Migs make for home, my Falcons pursue and begin to pick them off. But the enemy still has teeth, and lots of missiles. A couple of my fighters fall prey to Russian pilots who turn and fight, but the exchange rate is heavily in my favor. As this fight is going on, the AWACS begins to get intermittent returns off of numerous low-flying helicopters that appear to be heading northwest across Finland on a heading for Banak. They vector a flight of -16s to afterburner between two streams of withdrawing Migs to investigate. As they drop through the clouds the pilots acquire a mixed flight of Mi-24 gunships and Mi-8 transports. While splashing Hinds would be satisfying, the pilots know that the infantry that are certainly in those Mi-8s are the real threat to Banak. They sweep in, loosing their remaining Sidewinders at the hapless helicopters, then banking and coming back in with guns. In seconds eight Soviet helos are oily fires on the snowy tundra, along with their cargo of Russian paratroopers. The Russian gunships continue on, but without the landing force they no doubt were meant to support. This victory comes at a price, however. Several of the Mig-23s headed for home break off to try to defend the slow-movers, and their missiles claim one of the F-16s. The other escapes at low altitude and heads for home, all ordnance expended.

At the same time, another strike of six fighter-bombers is detected over Finland, heading for the Backstop complex. The Russians must really want those radars shut down. However, with their fighter cover streaming west, these birds are easy prey for Falcon drivers who swing around onto their tails and knock them down long before they can launch their ordinance.

I now have two strong groups of fighters up, one over the North Cape and the other over the Backstop radar site in Finland, though some of the fighters are low on missiles and others are low on fuel. The action has slowed down enough that I feel comfortable detaching a single fighter from each group to go and hunt the Soviet EW aircraft that are playing havoc with my radars. At the same time, my F-5s and AMRAAM equipped F-16s are landing at Evenes and Tromso and will be available as soon as the ground crews can refuel them. My detached Falcon from the North Cape CAP locates and downs a Tu-16 Badger recon aircraft, while the southern loner closes with and destroys an An-12 EW aircraft over Finland. I’m beginning to wonder if we’ve really given the Russians a bloody nose. Then the other shoe drops.

The AWACS begins to pick up dozens of Russian aircraft coming west in a steady stream. The jamming makes identification difficult, but this river of radar returns is led by another flight of eight Su-27s. There won’t be any ambushing this group. The air controllers begin making frantic calls to the dispersal airfields to get every available fighter into the air, and the first flight of AMRAAM equipped F-16s rises from Tromso, followed seconds later by a flight of four F-5s from Evenes. My fighters already aloft scatter north and south from the incoming Flankers with their long missiles until I have a better grasp of the situation.

Slowly the situation begins to become clear. The AWACS begins to identify the incoming stream of blips as dozens of An-12 transports escorted by pairs of Mig-29s and Su-27s along the entire length of the lumbering column. The lead flight of eight Su-27s shows where they are headed; they slow and begin circling at 36k feet over Banak. Obviously the Russians understand that this location is the key to north Norway, just as we do. I have to defeat this CAP if I want to have any hope of interfering with what is shaping up to be at least a brigade-sized airborne operation to capture Banak. The transport helos I downed earlier were likely carrying an advance pathfinder unit for this drop. The gunships that had been escorting this group are just now arriving over the port, but they are all quickly brought down by concentrated RBS-70 missiles and 40mm Bofors fire. Ivan will have to learn not to be so careless with those things.

At the same time I receive more bad news. My coastal radars and AWACS pick up more supersonic missiles of unknown origin, heading for my two remaining groups of missile boats. It’s unclear how they were detected and identified, as they were both operating under EMCON. Perhaps a diesel submarine in the fjords? Regardless, the missiles streak in and reduce my two groups of three boats to one missile craft each. I had been counting on these units to stop any further naval landings by the Zubrs or the slower trailing convoy. Now the survivors are heading deeper into the fjords, just trying to survive. For good measure, the Russians also destroy a Coast Guard cutter that was outbound from Banak headed for central Norway. The Utstein is creeping west to try to ambush the oncoming squadron of Tarantuls.

Post 7

To try to get at the incoming river of Russian transports, I’ll first need to defeat the CAP of eight Su-27s circling over Banak. If I can do this, then I can send sweeps of F-16s rocketing in on the north and south flanks of the Soviet airborne column to engage the escorts while flights of F-5s follow them in and poach the wide-bodies. It won’t be easy, and it will probably be bloody, but the Russians are forcing my hand. We can’t let those paratroopers get to Banak if we want to have any hope of stopping the Russians east of the Cape. NATO command must understand the situation as well, because Akershus fortress informs me that I will receive further reinforcement in the form of the Royal Netherlands Airforce 332 squadron with another twelve F-16As. I have a feeling I’m going to needing those replacements.

