**Northern Fury #10 – Eisenhower Moves North**

**AAR by fitzpatv, Aug 2021**

Following Enterprise’s success in blunting the Red Banner Fleet’s move into the Atlantic, USS Eisenhower sails through the Straits of Gibraltar to help relieve her. After three days’ hard fighting in the Mediterranean, the battlegroup is currently dispersed for replenishment. In this ‘not as Northern as usual’ episode, the Soviets try to take advantage.  
  
You can play either side here, but I stuck with NATO for consistency. It would be an interesting challenge as the Russians. As NATO, it is a major logistical and organisational exercise and a bit of a slow-burner, but absorbing and enjoyable nonetheless.  
  
Your surface forces are divided into five elements. Eisenhower is out in front off SW Portugal with just the cruiser Vicksburg and the frigate Halyburton for escort. The Portuguese frigate Corte Real is to the W under your direct orders. Just departed from Rota in SW Spain are the cruiser Virginia, destroyer Arleigh Burke, frigate De Wert, Spanish frigate Numancia and the vital oiler Detroit. Still in the Med are the cruiser San Jacinto and destroyer David R Ray. There are some worrying shortages of equipment, such as SAMs and aircraft, with many of Eisenhower’s fighters being re-programmed to use AMRAAMs at Rota and a draft of replacement Hornets and Tomcats scheduled to make a long journey across the Atlantic from the States with AI-controlled tanker support.  
  
In the English Channel, you have the oiler Fort George, escorted by frigates and fellow Brits Hermione and Beaver. These need to rendezvous with the Eisenhower group at an Assembly Area W of Ireland within 48 hours.  
  
There are two American SSNs, Boston and Albuquerque, under your control and these have to reach a patrol zone to the NW of the Assembly Area in the same time limit.  
  
Various AI-controlled squadrons are around to provide support. The Portuguese have the frigate Vasco da Gama and corvette Afonso Cerqueira W of Lisbon, plus the diesel sub Barracuda in the Atlantic approaches. Spain fields the frigates Baleares and Descubierta in the Straits of Gibraltar, with the subs Marsopa and Sirocco respectively W and E of here. In the Bay of Biscay, there is a French squadron, comprising three unconvincing destroyers (Tourville, Primauguet and Aconit), while the elderly British SSN Churchill is patrolling the Assembly Area. Some useful Spanish and Portuguese Orions are helping patrol the waters off the Iberian coast, supplementing three Rota-based American P-3 Upgrades under your direct control.  
  
To complicate matters further, there are convoys in the Bay of Biscay and Western Mediterranean with just one weak corvette each for escort, as well as two single merchant ships (Wild Rover and Nordanger), wandering around in the Atlantic.  
  
Another layer of detail is the need for replenishment flights to the Eisenhower from a number of sources, with Greyhounds ferrying supplies from Rota, Sea Knights from the Detroit and potentially Sea Kings from the Fort George if it ever gets near enough.  
  
The Soviets are known to have 12-18 submarines of various types in the region, including at least one Oscar and Echo with Shipwreck and Sandbox anti-shipping missiles. As your ships will need to move quite fast to reach their target zones, there is a heightened risk of torpedo ambushes.  
Once N of the English Channel, you are warned that the enemy have around 30 long-range bombers available, probably Badgers with Kingfish missiles, plus recon and OECM planes. There is an exclusion zone around Iceland and the Faroes (the latter having fallen since Plug the Gap), though how far this affects enemy movement is uncertain at the start. At least there is no danger from Soviet fighters or surface warships, the latter having withdrawn since their unpleasant experiences in Hold the Line.  
  
It’s important to do your sums in this scenario!. Clearly, pushing ahead in the starting groups is dumb, as you will be exposed to defeat in detail with inadequate cover. You urgently need to re-group your forces first, then get to the Assembly Area afterwards. Some calculations showed that the Detroit, moving at her Full Speed of 24 knots, could do so with a decent comfort margin, so I decided to have the Eisenhower and Corte Real elements close on her, actually moving AWAY from the Assembly Area to begin-with. The San Jacinto group would need to move at maybe 22.5 knots on average to get to the AA on time. I decided to have everyone start at Creep for the first half-hour in case of immediate ambushes, then have San Jacinto accelerate to Flank as circumstances allowed. As units joined-up with the Detroit, they would conform to her 24-knot pace. This was still worryingly fast, given the sub threat, but I hoped to offset this by littering the sea with buoys and making hourly checks on my levels of ASW cover.  
  
Fort George starts rather exposed and it’s hard for her to maintain ASW cover with her three short-ranged choppers. On the positive side, she has less far to go and it proved possible to chug along at 8-10 knots and try to follow the swathe of sonobuoys set-up by escorting AI-controlled British Nimrods out of St Mawgan in Cornwall (there are also some British Hawk trainers with Sidewinders at Valley on Anglesey, which might be some use against Badgers overflying the UK).  
  
