**Northern Fury #41 – Tour de Force**

**Playtest Report by AndrewJ Feb 2020**

***Note: This scenario is quite large, and many changes were made based on Andrew’s fantastic reports which are shown below.***

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*"...at least five Oscar II SSGNs remain."*

Oh heck... Five Oscars, dozens of other subs, and I've got isolated supply ships, blind as can be, spread all over the ocean. This is not going to end well. Even if I avoid the Oscars I just know I'm going to run over some geriatric Whisky and lose a task group.

All joking aside, this looks really challenging.

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Well, my usual slow rate of play hasn't improved - here's Day 1!

**THE SITUATION**

It's carrier wrangling time in cold northern waters, as I'm assigned to herd 10 assorted carrier groups into their patrol zones, see that they're fed, watered, fueled, and generally resupplied, all while maintaining a continuous presence on-station. Oh yes, by the way, you can't send the munitions ships to the carriers, they have to come south to you. There are streams of munitions ships and reinforcements coming up both Atlantic coasts, from as far south as the Mediterranean, a variety of minor task groups in the vicinity of Iceland, and some subs (mostly good SSNs) going to and fro.

The Russians are digging in hard in Norway, and while they're not a major force on the high seas at the moment, they still have the potential to be nasty opponents. Intel warns of multiple submarines about, with the possibility of many coming out of reserve, a Kirov group lurking in home waters, the potential for land-based bomber attacks (still), and, of course, the usual porcupine of SAM and fighter defences over land.

I'm to keep pressure on these forces, despite my dwindling stockpiles of fuel and munitions, and execute any specific tasks in an 'economic' fashion. Many of my munitions are in short supply, particularly TLAMs, and it will be many days before more arrive in-theatre. I do have the option of calling in B-52s to launch CALCMs, but that takes political capital I'd prefer not to spend. I can't, however, ignore the need for tankers, and I pester my superiors until they grant me two sets of tankers, 5 in Iceland, and 5 in the UK.

**THE PLAN**

My plans in the north are simple. Stay in your zones, patrol quietly, and wait for reinforcements to arrive. The Enterprise and Roosevelt, in the north-eastern corner of the theatre, are in the worst supply condition, so they are ordered to patrol side-by side, on either side of their common zone boundary, in order to provide mutual support if attacked. The other carrier groups will patrol individually, creeping quietly along and listening for subs.

I'm more worried about submarines than any other part of the Russian forces, particularly their SSGs and SSGNs. Those can reach out from a convergence zone and cripple and kill weakly defended munitions ships, even if the subs can't quite make the intercept for a torpedo attack. I'm also mindful that relying on my SAM defences might be problematic, since it takes a trip to Norfolk or Rota to resupply them. So, up north my defence will focus on my fighters, and the carrier CAP, which I normally keep far afield in the expected threat direction, is kept tight over the carriers to be instantly ready for pop-up missile attacks from any direction.

The Atlantic traffic will be guided into two narrow streams, one up each coast, and these paths will be patrolled by P-3s and Nimrods. I don't have enough ASW ships to escort all the freighters individually, so the airplane patrols will have to do. The one isolated freighter full of TLAMs out in mid-ocean is assigned its own dedicated P-3 patrol to give it a full-time escort. I do not want to lose that one.

I'm also sending most of my E-3s to guard the ocean routes, rather than up with the carriers. (Those should have enough E-2s to do the job on their own.) With the E-3s acting as missile lookouts, the isolated munitions ships and small task groups can travel with radars off, significantly reducing the ability of enemy subs to stick up a mast and detect us with ESM. Hopefully, the E-3s will also give us a chance to spot the launch location and launch a counter-attack if any missiles get fired.

I do have some lone munitions ships near Keflavik, and these are ordered to stay put! I do not want them wandering around alone, where they can blunder into some old SS and die. They are not to go anywhere until escorts arrive (probably TG Algonquin) in a few days.

**DAY 1**

**The Svalbard Question**

Looking around, I find I'm uncomfortable with the northern Russian radar screen deployed on Svalbard and the islands in the Norwegian sea, and the possibility of Russian aircraft operating out of or through Svalbard is an unnecessary risk. I would like freedom of movement for my vulnerable recce, surveillance, and tanker aircraft in that area, so I can screen for incoming bombers and Bears, and the last thing I need is a MiG-25 or something popping up with an afterburner dash and picking off my slow soft targets.

Therefore, 'Operation Northern Freedom' begins! My last few TLAMs in the region are launched immediately to eliminate the isolated radar stations (ignoring the space surveillance radars in the Globus array, which won't affect me), and then my aircraft start to patrol the vicinity of the island. It turns out that the Russians currently have some older MiG-23s and ASW planes patrolling near Svalbard, and there are several FFLs and patrol boats in the region. Mid-day fighter sweeps from the Roosevelt manage to take care of most of the MiGs, and the French Etendard pilots are quite happy to sink the largely defenceless light craft with Exocets.

In the meantime, preparations are put underway for the three northern carriers to try and shut the Svalbard runways late in the day.

