**Northern Fury 5 AAR**

**By Joel Radunzel**

**First Post:**

This scenario takes place 24 hours into the war. Just a little set up: if you read my H-Hour AAR you know that in that battle the Norwegians inflicted crippling losses on the Soviet air strength and essentially annihilated a Soviet parachute assault on the airfield at Banak. This scenario starts with the assumption that the Norges didn’t do quite as well and that the airborne drop on Banak was a success. The Soviets are in control of north Norway, the Red Banner Northern Fleet (2 Kuznetsov-class CVs, 2 Kiev-class CVHs, and 2 Kirov battlecruisers, plus escorts and an amphibious group) has broken out of the Barents Sea (again, no significant casualties, despite my X-Ray Station AAR).

So, after the initial surge the Soviet air offensive quieted down as both sides licked their considerable wounds. The Norwegians are reinforced by American F-15 from the US 493rd Tactical Fighter Squadron and F-16s from the Dutch 332 Squadron. These join the surviving Norge F-16s and F-5s from the previous day’s fighting. More reinforcements are expected, but people are screaming for backup all over the world, so we’ll see what comes. The hub of Norwegian air resistance is now the airbase of Bardufoss, with Andoya, Evenes, and Bodo supporting from further south.

The threat of a ground offensive in north Norway in February is pretty slim, but the bulk of the Soviet airborne strength is still unaccounted for, and that Soviet amphibious group is out there as well. Analysis is it’s heading for Trondheim in Central Norway. Norwegian ground forces are establishing a defensive front at the Lyngen position, but it will be meaningless if the Russians can envelope it from the air or sea.

To defend the coast, there is a picket line of NATO subs extending into the Norwegian sea. The USS Annapolis is the farthest out, then HMS Talent, the Ula-class diesel boat Utsira. Behind these is the older diesel boat Klin. Further back, tucked into the Lofoten islands are several groups of missile boats of various types and a pair of frigates, the Bergen and Stavenger, making their way south to join up with stronger forces. It’s looking pretty thin.

It’s now noon on 14 February, 1994, the second day of World War III. Yesterday a truck bomb blew up the Norwegian parliament, killing the king and the prime minister. Command and control from NATO is working, but the Norwegian national government s in tatters.

All indications are towards a renewal of the Soviet offensive any minute. Will they come by air? by sea? both? Will the battered Norwegians and their NATO allies be able to hold? Read on to find out.

**Second Post:**

The battle for control of the air over Bardufoss began for the Norwegians at the airfield with an intel update from HQ, Allied Forces North Norway (AFNN), stating that sources with eyes on the captured airfield at Banak were reporting a major Soviet strike consisting of dozens of Mig-23s and Mig-27s staging from the field. SIGINT was also indicating that the Soviets had been reinforced with regiments of Mig-29s and Su-27s, and that a Long-Range Aviation strike was likely forming up over the Kola. The warning was accompanied by an admonishment to get every ready fighter into the air to meet the threat.

As if to put an exclamation point on this report, the data-link to the E-3 AWACS making racetracks over central Norway began to show numerous contacts rising from Banak. Troublingly, at the same time the technicians on the AWACS also began to pick up significant aerial activity coming north from southern Finland. The Finns had so far been troublingly quiet, both about the repeated Soviet violations of their airspace on the previous day and the few retaliatory incursions made by NATO jets. This new burst of activity over their major airbases indicated that this passive posture might be changing.

The three airborne NATO F-16s continued to circle over the Lyngen position while additional Norwegian and Dutch F-16s as well as American F-15s began to rotate off the runways of Evenes, Bardufoss, and Bodo and roar upward into the dreary arctic winter clouds which quickly obscured them from view. Unfortunately, the exhausted ground crews were struggling to keep up with the tempo of operations and many of the NATO aircraft were still in various states of readiness, so the numbers rising to meet the new Russian push were paltry and arriving piecemeal. Still, the reports that the NATO pilots were receiving from the controllers on the AWACS gave them confidence about their ability to meet the initial Russian thrust.

Based on the emissions from the Russians’ air-to-air radars, the EW techs on the NATO control aircraft and its accompanying ELINT bird began to decipher two distinct streams of Russian aircraft approaching central Norway. The first, coming from the captured field at Banak, appeared to be composed of about three squadrons of Mig-23s. These would not be overly difficult for the gathering NATO air strength to deal with, but dealt with they must be, and therein lay the tactical problem. Behind the Mig-23s, approaching from bases in the Kola across Finnish airspace, was a second stream of much more lethal Mig-29 and Su-27 fighters accompanied by yet more Mig-23s. These would arrive behind the first stream and after the NATO fighters had been forced to break formation and expend most if not all of their air-to-air ordnance. Yet another concern was the northward movement of several flights of Finnish fighters, who would arrive near the battle space just behind the first wave of Soviet aircraft.

Still, the NATO pilots had learned many lessons from the previous day’s combat, which had allowed several of them to become aces. They began to execute a pre-arranged plan to meet the initial Russian threat. The original three Sidewinder-armed F-16s turned off their radars, turned due north, and dove for the clouds obscuring the Norwegian coast while an AMRAAM armed F-16 and two American F-15s proceeded northeast into the teeth of the Russian onslaught with their radars on. Two more pairs of F-16s, one Norwegian, one Dutch, followed the advancing AMRAAM-armed jets, and a second pair of F-15s were rising to reinforce the battle.

As the first Russian Mig-23s entered the engagement envelope of the AIM-120s, the two American and one Norwegian pilots began to volley off their long-range radar-guided missiles. The Russian pilots, who for the most part had only faced the short-ranged Sidewinders the day before, were dismayed to hear their radar warning receivers begin to warble a lethal threat. They began to scan the skies for tell-tale contrails as the American-made missiles arced towards them. When they spotted the thin contrails, the Soviet airmen broke formation and jinked and dove to try to evade. They lacked any weapons that could match the range of the NATO missiles, and could only try to survive the onslaught at this point.

