**Northern Fury – Here Comes the Cavalry**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Oct 2015**

Plans made, courses laid in, CAP and ELINT patrols spread out, and one reckless Sierra destroyed. Now the long wait through the night, monitoring the patrol paths of the Badgers, Mainstays, and Cubs, and cursing the limitations which prevent me from taking them down. Wait until tomorrow?? No action north of 65º??? GAAAAHHHHH! I know I could bite off some of those juicy jammers and ELINT planes right now if it wasn't for those damned orders saying don't. All those valuable vulnerable support planes north of Iceland, just out of reach by regulations. I can't take it!

The quiet night continues... Things are relatively still on the big ships. ESM operators stare at their glowing screens, continuing to monitor enemy patrol patterns, while fighter pilots shift restlessly in their bunks and try futilely to get some sleep before the big day.

But under the waves, the San Juan, cruising at 20 kts towards the carrier groups, has a direct path submerged contact in the layer. Slow to 5 kts! SSN for sure, but what type? Has it seen us? Can we wait for aircraft to deal with it safely? The San Juan turns west, then east, and the contact changes course to intercept each time. We've been had! Two Mk 48s spread shot BOL, low speed at kinematic range, then duck under the layer and turn to run at flank in case he's already launched. Hopefully he'll evade, get pushed away, and lose us while he's running. Then we can break contact, get stealthy, and let the aircraft deal with it. But it never comes to that. The SSN doesn't evade, and one of our Mk48s solves the problem for us. Run a little longer, cut speed, check baffles, then up into the layer and course change back towards the carrier group.

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The night continues... Busy night for San Juan...

CZ contact NNW! The San Juan cuts back to creep again, and the contact firms up rapidly. 1st CZ, under the layer, definitely an SSN, cruising on a course towards our position at the end of our speed run. Looks like he heard us charging around at flank speed in the deep sound channel and is coming to investigate. This time there is time and clearance enough to wait for the aircraft, and a pair of S-3s work the contact, which turns out to be an older Victor I. It may be old, but it's tough, and its decoys work well enough that it takes 4 torps to sink it.

Maybe I should try deliberately making noise with one sub to draw enemy subs towards a line of stealthy ones? Risky... Hmmm...

It's 10:30 Zulu, attack Waves 1 and 2 are complete, and Wave 2 is now retiring back to the carriers, so it's time for a sitrep.

During the night the carrier groups steamed towards each other, staying down around 57N, while the subs pulled back in order to cover the carriers more closely (the Newport News sinking an Alfa in the process, bringing the total subs sunk up to 4). The carrier groups are now only ~ 40 miles apart, and will soon turn north, in parallel, flanked by the Ticos. The best ASW units are screening around them, predominantly to the N, so hopefully there isn't something ultra-stealthy coming up from the south. In a risky move I have detached the two Virginias and a Spruance and sent them north about 90 miles, intending to use them as a SAM trap to attrite and disrupt any Su-24 raids coming south from Iceland. Intelligence reports a division of bombers there, but so far I haven't seen any sign of them, so thankfully this hasn't been put to the test. There's been no sign of our long-range friends from Andoya either, and they could be a real problem if they show up while the bulk of my fighters are up in Iceland. I'm keeping a picket out east to look for them, just in case.

Two F-14s with TARPS pods went in just before the main attack wave, one to recce the coast near Keflavik, and one going along the coast towards Hornafjordur. (I wanted to know whether the coast between the two was defended.) The Keflavik plane found a pair of suspected SAM sites on the mountain ridge S of Keflavik and Reykjavik, and decided not to press its luck any further. The Hornafjordur plane also found a pair of SAM sites and then got shot down for its troubles. The range on the TARPS pods is just too short in the face of good SAMs.

Attack Wave 1 went in at 0600Z. I sent out four lightly loaded F-14s each to the far W and E of Iceland, hoping to prey on the Russian support planes near the ends of their patrol routes. Using extreme range Phoenix shots I managed to get one elint Badger out W, and one Su-24 jammer out E, but barely escaped from the angry swarm of Mig-23s that came boiling out of Hornafjordur. Using 8 planes this way wasn't very productive, so I didn't repeat it in Wave 2. I didn't even try to make any ground attacks in Wave 1, reserving my TLAMs and ground attack aircraft for later. There are so many Russian planes up that they would never have made it through.

The main attack approached Keflavik from the SSE and also from the W, with F-14s followed up with F-18s and heavy jammer support. The attack from the SSE drew piles of Mig 23s from Hornafjordur as well as numerous planes of all sorts from Keflavik, while the attack from the west only had Keflavik planes to deal with. Since the Russians are using semi-active missiles my jammers gave me a powerful range advantage, and even when they do manage to get a fix on me the launch is disrupted except at very close range. My active AMRAAMs and Phoenixes are not hampered this way in return, so the battle went very well, with the Phoenixes reaching deep into the enemy formations to destroy the dangerous Mig-31s, AMRAAMs tackling modern fighters, and Sparrows reserved for clumsier Mig-23s (when I don't happen to be pointing at an enemy jammer). I try to keep my distance, so Sidewinder shots are rare (I've only used 7 so far). Besides, a Sidewinder launch usually means an Archer is coming my way in return, which is a bad exchange. Distance is my friend!

Attack wave 2 went in several hours later, with a ground attack component of F-18s toting SLAMs, HARMS, and TALDs following the fighters at a safe distance. This attack only focused on Keflavik, staying away from Hornafjordur, and once again the air battle went well. So well, in fact, that I manage to temporarily clear the skies, pushing in close enough to Keflavik that the airfield was in range of my Phoenixes, and I could engage aircraft the moment they lifted off. Taking advantage of this gap some of my F-14s headed inland north of Keflavik and managed to down another Su-24, the pair of AWACs, and even the jammer Cub, all while staying a hairs-breadth south of their mandated navigation limit. The Russians tried to launch replacements, but this didn't end well when the airfield was in Phoenix range. (Is there a LUA way to prevent a mission from taking off if enemy are too close to the base?)

The ground attack didn't go too badly, in the sense that none of my attack planes were shot down, and I managed to destroy one SAM site and damage another, but this is only a small scratch in what turns out to be an enormous SAM complex. As my TALDs and SLAMs were going in radars started lighting up all over the place, and now my ELINT planes have managed to plot the location of most of them. Wave 3 will target some of these with TLAMs (I still haven't used any), and I expect some will get through, but there's no way I'll be able to get them all.

Wave 3's done, experiencing significantly less resistance. My fighters approached all three airbases looking for foes, and got a bunch of Mig-23s, and a handful of modern fighters, but nothing like earlier in the day. TLAMs and a few more SLAMs knocked out additional SAM sites, bringing the total destroyed up to 7. (The SAM sites didn't see the missiles coming, due to lack of airborne radar cover, and therefore did not fire in self defence. Is there a LUA way to say "If AWACS = 0, ground radars = ON"?) The skies were clear when I left, except for the support planes up north. Some more CAP sprang up again after I left, but not in great strength.

Final tally was 250 fighters of various types, including all the Mig-31s, and an additional 12 support planes (AWACS, jammers, ELINT). I managed to hide from the bombers so they did not launch against me, and remained untouched on the ground.