**Probing & Orders**

With the Svalbard radars down, I start sending some planes around the north coast of Norway, probing to see what's there. ESM shows some tempting looking surveillance planes in the Russian rear, and long-range F-14 operations manage to get some of the ones operating over the ocean, but that provokes a strong reaction. MiG-31s scramble out of Banak, and while my pair of F-14s can kill the first two, they have to flee from another four, flying so low the enemy's missile's can't lock on. The MIGs pursue at high altitude, and I'm forced to stay low, burning fuel far too quickly, until more F-14s arrive to rescue my fleeing fighters. When my pilots get to the tanker they only have two minutes of fuel left. More probes are launched later in the day, proceeding more cautiously with tanker and ESM support, and a few more ELINT Badgers and MiG-31s are shot down.

Fresh orders arrive mid-day, directing me to set up a pair of ASW stations on Greenland and Jan Mayan Land. The relevant task groups are already headed in that direction, so no major changes are required yet. One of my cruisers, the Worden, is being recalled to the States. This is a bit of a loss, but fortunately the cruiser has just refuelled, so it should make the long trip in good time, heading between Greenland and Iceland, and following the 'Western Passage' route, passing my northbound traffic. The biggest new item in the orders is a request for an alpha-strike on Bodo. Resources are limited, but I should be able to muster enough for a good strike after dark.

**Oscar**!

The Russians don't sit idly by an take my harassment on the chin. The first issue is the discovery of a fast-moving SSN near the Enterprise group, well within the first CZ. An S-3 hurries over to check it out, and it turns out to be an Alfa. This is grim news, because if it dives deep, none of my air-launched torpedoes can reach it. The US Navy immediately starts hollering for the Royal Air Force to send over a Nimrod to rescue them with its deep diving torpedoes, but it's so far away it will take at least half an hour to get there. Fortunately, the Alfa is shallow at the moment, so the S-3 swings in and drops a pair of torpedoes in its path. The Alfa immediately starts dashing for the deep, and the torpedoes follow down into the darkness, There, just before they exceed their depth limit, they manage to hit with meters to spare, and the water pressure does the rest.

The Alfa didn't get a shot off, but that doesn't mean it hadn't done damage. The Alfa had friends, and it had told them where we were. A few minutes later my E-2s start screaming about a cloud of high velocity sea-skimming missiles clearing the horizon from the north-east. Oscar! Fighters from the Enterprise and Roosevelt start dashing to intercept, when the E-2s call again. More missiles, these ones to the north-west! As my planes continue to scramble and intercept the first pack of missiles, it becomes evident that there are only two missiles coming in from the north-west, which is peculiar. Maybe some sort of hasty upgrade of an ancient Echo, Juliett, or Whiskey Long-bin?? There's not much time to consider it further, and my fighters continue to intercept and destroy the incoming missiles. They get them all, at the cost of a significant proportion of my air-to-air missiles, and none of them get close enough to the carrier for me to engage them with SAMs.

Once the fighters have scrambled, S-3s are launched to hunt for the Oscar in the NE, but nothing is found where the missiles were first spotted, so they continue further out along that bearing. While they're doing this, two more missiles appear from the NW, and are shot down, and then two more, and so on. It looks like it really is an Oscar out there, and, for whatever reason, he's firing only two missiles at a time. This is actually very helpful for tracking him down, and F-14s fly along the extended chain of missiles, and eventually spot the launch point. Slow-moving Alizes from the Clemenceau finally arrive on the scene, and quickly manage to localize and sink the massive sub. Meanwhile, the S-3s in the NE have flown all the way out to the limits of the Oscar's missile range and found nothing. They're on their way back to the carrier, pursued by some MiG-23s from Svalbard, when the Oscar blunders under one of their passive sonobuoys half-way along their search path. The S-3s just have time to drop torps on the Oscar as they pass by, with F-14s blasting overhead to engage the pursuing MiGs and pry them off the S-3s' tail. It's a very close call, but it works out in the end.

The final tally is two Oscars and one Alfa sunk, which is very good news, and no SAMs expended. But most AAMs are in extremely short supply now, particularly on the Enterprise, so much so that I'm putting some of my fighters on Ferry missions, just to allow others to get a full loadout.

**Late-Day Engagements**

As the day progresses, more probes are made along the west coast of Norway. An attempt to run a TARPS bird through Andoya is quickly driven away by a combination of MiG-23s and SA-11s. Another probe down towards Bodo reveals an SA-10 and SA-11 in the region, and Su-27 and MiG-23s in defense. A few of those get shot down, which should help when dealing with Bodo later tonight.

Just before dusk, attack planes from the Ark Royal, Clemenceau, and Roosevelt make a strike on the radar-less Svalbard airbase. The plan is for Harriers and Etendards to pop over the hills immediately south of the airbase, and take airbase defences by surprise, while A-6s stand guard with ready HARMs, and others wait for the all-safe to come in with LGBs. My thought was that the small peripheral airbase might have some older medium range SAMs, like SA-6s and SA-8s, or maybe an SA-11. Unfortunately, when the Harriers crest the rise, they find themselves staring at a pair of SA-10s, a pair of SA-11s, and a collection of SHORADS and AAA. Ooops... My pilots push to full power and dash in, releasing cluster bombs moments before the SAMs arrive. Three of the Harriers are cut down before they can escape, but they do manage to wreck the heavy SAMs, and with the help of the French Etendards and incoming HARMs they pummel the remaining defences, allowing the A-6s to wreck the vital airstrip facilities. There should be no more fighter interference from this direction, at least for the next few days.