Several Russians managed to evade their tormentors by violent maneuvering and chaff, but several more had their aircraft blotted from the sky by the cones of exploding shrapnel thrown by the intercepting American missiles. The shaken survivors tried to reform and continue the advance to close with the NATO fighters and try to gain some measure of revenge. Just then, the three F-16s that had detached and flown north burst upwards through the cloud layer into the northwest flank of the Russian fighter stream. The three pilots fired off Sidewinders as quickly as they could bring their noses to bear on new targets, and the Russian formation once again dissolved into chaos as Mig-23 pilots turned in every direction trying to evade the nimble IR-seekers.

The surprise assault from the flank was devastating, and made even more so by the fact that the NATO pilots who had launched the AMRAAMs from the southwest were also following their missiles in, catching the struggling Russians between an anvil and a hammer. The NATO pilots had learned from the previous day’s fighting how to easily evade the semi-active radar homing missiles carried by the Soviet Mig-23s. Today this knowledge allowed the more nimble NATO fighters to close with the more cumbersome Russian jets where they could bring their Sidewinders and cannons to bear. The result was a slaughter. Mig anfter Mig exploded, caught on fire, or simply spun or dove out of the sky as the American, Dutch, and Norwegian jets tangled in a massive furball with the initially more numerous Russians.

The advantage lasted until the NATO jets began to run out of missiles and cannon rounds. As one NATO pilot after another expended his last ordnance and attempted to disengage, he was jumped by surviving Soviet pilots eager for revenge. A Norwegian F-16 was the first to fall, then an F-15, followed quickly by another. The situation was only salvaged by the arrival of the reinforcing Dutch F-16s following the AMRAAM armed jets up from the south. Then the Finns arrived…

**Third Post:**

Finland, along with Sweden, had sat out the first day of the war, uneasily watching the conflagration that was enveloping the world and in particular the rapid Russian advance into northern Norway. The offensive had come as a surprise to the Finns, but the Russian government had placed immense pressure on them first to not interfere and then later to actively join the Russian effort. This pressure included aggressive mobilizations and maneuvers along the Finnish border around Leningrad and aggressive naval demonstrations in the eastern Baltic. The tipping point for the Finnish government came with the fall of Banak. With north Norway in Russian hands, and no sign of a letup in the Soviet offensive, the Finns felt they were surrounded and had no choice but to comply with Soviet demands.

The Finnish dilemma did not come as a complete surprise to NATO. Indeed, a warning from AFNN had gone out several minutes earlier that NATO forces were free to engage Finnish aircraft that were behaving aggressively. This warning, however, was slow to reach the NATO pilots now engaged in the desperate battle to hold at bay the masses of attacking Soviet fighters.

A squadron of J-35 Draken fighters rocketed northwest across the Norwegian frontier and into the furball that had begun to dissipate as both NATO and Soviet fighters tried to disengage. Finnish belligerence came as a nasty shock to the NATO pilots who had just turned back one Russian thrust and were now critically low on ordnance. They ambushed one Norwegian pilot trying to extract himself from the combat and damaged a second F-16 before the NATO pilots began to respond to this new and unwelcome threat. When they did, however, the results were deadly for the Finnish pilots.

The Finns had not had the benefit of the previous day’s combat to learn the unforgiving lessons of modern aerial combat. Worse, their fighters were armed with the obsolescent (American-made) AIM-4 Falcon missile, a weapon that had been ineffective even when it had first been fielded in the 1950s. The inexperienced Finnish pilots placed entirely too much faith in these weapons, attempting to engage the maneuverable NATO fighters at range instead of closing and engaging with cannons. This was a fatal error, as the NATO fliers were able to easily evade the Falcon missiles but still engage the Finns’ attention as two reinforcing flights of Ditch F-16s approached from the southwest.

When the Dutch arrived, they turned the table on the Drakens, plowing into the flank of the furball spitting Sidewinders and Vulcan bursts. In a few short minutes of violent turning combat the Dutch pilots and their nimble craft, along with the NATO survivors of the initial ambush, annihilated the leading Finnish squadron of Drakens and blunted a thrust by a second squadron approaching from the south. This left the NATO fliers on control of the airspace over the Lyngen positions as the surviving Russian Mig-23s and Finnish Drakens fled for their bases. However, they were once again critically short of ordnance, with many fighters down to one missile or completely out, and others critically low on even Vulcan ammo.

This was a critical shortage, because the E-3 radiating over central Norway was tracking a second wave of dozens Russian fighters transiting northern Finland from the Kola. ELINT platforms had pegged at least some of these as first line Mig-29s and Su-27s. Not a single NATO fighter now in the air carried any long-range AIM-120s, and the current allied airborne strength was wholly inadequate to meet the new Soviet thrust. The battle would come down to the ability of the NATO ground crews who even now were frantically readying more flights of F-16s and F-15s at Evenes, Bardufoss, and Bodo. Would they get their jets into the air in time? Or would the capable Russian interceptors sweep through the perilously thin NATO screen and on over their bases to bounce allied pilots as they took off?

**Fourth Post:**

While the aerial drama developed over the Lyngen position, the Red Banner Northern Fleet inflicted two hammer blows on the Royal Norwegian Navy. The first blow fell when a Soviet Helix ASW helicopter picked up the Norwegian Ula-class diesel boat Utsira on radar close inshore as the sub was snorkeling. The Norwegian boat quickly dove, but more helicopters from the approaching Soviet Surface action group joined the hunt and flooded the restricted waters with buoys. The Ula-class was an extremely quiet boat, but the radar return had given the Russians a precise location to start their search, and they eventually detected and localized the creeping Norwegian sub. A Helix approached the Norwegian from astern and dropped a light torpedo directly in its wake. The weapon quickly acquired the submarine and bored in, striking the small vessel’s screw and sending it and its crew to the bottom of the Norwegian Sea. The landward flank of the NATO naval picket line was now compromised.

The second blow fell on the two Norwegian frigates, Bergen and Stavenger, which were fleeing southward to link up with STANAVFORLANT. They were cruising south close in to the Lofoten Islands when their radar technicians picked up a spread of torpedoes approaching at an incredible 70kts from seaward. Both ships turned away and increased speed to flank, while Bergen launched a Stingray torpedo back down the bearing of the approaching weapons. The contest between the rapidly approaching Soviet torpedoes and the accelerating Norwegian ships was an unequal one. Bergen’s screws were still clawing at the water when a massive explosion lifted her stern completely out of the water and slammed the ship back down, a broken wreck in the frigid waters.