My plan for tackling the Russian jets over Banak is to use my flight of AMRAAM equipped F-16s coming in from the west to pare down the Russian numbers. This flight will follow their missiles in and be joined by another two flights coming from the north and south. The plan works. The performance of the AMRAAMs is disappointing, with only three Russians killed by the eight missiles, but these also have the effect of disrupting the Russians’ formation and forcing them to evade as my Sidewinder-armed flights bore in. A furball develops, with fighters turning and jinking, launching missiles and firing cannons. The remaining five Sukois fall to my pilots, but two more F-16s are lost as well, and the rest have expended all their remaining missiles. They stay aloft to hopefully use their remaining gun ammunition to bring down some lumbering Antonovs.

With the Soviet CAP destroyed the AWACS orders the remaining fighters north and south of the Russian airborne stream to turn into the attack. F-16s bore in from the north and south, and two flights of four F-5s follow the southern group of Falcons in. The escorting Mig-29 and Su-27 pilots must be the Russian’s A-team, because they effectively interpose themselves between my fighters and the transports, launching missiles and buying time for the escorts further back to rocket forward into the flanks of my own attack. The action becomes confusing, and aircraft on both sides explode and drop through the clouds.

Lower down, flights of fighter bombers, Su-17s and Mig-27s, stream towards Banak. My pilots have to let them go. We don’t have the numbers to both stop this raid and interfere with the airborne drop. My staff reasons that we can repair bomb damage if we still own the town. The bombers come in low over the airfield and release their bombs, cratering the runways and setting fires across the field. Banak airport is effectively closed. RBS-70 SAMs reach up and knock down several of the raiders as they egress, but the damage is done.

Back above the clouds the weight of my F-16s start to tell against the Russian escort fighters defending the transports, and twin-engine heavies begin to go down as well, paratroopers spilling from the jump doors. But my planes are taking losses as well as more Russian Migs and Sukois join the fight. A flight of four F-5s darts in among the transports, downing five An-12s before they are bounced by a pair of Mig-29s. All four Tigersharks go down in the span of ten seconds. Another F-5 falls prey to the tail gun of an An-12. The exchange rate of F-16s to enemy fighters is not as favorable as we would like, but the Russians are taking a pounding. Then, suddenly, there are no more Russian fighters! My own jets have won the fight against the escorts and the transports are completely undefended. My remaining pilots show no mercy. The Russian pilots show courage, pressing ahead to try to deliver their paratroopers to the drop zone, but F-5s and F-16s flash into and out of their formation, littering the white tundra southeast of Banak with nearly fifty oily pyres, each marking the death or at least scattering of dozens of Soviet paratroopers. The drop on Banak has been defeated.

At this point nearly all of my airborne fighters are out of missiles, many are out of gun ammo, and several are critically low on fuel. More Russian fighters are taking off from their own fields, but this doesn’t appear to be a major strike. The AWACS orders most of the fighters to RTB, and the remaining flights, those with missiles and fuel, pull back to the west. This isn't a time to suffer any more losses. Two F-5s (note: I just realized I’ve been calling these Tigersharks, the name of the closely related F-20, but these are actually F-5A Freedom Fighters) are vectored north past the cape to try to hunt an Su-24MP jammer aircraft. A single F-16 is sent back over Finland to down a second An-12 jammer that replaced the first, which was destroyed earlier. After a long search in the gathering arctic dusk the F-5s locate the Fencer south of the Cape and manage to bring it down, but on their way home they run afoul of two Su-27s headed for a CAP station over Banak and one is lost. The F-16 downs the Antonov and then heads for home as well. For now, the air controllers decide not to challenge the two-ship Russian CAP over Banak, instead maintaining a two-ship CAP of our own to the southwest. Other than these four aircraft, the only planes flying now are flocks of Russian EW and reconnaissance jets over the Arctic Ocean and Finland, and my own AWACS and EW bird. The first three hours of World War III in the north have passed, and they have been bloody.