Not all the action is in the air, as another Russian sub is found operating in the Greenland-Iceland gap. P-3s from the local airbase quickly refine their sonobuoy contact (it turns out to be a Victor) and sink it.

**Alpha-Strike Bodo**

Once night has fallen the attack on Bodo begins. It's an all-attack-plane event, without my normal TLAM support, and I've decided not to ask for B-52 CALCM help either.

The opening shots come from SLAM-carrying A-6s, which attempt to sneak their missiles up valleys to deal with the two surveillance radars east of Bodo, and over the hills to find the SA-10 and SA-11 located south of Bodo. None of it goes really well. Some get shot down by hidden SAMs (apparently there's an army in those valleys out there - who knew?) , while others get picked off by SHORADS before they can spot their targets.

They do manage to get enemy radars to turn on, however, and that's when my HARM carriers get their chance, salvoing missiles at the SAM sites, and getting good hits on the major elements near Bodo. Unfortunately, they also find there's an SA-20 lurking further east in the hinterlands, and I can't get at it, so Russia still has control of the high-altitude band. Low-level Maverick and cluster-bomb attacks by F-18s are next, dashing down the coast and over the hill from the north, while A-6s come in from the south, pummeling the remains of the SAMs and airfield soft targets with Snakeyes. Normally my TLAMs would have soaked up many of the last SHORADS, but that doesn't happen here, and the return fire is deadly. Three of my F-18s are shot down near the airfield, and several more have chunks blown off by AAA, before the bomb hits suppress the air defences. That allows the other A-6s to come in as low as they can with LGBs, cratering runways and taxiways, and putting the base out of operation. As the A-6s turn away, my last few HARMs manage to snipe those two surveillance radars which were supposed to die at the beginning.

Now that the attack is retiring to the carriers, the fighter escort swings north, skirmishing with some Su-27s, and then trying to make a low-level sneak attack on the coastal ASW planes operating near Tromso. That provokes a very strong local response from the three airfields there, which scramble MiG-23s, MiG-25s, and Su-27s to intercept me. My pilots manage to kill some of the MiG-23s but have to withdraw without getting the flying boat. The Su-27s, with their long-ranged missiles, are definitely a problem, and I'm starting to wonder if I'll need to relax my Phoenix ROEs to get at them effectively.

More to follow...

Here's another day of activity.

**DAY 2**

Things are calm at the start of Day 2. Southern replenishment ships and task groups continue to head north, and two of my northern subs are underway south, headed for refit and resupply in Faslane. The Raleigh and Jeanne d'Arc groups continue heading towards the landing sites for the new ASW helipads, and the Nimitz group is completing resupply. The Roosevelt and Enterprise are in bad shape for munitions, particularly AAMs of all types, but they do have enough to keep a respectable defence in hand.

After some consideration, I decide to move my two northwestern carriers (the Clemenceau and Ark Royal) to the southern end of their patrol zone. They no longer need to attack Svalbard, and the move will put them closer to the resupply ships when the time comes. I'm also getting worried about pop-up cruise-missile attacks on the upcoming ASW heliports. If I keep the little carriers far north then a sub may creep south of me, and I won't be able to intercept the missiles. This move will bring my fighters closer to the targets they need to protect. (Although it does lose me some ground against bomber threats. So far there's been no activity of that kind, fortunately. I had expected a Bear or two sniffing around by this point.)

**Fighter Sweep - Andoya**

I've been tasked to recce Bodo again tonight (no problem), and Andoya in the afternoon. That's more problematic, since the last time I flew near Andoya there was a determined response from the Russians. I really doubt a TARPs bird would survive the trip. So, I decide to run an early afternoon fighter sweep against the three airbases in the Andoya / Bardufoss / Tromso area, and try and sneak in my recce bird while the fighters are distracted. The Roosevelt and Enterprise are almost black on air-to-air missiles, so the Nimitz sends its entire complement of F-14s and some F-18s, while the Roosevelt and Enterprise provide the jammers. The fighting goes much better than yesterday, and while my fighters are mixing it up with Su-27s and MiG-23s and MiG-25s, the TARPS bird comes in low, led by a pair of F-18s with the Roosevelt's last 4 HARMs. The HARMs kill the Andoya surveillance radar, and manage to wound an SA-11 that pops up, but there are at least two more short-ranged SAMs down there, plus AAA, and the MiGs keep surging out of Andoya. Meanwhile, my fighters are running out of Sparrows, and they have to start looking for ways to disengage. The odds of success are dwindling. Sadly (but probably prudently) the TARPS pilot waves off and aborts the recce only 15 miles away from his target.

So, while the recce itself was a failure, I did manage to get some good information on the Andoya defences (which include an SA-20 on the mainland near Bardufoss, preventing me from doing high level overflights), and claim a good bag of enemy fighters, including three of the very dangerous Su-27s. This will be very useful, since as my fighter sweep was launching HQ sent word that we are to alpha-strike Andoya. That will come tonight.