The death of Bergen did mask the Stavenger from the remaining Russian weapons, and her captain ordered her to turn into the attack just as his sonarmen reported an explosion on the bearing of Bergen’s Stingray. Stavenger’s captain put his ship on the bearing of the explosion and accelerated, wanting to ensure revenge for Bergen, which he could see rapidly sinking now off his port bow.

The Soviet Kilo-class diesel boat that had attacked the frigates had taken a hit from the light Stingray torpedo in its sail. The explosion had shredded the sail, but left the submarine still seaworthy and with all of her sensors intact. Once her captain determined that she was still in the fight, he began to consider the reports from his sonar room of the surviving frigate bearing down on him. He quickly realized his damaged boat was making far too much scraping and grinding noise to escape. His only chance of survival was to launch another attack. He ordered his torpedo room to launch two more torpedoes.

Stavenger’s captain’s blood went cold when his sonar room reported the incoming torpedoes. He hadn’t expected a damaged submarine to be capable of another attack. He ordered a radical turn and loosed two Stingrays of his own back down the approaching fish’ line of bearing. In the end, though, Stavenger’s fate matched that of Bergen. The incredibly fast Russian torpedoes closed relentlessly on the frigate’s stern and blew her out of the water. Her captain ordered abandon ship, and the survivors began to join Bergen’s surviving crew in bobbing orange life rafts.

Stavenger’s two Stingrays avenged the two frigates, sending the Kilo to the bottom of the Norwegian sea with no survivors, but the damage had been done. Norway’s Navy was quickly being reduced to little more than a coastal patrol force.

**Fifth Post:**

So…I had to reload the scenario from an earlier save after what I thought was a glitch. This had some interesting effects, namely that the diesel sub Utsira managed to evade the Soviet ASW helos and break contact towards the landward most Soviet SAG, and the second salvo of torpedoes fired by both the Kilo and the frigate Stavanger missed their targets. Both ships survived and have lost contact with each other. Otherwise, everything in the previous updates remains the same. So, read on…

The massive formation of close to forty Soviet fighters, at least half dangerous Su-27s and Mig-29s, proceeded across the Finnish wedge towards the airspace over the Lyngen position. The drubbing that the Norwegian, Dutch, and American pilots had dealt to the first Russian fighter sweep had been heard by the second wave’s pilots in snippets of frantic radio chatter over the thirty minutes that that air battle had lasted. What came over their radio nets next was the stunned reports of the surviving Mig-23 pilots who were retreating towards Banak. This was causing confusion among the second wave, whose mission was to set up a CAP over the Lyngen position and Bardufoss, not to fight their way in. THAT had been the task given to the first wave. The second wave’s pilots hadn’t planned for the eventuality that the first wave would be so utterly defeated, and their organization and formation began to erode. Even so, the NATO fighters in the air were desperately short on ordnance and the ground crews at Bardufoss, Evenes, and Bodo were working feverishly to get more fighters off the ground.

As the Soviet formation crossed northern Finland, the first two American F-15s took off from Bodo. The pilots punched their afterburners and rocketed north. These were followed by four more F-15s that rose from Bardufoss, along with an AMRAAM-armed Norwegian F-16. As these seven aircraft formed into a line abreast heading east, more F-16s, both Dutch and Norwegian, began to rise from Bardufoss and Evenes. The NATO ground crews had done their part, and they now turned their efforts to reading the next aircraft for the remaining weary pilots. The battle for the airspace over Bardufoss now at least would be won or lost in their air.

The NATO fliers had the advantage of direction from an E-3 AWACS turning racetracks over central Norway and of an EW aircraft providing jamming support. The Soviet A-50 AWACS aircraft, so prominent in the previous day’s fighting were conspicuously absent today, and the Soviet pilots were suffering from a lack of knowledge about what was ahead of them. The controllers on the NATO AWACS fed information to the F-15 pilots who oriented their battle line towards the front of the approaching Soviet fighter column. Seven Allied fighters closed with forty Soviet ones, though the pilots of several additional flights of 16s were punching their afterburners to catch up.

The pilots of the American F-15s had been approaching with their radars off, receiving guidance from the controllers on the AWACS. Now, fifteen miles in front of the oncoming Soviet fighter stream, the Eagle drivers flipped on their radars and began selecting targets. In seconds they began to ripple fire AMRAAMs as fast as targets could be illuminated and engaged. The Soviet pilots, already confused and flying into the unknown, were caught completely by surprise by this deadly assault. Their formation, already wavering, fell apart as individual pilots broke ranks to evade.

The American missiles dove and ripped into the Soviet column shattering plane after plane and taking a particularly heavy toll of the first-rate Mig-29s and Su-27s which were at the front of the Soviet formation. Behind the AMRAAMs came American F-15s and Dutch and Norwegian F-16s boring in on afterburner. These tore into the surviving Russians, launching Sidewinders as fast as they could bring a twisting Soviet jet into their sights. It was a slaughter. The NATO jets tore through the tattered Soviet formation as red-starred fighters exploded, burned, or simply fell broken through the scattered clouds below. In minutes the battle was over. It had been an unmitigated disaster for the Russian air force. The NATO fighters, after annihilating the leading Migs and Sukois, had turned on the following Mig-23s and smashed them as well.

The American, Dutch, and Norwegian pilots found themselves bursting through what had been the back of the Soviet column to clear skies. As they turned to reenter the fight it began to become clear that there were no more Soviets to fight. The Russian second wave had been destroyed completely without the loss of a single NATO aircraft. The pilots turned back for the sky over the Lyngen position to await further attacks as the controllers began sending those pilots who were low on missiles back to base to rearm. So confident was the battle captain aboard the AWACs after the unlikely victory that he vectored two reinforcing F-15 from Bodo out over the Norwegian Sea to hunt Soviet ASW helicopters with the long-ranged AMRAAMs.

