**Northern Fury 13, Cutting the Tether**

**AAR By Joel Radunzel**

First Post

This scenario takes place simultaneously with the start of the last AAR (Here Comes the Cavalry). The Soviets have been using the captured airbase on the tiny island of Jan Mayen in the Norwegian Sea (see previous AAR, A Cold and Lonely Place) to ferry aircraft to Iceland. This has allowed them to amass an impressive air strength on Iceland in the past week. The mission is to cut this tether back to the Kola so that the carriers and the USAF can go about reducing the Soviet defenses on Iceland.

Jan Mayen island is essentially two dormant volcanoes connected by a narrow isthmus of black, volcanic sand. The southwestern volcano is the significantly smaller of the two mountains and the gravel runway, along with the Soviet airbase facilities, the pier, and the fuel pipeline out to sea, all sit in the isthmus. The Russians have positioned a surveillance radar on the southwestern mountain and a limited number of infantrymen are patrolling the lower-lying areas.

A picture containing graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

The long hull *Sturgeon*-class (*Archerfish*-class) submarine USS *Batfish*, supported by the *688*-class USS *Oklahoma City*, are tasked with reducing the Soviet facilities on Jan Mayen. More specifically, the forty Navy SEALS in *Batfish*’s new bulbous diving chamber have the mission of neutralizing Jan Mayen, assisted by *Oklahoma City*’s Tomahawks. The plan is for them to put ashore and neutralize the “Box Spring” surveillance radar on the island, which will allow the cruise missiles to approach the island without being detected and engaged by the Soviet SA-3 battery defending the facilities. After the strike, the SEALs will close in and clean up what the Tomahawks missed. This all needs to be complete and the SEALs off the island before daybreak, eight hours from now.

Can the SEALs prevail against the elements, the Russians, and time to cut the Soviet tether and give the carriers further south a chance? Read on to find out!

Second Post

The screw of USS *Batfish* silently beat the black waters of the Norwegian Sea as she crept silently past the southwestern tip of Jan Mayen. The American submarine was running shallow, had been for the last several hours as her captain had used the advanced optics in his periscope to gather all the information he could about the island that was such a key link in the Soviets’ aerial bridge to Iceland. For once things were going well. Arc lights and poor Soviet light discipline at the pier that extended away from the island’s isthmus had allowed the captain to discern that a tanker was even now offloading fuel into the pipeline that paralleled that long, manmade sliver of gravel and black volcanic rock. Given the primitive conditions up here, and the absolutely horrific working conditions (it was -28 degrees C above the waves), the captain judged that she would likely be here for several more hours before starting the cold voyage back to the Kola. If everything worked as intended, the captain mused, it would be a lot longer than that before she ever left this rock.

The low-light and thermal viewers in the periscope had also revealed an icebreaker anchored off the southern side of island’s isthmus, accompanied by what the captain judged to be a *Pauk*-class corvette. Neither vessel was underway, and the captain guessed that their crews were doing their best to huddle inside the hull away from the icy wind that was blowing across the water. The captain had also seen what he assumed were Russian soldiers, heavily bundled against the cold, trudging along the island’s southern rim. He didn’t envy them their duty, but these men with rifles were actually the greatest threat to the accomplishment of his mission. If they were on their game…

The captain looked at his watch, then at his boat’s position on the map plot in front of him in the control room. It was time, he judged. The captain picked up his boat’s intercom and called back to an officer waiting at the escape hatch behind the conning tower.

“Tell those frogmen they are clear to start the insertion. Launch the boats!”

In the diving chamber, a long, rounded hump on Batfish’s back behind the sub’s conning tower, a dozen elite commandos in drysuits put their scuba breathing apparatus in their mouths, then began the process of exiting the metal tube that had been their home since they had joined this special mission boat in Scotland days before. Once in the breathtakingly cold and black waters outside the chamber, the SEALs kicked the few meters upwards to the surface and broached. Then they began working fast. Two of the men pulled lanyards on drum-like packs that they had brought with them. The two objects hissed into shape as a pair of zodiacs. Two more of the men attached small outboard motors onto the craft, then each of the dozen men climbed in. Within a few short minutes, the first dozen commandos were skimming across the rolling blackness of the sea towards the even blacker outline of Jan Mayen.

Third Post

The two Zodiaks rode up onto the icy black sand beach on the western tip of Jan Mayen, and the SEALs piled out, yanking their packs and two bulky tubes out as well. As the commandos removed their weapons from waterproof bags, the Zodiacs turned about and sped back to seaward to rendezvous with Batfish. Four more teams of SEALs would land on the island in the next half hour. The first dozen men did not wait for them, however. Instead, they donned white camouflage smocks, cradled their weapons, and started up the snowy flanks of the Sor-Jan Mountain.