**Skirmishing at Sea**

Russian submarine activity is evident throughout the day. First a Nimrod finds a Kilo a few miles behind the Fort Victoria group, which means I had a very close miss here. I have very few diesel-carrying oilers, so the loss of this one would have been significant. Next, TG Algonquin, patrolling the western ocean route finds a Victor right in front of a cargo ship full of TLAMs. Finally, the Vinson, heading NE to relieve the Enterprise, spots a Tango near Jan Mayan land, where the Baby Ice ASW heliport is due to be set up. All three subs are sunk, but it's a very clear indication that the Russians are still quite dangerous beneath the sea.

I also make efforts to provoke Russian responses up north of Norway, by flying F-14s around in the area, but little comes of the effort. It's not until I get quite close to the shore to shoot down another ELINT Badger that the Russian's finally launch another two MiG-31s out of Banak. But it's only two, and not the aggressive response I provoked yesterday. This is an interesting development. The Russian Mainstays are patrolling over northern Norway, and are conceivably within range of a Phoenix shot without getting too far inland. If the Russians are already running out of fighters there... Hmmmm...

**Northern Phoenix**

The opportunity is too tempting to miss, so Operation Northern Phoenix begins. Half a dozen heavily laden F-14s take off from the northern carriers, hauling precious Phoenix missiles, and EA-6s, ES-3s, Sparrow-armed F-14s, and tankers go with them. The package arrives off the northern coast of Norway in the late-afternoon sun, and, after a pause for refueling the fighters turn south, closing relentlessly on the orbiting AEW planes. Phoenixes roar off the launch rails, flying deep inland and plunging down on the slow and vulnerable targets. Three are shot down in flames, plus a couple more support Badgers. The F-14s don't get very far inland before an SA-10 opens fire in front of them, but the Tomcats are able to dive low, beneath the radar horizon, and avoid the incoming missiles. (Question: all three Mainstays were patrolling simultaneously. Had you intended that, or only one at a time?) ***Note: No, this is fixed***

My attack doesn't go unopposed, and MiG-31s come scrambling up out of Banak, but the Phoenix range advantage pays off, and they are shot down without loss. The F-14s continue shooting as more planes rise to meet them, until somebody finally notices that the last couple of planes aren't MiG-31s at all. They're older MiG-25s, and aren't on the 'approved Phoenix list'. (This embarrassing error is glossed over in the post mission debrief. The admiral is a busy man. We're sure he wouldn't want to be disturbed.) Fortunately, they're nowhere near as capable as MiG-31s, so my pilots manage to tackle them with Sparrows.

One side note to this, is that some of my fighters, diving to low altitude to avoid missiles, spot some sort of commercial (?) ship underway near the coast. What's it doing there?

**Alpha-Strike Andoya**

Once darkness falls, my alpha-strike package makes its way to Andoya. Andoya is a smaller base than Bodo, isolated on its spit of land, and as far as I can tell it doesn't have the same long-ranged SAM defences as Bodo did, so the strike is smaller.

My leading fighter sweep encounters some resistance from Bardufoss (MiG-23s and 25s), but nothing flies out of Andoya or Tromso, and the few enemy fighters are quickly pushed aside. F-18s with HARMs and Mavericks attack first, suppressing the medium-ranged SAM defences (another SA-11 and some SA-15s and SA-8s), and then another set of F-18s dashes in low, destroying the damaged SAM sites with cluster bombs, then tearing over the airbase itself to savage some of the fighters parked in open revetments. There have to be well over a dozen MiG-23s down there, and it's fortunate they're not yet active, or I could have been in real trouble.

Once the SAMs are knocked down the A-6s come in from safe altitude, avoiding the AAA, and pummel the runways and other base infrastructure with LGBs. There's still plenty of AAA down there afterwards, and trapped aircraft too, but the base itself is not likely to be operational for days.

**Supply**

Once the Andoya strike is launched and underway, the Roosevelt turns south and starts heading for the replenishment ships. She should get there tomorrow morning, all going well. Her place will be taken by the fully restocked Nimitz. The Enterprise, further north, is actually in worse supply condition than the Roosevelt, but I need her to hold on a little longer. The Vinson is heading her way, and should arrive after dawn tomorrow, at which point the Enterprise can head south too.

Many of my southern replenishment task groups are closing on their destinations just south of PL Bravo, to ready for resupplying the carriers, while others are still working their way up from the south. One thing that has me wondering is the state of the T-A0s, which are going to be accumulating south of PL Alpha. I don’t have a good plan for them yet, and they may just steam back and forth in the ocean until other tankers come back to top up from them.

**Upcoming plans**

As the day comes to an end, more orders come in from HQ. They want me to look for a cargo ship called the Dralch, which may be the one I spotted up north, and they also want recce runs in the Evenes and Andoya areas. Andoya should be no problem, since I beat up the defences today, but Evenes is still fresh, and presumably there are defences associated with the nearby airbase. It may take some work to get in there, and I may have to hit the base to do it. Also, now that the Mainstays seem to be down, I'm looking at the main Russian search radars with hostile intent. I'd love to knock those down, but I don't have precise enough locations on them to simply hit them with TLAMs. They're still deep in the SAM belt, so they may be out of reach for the moment. Planning staff are put on it. We shall see!