Out to sea the Soviet naval deployments were becoming clear. Closest in to the coast and heading south were two surface action groups of four warships, each consisting of a Krivak frigate, an Udaloy, a Sovremeny, and a Kresta-class cruiser. Further to west was the Kiev task group, with another task group centered on the carrier Kuznetsov far out to sea. These groups were all advancing roughly abreast, sweeping the ocean ahead of them. Behind them the AWACS’ radar was beginning to pick up returns from what could only be the approaching amphibious group that had be sighted by Trafalgar in the Barents Sea yesterday.

The NATO submarines were particularly well positioned to intercept these forces, but it would take a great deal of skill by the sub’s captains to get past the powerful Russian ASW screens to attack the carriers and amphibs. Killing some to the screens’ helicopters would at least help, though the American jets would have to stay outside the engagement envelope of the effective Russian naval SAM systems. Complicating things further was a CAP of Su-33 fighters flying from Kuznetzov. The Soviet naval offensive would clearly be a tough nut to crack, if it could be cracked at all.

**Sixth Post:**

After evading the Soviet ASW helicopters the Norwegian 210-class diesel sub Utsira had broken contact towards the oncoming Soviet surface action group. The captain had taken his boat deep to evade the Russian aircraft, and his positions astride the course of the Soviet ships allowed him to keep his sub moving at barely above steerageway to keep noise to a minimum. The Soviet formation was shaped like an inverted letter Y, with the group’s Sovremeny-class destroyer and an older Kashin-Mod-class destroyer taking the lead and either leg of the Y, followed by a Kresta and an Udaloy in column. Utsira’s captain set his slow course so that he would split the distance between the two lead destroyers. He planned quietly slip into the center of the Soviet formation before launching his attack and then using the ensuing chaos to egress.

To the northeast, another challenge to the NATO pilots patrolling the skies over the Lyngen position was developing. The Finns were launching another wave of fighters, this time a mix of Mig-21s and Drakens, while sorties of Mig-27 ground attack fighters were making sorties from Banak and proceeding southwest at low altitude. The NATO pilots were once again low on missiles after annihilating the second wave of Soviet air superiority fighter, and the controllers in the AWACS were not eager to put their outnumbered aircraft into a gun fight with nimble Mig-21s. Additionally, NATO fliers had to divide their attention between the Finnish fighters approaching at 40,000 feet and the Soviet raiders coming in at treetop level over the broken and mountainous Norwegian terrain, meaning one aircraft could pilot could not divide his attention between two threats.

In the end, the NATO Falcon drivers split up, Dutch aircraft going south to meet the oncoming Finns, and Norwegians going north to hunt down the low level attack jets. The Dutch pilots met the inexperienced Finns with volleys of their remaining Sidewinders before the fight devolved into a turning furball of twisting and turning F-16s and Mig-21s. The experience of the battle-hardened NATO pilots quickly told, and Finnish Migs and Drakens began to fall again through the clouds, joined by a lone flaming Falcon. The battle was quickly over, with the surviving Finnish pilots turning and punching their afterburners to escape.

Further north, the Norwegians were struggling to intercept numerous pairs of Mig-27s as they infiltrated through deep mountain valleys towards Bardufoss. They managed to down or turn back most of the raiders, but one pair burst through and bore down on the airfield. The 40mm Bofors guns defending the field opened up at the low flying jets as they streaked over the tarmac and released their ordnance. Green bombs fell off the Russians’ wings and slammed into the taxiway. Earth and pavement were heaved into the air as the Migs streaked away and turned back into the rugged snow-covered mountains. Almost before the dust had settled bulldozers were speeding out to smoothe away the damage done by the Russian bombs. The two Migs made good their escape as the NATO pilots continued to joust with the other Soviet and Finnish intruders.

At sea the Utsira’s captain had maneuvered his sub into position in the middle of the landward most Soviet SAG. With the throbbing screws of the Russian ships all around him, he ordered his boat to ascend and make its attack run. This was where the small 210-class sub’s eight torpedo tubes would show their worth. When the Utsira ascended through 100 meters the captain gave the order and the whole ship shuddered eight times as two torpedoes were launched at each of the four southward moving Russian ships.

The Russian reaction was swift and violent. The two leading destroyers each launch torpedoes towards the point from which their sonarmen reported numerous torpedoes radiating outward. Simultaneously, RBU anti-submarine mortars began to cough from all four ships, sending bomblets towards the diving and accelerating Norwegian submarine. Despite the volume of fire, the Utsira’s captain managed to avoid damage and dive his boat deep as his own weapons sped towards the Soviet ships as bomblets roiled the water around them. Then the chief sonarman reported deeper, larger explosions.

The first Soviet ship to die was the group’s flagship, the Kresta-II class cruiser. The first Norwegian torpedo struck her bow and crumpled the entire front of this ship. Moments later the second weapon passed underneath the wrecked bow and detonated directly under the keel. As the column of water subsided the Russian cruiser groaned and then broke in half. The two parts quickly sank, leaving few survivors.

The next casualty was the Kashin, followed quickly by the Udaloy. The former capsized after two torpedoes plowed into her port side, while the latter lost all power and began to settle by the stern. The Sovremeny managed to evade the first enemy weapon, but the second bored in and detonated under her stern, lifting it out of the water and slamming it back down. The destroyer quickly began to settle by the stern until her bow lifted out of the water and the whole ship slid backwards with crew members jumping into the icy waves.

Unfortunately for the Utsira, just before the last torpedo had detonated under the Russian Sovremeny, the enemy ship’s crew had launched one last lucky salvo of RBU mortars. These straddled the fleeing subs position with one bomb actually striking the boat just behind the sail. Water flooded the control room as the pressure hull failed, and the Utsira and her crew joined the wreckage of the Russian SAG on the bottom after one of the most violent and deadly naval engagements of the war.

**Seventh Post:**

Though the loss of the Utsira was bitter, the complete destruction of the landward-most Russian SAG suddenly opened up possibilities for the NATO forces to set the conditions to go on the offensive at sea. The controllers on the AWACS had watched with mounting excitement as the electronic signatures and radar returns from the four Russian ships disappeared one by one. This excitement was compounded when the captain of the older Kobben-class diesel submarine Kinn, operating some distance south of the Utsira’s patrol area, came to communication depth and reported he had detected, tracked, and eventually sunk a Soviet Foxtrot-class diesel boat. This, combined with the damage inflicted on the Kilo further north, seemed to indicate a severe weakening of the Soviet fleet’s eastern flank.

