**Northern Fury – Jar Heads on Ice**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ July 2018**

So here's how it went on NF 25.

**THE PLAN**

I'm ordered to make two landings, one at the foot of the Snaefellsjoekull peninsula, and the other further east near Bakkaflugvollur. Looking over my forces, it's clear that I don't have a lot of extra time for deceptive maneuvers or consolidating my forces, so it looks like it'll have to be a straight-in direct path approach.

Each beach has two groups of ships assigned, and they are ordered to make a straight line approach to their beaches at 15 knots. The groups will follow each other down the same corridor, which will be patrolled by P-3s (in the west) or S-3s (in the east). Formations are tightened up and changed to put the valuable aviation ships and LKAs in the center, with less critical ships acting as missile soaks on the flanks. (Sorry LSTs!) Formations will travel radars off, but sonars active. My SSNs will be flank guard far to the outside of the passing formations.

The Guadalcanal group (which will not participate in these landings) is ordered to make similar formation changes and steam at 15 knots towards its central assembly area. The Roosevelt group will change course to meet it there. The TG Hayler ASW group will make initial sweeps of the central assembly area, and then split up, with one half continuing to patrol in area, and the other half clearing a lane towards the Guadalcanal group. The Mt Whitney command group will lurk discretely far out to sea.

My two BB groups cause some indecision. I'd really like to take them further around the coast and hit the Isafjordur and Hornafjordur airports. However, I've been given orders to preserve airfield facilities in preparation for subsequent operations, and 16" shell craters all over the airfields are probably a bad thing for flight ops. Therefore, after some debate, the BBs are ordered to turn back and head for the landing beaches to provide fire support. Since they are travelling near the coast in the day with potential observers nearby on shore and in fishing boats, it's safe to assume the enemy knows where they are. Therefore, they will travel with radars on.

Air operations will begin with ESM and Recce, and a basic central CAP, while transiting F-18s fly in to Vestmannaeyjar. Strike activity will develop depending on what we find inland.

**OPERATIONS**

It's only minutes into operations when radar operators in the Missouri group start screaming about sea-skimming targets inbound at high Mach. Oscar! The Ticonderoga immediately opens up with all launchers, getting many hits, but the stream of missiles gets closer and closer. The Perry starts shooting too, pumping missiles out as fast as it can, but the last ones are too close, and the white-faced crew hears the deep groan of the CIWS opening fire. There's a thunderous boom, and then silence. They look around. They're all alive! Brown shorts for everybody...

The ASW helicopters rush to where the missiles were first spotted, but they find nothing, except in incoming Mig-23, which shoots down one of the helicopters, before it is engaged by SAMs and finally shot down by the belated arrival of the CAP. The Oscar is long gone.

Meanwhile on the other coast, the same thing begins happening again, when the E-3 reports high-speed sea-skimming missiles headed towards the Wisconsin group, coming from the large bay north of Stykkisholmur. The group starts shooting, but there's one huge difference. They don't have a Tico. They only have a slow-firing Belknap. They'll get a few missiles, but they can't stop them all. Death is written on the wall, but then the strangest thing happens. The column of missiles abruptly spreads out in a broad fan, and most pass harmlessly east and west of the group. The few that come directly at the group are shot down, and the radar operators stare in bemusement at the other receding contacts on their radar. (Post-war analysis shows that the Oscar had fired on an ESM contact, with a large uncertainty area. When the missiles passed through the area they spread out and went in random directions along the area. This is the only thing which saved this group. If the Oscar had launched on a firm visual sighting this group would be dead.)

The missiles had been spotted coming from that bay. Had the Oscar captain trapped himself? Helicopters and P-3s spend an extensive amount of effort over the next few hours, trying to find anything in the bay, but they find nothing. The elusive Oscar was never there, and I never find a trace of it. I do, however, shoot down a single slower-moving missile coming in from the open ocean out west. There's another SSGN out there, possibly a Charlie or a Papa. Great...

While the fruitless hunt for the Oscar continues, the Wisconsin and friends suddenly hear a torpedo in the water as they pass the tip of the Sneafellsjoekull peninsula. Could this be the Oscar, so far from where I thought it was? My ships turn and flee, outrunning the torp, until the P-3 comes over to sink what turns out to be a Tango. This is getting a little alarming! What else is underwater here?