**DAY 3 (MARCH 20 1994)**

As Day 3 begins, my two heliport construction groups are closing on their destinations on Jan Mayan and Greenland, the retiring Roosevelt has almost reached the replenishment ships south of PL Bravo, and the Vinson is nearly on station to relieve the Enterprise. The northern French and British carrier groups are down to about half fuel, but their slow creeping ASW search patterns means their fuel consumption is low, and they won't need to refuel for many days yet. My withdrawing SSNs have passed their replacements, who are headed to a patrol zone just south of PL Delta. The ships in the Atlantic are making good progress northwards, although the scattered individual ships who don't have escorts continue to be a concern.

**Coastal Shipping**

The question of that coastal merchant ship I spotted earlier continues to nag at me, and HQ has expressed an interest in it as well, so an F-14 TARPS bird is sent for a look, accompanied by a few fighters and an ES-3 to do radar surveillance. The radar search finds the merchant quickly enough, and it also finds a second lone ship operating further east. Recce passes show one to be the trawler Dralch, which HQ was looking for, and the other to be a container ship. I'm not sure what the Dralch is doing, as it doesn't seem to be headed anywhere specific. Maybe coastal minelaying? Both ships are under Warpac control, so they're fair game to me. The Etendards on the Clemenceau are given the task, and they fly in with a combination of buddy stores and Exocets to sink both of the ships. (I'm finding Exocets to be really handy for light unopposed anti-shipping work, when I don't want to expend a heavyweight long-ranged Harpoon.) This does provoke another set of MiG-25s to fly up out of Banak, but my escorting F-14s put them down without suffering any losses.

The sinking of the two merchants is good. (Although, come to think of it, HQ said to look for the Dralch, not sink it. I hope they don't mind.) More important, however, is the discovery the ES-3 makes further east along the coast. Radar shows an ominously large task group anchored off Murmansk. While the radar operator is counting ships, the ELINT sensors start picking up radar emissions from patrolling Foxbats operating out of Rogachevo. There's no time to waste, and the plane turns off its radar and hurries away into the darkness.

Presumably these contacts are the Kirov group alluded to in some of the intelligence reports. In its current position, it would only take about ten hours of steaming to get within missile range of my closest carrier group. Fortunately it's not moving at the moment, but I may have to consider a long-range ASM strike before it can get underway and become a problem.

**Strike on Evenes**

With Bodo and Andoya out of commission, at least for the moment, the most exposed of the enemy airbases is Evenes. HQ has asked for recce runs in the area later in the day. I have already encountered some long-ranged SAMs deployed north of Evenes, so a southern approach seems wisest, but even so I'm not confident a lone recce plane can make it in and out without loss. There's a good surveillance radar nearby, and presumably fighters and more SAMs at the airfield itself. Therefore, I decide to launch a small hasty dawn attack on Evenes, to soften up the local defences and kill the surveillance radar.

The strike is composed of F-18s with LGBs, HARMs, and a few Mavericks, and my intention is to go in above the SHORADS ceiling, hit the runways and SAMs, and retire without going low. It turns out that Evenes is guarded by two SA-11s (okay, suppressed by HARMs), a distant SA-4 to the NNW (not a threat), and a distant SA-10 (too far away to engage me effectively). But the unspotted SA-12 in the mountains to the NE is a real problem, and it launches a huge salvo of missiles at my laser-bombing F-18s, forcing them to go diving wildly towards the deck. Fortunately the fjord walls are tall and steep, and the F-18s are more nimble than A-6s, so they manage to escape below the missile barrage by the narrowest of margins.

My attack doesn't actually kill any of the local SAMs outright, although it wounds most of them, but it does manage to destroy the surveillance radar, and cut the runway facilities at the base. After the bombing, the F-18s go scurrying south through the hills, trying to stay well below the threatening SA-12 radar, and some of them come across an enormous vehicle park nestled in one of the valleys. Calls are made to the carriers, and over the next hours more F-18s arrive with Snakeyes and cluster bombs, and start wrecking the marshalling area.

**Fighter Activity**

Interestingly, there were no fighters launched from Evenes itself against my strike, so maybe it was a divert airfield, with no fighter presence? There are certainly fighters coming from Bardufoss, however, where numerous old-model MiG-23s start making their presence known, and, after no activity for about a day, I start seeing fighters coming out of Tromso too. This prompts another mid-sized fighter sweep in the Andoya/Bardufoss/Tromso area, which nets a lone Su-27, a few MiG-25s, and a sizeable bag of the older Floggers.

Another sweep heads to the north coast again, with F-14s looking for any more Badger recce planes which might be up. They don't find any (nor have any more Mainstays appeared), so they come inland to attack one of the Su-24s, which prompts two more hidden SA-10 batteries guarding Banak to open fire. That makes three, surrounding Banak in a horseshoe. The F-14s dive to safety, and then get tangled up with some aggressive MiG-25s, but make it out intact in the end. In the meantime, one of my S-3s takes a moment to check up on the Murmansk fleet. It's still there, apparently resting at anchor, so for the moment all is well.

**Damned Tango!**

It's late-morning when the Russians hand me a serious setback. Urgent radio calls start coming in from one of my T-AOs off the south coast of Iceland, reporting a torpedo impact. The captain orders flank speed and attempts to run, but the second torpedo hits half a minute later, and water comes pouring in the two tattered wounds in the port side plating. Within five minutes the ship has drifted to a halt, rolled over, and sunk.