The two US subs also have a race on their hands to reach their PZ. Moving at Creep is impractical, though I did so for the initial half-hour. After this, they went to maximum depth to avoid cavitation issues and headed N at 25 knots, though this meant that their towed arrays were useless.  
  
As for the convoys and single sailings, they would have to take their chances until I could spare more assets to look after them.  
  
In general, I put as many aircraft as possible on ASW loadouts and kept ships’ radars dark to foil detection, notably from a Soviet spy satellite that regularly traverses the map. Supplies of air-air missiles are low, so I had to put some Tomcats on basic ‘light’ or ‘peacetime’ settings.  
  
19/2/94 01:00 Zulu Time: After a quiet opening hour, broken only by biologic subsurface contacts, a Kilo ambushed the Vasco da Gama and Cerqueira. The result was a total wipe-out, which cost me 20 VP and the Russians 5. Vasco’s chopper survived to fly patrols from Beja airbase on the mainland. Meanwhile, Greyhound flights began to arrive at the Eisenhower – these happen continuously throughout the game and score no points, serving only as a distraction.  
  
02:00: Just as San Jacinto deemed it safe to accelerate to Flank, a second Kilo popped-up and loosed unsuccessfully at the Spanish sub Sirocco nearby. Ray’s Seahawk engaged and sank her for 5 VP, but had to use both her torpedoes, leaving her squadron out of ASW cover for an hour or so. Relied on speed and made the dash.  
  
05:00: A Victor III ambushed the Detroit group and sank the Numancia for 18 VP, including a chopper. The frigate’s Seahawk took revenge, but this scored just 10 points, plus another 5 for a third Kilo, which appeared nearby and was dispatched by an Orion from Rota. The Spanish chopper appropriately re-based to the De Wert. Both Soviet subs needed two hits to kill.  
  
07:00: A Spanish Orion found and sank a fourth Kilo SW of the Straits of Gibraltar. Not long afterwards, Corte Real got close enough to merge into the Eisenhower group (select frigate, then hold Shift and select the CVBG, then use Units:Group Ops). This necessitated some re-definition of ASW missions. Later on, Detroit also made the rendezvous. This prompted a message ordering me to detach the Vicksburg and Halyburton to Brest for replenishment. As I was still off SW Portugal, I deferred this to a more appropriate time…  
  
I reckoned I could reach the AA with about eight hours to spare, so long as no ships got damaged, of course. San Jacinto should be able to catch-up long before I would need to detach Vicksburg.  
  
10:00: The Portuguese sub Barracuda detected a dozy Victor II some way WSW of the fleet and held the fort long enough for a Viking to arrive and destroy the Russian for another 10 VP.  
  
13:00: The MV Wild Rover was torpedoed by a submarine SW of Ireland, costing 10 VP. We had no ASW assets nearby.  
  
15:00: An Orion, previously searching the approaches to Brest for anything waiting to ambush Vicksburg, reached the scene of the Wild Rover sinking. The Victor III responsible had stayed local and died of a bad dose of ASW torpedo.  
  
16:00: Action stations as a flight of Shipwreck missiles suddenly came-in, dangerously close, from the W of the fleet!. Thankfully, there were just five and copious use of SAMs and some hastily-scrambled fighters disposed of them. Was the Oscar short of ammo, maybe due to participation in the attacks on the Eastern Seaboard?. Put-up a Hawkeye to watch for any more (having been using them sparingly due to their lousy endurance). Not long afterwards, San Jacinto caught-up and conformed to the 24-knot fleet speed. A pair of Hercules tankers lifted-off from the States, heading for St Mawgan.  
  
18:00: A pair of Sandbox missiles came-in from the NNW and it took a disproportionate amount of effort to stop the lucky beggars. Again, why just two, as an Echo carries eight?.  
  
19:00: Three more pairs of Sandboxes approached in succession, but lacked their counterparts’ good fortune and were easily picked-off by CAP. One Echo de-fanged. A third Victor III appeared S of the fleet and fell victim to a Portuguese Orion.  
  
21:00: As replacement Hornets and Tomcats began to launch from the States, a shoal of 19 Shipwrecks hurtled-in at 1,600 knots from the WSW. The Oscar hadn’t been out of ammo, but she was now!. A major effort from Phoenix-toting Tomcats stopped any getting close, but supplies of that missile type were now desperately low. The Oscar was now less of a threat and probably wouldn’t be able to catch us – but was she the only one?  
  