Post 8

As things in the air have been settling down, the action at sea has been heating up somewhat. My Ula-class submarine, the Utstein, has been creeping towards the squadron of four Tarantul-class frigates since destroying the Nanutchkas shortly after the beginning of hostilities. The Tarantuls are heading west at 30 kts, and the captain decides to repeat his previous attack by launching a spread of four torpedoes, one at each frigate. He makes the decision to launch these at long range, as the torpedoes will close the gap with the Russian faster than the submarine and this will save some time and allow him to go after other targets. Just as the last torpedo shudders out of the tube the four enemy ships execute a 90 degree turn and start heading south. This appears to be a preplanned course-change rather than a response to my attack, but it has the effect of throwing off the weapons’ target solutions. If the Tarantuls maintain this new course then the Utstein’s fish won’t have the endurance to chase them down, since the speed of the torpedoes is only 5 kts faster than the Russians. This is a major disappointment, as now the Utstein, certainly the most capable Norwegian unit in this theater, has only six torpedoes remaining. The captain orders a turn south and an increase in speed to hopefully trap the Russian ships against the coast or in a fjord.

At the same time, the coastal radar at the Cape reports that the two Zubr-class hovercraft have also altered course south and are making for the port of Mehamn, nestled in a small bay 40 miles east of the Cape. The only unit nearby that can possibly intervene is the sole remaining missile boat from the central missile group. This boat is ordered out of its fjord and around into the bay to try to stop the landing, but it will take time. The Zubrs are moving at 60 kts and will make landfall long before help can arrive.

Much further south, about 100 miles north of Andoya, a patrolling P-3 Orion detects a chance submerged MAD contact. The only nearby friendly submarine, the Kobben, is well to the north and snorkeling, and so this contact can only be hostile. A radio order goes out for the Kobben to turn south while two more P-3s take off from Andoya with sonobuoys and torpedoes. They quickly join the first P-3 and localize the contact, identifying it as an SSK moving south at 3 kts. The Kobben, having turned into the baffles of the contact, launches two torpedoes at long range. These slowly close with the murky contact, who doesn’t appear to hear them until far too late. Both torpedoes impact, and a Soviet Kilo lass diesel boat settles to the sea floor.

Back above the cape, the two Russian hovercraft have entered the bay at Mehamn and quickly begin disgorging troops and armored vehicles. The platoon at Mehamn reports at least two companies of naval infantry with BTRs, but no tanks. These land east and west of the town and begin enveloping the defenders, though they keep their distance for now. At the same time, the slow Russian convoy further east turns towards Batsfjord, and with the loss of the easternmost missile boats there is absolutely nothing to interfere with their mission.

The easternmost surviving missile boat travelling at flank speed turns into the head of the bay before Mehamn and quickly acquires the two Russian hovercraft. The captain looses his four Penguin Mk. 2 missiles before turning to try to get back into the fjords ahead of the advancing Tarantul frigates. The Russian hovercraft have significant defenses, however, and three of the missiles fall to gun and missile fire. The fourth streaks in and wrecks one of the massive Zubrs. This attack hasn’t prevented the Russians from occupying Mehamn, which I’m sure they will do as soon as they get around to overrunning the platoon there, but hopefully the loss of one of these very large and capable vessels will help to curtail further landings along the coast in the coming days.

In the meantime, the other missile boat is racing east to try to stay ahead of the Tarantuls, which are heading for the mouth of the fjord, and also to link up with the other withdrawing missile boat. As it does this, it acquires the four Tarantuls, which have slowed to around 15 kts, and fires of its four Penguin Mk. 1 missiles at them. Unfortunately, Russian jamming interferes with both the targeting and the guidance of this salvo, and all four missiles go wild and slam into the sea. The crew of the boat thinks it likely the Russian frigates didn’t even know they were under attack. The Russians continue south, preceded by the missile boat racing to link up with the other survivor withdrawing from the attack on the Zubrs. The mission of the frigates seems to be the sweep the fjord of these craft, and my boats withdraw deeper into the darkening night.

While the missile boats attempt to link up deeper in the fjord, the Soviets start landing at Batsfjord and quickly overrun the platoon there. The Russians now control every significant port and airfield between Banak and the Russian border. This, in conjunction with the fact that I can’t reliably get aircraft up there, means that the enemy now essentially controls the sea and air east of the Cape. Strategically, I imagine this means that Soviet naval and air forces will have much shorter flights and easier access to the north Atlantic. Troubling news for NATO. This impression is confirmed by a message from NATO headquarters that submarine pickets are reporting a major breakout attempt by the Red Banner Northern Fleet. This is a powerful task force including two Kuznetsov-class CVs, two Kiev-class carriers, and two Kirov-class battlecruisers. Fortunately, this nut will be someone else’s to crack (probably mine in a later scenario), but it may interfere with future reinforcement to my front.