The ship was one of the lone T-AOs coming up the west Atlantic route, without any escorts. Once she had reached the latitude of Iceland she turned east, intending to anchor off Reykjavik with the other oilers and resupply ships waiting there. She was only three hours from her destination when she met her nemesis, a Tango which had quietly eluded the P-3s patrolling the area. Now that there was a flaming datum the P-3s hurried to the scene, and quickly found and sank the enemy sub, but that was small consolation for the shipwrecked sailors, and no replacement for the lost fuel.

With this wasteful and avoidable loss staring me in the face, I sit down and do what I should have done in the beginning: make a proper plan. MPA patrol zones are tightened up, coordinated, and adjusted, lone resupply vessels are directed to form small convoys (even if it means delays), and warship task group courses are adjusted to improve cover for the oilers. In some cases the resources simply aren't there to protect everything immediately, but I've at least got a better plan to get them to places of safety, rather than simply crossing my fingers and hoping for the best.

**Helicopter Bases**

By mid-day my two task groups have arrived at their helicopter bases at Jan Mayan and Greenland, and while the main cargo and logistics ships anchor to begin unloading, the escorting warships start patrolling the immediate area for subs. The ASW helicopters transfer to the bases, and begin deploying an east-west barrier patrol, although 'barrier' might be a strong word. I've got it set up so each helicopter has a 50 mile wide zone to hunt in, and since you only get about three miles each way from a dipping sonar, there's clearly plenty of room for a sub to slip through. Still, it's better than nothing.

It's going to take several days to fully set up the helicopter bases, and my anchored ships (and the bases themselves) will be vulnerable during that time. The Jan Mayan base gets an F-14 CAP, TG Whitney steams to a location along the most likely cruise missile approach path, and S-3s are set to patrol the general area all around the island. It seems like reasonable defences are in place.

The Greenland base, however, has a peculiar problem. The edge of the pack-ice is there, and although I have the Canadian O-boat SS patrolling there, as well as the surface warships from the task group, none of them can operate under the ice. So, there's a clear, unobstructed under-ice route for an SSN to get into the area, without being detected in advance. The more I look at it, the more it seems to be a big highway with a "this way to defenceless victims" sign painted on it. The closest sub I have is the SSN Groton, which was headed north to start patrolling the gap left by the other subs which are returning to Faslane. It's captain is ordered to turn the sub around and head SW at high speed, to begin patrolling the ice-approach route as soon as possible.

The Greenland base is also so far from the carriers that it is difficult to provide fighter cover for it. Planning staff are currently considering whether to send the Enterprise group in that direction after refuelling, or perhaps detach some of its fighters to provide CAP by operating out of Iceland. Additional MPA cover should also be available once TG Algonquin gets its valuable freighter of TLAMs to Reykjavik.

**Afternoon Activity**

The noon briefing brings word that HQ is requesting SEAD activity around Bardufoss, which is the most heavily defended of the central Norwegian bases. There's a pair of SA-10s near the coast guarding the most obvious ingress routes, an SA-11 just N of Bardufoss itself, and an SA-12 and an SA-20 further inland, along with several long-range surveillance radars. And those are just the ones I'm aware of. Effective SEAD against this array would be a major effort, and costly in terms of HARMS and PGMs (which I want to preserve for an attack on the Kirov group). Planning staff are set to work examining the options.

Meanwhile, the Roosevelt group has finally completed reloading, and is heading north again, while the Enterprise group is headed south for its turn at the tankers.

In the early afternoon, another recce-run is made on Evenes, overflying the battered truck park, before more F-18s with Snakeyes come in from the south to to complete the destruction. Another two flights of F-18s are sent in to finish off the pair of damaged SA-11 batteries to the east of Evenes. One of them gets fired on by an SA-15 guarding the northern ingress route, but it's a long-ranged shot, and the missiles fall short as the F-18s dash away across the fjord and into the mountains again.

Late-afternoon sees a small fighter sweep go into the Andoya / Bardufoss / Tromso area again, but this time there is no fighter response of any kind, only a few shots from the SA-10 near Tromso. This bodes well for any upcoming SEAD activity in the area.

**Small Convoy**

The 1800 intel briefing comes in, with indications that the Soviets may be positioning themselves to pull back from their most southern extent, which is encouraging news. There is also mention of a small convoy underway in the east somewhere, possibly headed for Rogachevo (which I am unlikely to be able to interfere with) or even Svalbard (which would be a suicide run - if I can spot it). An S-3 and some F-14s are sent out for a coastal reconnaissance, and they find it slowly coming along the coast, just passing Murmansk – four tightly spaced central targets and three escorts. Alert the French!

It takes a few hours to arrange, but, with the help of the VC-10 tankers out of Lossiemouth, the Clemenceau's complement of Etendards is sent east, each of them carrying one Exocet missile. Periodic radar checks by the S-3 show the convoy has continued slowly along the coast, at a mere 5 knots. The three escorts are on the front and flanks of the convoy, so the Etendards swing in from the undefended rear side, launching their missiles in succession through the gap in the coverage.