Quick planning was conducted by the staff at AFNN, and they presented a plan to the theater commander to focus their anti-surface efforts on the one Soviet group that could both be engaged decisively and whose destruction would upset whatever plans the Soviets had for the Norwegian Sea: the amphibious group trailing the three surviving Soviet surface groups. This force was possessed of a strong escort, but it was nonetheless weaker than that of the Kuznetsov or the Kiev-class carrier (probably the Admiral Gorshkov, since the Kiev had been identified earlier in the day north of Jan Mayen).

ELF messages went out to the nuclear submarines USS Annapolis and HMS Talent, which were stalking the Kuznetsov and Gorshkov groups respectively. The two subs duly came to communication depth and their captains grudgingly received instructions to break off contact with the Soviet carriers and skirt the enemy screens to proceed north. They were instructed to come to communication depth at a pre-determined time to attempt a combined missile attack on the amphibious group’s escorts with their combined eight Harpoon missiles. The subs would then close and do what damage they could with torpedoes. The missile attack would hopefully weaken the group’s screen enough for AFNN’s commander to play the two Aces he was keeping up his sleeve: two squadrons of F-5As at Andoya and Bodo configured for an anti-surface strike, and the four groups of missile boats currently sheltering in the Lofoten Islands.

In the meantime the NATO cap over the Lyngen position continued to fend off low-level Soviet raids by Mig-27s. Most of the enemy flights coming in at low level were either shot down or turned back, but one enemy flight managed to evade interception and burst through to the Norwegian naval base at Olavsvern. The pilots of the two attack jets released their bombs and baked for home. The six bombs tumbled down and exploded outside the blast doors of the massive complex burrowed into the mountain flank of a fjord. Damage to the actual facilities was minimal, and the two raiders were bounced by Dutch F-16s on their egress. A third Finnish wave, weaker than the previous two, was also turned back with heavy loss.

The success of NATO airpower over the Lyngen position allowed COMAFNN to execute the first part of his staff’s plan to smash the Soviet amphibious group. A pair of F-15s had already been sent out to hunt Soviet ASW helicopters but had been kept at bay by the air defenses of the landward SAG. When this group suddenly disappeared, its ASW helicopters were left suddenly without any top cover. Even worse for the Russians was the fact that the amphibious group’s commander had dispatched several of his escorts’ helicopters to assist in the hunt for the now-dead Utsira. These all became easy prey for the American interceptors who dove on the defenseless choppers and remorselessly downed them one by one.

Once these were destroyed the Eagle drivers dropped down to low level and streaked in towards the next Soviet surface group, the other SAG. The two pilots used AMRAAMs to destroy the helicopter screen for this group as well. The American fighters were inexorably caving in the ASW defenses of the Soviet east flank as the Annapolis and Talent dove and adjusted course to approach the amphibs from the west and south. COMAFNN began to feel a glimmer of confidence about his plan to foil the Soviet designs in his theater.

**Eighth Post:**

Over the Lyngen position, the weight of Soviet numbers began to tell. Though the NATO pilots in their Falcons and Eagles continued to smash and turn back successive waves of Russian aircraft, the volume of sorties the Soviets could put in the air was beginning to cause strain on the NATO logistical systems. Pilot after pilot expended his missiles in swirling dog fights with groups of Mig-23s supported by more cautious flights of Mig-29s and Su-27s. By now every NATO fighter, other than the F-5s being husbanded for the strike on the Soviet amphibs, was in the air or being rearmed after one or sometimes two sorties over the past two and a half hours.

Soviet losses were heavy, but NATO casualties were beginning to mount as well. A Dutch F-16 fell to a high deflection cannon burst from a Mig-23. Minutes later, and F-15’s pilot banked into the path of one air-to-air missile while trying to evade another. Two more Norwegian F-16s were the next to fall. One pilot was unable to shake an AA-11 fired at long range by a Mig-23, and the other was shot down when he failed to account for the air to air armament of the Su-24 attack aircraft he was intercepting. Even so, the air defenses over the Lyngen position managed to hold on and turn back each successive Soviet thrust, leaving the skies further west clear for the mission against the amphibious group.

The pieces for this operation were moving into place. The USS Annapolis and HMS Talent would come to communication depth soon and be standing by to launch their Harpoons on order for a coordinated attack. At the Andoya and Bodo airfields the F-5A pilots gathered in their ready rooms to receive their mission briefings. Sixteen aircraft would participate from the two fields. Ten would be armed with the obsolescent AGM-12B Bullpup missile. This Vietnam era weapon possessed a diminutive 250lb warhead, required the launching pilot to guide the weapon all the way to the target, and had a measly range of only 6 nautical miles. Four more of the F-5As would carry Rockeye cluster bombs, and two more carried Mk82 general purpose bombs. The armament was far from ideal, but the ordnance was all that was available in north Norway at the moment.

As the mission briefings proceeded, the mood in the ready rooms became increasingly pessimistic. The screen of the amphibious group was strong, consisting of two Krivak-class frigates, A Kresta II-class cruiser, one each Udaloy and Kashin-class destroyer, and worst of all from the perspective of the pilots, two Sovremeny-class destroyers with their string air defense suites. The F-5 strike had no chance of seriously denting this force. Instead the goal of entire air strike was to destroy the Udaloy to open up the Russian screen for the SSNs to do the real destruction. The idea was for the Harpoons from the SSNs, coming in from the west and south, to fix the attention of the Russian air defenses while the F-5s approached at low altitude with jamming support from the east, concentrating all their attacks on the Udaloy. Ideally the airstrike would have been delayed so that it could coordinate with the missile boats waiting to the south in the Lofoten islands, but that would push the attack onto hours of darkness, and the F-5s were not equipped to conduct night attacks.

Once the briefing was complete at Andoya, the squadron commander stood up and addressed his pilots.