The drama between the Tarantuls and the missile boats in the fjord begins to play out. As the enemy frigates enter the fjord their formation begins to string out as they pick their way through the narrow waters in the gathering arctic dusk, but it is clear they are coming for my missile boats, which are still separated on opposite sides of a tributary fjord. Of these, one has four wire-guided torpedoes and the other only its 40mm Bofors cannon. Their only hope is to rendezvous and try to give the Russians a bloody nose, then disappear along the coast into the darkness.

As the torpedo-equipped boat rushes across the fjord to link up with the second boat hiding in a small cove, the lead Tarantul rounds the headland and starts lobbing 76mm shells. These get progressively closer, causing blast damage that disables one of the four torpedo launchers before the boat can speed into the cove and link up with its mate. The captains confer briefly and decide their only hope is to sally out and try to torpedo the lead Russian frigate, which has strayed far ahead of the other three enemy ships. As the Norwegians emerge from the cove the Tarantul again begins rapid fire from its 76mm gun. The Norwegians return fire with 40mm Bofors, but the range is too long for these to be effective. They do conceal from the Russians, however, the three torpedoes that slip into the water and begin heading for the Russian at 35 kts. Not fast enough for one of the missile boats, however. Two direct hits from 76mm shells in quick succession leave the craft sinking in the icy waters. The Russians now turn their attention to the second boat, which incidentally is the one directing the torpedoes. It’s a race between the fish and the Russian’s ability to find the range with their gun. Just as shells begin bracket the missile boat, causing damage and casualties, the first torpedo reaches the frigate and lifts it out of the water with an enormous explosion that echoes off the fjord walls. My sailors have survived another harrowing engagement, for now. The remaining missile boat picks up the survivors from their fellow craft and head deep into another cove, hoping to evade detection from the three remaining Tarantuls, who themselves don’t realize they are being pursued into the fjord by the Utstein.

Post 9

A final aerial drama plays out as the arctic dusk darkens into night. The Russians are maintaining a CAP of two Su-27s over Banak while I maintain a two-ship CAP to the southwest to forestall any raids on my airfields. The Russians are still putting out heavy jamming despite the losses inflicted on their EW aircraft, but for now I decide to allow my crews to rest, refit, and prepare for whatever the Russians have to throw at us next. We’ll use the lull to begin to integrate the American and Dutch pilots who have now arrived into our defense plan.

Just as it seems the Russians may be done for the night, the AWACs pick up three more groups of aircraft entering Norway, one with a course crossing over Banak and two coming across Finland.

The AWACS quickly identifies these as fighter bombers, but their targets are indeterminate. The air controllers send the flight of F-16s east to intercept the two groups coming from Finland and order a flight of F-5s to take off from Tromso to engage the raiders coming from the northeast. However, my CAP is low on fuel and proceeds east slowly to avoid using too much up. This means the intercept will occur over central Finnmark. Alas, this is a mistake. Before the F-16s can intercept, one of the Russian flights alters course south and releases four air-to-ground missiles aimed at the Backstop radar array. These all fly true and demolish my most important surviving ground-based sensor array. If only I had had a CAP up with sufficient fuel! They could have intercepted on afterburner and saved the radar. As it is, the airspace over Finnmark, the shortest route to my airfields, will now only be swept from afar by the AWACS off the coast.

The F-16s ignore these raiders for now (they’ve already expended their ordinance) and instead focus on the second flight that is proceeding past the now burning radar site towards my airfields in central Norway. The pilots flip on their radars and acquire the two Su-24s in the gathering darkness, and down them with Sidewinders. They then turn back east and pursue the other two Russians withdrawing from the radar strike, closing and destroying them with missiles and guns.

Further west I’ve made another mistake. The AWACS has identified the two raiders coming from the northeast over Banak as Mig-27s flying at minimum altitude. The arctic night is quickly darkening the sky and the F-5s sent to intercept this flight have no radar. The AWACS gives the F-5s a vector to intercept, but the pilots are struggling to visually acquire the enemy bombers as they fly nap of the earth, diving and climbing into the craggy fjords along the North Sea coast. This raid is clearly making for one of my airfields further south, airfields that are now crammed with Norwegian, American, and Dutch planes gathering themselves for what the Russians have to throw at us next. It’s too late to launch another flight to intercept, the Russians are now too close. Desperate, the F-5 Pilots drop to under 1,000 feet and strain their eyes to make out the dark shapes of the Russian jets against the snowy mountains below. The AWACS guides them to within two miles but the pilots must now scan for the Russians while trying not to drive their fighters into a fjord cliff-face. There! The flight leader spots one of the Russians cresting a ridgeline and dropping into the fjord valley below. He increases speed to close and fires two sidewinder into the Russian’s tail at half a mile. The missiles hit, and the Mig flips over and plunges into the icy water with a tremendous splash.

