**Northern Fury – Changing of the Guard**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ 1 Sept 2015**

Interesting! The first wave has passed and I've got some breathing space I think, so time to update the log.

Given the sub threat I decided to get my units off the continental shelf ASAP. The last thing I need is something Russian creeping along the shallow sea-floor where I can't see it. So the Canadian group heads SW at speed and then curves around to meet the Monongehela group and skirt the shelf around E then NE to the replenishment zone, where the Bluefish will be patrolling.

The Vinson heads more NE into the deep water, and will then bend eastward towards its patrol zone SW of Iceland, where the Pittsburgh will be patrolling. Enterprise will turn about instead of swinging south, and will follow much the same path in reverse. This way my MPA will do double duty, sanitizing the same path for both carrier groups. SSN750 will also patrol the path, while SSN 757 will head out to meet the Seattle group, which will also keep to the deeper water as long as possible as it heads in to St John's.

With courses set, and MPA on the way, I spread out my ESM aircraft from the Enterprise and put up a CAP with a jammer. It doesn't take long before my F-14s are jousting with the Mig-31s, and then I start detecting recce aircraft and jammers to the N and NE. I manage to get the recce planes, and many of the initial Mig-31s, and then I start detecting a dense swarm of aircraft coming in from Iceland, and I realize that a modest CAP will soon be overwhelmed. Before long I have literally every missile-bearing aircraft that's ready up to meet the threat, and more jammers (Blinders... hmmm...) are lighting up far off to the NW. I send some of my force towards them, but the majority goes towards the major threat coming in from Iceland.

The horizon is dark with Su-27s, and I can't get a good look at what's behind the jammers, which are shutting down my Sparrow-armed planes and semi-active homing SAMs. Thank God for the HOJ ability of the Phoenix! I manage to kill enough of the northern jammers that I can fight and see (although I never do get that damned Cub), and then I start working on the ones to the NW, but as I do anti-shipping missiles start streaming towards me through the Blinder jammers. I should have concentrated NW!

By the time I get the last of the jammers I can only shoot down a handful of bombers before they launch, but my pilots have their revenge on the empty bombers, and manage to kill half of them as they head back home. Hopefully that will ease the pressure tomorrow. Fortunately the missile stream is somewhat spread out, and a combination of Sparrows, AMRAAMs and Phoenixes manage to thin it out so the SAMs can handle the rest. That uses up almost all my Phoenixes and 60 of my SAMs, and my reduced magazines now hold 19 SM-1s, 48 SM-2s, and 10 SM-2ERs (plus the Sea Sparrows), but my task force is safe.

Meanwhile I've realized that the pack of Su-27s is just a fighter sweep, and I manage to give way and avoid most of it, attriting the edges where possible. Then as the Flankers retire the Su-24s show up, spread out in a long stream, perfect for all my fighters which have been shooting at the ASMs. My fighters are out of long range missiles, but they still have all their Sidewinders which are just the thing for Su-24s, and the Fencers die like torpedo bombers in the Pacific. If they'd arrived earlier, at the same time as the Su-27s and the bombers, then the situation would have been horrific.

Meanwhile the planes from the Vinson start showing up along with the tankers from Goose Bay, and it's a damned good thing too, because the next wave of Mig-31s is already showing up. I try not to engage those too directly, and send forces skirting around the W and S flanks of the enemy to look for vulnerable support and recce aircraft. Earlier when I was chasing the bombers I had spotted some large aircraft 2/3 of the way to Iceland, and they turn out to be tankers! Phoenixes work very well on those lumbering targets, even at extreme range, and the Vinson's F-14s try to concentrate on them almost exclusively. Of course this means risking the Mig-31s, and some of my pilots never come back, but they claim a whopping 20 tankers (and 1 AWACS!) by the time we disengage. That's got to put a hole in anyone's air support plans, and I hope they can't just fly in replacements tomorrow to support another bomber wave.

ESM spots some Be-12 radar up by Iceland, but clouds of Mig-23s and Mig-29s come boiling up any time I get near the island, so I stay the heck out of those and give up on my plan to hunt the flying boats that might threaten the O-boat. There are two more sweeps by strong Su-27 forces, and a number of recce Badgers need to be splashed while I spend a lot of fuel to avoid the Mig-31s, but no further major engagements. It's now dusk, and I'm hoping for a calm night to rest my pilots while I retire.

During the air battle three Russian subs made an appearance - one Sierra at each carrier group, and one more Victor up north, The southern Sierra launched a salvo of torpedoes at long range, to no effect, before it was sunk, and the two northern subs were sunk before they could fire. I'm definitely worried that I'm going to stumble onto more.

The Enterprise's AAM magazines are nearly empty now. My last few Phoenixes, AMRAAMs, and Sidewinders are all on my aircraft, and I'm down to 50 or so Sparrows in the magazines. The lack of Sidewinders was particularly problematic, because with none of them in the magazine the Air Ops window won't let you ready any AA loadouts that include them! At one point this left me with over 100 long range missiles, and no way to ready any of them. So what I've been doing is forcing a ready in the editor, manually subtracting the proper number of missiles from the magazine, manually setting the proper ready time, and then manually subtracting the missing Sidewinders from the aircraft as they launch. It's cumbersome, but it's the only way to simulate what would happen. (Can you imagine for a moment, when enemy bombers are bearing down on the task force, that some prim bean-counter in the ordnance section is refusing to let anyone have Sparrows because he didn't have Sidewinders to go with them?) I'm not sure if you had intended the low Sidewinder numbers to act as a limit for scenario purposes, so sorry if I've messed with the balance.

So hopefully a calm night, and then trepidation about another bomber raid tomorrow! Time will tell...

Haha! As a parting shot, the Enterprise sends two Tomcats up the Greenland coast, with a tanker and EA-6 in attendance. Hooking in from the west they get three flying boats, an AWACs and a jammer Cub (and scare the crap out of another one with a near miss), before getting away scott free. Take that!

(Have you noticed I'm enjoying your scenario?)

All Task Groups report safe in their destination zones sir!

Things definitely died down the next day. Submarines made their appearance, were detected by sonobuoys and surface ships, and were duly sunk. My subs never did hear or engage any enemy subs. In the air, continued exploitation of the W flank of the Russian air effort finally got rid of their jammers, tankers, and AWACs. The Vinson's aircraft made several large attacks with ECM support in order to defeat the Su-27s and Mig-31s, which went more easily as the Russian support aircraft were whittled down. (Finally figuring out there were some sneaky Badgers doing covert ESM work in behind the Mig-31s was definitely beneficial.) The Russians never spotted the Vinson, so the second Fencer attack never launched.

Thanks again for the great scenario.