“Men, I am not going to lie to you. Some of us, even many of us, will likely die in this mission. Our EW is inadequate, our weapons have too short a range, and the Russian defenses are strong. But the Russians caught our country with our pants down during the Olympics. They’ve already overrun the north, and if the naval infantry in those transports get to their destination then we may lose central Norway as well. Right now, we are the only thing that NATO and our country have to throw at those bastards, and those subs out there are counting on us to weaken the screen. Remember, these are the people who killed our king yesterday. I know you all know what things were like the last time out country was invaded. We cannot allow that to happen again. When we go in, I want no wavering, no hesitation. Even if the planes to your left and right go down, you must keep going and deliver your weapons on target. The future of Norway depends on you. That is all.”

The pilots met the speech with thoughtful silence, and then began filing out of the warm briefing room and across the icy tarmac to their aircraft, which were undergoing they final checks from the ground crews. A few minutes later the first of the twin-engine fighters rotated off the runway at Bodo, headed north.

Far to the west, at precisely 1600 local time the two NATO subs, Annapolis and Talent, came to communication depth and received their targeting instructions and vectors from AFNN. Both subs came to periscope depth and conducted one scan with their radars, quickly locating the large formation of Soviet ships…

**Ninth Post:**

Four Harpoon canisters exploded out of the water in front of HMS Talent, followed seconds later by four more fired by USS Annapolis more than forty miles to the northwest. The rocket engines for the eight weapons ignited and all settled into their wave-top altitude for the short flight to the southwestern arc of the Soviet formations. Both sub captains had ordered their missiles to be targeted at what appeared to be the flagship of the Soviet formation, the Kresta II cruiser. They each immediately ordered their boats deep and altered course to evade any counterattack.

At the same time the controllers in the AWACS transmitted a one word order to the flights of F-5As approaching the amphibious group from the east. The sixteen pilots dropped their aircraft down as low as they could fly with their heavy loads and fanned out on an intercept course for the Udaloy cruising on the northeast quadrant of the Russian formation. They were supported by electronic jamming from a Falcon 2 ECM aircraft (essentially a corporate jet airframe full of ECM equipment), which was cruising at the margin of the Soviet SAM envelope.

The Harpoons crossed into the Russian SAM envelope just before the fighters crossed from the opposite direction. The jamming behind the jets ensured that the Russian were able to achieve firing solution on the missiles first. Air defense missiles began to explode from the mounts on the Sovremenys, heading west and south to intercept the incoming Harpoons. So far the Norwegian plan was working to perfection, with the Russian attention fixed away from the approaching fighters. SA-N-7s streaked out, leaving smoky arcs leading away from the two air defense destroyers. Then the Russian radars began to burn through the NATO jamming and the plan began to unravel.

The air defense coordinator on the Kresta, realizing the threat materializing from the electronic haze to the east, ordered his two Sovremenys to split their fire between the missiles and the approaching F-5As. More missiles arced out towards the northeast as the radar warning receivers began to chirp at the Norwegian pilots, sweating in their cockpits as they fought to keep their planes above the wave tops. Other ships began to add their missiles to the fire arcing over to meet the Norwegian onslaught.

The first several missiles plowed into the sea or exploded beyond the oncoming Freedom Fighters. Then an SA-N-7 exploded directly in the path of a Rockey carrying F-5, which immediately cart wheeled into the sea. The raiders crossed to ten miles of range to the Udaloy as another F-5 was swatted down, then another, and another. Six miles, and the pilots of the AGM-12B equipped jets began launching their radio guided missiles at the Udaloy class destroyer now clearly visible directly ahead. Missiles shredded two more aircraft and also began to engage the incoming missiles. Two miles. In a flurry of missile and gunfire and chaff two Bullpup missiles plowed into destroyer amidships and exploded, starting fires around the RBU ASW mortars. Two more impacted the water within 20 meters of the ship, causing superficial damage. The rest of the missiles had either been destroyed by defensive fire or, the pilots who were to guide them in now dead, continued harmlessly over and past the ship.

The surviving F-5 pilots, finding themselves in a maelstrom of fire from the Soviet ships, each launched their second AGM-12B at close range. Missiles continued to shred aircraft as they turned north, trying to escape on afterburner. One more Bullpup plowed into the fantail of the Udaloy and exploded, immediately stopping one of the destroyer’s shafts from spinning and slowing the ship to eleven knots. Another missile crashed onto the sea just behind the Russian ship.

The few surviving Norwegian pilots had no idea what damage they had caused to the Russian ship, but they were shocked at the losses to their own ranks. One of the survivors was the squadron commander, distraught at the loss of his men and still desperately trying to escape himself. He cried out in frustration as the F-5 to his left exploded and fell 100 meters into the sea. Then the jet to his right disintegrated. He looked around, realizing he was the only one left. He felt tears well in his eyes as he thought of his parents and the families of his squadron mates, just as an SA-N-7 exploded into his engines. The F-5 nosed down and disintegrated into the dark blue-gray Norwegian sea.

The air defense officer aboard the Soviet flagship breathed a sigh of relief as the last of the sixteen enemy jets disappeared from his radar screen. The eight missiles approaching from the south and east had all been easily engaged and destroyed by missiles from the west-most Sovremeny. He was amazed by the courage shown by the enemy raiders. How could they have hoped to survive against the concentrated fire of this screen? Then the damage reports began to come in.

The captain of the Udaloy, on his bridge as his damage control teams tried to control the fires started by the three missiles, reported that his ship could not stay information and was dropping back. The best he could do was 11 knots, not nearly fast enough to keep up with the 18 knot convoy. The sacrifice of the Norwegian fliers had not been entirely in vain. Now it would fall to the crew of the HMS Talent, lying in wait across the amphibious group’s southward course, and to the crew of the USS Annapolis, hurrying to close with the convoy from the west, to exploit the crack opened by the brave Norges.

**Tenth Post:**

The Soviet amphibious group, with the damaged Udaloy-class destroyer now trailing further and further behind as her crew tried to bring the fires in her mid and tail sections under control, continued at 18 knots on a course of south-south-west. The group’s commander had detached one of his two Krivak-class frigates to escort the damaged ship. Even with the loss of these two ships the group’s screen was strong, consisting of the two Sovremenys, the Kresta-class cruiser Kronstadt, the remaining Krivak, and two Kashin-class destroyers, along with the organic weapons carried by the amphibious ships themselves.