One more to go. The surviving Russian is now just a matter of seconds from Tromso or Evenes, should these be his targets. The F-5 pilots are desperately trying to find him. Finally, the lead pilot sees the glow from his engines and turns into the attack, but his remaining two missiles lose lock as the Russian dives into a valley. The trail F-5 closes but the pilot is having his own troubles picking the enemy plane out against the dark ground. Finally, just a few short miles from Tromso, he identifies the bomber and looses two Sidewinders that fly true and blow the Mig into a valley wall. That was far too close for comfort. The air controllers immediately order the last remaining flight of Norwegian AMRAAM armed-F-16s into the air on CAP.

It is now about 6pm. The war is five hours old. My losses have been heavy, but with the reinforcements from the UK and the Netherlands I am actually stronger than I was when the war started in the air. So far I’ve lost:

* 21 x F-16As
* 2 x F-16AMs capable of carrying AMRAAMs
* 8 x F-5s

31 (32 if you count the Lynx helicopter lost when the Coast guard cutter Nordkap was lost) precious aircraft in total (more than half my pre-war strength), though I’ve been reinforced by 36 capable fighters, including 24 F-15Cs.

Against this butcher’s bill the J2 tells me he believes we’ve destroyed:

* 1 x Tu-16 recon bomber
* 2 x An-12 EW aircraft
* 2 x Su-24 EW aircraft
* 49 x An-12 transports likely carrying a brigade of Soviet paratroopers
* 15 x Mi-24 Hinds, mostly destroyed by ground fire over Kirkenes and Banak
* 8 x Mi-8 transports likely carrying another company of paratroopers or Spetznaz

For fighter-bombers we tally:

* 18 x Mig-27s
* 10 x Su-17s
* 6 x Su-17s configured for recon missions
* 25 x Su-24s
* 6 x Su-25s

In fighters we claim:

* 10 x Mig-23s
* 24 x Mig-29s
* 38 x Su-27s (Along with the two now patrolling over Banak, we believe this accounts for the entirety of the Su-27 regiment assigned to this front)

214 total enemy aircraft downed on this front in the first five hours of the war, or over half their pre-war front-line strength on this front if initial estimates were counting their transports and helicopters. While our losses have been bitter, I am pleased with the exchange ratio. Moreover, the destruction of nearly fifty transports along with an airborne brigade will hopefully hamper further Soviet advances into Norway.

At sea and on the ground the situation is not nearly as good. I’ve lost eight of nine of my missile boats (the one that torpedoed the Tarantul was so badly damaged it had to be beached and abandoned in the cove). These combined to sink one Tarantul, six Osa IIs, and one Zubr-class hover-craft. To this tally the Utstein added four Nanutchka IIIs and the Koben sunk one Kilo-class submarine. My naval forced failed completely in preventing the Soviets from seizing every important port town between the Russian border and Banak, at the very least opening up a corridor for their long-range aviation to sally into the Atlantic. In addition, the destination of the Soviet Northern Fleet is still unknown. The four carriers in that group could carry as many as 120 more first-line fighters, this in addition to what the Russians still have to throw at me in the Kola Peninsula, and they may be receiving reinforcements as well.

On the ground, the one other troubling development is that motorized elements of the force that landed at Batsford are reported heading south on the roads towards Banak, though they don’t appear to have the strength to challenge my battalion there.

Overall, after the last Soviet aerial raid the front seems to have settled into a lull, hopefully one that will last the long night. The staff sets to work planning how to employ our forces overnight and during the next day, and asking NATO for updates on how the war is going on other fronts.

Post 10

As the sky darkens and empties of aircraft, reports start to come in to my headquarters about the goings on in the rest of the world.

First, an abbreviated SITREP comes in from NATO that Keflavik on Iceland has suffered a massive cruise missile strike that has shut down the air base there. This report, in conjunction with the earlier sighting of the Red Banner Northern Fleet breaking out through the Barents Sea, points to a possible invasion of Iceland, but Central Norway is also a possible target given how the Soviets are seizing the transportation nodes along the Arctic coast.