Things calm down at sea for the next few hours, to be replaced by an upsurge of air activity. There are some minor ground troops opposite my island airport, and they get dealt with by a combination of helicopters and local Harriers. My recce and allied scouts start reporting enemy mobile units (presumably the tank battalion) heading northwest in the general direction of the Stykkisholmur airport, so the Bataan group launches a strong Harrier strike, which breaks up the attack. (They also find a Styx battery in the area, which gets thumped.) Forces are also noted coming in from the north-east side of the island, and they too get pounded on by a combination of Harriers with laser Mavericks and F-18s from the Roosevelt with designator pods. Harriers making low level attacks find the Russians are well supplied with MANPADS, which take chunks out of several of my attackers. Fortunately the warheads are small, and my planes manage to limp home.

In the air, the Russians make some attempts, but it's clear they have been badly mauled. Isolated fighters make some attempts in the Kef/Ryk area, but they are outnumbered and get shot down before they can get too far. There is one brown-pants moment when a Mig-31 lifts off, and is immediately in range of my tankers, but my missile shots force him to turn aside and break lock before his missiles reach their targets, and he is soon destroyed. Shortly after that I refuel some F-14s and head them north to pick off the jammers, along with an Su-27 which tries to interfere from Akureyri. The biggest air activity comes when a swarm of Su-25s lifts off out of Ryk and starts heading for my island airport. Fortunately, this happens just as a flight of 4 Harriers is probing at the bunker chain in the area, and between them and the CAP the Su-25s are swiftly shot down.

As my ships continue to close in I spend a lot of my time cataloguing the extensive population of sea-life. Every contact has to be taken seriously, and they show up again and again and again. Quite realistic, I expect. Out west, that SSGN takes another shot at the Bataan task group, which passed close enough to a tattletale fishing boat to get ID-ed. AWACs spots the incoming missiles in plenty of time, and the VLS Tico in the group has no problem dealing with them. By now the P-3 has stopped trying to find the Oscar, and it finds and kills the Charlie instead.

Moments later, another pack of missiles appears on AWACS screens, this time out to the southeast. Their closest possible target is actually TG Charleston, which is completely undefended except for a Knox, which is no protection at all. Fortunately the real target turns out to be the Missouri group to the north, which was just tagged by tattletales. SAM magazines in the group are reduced, but should be enough to deal with the attack. However, that would leave the magazines essentially empty in the event of a third attack. Interceptors dash out of my nearby island airport, and winnow down the stream to preserve some ship-borne SAMs. The attack is defeated, and an S-3 finds the SSGN and sinks it shortly afterwards.

I get a message about mines in the Ryk/Kef area, but I'm not intending to operate there, so that's a problem for later.

My task groups are now closing in on their beaches. Helicopters ferry a large number of troops over to protect the isolated Stykkisholmur airport, and once that is secure, I fly in one of the F-18 squadrons from Greenland, who are in place by the end of the scenario, although I don't actually make use of them. I also make a helicopter landing in the Bakkaflugvollir area, to seize the ferry and the airstrip. Minesweeping helicopters clear the beach areas, and a combination of helicopter and boat landings put large formations ashore on the beach. All amphib and supply ships are in their assembly areas, which are patrolled by warships on ASW duty.

**OBSERVATIONS**

The battleships didn't do much, other than get shot at. The Wisconson took a few pot-shots at bunkers and air defences near its landing area, but it has rotten CEP if engaging over the horizon (there's no way to simulate RPV observation), and rarely hits anything. The Missouri had nothing to shoot at at all. The BBs may be big and impressive, but you can usually do it first with an airplane. Which is probably why the Navy didn't complain too hard when they let them go.

It turned out that I only used a part of my air power. The TG Bataan Harriers fought, and some of the TG Roosevelt planes (all the F-14s, four F-18 attackers), and a few on my island airport. However, the F-18s on Greenland did not fight, neither did the Harriers on TG Wasp, nor the bulk of the attack planes on the Roosevelt. I only used two of my Tomahawks (to knock off a long range radar in the east).

I have to admit I wasn't particularly aggressive here. I got my troops safely landed, beat up on enemy formations in the field, but generally played it very safe. The injunction to preserve airport infrastructure is definitely a damper on plans to make airfield attacks. I kept wondering if there would be a pop-up SA-10 or the like in my operation area, but there never was, and I didn't press the point looking for them in the east.

Oscars! Never caught sight of any of them, launching far away in untouchable bastions, and damn-near lost a task group to them. They are, without doubt, the nastiest ambush predator out there. We hates them, Bagginses, we hates them...