20/2/94 00:00: Had to amend ASW missions to stop Vikings heading to tankers in mid-Atlantic and compromising the replacement flights. I’d assigned one of the Rota Orions, now re-based to St Mawgan, to protect the convoy in the Bay of Biscay, but she couldn’t remain on-station all the time and, as fate would have it, was just returning for a second patrol when a Victor I attacked. Two merchant ships were lost and two more damaged. The Orion arrived and exacted retribution, but it cost us a net 10 VP. Thankfully, the damaged ships stayed afloat.  
  
Meanwhile, an old Tango sub appeared in the AA near HMS Churchill, which got first shot and sank this particular ‘Rattlesnake of the Atlantic’ for 5 VP.  
  
01:00: Began sending Eisenhower’s less-capable fighters to St Mawgan to clear hangar space and prepare a hot reception for any Badgers overflying the UK.  
  
02:00: The AI-controlled Barracuda torpedoed a whale!. Thankfully, this cost no points, but I reviewed all my ASW settings and set them from Weapons Free to Weapons Tight where necessary. Fighters and the Stateside Hercules began to reach St Mawgan (the tankers had to be switched from Ferry settings).  
  
03:00: Fighters from Oceana began to reach the Eisenhower. Relieved that the AI had managed to handle the mid-ocean refuelling (thanks, Bart), I assigned them loadouts, as they’d travelled without missiles to save weight. The Hornets could use AMRAAMs and we had 40 planes’ worth on-board.  
  
04:00: A chopper from the previously-maligned French destroyer Primauguet did me a huge favour by finding and sinking a dangerous Sierra SSN for 10 VP.  
  
05:00: Now out in the Bay of Biscay, I detached Vicksburg and Halyburton to Brest, recalling their ASW planes and creating new missions for them. Orions provided further support.  
  
06:00: More replacement fighters, loaded with AMRAAMs, began leaving Rota for the fleet. I launched a Hercules tanker from Rota in support, though she wasn’t needed in practice.  
  
08:00: Primauguet’s chopper excelled herself again by getting rid of the Echo (15 VP), which was trying to reach us for a torpedo attack. The French weren’t so useless after all!.  
  
10:00: Fort George was now close enough for her choppers to start flying supplies to Eisenhower.  
  
11:00: With the fleet now getting into the danger zone, my thoughts were dominated by the risk of a 30-plane Badger strike with Kingfish, supported by SEAD planes. I began running an active CAP over NE England from St Mawgan and sent the base a Hawkeye in support. However, I couldn’t ignore the possibility that the enemy might approach from Iceland, despite the Exclusion Zone, which might only apply to us. That lack of Hawkeye endurance was a handicap and I had to use lightly-armed fighters to plug the gaps.  
  
15:00: Albuquerque reached the PZ for 25 VP and went to Creep, Just Over the Layer.  
  
16:00: The fleet reached the AA, scoring 10 VP per frigate, 15 for destroyers, 25 for cruisers, 35 for oilers and 50 for the carrier. By now, we had detected Badgers airborne S of Iceland and moved one of the St Mawgan Hercules to support CAP in this direction.  
  
17:00: With the Fort George group joining the fleet in the AA, I obeyed orders and sent the frigate Hermione back towards Portsmouth with her own ASW support mission. Meanwhile, Vicksburg and Halyburton reached Brest, with no sign of an ambush and scored another 15 VP. They now had to wait there for six hours to score some more for completing their re-fit.  
  
18:00: Enemy coded messages were intercepted, suggesting an attack was imminent. It was pretty obvious from early in the game that an Irish-flagged trawler called the Jumping Leprechaun was the culprit due to her emissions levels, but she showed-up as Neutral and I felt it to be in the spirit of the scenario to spare her the Harpooning she deserved. She was out of sensor range and moving away, anyway, as my radars remained dark.  
  
19:00: USS Boston reached the PZ for another 25 VP.  
  
20:00: Went after the Russian aircraft S of Iceland with my Tomcats, nailing a couple of Badgers and sending the others running, but this scored no points. Enemy jamming again made their OECM planes almost impossible to attack and using my Prowlers made no difference. There was a concern that the Russians were being canny and sending Badgers quietly around to the W of the fleet for a surprise attack, so I stationed a few fighters in this quarter.  
  
22:00: Aggressive Tomcat patrols accounted for a third Badger, the Exclusion Zone not keeping-out missiles, but endurance considerations stopped me doing more.  
  
23:00: Scored another 25 VP for completing the Vicksburg group’s replenishment and started them back to the fleet. Probably because of my jamming and lack of radar emissions, no Soviet airstrike materialised and the game ended in a Triumph, with a score of +357.  
  
NATO lost two frigates, a corvette, three merchant ships and two choppers, while the USSR lost 12 assorted subs and three Badgers.  
  
The next one seems to be a similar affair with the Carl Vinson replacing the Enterprise, but perhaps without the replenishment issues. It’ll be nice to get properly on the offensive after this, maybe...