All four of the central cargo ships are struck and sunk (or I assume they are cargo ships - I never got close enough for an accurate ID), as is one of the Grisha escorts. The other two escorts (a Grisha and a Krivak) mill around uncertainly, while the Etendards turn about and fly back towards their tankers. There are MiG-25 radars coming from the direction of Rogachevo again, and it is time to leave. As it turns to fly home, the S-3 gets a last contact on the Murmansk task group, still sitting stationary at the extreme edge of radar cover.

**Soviet Subs**

Early in the evening my ASW precautions start to pay off. After numerous false contacts and biologicals in the Jan Mayan area, one of the escorts in TG Whitney gets a direct-path hit on a submerged contact headed south. The S-3s close in, identifying it as an SSK of some sort, before sinking it with a well-placed Mk 50. I'm not sure whether it was headed for the task group or the ships unloading at the new helicopter base, but, in any case, I'm glad it's gone.

Several hours later another sub is spotted in the Greenland-Iceland gap, cruising southwards at modest speed. It turns out to be an Akula, which had the misfortune to travel directly under a passive sonobuoy. The P-3 on patrol claims this one, although it takes three torps to finally sink it.

**Bardufoss SEAD and Strikes**

Much of the night is occupied by a series of strikes aimed at reducing the air defenses in the Bardufoss area, and along the NW Norwegian coast. Strike aircraft are called in from all four nearby American carriers (even the stores-hungry Enterprise finds something to contribute). The Clemenceau is busy hitting the convoy, but the distant Ark Royal manages to send its last two attack Harriers, and tankers and ELINT planes are brought in from Iceland and the UK to support the effort.

The first phase concentrates on knocking down Soviet air surveillance radars near the coast. A pair of TLAMs come flying down the fjord to knock out the Big Bird radar ENE of Bardufoss, and a pair of F-18s come in low with Snakeyes to wreck another radar further east. Unfortunately, it seems that for every radar I kill, I find another one, so the overall coverage isn't completely eliminated.

Another flight of F-18s comes in low from the north, planning to attack the hilltop radar W of Tromso, and then carry on to bomb the SA-10 one hilltop further south, but it turns out the area is much too heavily defended to do all that. The pilots manage to kill the radar and an SA-11 battery, but in the process they are fired on by two more SA-11s, and three SHORADS. Their glimpse of the Tromso airbase shows at least 20 planes on the ground, plus whatever's under cover, and they radio the update back to HQ as they duck down behind the hills again and head back out to sea.

Fortunately, none of those aircraft seem to be flight-ready yet, and the patrolling F-14s don't spot any interceptors, either from Tromso, Bardufoss, or even the more distant Banak.

The main strikes reach the Bardufoss area shortly afterwards, flying in from the west, just north of the battered Andoya airfield. The first blow falls on the coastal SA-10 there, distracting it with HARMs, before low-level F-18s finish it off with cluster bombs. As the HARM-carriers (both F-18s and A-6s) loiter uncertainly over the coast, probing shots with SLAMs and BOL HARMs start prompting more SAMs to reveal themselves; a total of three SA-11s and some SHORADS around Bardufoss, a pair of new SA-10s (actually SA-12s, it turns out) in the valleys south of the airbase, and a probable third one somewhere near the coast to the north. The SA-20 is still keeping quiet.

HARM barrages are fired towards the SA-11s, doing some damage, but the SA-12s prove to be problematic targets. They need only brief moments of terminal illumination, so the HARMs have great difficulty getting a good signal to fire at. The real stars of the show turn out to be the low-level F-18s, who go hurtling down the valleys using their night vision, killing both SA-12s, finishing off an SA-11, destroying a newly found SA-6, and pressing on to hunt the SA-20.

Some things don’t go well. The pair of Harriers come rushing down dark waters of the Lyngen Fjord from the north, and drop a brace of retarded bombs on the SA-12 near the base of the fjord, destroying most of the battery. Turning about they vanish into the darkness, retiring back up the fjord at wavetop level. The pilots are confident they’ve made their escape, until one Harrier abruptly explodes, struck down without warning by an optically-fired SA-6 they didn’t notice on the way in. I now have only one operational attack Harrier, which is grim news for the squadron.

In any case, the high altitude SAMs around Bardufoss are eventually destroyed, allowing my Maverick-carrying F-18s to come in above the SHORAD ceiling and eliminate the SA-15s and SA-8s guarding the base. With those gone, F-18s with LGBs are called in to destroy the runways and a few of the airfield facilities. Bardufoss is shut, trapping 6 planes that I can see, and whatever else is in its network of shelters and caves.

I had also hoped that I might shut Tromso as well, and although I damaged many of its surrounding medium and heavy SAMs, its SHORADS was still completely intact. I suspect my odds of getting the enough LGBs through the missile screen would be remote, so I reluctantly send the remaining bombers home, taking their LGBs with them.

**Late Night Situation**

As the night draws to a close, the situation is looking better. Although I have lost a T-AO, I seem to have crippled the Soviet air force for the moment, and largely eliminated the major SAM threat in NW Norway. Bodo, Evenes, Andoya, Bardufoss, and Svalbard are all shut by cratered runways, and although there are more planes at Tromso and presumably at Banak, none are flying at the moment. Soviet coastal shipping has been struck a heavy blow, losing their small convoy and two independent merchants, and the Murmansk task group seems to be holding still for now.