Next, J2 receives a much more comprehensive report of the global situation (I won’t relate all details here, if you want them go play the scenario yourself ;)). The highlights are: the air battle of central Europe is “epic,” Soviet and Soviet client states all over the world are cooperating against NATO and NATO allies including in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. In the build-up to the present crisis over the past months the US has either delayed or accelerated overhauls on its carriers so that nearly all 15 active fleet carriers are more or less ready for operations. Unfortunately, and most importantly to us, the timing of the commencement of hostilities has caught the US Atlantic Fleet badly out of position, with the USS Enterprise working up in the Caribbean the only flattop readily available to deploy immediately to the North Atlantic. This number will increase to four carriers within two weeks, but for now the line is very thin, and North Norway can’t expect any immediate help from the US Navy.

The next message from Akershus fortress is a bombshell. While only scattered enemy activity has been reported within the civil infrastructure up to this point, in just the past few minutes several large explosions have rocked Oslo. Apparently, those missing Russian Olympic athletes have reappeared. Most importantly, and shockingly, a large truck bomb was detonated in front of the parliament building while the king was addressing the assembly. There are few survivors and the King and Prime Minister are assumed to be among the casualties. The seat of government is now at Akershus fortress, with the Foreign Minister confirmed by the Supreme Court as its interim head. This…is…serious. We Norwegians LOVE our monarch, an affection built on the dignified defiance his father showed against the Nazis in the last war. If the Russians were hoping to sap our will to fight with these actions, they have achieved the opposite.

My pilots on CAP fly into a rage upon being radioed the news. They demand clearance to engage the Soviet CAP over Banak. But, six Mig-29s have joined the two Su-27s on station (four more F-16s have also taken flight from Tromso and Bodo to keep an eye on them) and an attack right now would not be advisable. And then, the short-legged Fulcrums turn and head for home, apparently short on gas. This provides us the first opportunity to avenge our king. My two-ship CAP is composed of the last two AMRAAM-equipped Norwegian F-16s available. They turn northwest and flip on their radars, acquiring the two circling Su-27s, and loosing two AIM-120s at each. The missiles fly true and blot the two Russians from the sky before they can get into range to return fire. What a difference a long missile makes! The two fighters streak over Banak, bent on hunting more Russians. The withdrawing Mig-29s are beyond our reach, but two EW Su-24s are nearby, northeast and southeast of Banak. One falls to an AMRAAM, the other to a Sidewinder as my enraged pilots sweep the sky. For the moment, Norwegian aircraft are once again the only planes aloft over north Norway.

At the same time, the Utstein, unaware of the travesty on Oslo, is initiating its ambush of the three surviving Tarantuls, which are exiting along the western wall of the fjord. Low on torpedoes, the captain launches three fish, one at each enemy vessel. Two massive explosions reverberate across the fjord as the first fish find their mark. The third Tarantul detects the incoming torpedo with its active sonar as the Russian clears the fjord mouth. It turns west to place the fish on his tail and run. This tactic works, as the Utstein's torpedo loses lock as it comes to the end of its guidance wires. The Utstein lets the Russian go, moving instead northeast to enter Mehamn harbor and attempt to destroy the last Zubr. The Tarantul I will deal with later using my surviving missile boat and the two-frigate SAG coming up from central Norway.

More enemy fighters are belatedly taking wing to try to reestablish their tentative control of the sky over Finnmark and Banak. Eight Mig-23s are coming west in loose formations, some heading for my AEW aircraft and others for my CAP now over Banak. These two have three AMRAAMS left between them, and they launch these at the incoming Russians. The performance of the missiles is disappointing this time, with only one Russian downed. The CAP turns northwest and flees on afterburners. We’ve learned to run the Russians out of gas before engaging them, and that’s how it plays out. The Migs slow and turn back before reaching the North Sea coast, and my pilots turn and pursues, downing three more Migs, but more are taking off to take their place. As long as the Russians don’t launch any more strikes or airborne operations to force me to engage them on their terms, this looks like a good way to whittle down the Russian numbers. I have six F-16s airborne to play in this deadly game of tag, though the northernmost pair is out of missiles. Then, the first flight of US F-15s completes refueling at Bodo. The twin-engine fighters taxi, and rotate off the runway into the arctic night…

Post 11

At this point the aerial battle has settled into a pattern in which the Russians send relatively strong sweeps of fighters over northern Norway, the weaker Norwegian CAPs turn tail and run from them until the Russians run low on fuel near the North Sea coast and turn for home, allowing the NATO pilots to turn and pursue in turn to try to pick off a straggler here and there. This pattern holds for about an hour as the first two flights of F-15Cs head north from Bodo, with three MiG-23s downed for no friendly losses. Things are about to change, though.