The SEALs scanned into the night through their night vision goggles as they walked. The wind shrieked around them out of the north, almost cutting through their layers clothes, which each man had donned hurriedly at the beach. They continued to climb until the point man quickly raised his hand in the signal to halt. The squad froze. Then the point man pointed ahead.

There, four hundred meters ahead, just around the flank of the mountain, rotated their objective. Sticking out of the top a large trailer, the sail-like antenna of the “Bed Spring” air search radar turned in lazy circles, silently sending electromagnetic radiation into the sky. Slowly the commandos crept forward now. Closer inspection showed a large tent nearby, likely housing the relief crew and a security team. The SEALs took up positions in an arc around the site. One team lugged the two tubes forward. A man mounted one in a launcher, and the brand-new Javelin missile, one of the first prototypes to make its way into soldiers’ hands, was ready for use. Then the men waited in the wind and blowing snow.

By now the four other teams were moving along the northern beach of the island towards the isthmus. They encountered no patrols, and quickly reached their own positions. One four-man recon team perched on a ledge overlooking the anchorage on the south side of the isthmus, noting the tanker still unloading fuel among the arc lights at the pier, as well as the icebreaker and the *Pauk* rocking at anchor further out. A second four-man recon team crawled up to the low ridge north of the airfield and looked down. Through their night vision they could see four MiG-23 fighters parked along the gravel runway. Ten temporary weather shelters lined the northern side of the strip, and a collection of construction vehicles, clearly intended to extend the runway during the short daylight hours, sat idle at the western end of the gravel. To the left a small tent city sat dark and silent against the howling wind. Finally, the vehicles of the SA-3 battery and its supporting ZSU-23-2 anti-aircraft dotted the snow around the whole site.

The recon teams radioed their observations, along with precise targeting coordinates, back to the raid’s commander, who was with the team watching the Box Spring radar. Behind the recon elements, two more ten-man assault teams waited for the order to rush forward. All was ready.

On top of Sor-Jan, the raid commander finished typing the last coordinates into his digital radio, then pressed the transmit button. The signal shot out from the radio set at light speed. It arrived at a dark mast that stuck up from the waves thirty miles south of the island. From there, the message travelled to the comm room of the 688i-class submarine USS *Oklahoma City*. In minutes the coordinates, which had been expected, had been loaded into the guidance computers of sixteen Tomahawk Land attack missiles, twelve in the boat’s VLS cells, and four more in the torpedo room. The torpedo tubes themselves were filled with the boat’s four Harpoon anti-ship missiles. Once all the weapons were ready, Oklahoma City’s captain ordered his comms officer to broadcast a single codeword on the same frequency from which they had received the coordinates. Then he ordered, “Weps, fire tubes one through four with the Harpoons on the following bearings. Tube one…”

On the flanks of Sor-Jan, the shivering raid commander saw the execute code flash on the display screen of his digital radio. Immediately he raised the hand mic of his squadron radio and said, “All Neptune elements, this is Neptune Six, stand by to initiate.”

Then the officer slapped the prone man next to him twice in the buttocks. The other SEAL, who was peering through the optics of his Javelin launcher at the radar van three hundred yards away, depressed his thumb triggers, and the raid was on.

The Javelin jumped upwards out of its tube on the force of the compressed air from its “soft launch” system. A split second later, the rocket motor ignited, and the missile streaked upwards, arcing the short three hundred yards to the radar. The weapon dove towards the van and exploded in the flash that lit up the surrounding snowscape. Hot metal ripped into the van and blew apart the flimsy radar antenna. All over the island, the other SEALs took the explosion as the signal to open fire. Rifle and machinegun rounds ripped into tents, SA-3 vehicles, anti-aircraft guns, and aircraft.

Twenty miles to the south, sixteen missiles skimmed above the waves, heading north. Oklahoma City’s crew had launched the four Harpoons from the sub’s torpedo tubes at the same time the twelve Tomahawks burst vertically out of its VLS cells. Now all of the weapons converged on the southern broadside of Jan Mayen. Three Harpoons followed a course towards the tanker at the pier, while the fourth streaked towards the anchored Pauk.