Opposing this group were the two NATO SSNs. The captain of HMS Talent had already laid his ship astride the course of the Russian ships and was making 5 knots at 300 meters depth while waiting for the Russians to arrive. Twenty-five miles to the west the crew of USS Annapolis was cruising south at 25 knots in order to get ahead of the Soviet group and execute their own ambush well to the south of Talent’s position. The plan transmitted by COMAFNN to the commanders of the two SSNs before they dove after their unsuccessful missile attack was for HMS Talent to attempt to pass to the rear of the Soviet formation and finish off the Udaloy. Annapolis would then ambush the front of the Soviet formation to destroy the two Sovremenys with their strong air defense suites. This would leave the Russians vulnerable to the final phase of the NATO plan for stopping the amphibs.

The third part of NATO attack would involve the three groups of missile boats that had been biding their time hiding in the rugged coves and bays of the Lofoten Islands, which arced southwest away from north Norway like a tail. The plan was for them to move west and rendezvous with the aim of launching an overwhelming missile attack against the Russian ships with their Penguin Mk. 1 and Mk. 2 missiles. The neutralization of the two Soviet air defense ships was vital to the success of the attack. After a curt radio order from AFNN, the crews of the Hauk and Sturm missile boats motored out into the gathering dusk and warily turned their small craft towards the weak setting sun.

Hours passed as the various ships closed with each other. HMS Talent was the first to make local contact with the Russians as the lead units of the enemy formation bore down on her position. Talent’s skipper chose as aggressive strategy. He directed his boat to dive deep and put her on a course to pass directly under the thrashing propellers of the Soviet ships to then pop up and attack the rear of the formation. As the British submarine passed the outer screen of the Soviet ships this plan began to unravel. Somehow the leading Krivak had caught a whiff of the stealthy sub and the frigate’s captain, already on edge after the combined missile and air attack, launched two torpedoes at long range to try to flush the faint contact.

The tactic worked, after a fashion. The captain of the Talent, Commander Pimm, realizing that he had been detected and that his plan to get to the rear of the Soviet column was now impractical, decided on a different and equally aggressive course of action. As the Russian weapons came on still several miles distant, HMS Talent accelerated to 20 knots and ascended above the thermal layer. As the sub came shallow, Pimm ordered his four ready torpedoes launched, two each at the oncoming Sovremenys, and that the torpedo room then launch their fifth ready weapon at the Russian flagship, the Kresta II. Talent shuddered four times, followed a few seconds later by a fifth, as the modern Spearfish torpedoes exited her tubes and sped on their outward radiating paths towards the heart of the Russian screen.

“Take us deep, if you please,” ordered Pimm, and his sub tipped down and accelerated away from the still oncoming Russian weapons.

The Russian counterattack was swift and violent. Far to the rear of the Russian group the Udaloy, based on data provided by the Russian flagship, began launching rocket-propelled Metel ASW torpedoes arcing over the amphibs to splash down near where the Russian sonar operators believed the stealthy British sub would be. One splashed down a mile to port of the talent and began its search pattern. After one circle its active sonar picked up the British boat and the weapon turned to give chase. Talent’s screw thrashed the water to get away but the torpedo closed relentlessly.

At the last moment Pimm ordered, “launch countermeasures, hard to starboard!”

The Russian weapon bored in and accelerated through the cloud of bubbles created by the noisemaker and into the knuckle of water created by Talent’s sharp turn, continuing on straight as the British boat completed her turn to go on a reciprocal heading. Talent’s crew let out a collective breath.

The reprieve was only temporary, however. The two torpedoes launched by the Krivak were still approaching, not from directly ahead, and unknown to Pimm another Metel rocket was also inbound. On the other hand, the efficient British torpedo room had managed to reload three tubes with half of the remaining Spearfish torps.

Pimm ordered a snapshot of two weapons against the leading Soviet frigate and targeted the third at the flagship. Just then a low rumble reverberated through the hull. The sonar room reported an explosion on the bearing of the Kresta-II. The 60-knot spearfish launcheb by Talent’s torpedo room had struck the cruiser’s fantail and wrecked her propulsion, leaving the ship dead in the water. To the north and northeast of the stricken cruiser the two Sovremenys were maneuvering wildly to try to shake their tormentors. The captain of the east-most destroyer was the most successful. He managed to interpose his towed decoy between the lead Spearfish and himself. The British weapon detonated in a luminescent column of white water behind the ship. The explosion also blinded the second torpedo, which was following several hundred meters behind, and this fish then continued straight on behind the stern of the destroyer.

The second Russian destroyer wasn’t nearly so lucky. The lead Spearfish plowed past the towed decoy and detonated directly under the Sovremeny’s stern, lifting the rear of the ship completely out of the water, her screws still thrashing wildly. The ship crashed back down in a froth of white water and smoke just as the second Spearfish detonated under the now wrecked fantail. The rear of the destroyer broke off entirely, and front two thirds of the shift tilted upwards until the entire structure was vertical before the entire wreck plunged straight down into the sea.

Aboard Talent, Pimm’s torpedo room reported the destruction of the one Russian destroyer, but was unable to confirm if the other had been hit. Just then the second Metel splashed down behind the British boat and began an active sonar search pattern. The torpedo room had managed to reload two of the remaining three Spearfish by this point, and hedging against being sunk Pimm ordered these two launched at the last known position of the first Sovremeny. The commander then ordered an evasive turn and dive as the Russian weapon turned into them.

This time Pimm’s luck held. The Talent’s captain ordered several noisemakers ejected. These succeeded in luring away the latest Russian attack.

Back above the surface in the darkening arctic night the remaining Russian ships were in confusion. The flagship was dead in the water with a single torpedo bearing down. The lead frigate was fleeing two other torpedoes, and the sonar operators on the surviving Sovremeny had just detected two more weapons bearing down to replace the two they had already evaded. The next Russian ship to die was the flagship. The Kresta-II had been settling by the stern until the second torpedo approached head on and wrecked the ship’s bow, actually detaching it from the rest of the cruiser. The Kronstadt sank quickly, her surviving crew jumping and tumbling into the frigid arctic water.