A group of six Soviet MiG-29s are just leaving their CAP station over Banak to be replaced by another flight of four MiG-23s coming across northern Finland when the first Eagles come on station. The controllers on the AWACs decide to set up an ambush. A flight of Norwegian F-16s makes a dash eastward, drawing the attention of the approaching Migs, who go to afterburner in pursuit of the Falcons who turn and run...straight towards the oncoming Eagles. This engagement is taking place beyond Soviet airborne and ground-based radar coverage, and my own EW aircraft are jamming the Russian fighters’ radars, so the enemy pilots are unaware of their predicament until the F-15 pilots flip on their radars and the Russians’ warning receivers alert them of the swarm of AMRAAMs coming to meet them. Three of the Floggers explode in quick succession, strobes on the blanket of clouds below the starry arctic night, but the fourth pilot somehow manages to evade the two Slammers targeted at him and break for home. His flight is for naught, however, as the Eagles bore in and drop him with another salvo of two missiles. And once again my fighters are in sole control of the sky over Finnmark and northern Norway, at least beyond the Russian SAMs, and with a second flight of Eagles just coming on station I think we may be able to maintain it.

While this is going on, a smaller drama unfolds in the icy waters beneath the cliffs of the North Cape. My sole surviving missile boat has been steaming at flank speed north from central Norway, but with the loss of all the other missile boats the captain decides to take a more inland course, dodging between islands and the mainland. At the same time, the surviving Russian Tarantul from the Utstein’s ambush is rounding the Cape, tracked by the coastal radar array there that has so far been protected from attack and destruction. Thus, my missile boat’s crew is made aware of the proximity and course of the lone enemy vessel. As the Tarantul clears the Cape, the Norwegian Hauk-class boat, informed through reports sent by the Cape radar, motors out from behind a rocky island, acquires the Russian ship with its optics, and launches a spread of four infrared-guided Penguin Mk. 1 missiles. The Russians never even have a chance, or even see the missiles coming. The four weapons impact the small ship and wreck it above the waterline. What survivors there are from the rapidly sinking vessel won’t last long in the icy arctic waters as night. The Hauk motors on around the Cape, searching out a target for its two remaining torpedoes.

My newfound air-superiority thanks to the intervention of the F-15s allows a me to go on the offensive somewhat. Since hostilities began, two Russian Mig-25 reconnaissance fighters have been loitering over northern Finland at 60k ft, no doubt recording every electronic emission my forces have made. The AWACS controllers send the first pair of Eagle-drivers after these two, and a pair of F-16s out over the ocean to try and hunt a lone Su-24 jammer out there that is playing havoc with my sensors. The F-15s manage to splash both Foxbats, but the F-16s come up dry on the Fencer and have to turn back, low on fuel.

Just then another surge of activity begins to pick up over the Soviet airfields. The AWACS picks up multiple bogeys forming up over the Kola and heading west. Is this another airborne drop? As my radar begins to burn through the jamming we can deduce by the formation, altitude, and speed of the bogeys that this is a large ground attack strike, fourteen enemy aircraft. Squadron strength. They fly in a column out of Russia, over northern Finland, on a course for Banak. The Russians are obviously feeling the losses of the previous hours, because only now do a quartet of Mig-23s take off from their Kola bases, ostensibly to escort the fighter-bombers. They are uncoordinated, nowhere near enough to protect their charges.

The AWACS directs two F-15s and four F-16s, two Norwegian and two Dutch, around to the southern flank of the approaching enemy fighter-bomber column. In doing so my aircraft fly relatively deep into the detection range of Soviet radars, and forewarned the fourteen Su-25s start to turn back, but it is too late. My fighters scream in from the south behind a wall of AMRAAMs and Sidewinders and finally cannon fire. It is a slaughter. In the end, only two Sukois escape back towards the Russian border, hugging the contours of the ground for dear life. The oncoming Mig-23s also decide to heed the better part of valor and remain behind the protection of their SAMs.

Now with no Russian threats materializing to my own airspace, I have hatched a plan to go after the Soviet A-50 Mainstay AWACs that have been holding station over the arctic ocean north of the Kola. Knocking out these priceless assets will seriously degrade the Russians’ ability to further threaten Norwegian airspace or defend their own airspace from the inevitable counterstroke from the US Navy, whenever it comes, assuming the world isn’t consumed in a nuclear holocaust before then. As midnight nears in the polar winter, two pairs of F-15s turn north and descend to the rocky coast east of the Cape.