The crew of the Pauk had been mostly huddled in their crew quarters against the miserable cold when the attack began. They were ill-prepared for the onslaught of American missiles. What saved the ship was quick action by the junior officer on watch. As soon as the sound of gunfire had erupted from the shore, the officer had ordered his skeleton watch crew to activate the corvette’s single AK-630 CIWS. The automated weapons warmed up just in the nick of time. Its short-range radar detected the incoming threat, and the 30mm gun rotated in that direction. In less than a second a stream of shells was spitting towards the Harpoon. One of the big rounds connected, and the missile detonated over the water in a yellow burst that reflected briefly off the flock of surviving missiles skimming above the anchorage.

Fourth Post

The remaining fifteen American missiles streaked past the Pauk to the left and right, barely out of range of the corvette’s AK-630. The first weapons to reach their targets were the Harpoons targeted at the tanker at the end of the pier. The first one slammed into the vessel, tearing a deceptively neat hole into the tanker’s starboard flank just before the warhead exploded, igniting fuel and fumes. The remaining two Harpoons bored in and added their warheads to the conflagration that was quickly consuming the vessel, its crew, the pier, and the pipeline that led onshore towards the airfield.

The SEALs on the ridgeline above the runway possessed a front row seat to the fireworks that engulfed the makeshift Soviet airfield as the twelve Tomahawks arrived in quick succession. The first things to burn were the four MiG-23s parked near the runway. Their pilots had been on the first leg of their flight to Iceland and stopped over here for the night. Now they would never get there.

Next went the fuel blivets. The entire island seemed to be bathed in yellow light from burning fuel, made even brighter by the fire’s reflection of the white snow and grey clouds. One missile blew apart the old Norwegian airstrip shack that doubled as the strip’s control tower. Two flew to the end to the runway and released submunitions over the construction site, wrecking vehicles and igniting yet more fuel. The last few Tomahawks spent themselves diving into the temporary weather shelters erected by the Soviet ground crew on the north side of the runway, where the missiles’ warheads wreaked havoc on maintenance equipment and aircraft maintainers who, just moments before, had been asleep in their workspaces.

Even before the reverberations of the last missile warhead stopped resounding off the island’s two mountains, two SEAL assault teams were up and trotting forward, weapons ready. One made for the two rows of tents north of the airfield, where confused Russians were just now beginning to brave the bitter cold, stepping out to see the destruction that was engulfing their airfield. The second team spread out into an arrowhead formation and moved down towards the runway.

The SEALs of the assault team making for the tents started squeezing off rounds from their weapons as they moved forward in a tactical half-crouch, dropping several of the Russians who had ventured out to see what was happening. The others disappeared into back behind the flaps, shouting a warning. More than one reemerged with an AK, only to be dropped by well-aimed shots from the SEALs as the commandos drew closer. Then the SEALs were in among the tents. The team split up, with one section covering the entrances while another ran up the aisle between the two rows of shelters, tossing satchel charges through the entrances that exploded amid shrieks and cries from those inside. The assault team continued through the tents towards the east end of the airstrip.

The second team swept across the runway, placing satchel charges against the remaining weather shelters and blowing them down, shooting any Russians who tried to exit the temporary structures. Half the team turned west and destroyed the remaining vehicles that looked even remotely serviceable at the construction site. It was all over in just a few minutes. As the SEALs began to withdraw up the ridge they left behind them a scene of utter destruction: broken airplanes, smashed buildings, smoldering tents, bodies scattered about, all lit by the yellow light of burning fuel from the blivets and the tanker that was settling to the bottom of the icy surf zone.

But the night was not done yet. As the SEALs crested the ridgeline, they ran directly into a patrol of Soviet paratroopers who had been out scouting the northeast end of the island and who had hurried back when they hear gunfire and explosions. A confused firefight erupted between the intermixed Americans and Russians. Two SEALs dropped before the ten Soviets died in a hail of automatic fire. One of the Americans was dead, the other would need to be carried to the extraction point. None of the Soviet soldiers survived.

The American commandos, their victory somewhat tempered by their losses, shouldered their wounded comrade and the body of their dead and disappeared into the night on the north side of the island. The recon teams and the radar assault team also withdrew. All converged on the same black sand beach where they had disembarked less than four hours earlier. The Zodiacs were waiting.

The wounded man went in the boat first. His recovery onto *Batfish* would be tricky. The SEAL commander was in contact with the boat’s skipper about the problem, and they agreed that the submarine would need to surface to get the wounded man aboard. This was done without incident, and the Zodiacs returned to the beach for their next load. Three more trips and the island was clear.

*Batfish* slipped into the depths, heading south. She left behind her a smoking ruin on Jan Mayen. It would be days before the Soviets would be able to use the field there to reinforce Iceland. The stage was set for the Navy and Air Force to set the conditions to retake what the Soviets had stolen.