**Northern Fury – Sweep up**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Nov 2016**

I just started into this, so here's an initial report.

After receiving and reviewing my briefing I laid out my plans and missions, most of which were similar to what was laid out in the initial scenario. Eisenhower will head N at modest speed towards Jan Mayen, preceded by its SSN, and will rely heavily on the UK tankers to make its attack. I feel the sub situation is too risky for a flank speed transit. On the other side of the island TG Algonquin will also head north, again at modest speeds. Both groups will also have an MPA sweeping the lane ahead. The main change is with the Vinson group. I'm really nervous about the Marines all alone out there, so the Vinson and the Marines will turn and steam towards each other, joining up as soon as possible before heading in towards Iceland. This takes the Vinson further away from Iceland for a while, but I can't invade if my invasion force is at the bottom of the ocean, so I think it's a risk I need to take. MPAs will also work the zone between the two groups until they meet up.

(I also confess that I use the editor to make some immediate alterations to aircraft weapons loadouts (keeping the same ready times), to suit my personal carrier 'doctrine'. EA-6s get switched from triple pod down to double pod, sacrificing some ECM performance for increased flight time. Aircraft on maritime surveillance get switched over to their ASW loadout. They can still look around while carrying torpedoes, and the ASW situation is too perilous, and the enemy is too close to warrant a dedicated long-range unarmed search mission in these conditions. Ditto for the S-3s with bombs. I know they went bombing in Desert Storm, but the airwar situation is much too dangerous for that here, so now they're on ASW too. Anything carrying a Mk46 torpedo gets switched over to a Mk50 if the torps are already available in the magazines, and similarly my F-14s readying for CAP get switched over from Sparrows to Phoenixes, unless they are specifically intended for a mission where long duration is the absolute priority. I think that in a high intensity hot war situation the initial advantage of using the better munition to achieve superiority pays bigger dividends than saving them for later, and I doubt that the 'good stuff' would be held back. Better munitions in the magazine aren't helpful if you've lost the planes closing to Sparrow range.)

So the scenario begins, and dammit, I'm just too darned close to Iceland! Compared to previous scenarios the Russian planes feel like they're in my lap the moment they launch. And the buggers are aggressive too. A few minutes in and my E-2s start reporting a major strike lifting off and heading for TG Algonquin. (How'd they see us? I'm betting on a CZ hit from a sub.) My two F-14s on CAP go racing north on burner to intercept, and I start launching more. But everyone's getting ready for recce and bombing, so I really don't have very much CAP, and before I know it I've launched all of it. Yep, one mighty supercarrier, and nobody's left ready with a pure AAW loadout!

The first two F-14s arrive ahead of the strike, and manage to start engaging the Su-24s with their Sparrows, but that means the Mig-23s (close to home, and fuel-rich) can burner in to effective range. The F-14s do damage, but are overwhelmed, and the Su-24s start to launch their missiles. Half my other planes are sent on anti-missile duty, and together with SAMs from the ships they manage to shoot down all the missiles (although it was a very close call with those nasty ARMs). The other half go on a supersonic chase to engage the retreating Su-24s, and they manage to get most of the formation.

However, in doing so they get close enough to antagonize the Flankers in Reykjavik, and now its my turn to run away with little fuel and few missiles, hoping to get back to the shelter of the carrier's SAMs. It's clear my planes won't entirely make it in time, so now I'm reduced to launching HARM-toting F-18s just to make use of their defensive AMRAAMs! I order incoming COD flights to divert south as the Flankers close on the carrier group, and between long-range SAM shots and the HARM shooters I just manage to shoot down the Flankers and make it back to the carrier on fumes. Up north one of the Flankers decides to have a go at my ASW helicopters in TG Algonquin, but he finally succumbs to long range SAM shots before he can engage.

Speaking of ASW helicopters, one of them gets a MAD hit on an incoming sub, heading due south towards TG Algonquin, and after multiple torpedo engagements they finally sink a Victor. I'm betting (hoping) this is the guy who spotted us.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the island the Mig-23s and Su-27s are hassling the Eisenhower's CAP, and once again my ASW and ELINT assets are forced to retire from the area. My fighters manage to deal with the situation, but the Flankers almost get into SAM range, and by the time the engagement is over I've used up almost all my ready AAW loadouts. If anything big comes out of the east end of the island I may be in trouble.