Next to die was the fleeing Krivak. When the smoke and water column cleared from the detonation of the two torpedoes there was nothing left but debris and oily water. The last to die was the remaining Sovremeny, which took two Spearfish to the starboard side and slowly rolled over, taking most of her crew with her. The Russian screen had been reduced to the two old Kashin-class destroyers, along with the limping Udaloy far to the rear escorted by one more frigate.

The Russians didn’t die alone, however. A final Metel had splashed down directly behind Talent just as the reverberations from the last explosions quieted. Pimm’s luck finally ran out as the Russian weapon impacted the sub’s screw, destroying all propulsion. Pimm ordered an emergency blow that succeeded in surfacing his crippled boat, and then ordered abandon ship. Sailors tumbled out of the British submarine’s hatches and into survival rafts as the submarine began to settle by the stern more quickly. The proud boat then sank out of sight, taking with her several crew, including her captain.

The Russian amphibious group continued south with a much-weakened screen, ignoring the Talent’s rafts.

**Eleventh Post:**

The Russian amphibious group continued south with its much-depleted screen. To the west, USS Annapolis, her captain unsure about the outcome of HMS Talent’s attack, proceeded south at 25 knots on a parallel course, trying to get at the flank of the Soviet group. To the east the Norwegian missile boats rendezvoused with the Norwegian frigate Stavenger and then proceeded on an intercept course with the Russian ships at their best speed of 32 knots.

More than 90 minutes passed as the various units closed with each other. The next allied ship to make contact with the amphibs was the Annapolis. Her captain, Commander Adams, chose a conservative approach for his attack run. He would move in from the east and launch a spread of Mk48s at any escorts he could target at maximum range. He would then evade and assess the success of this attack before reengaging from a different vector. Annapolis turned west and slowed to 5 knots for the approach.

After a while, Adams’ sonar room reported that the only escorts they could make out were two Kashin-class destroyers and a Krivak-class frigate hurrying up from the rear of the enemy column. Talent’s attack couldn’t have been so successful that the escorting force was reduced to such a level, could it? Adams suspected a trap, and chose to keep with his conservative approach.

In reality, things were even worse for the Russians than they seemed to Adams aboard Annapolis. Talent’s attack had emasculated the group’s escorting screen, while further back luck had run out for the damaged Udaloy. The fires started by the three Bullpup missiles had continued to burn despite the efforts of the crew’s damage control parties. Now they had spread and were burning out of control along much of the ship. The destroyer had eventually lost power and her captain bowed to the inevitable and ordered abandon ship. The captain of the escorting Krivak had come alongside and taken off the surviving crew before ordering his ship south at full speed to catch up with the transports. The small warship was approaching the rear of the advancing column when she was detected by Annapolis.

Adams, suspecting a trap, opted to stay with his conservative plan of a long-range attack on the escorts. As Annapolis came into range of the column’s seaward flank, Adam’s ordered four Mk48s launched. The sub shuddered four times, and her captain then ordered a turn to port and a dive to 900 feet.

The torpedoes sped on their way for a surprisingly ling time before the Russians reacted. By then it was too late for the older Kashins to evade, much less detect their attacker. Both ships succumbed to a single Mk48, which exploded under their keels in the dark arctic night. The Krivak, carrying the survivors of the Udaloy, wasn’t any luckier. A Mk48 ripped into her, causing terrible casualties and tumbling the survivors into the sea, come of whom had lost two ships from under them in as many hours.

The Soviet transports were now without escort, but Commander Adams conservative approach and evasive course meant that he was now out of position to press his attack short of another lengthy run to the south. Now it was the turn of the Norwegian missile boats, speeding in from the east, to finish the job.

**Twelfth Post:**

The Hauk and Sturm missile boats sped across the dark rolling waves of the Norwegian Sea towards the landward side of the Russian column. Their crews were using their advanced optics, thermal and night vision systems to search for their quarry. The EW aircraft over central Norway had reported one by one the disappearance of every single escorting radar in the Soviet formation, and the Norwegian sailors were beginning to feel not just determined, but confident about their mission.

The crew on the lead small craft picked up the Russian ships on the western horizon and radioed their sighting to the other eleven boats. Each carried four Penguin ant-ship missiles, and the crews began to ripple-fire these as the low shapes of the Soviet LSTs and other transports began to appear on their screens.

The Russian defenses organic to the amphibious transport proved surprisingly effective at knocking down the incoming threats, particularly since the Norwegians had failed to launch their weapons in a single, coordinated strike. Even so, about half of the transports were hit, and several, weighed down with their heavy loads, began to sink. The missile boats, now out of missiles, pressed in on the Soviet formation like wolves attacking a wounded reindeer. They sped in and cut through the Russian ships, firing their 76mm deck guns and 40mm Bofors as fast as the crews could work them. The Russians fought back, particularly the large Ivan Rogov-class LPD at the center of the formation.

The Russian admiral in overall command, having realized lake the danger her amphibs were in, had dispatched four Yak-38s from the Kiev-class carrier Baku to safeguard these ships. These now arrived and attempted in the dark to intervene in the slaughter. They lined up on three of the Norvegian boats speeding into the column and dove, releasing their bombs just as Mistral missiles reached up towards them from two of the small ships. The bombs straddled one of the boats, causing superficial damage. At the same time, one of the stubby fighters exploded as it was hit by a Mistral SAM and fell into the sea behind the Norwegians. The Russian aircraft, now devoid of weapons, climbed and banked away, leaving the transports to their fate.

In the end, the small guns of the dozen Norwegian missile boats pummeled each Russian ship into wreckage one at a time. The last to succumb was the big Ivan Rogov, whose crew managed to hit several of the Norwegian boats with their own guns before they were swept from their posts by fire from several directions. A dozen transports, along with the Naval Infantry brigade they were carrying, were dumped into the icy waters of the Norwegian sea and the small and deadly boats withdrew into the night towards the Lofoten islands.

The allies had suffered losses, particularly among the F-5A squadrons, but the Soviet strategy for seizing central Norway was now in shambles.