Post 12

Throughout the course of the last ten hours of combat, the technicians on the AWACS have noted regular flights of Russian fighter bombers leaving the Kola peninsula, heading northwest along the Norwegian coast, and then northward over the arctic until they disappear off our radar screens. Later, they have been tracked returning along the same course, all at regular intervals. The air controllers hatch a plan to exploit this predictability to our advantage. Two F-15s will move north at low altitude to straddle the path of one of the returning Russian flights. They will then ambush this flight at close range in the dark and then assume the course, speed, and altitude of the dead Russians. This course takes them within striking distance of the Russian Mainstay whose loiter pattern takes it well out over the ocean. With the long reach of the F-15s AMRAAMs the pilots should be able to reach out and touch the Russian AWACS without having to expose themselves to Russian SAMs.

The initial ambush goes well. The flight of two F-15s head north at low altitude through one of the fjords and are talked onto the tails of two Su-25s returning to the Kola on a southeasterly course. The rise and close slowly and then put four Sidewinders up the Grachs’ tailpipes before either enemy pilot knows he’s under attack, No doubt the long night time flight over water had made them tired and complacent. The Eagles assume their new identity, settling into a southeasterly course at 23k feet and 350 kts.

While this is going on another smaller Russian raid materializes over Finnmark. Four Su-25s head west from their Kola bases at low altitude. Two Dutch F-16s are vectored to intercept, and the Russians, lacking fighter support, turn back. Even so, the Dutch pilots manage to close and down three of the four intruders before the sole survivor runs under the cover of the Russian SAM blanket.

Meanwhile my two F-15s approach the Russian Mainstay. As it turns out, this ambush is going to be spectacularly successful. The two Eagles are arriving in the Mainstay’s patrol area just as a second Russian AWACS is coming on station, no doubt to relieve the first. Probably fatigue on the part of the first Russian crew combined with a lack of situational awareness by the new one has allowed my ruse to succeed. As a bonus, a Russian Su-24 maritime reconnaissance variant is passing close by the two larger aircraft as my two fighters turn out of their course, activate their radars, and launch a spread of AMRAAMs at the three lumbering Russian aircraft. The Soviet pilots never have a chance, and just like that the enemy’s most potent radar platform is gone. No Russian fighters rise to challenge my two raiders, who move north to ensure that they don’t fall prey to any SAMS.

It’s now midnight, with the Russians’ newfound feebleness in the air I set up a CAP north of the Kola of F-15s and one over of F-16s over Finnmark. The northern CAP manages to down a flight of four Hind gunships heading west over the water from their base in the Kola. Other than another flight of gunships further south that are supporting the Russian ground troops at Kirkenes, and some maritime reconnaissance aircraft far to the north over the Arctic Ocean, the Russians have no aircraft up.

Thirty minutes after midnight my solitary Hauk missile boat (which at this point is equipped only with torpedoes) arrives off of Mehamn and acquires the Russian surviving Zubr hovercraft using thermal sensors. The captain motors into the bay slowly and looses his two homing torpedoes as the large stationary craft. The fish run true and blow the transport out of the water.

Further west along the coast a P-3C Orion has been laying a pattern of sonobuoys along the course of my two frigates heading north to take up station at the Cape. One of the buoys gets a hit off of a submerged contact just northeast of the Cape. The Orion closes in and localizes the contact, eventually identifying it at a diesel submarine. After checking to make sure that this is not the Utstein, the Orion crew makes a pass to drop active buoys to pinpoint the sub, and then makes a second pass to drop two Stingray torpedoes, both of which quickly acquire the target and close in for the kill. Two underwater explosions later and a Soviet Foxtrot-class sub is settling on the seabed floor.

Other action that takes place over the next our includes a flight of F-15Cs intercepting and annihilating a flight of four Mig-29s, the downing of the remaining Russian AWACS, and the annihilation of their maritime recon aircraft. The first twelve hours of the war in the north have been incredibly bloody in the air, but the arrival of the US and Dutch reinforcements seem to have tipped the scales decisively in my favor. Since the F-15s started running CAP I haven’t lost a single aircraft. The Russians are still advancing on land, but with air superiority I think my battalion at Banak will be able to hold the Russians from moving any further east.

(At this point this scenario seems to have played out for me. The Russians are putting almost nothing into the air and I can basically cruise at the edge of SAM range without interference. I’m playing on at time compression to see if there are any more special messages about the course of the broader war, and I suspect for the story line of the following scenarios I’m not actually supposed to have been quite this successful. Overall, I seem to have won a pretty decisive victory, though I think for the context of later scenarios I was supposed to suffer heavier losses and be harder pressed, with the Russians maintaining air superiority over northern Norway and pressing my bases further south. I’ll post any updates if there are any. If not, stay tuned for Northern Fury 2: X-Ray Station!)