So for now I'll tighten up the formations to concentrate my SAM cover, and hope that nothing severe happens until I can recycle my fighters. I'll try bringing my MPA back in front of the Eisenhower and TG Algonquin, and maybe if they stay very low with radar off they'll get away with it. If not, I have a very nervous voyage into sub-infested waters ahead of me.

Gathering up resources over the next hour, the Eisenhower starts sending a hodgepodge fighter sweep towards our target airport, accompanied by a TARPS bird to look for ground forces in the area. It soon becomes clear that our pilots have been over-claiming kills in previous scenarios! There are plenty of aircraft left, including a disturbing number of very capable Mig-31s. It's about this time that the quartermaster starts mentioning an embarrassing lack of Phoenixes, just when I'm facing AA-9s. (Who said it was a good idea to use them up first?) While we discuss the matter, we get to watch the trails of SAM smoke, as outlying picket ships in all three groups engage Russians who are pursuing our retreating aircraft closer to base than they should.

During the fighting the TARPS bird turns up a number of Russian forces along the coast, but it sees no signs of the tanks yet in its brief run over their suspected location. The enemy fighters force it to retreat before it can make a full sweep, however, so it can't make a comprehensive search. They're sure to be around somewhere. Hopefully we'll have time for another run with less interference.

Way up north the TR-1 had been sent to spy on Jan Mayen, rather than tangle with the Iceland defences which could easily shoot it down. It turns out that there are a bunch of Mig-23s based there, and soon the TR-1 is shadowed by a cloud of them, following impotently below, just out of extreme missile range. Buoyed by waves of hate the TR-1 turns serenely south towards Scotland, hoping that a Mig-31 isn't being sent to investigate.

I'm starting to think that I'll have to send in a big wave of strikers before the Russian air force is safely reduced, and hope that I can get in some effective ground target hits while the fighters are mixing it up. I don't have the time, or the munitions, to do this cleanly.

After a bit of time to gather the resources the battle continues.

Up north two pairs of sub-launched TLAMs deal with the SA-3 and the radar on Jan Mayan, and then all the Eisenhower's Bombcats arrive to pound the place. Of course there's the pile of Mig-23s, mostly airborne, which are ready to dispute this. Fortunately I've brought a jammer and they haven't, so the good old-fashioned Sparrow vs Apex fight goes in my favour. The targets are struck successfully, and the planes retire in good order.

Down south a major strike launched from both carriers converges on Iceland, with the A-6s from Goose Bay tanking up and following along a few minutes later. It looks like the previous fighter sweeps have knocked down enough of the enemy to weaken their response, and this time I am able to deal with their remaining fighters before the bombing begins. Our target airfield gets a lot of attention, as does a very interesting concentration of helicopters on the mainland, and some Russian artillery. I soon learn to stay above the Grouse ceiling whenever possible... The A-6s and carrier aircraft with LGBs spend a lot of their time dealing with the bridging targets, and my remaining 6 TLAMs are spent on bridges as well. A few pop-up fighters cause problems, but in most cases I can pounce on them before they do damage. During all this I manage to find the troop concentration in Iceland, but it is largely left alone for the moment.

TG Algonquin has been busy, steaming at full speed up the coast to interfere with aircraft operating out of Isafjordur. A few Mig-23s fall to their SAMs, and they even close in and sprinkle the airfield with gunfire, but by that time the base appears to be empty. I wonder how they would have done if I'd hurried them up the coast sooner, instead of slowly sub-hunting at first, or if I'd sent them to the Ryk/Kef area? Nothing stifles aircraft activity like taking off within SAM range of the enemy. For a high risk attempt, consider detaching the Tico and the Virginia from the carrier group, and running them up to the enemy airfield at flank. High risk, high reward? Or just foolishness?

Now that the ground situation has improved my CH-53s arrive to unload the Marines, who manage to find a Spetznaz team lurking in the area while they patrol around the airport. CH-46s arrive a couple of hours later during the night to help set up more equipment.

A second wave of ground attack concentrates on the Russian ground forces, completely disrupting the formation, as well as destroying a number of other secondary targets. This goes largely unopposed, and the planes retire in good order once their missions are complete.