My carrier situation is greatly improved, with the Roosevelt, Nimitz, and Vinson all on station with good munitions loads. Enterprise is essentially a spent force, but it will begin UNREP in a couple of hours, and the completely fresh Kennedy should be arriving mid-day tomorrow.

HQ has sent some late-night orders for recce tasks tomorrow, and all of them should be feasible. We will see what the day brings.

**DAY 4 (MARCH 21 1994)**

**Ship Movements throughout the day**

Replenishment activities are ongoing, as Day 4 begins, and more groups arrive in theatre. The Kennedy group tops up its tanks from the T-AOs south of Phase Line Alpha, and then advances to take up station in the patrol zone between Iceland and the Faroes. This frees up the Invincible, which tops up and heads west across the top of Iceland at high speed, to start patrolling between Greenland and Iceland. The Enterprise completes a pair of replenishments south of Phase Line Bravo, and starts heading to a patrol station north of a line between my two new helicopter bases, where it will provide air cover for both of them. The Foch is still coming up through the North Atlantic, but by the end of the day it has refuelled and is poised to enter the zone between the Faroes and the Norwegian mainland. Both TLAM freighters make it to base, at Reykjavik and Faslane, and I only have two other oilers still far out at sea, one on each coast. One has a Spruance escort, so it should be okay, and the other is relying on intermittent P-3 patrols as it comes up the European coast. Hopefully that will be enough.

**Soviet Submarine Activity**

The Soviet subs are still hunting for us. One of the Vinson group's S-3s finds and sinks a Victor III ENE of the carrier. The Vinson is in my most north-easterly patrol zone, and this makes me wonder if I should have ASW screening a lot closer to the coast of occupied Norway. My Norwegian SS has been patrolling off the 'corner' of Norway, but so far hasn't heard anything passing through, and I've not sent my ASW aircraft in close to the coast for fear of SAMs and fighters. Maybe I should? The P-3s are doing a good job in other places, however, and they find and sink another Akula in the Greenland-Iceland gap.

The most alarming encounter comes early in the day, as my TLAM freighter is headed into Reykjavik, and it finds another Soviet diesel sub lying in wait. This time my freighter has an escort, however, and the three ships of TG Algonquin are patrolling in the lead. The Kilo opens fire at the Algonquin itself, which immediately counter-fires and turns to run, while scrambling its ASW helicopters. The helicopters get to the sub and sink it first, but the Algonquin is much too slow to outrun the wake-homers at this range, and they bore in relentlessly. It's only the Nixie which saves my ship, decoying the torps before they can impact.

The area outside Reykjavik had extensive P-3 patrols, but they had found nothing, and the Kilo was literally only a couple hundred meters away from a passive sonobuoy, yet remained undetected until it fired. This leads to another change in policy. Up to this point I'd been restricting myself to passive sonar, hoping to avoid alerting subs to my presence, but no more. I revert to my normal practice, and the order goes out for active sonar use on ships with powerful hull sonars. Let's blast away! Even if that draws them in, at least I'll see them in advance.

(After their alarming experience, TG Algonquin docks alongside their freighter, refuels hastily, then heads out again to escort a pair of oiler and ammo ships around the west side of Iceland, and up to join the other refuellers at PL Bravo.)

**Actions in the North - AM**

The Tromso airbase is the next target on the strike list. Last night's heavy SEAD activity in the Bardufoss area destroyed or damaged most of the heavy SAMs, so this attack doesn't need to be so elaborate. High level attacks with Mavericks and HARMs clean out the four (not the three I had expected) SHORADS in the immediate area, and then LGBs shut the runway. Some aircraft are also detailed to hit the damaged remains of the nearby SA-10, SA-11, and SA-4 that were struck by HARMs last night. The attack aircraft can see numerous planes (mostly MiG-23s) parked in revetments, and presumably the hardened shelters are full too. ESM picks up Foxbat radars from Rogachevo during the strike, so some fighters are sent to go skirmishing in that direction, and another SA-12 opens fire on the passing planes from about 50 miles east of Tromso.

Recce activity up into the Barents confirms that the Murmansk group is still holding position in the same location, and the radar operators on the ES-3 are confident they also picked up a tiny moving contact which had to be a surfaced or snorkelling sub headed into port. They also find the two escorts left over from yesterday's convoy, still headed west. By now the radar operators know the drill: For all your anti-shipping needs, call the Clemenceau! More Etendards make the flight, and although it takes a few more missiles (it's a daylight attack, so the ships can see the missiles incoming and shoot back), the results are the same, and the last of the convoy is sunk.

**Rogachevo**

I'm getting concerned about the Foxbats operating out of Rogachevo. They're not exceptionally dangerous, two at a time, but they can certainly interfere with things, and if they ever surge more (or have something nastier they haven't shown yet), then they could be a significant problem. Therefore, a modest sweep (six F-14s, tanker, and ESM support) is sent to draw their teeth a little. And nothing happens. No planes come up to fight. So, after hours on station, and multiple trips to the tanker, the fighter pilots sadly turn for home with aching butts and bursting piddle packs. Of course, that's when another pair of Foxbats comes up. Those get shot down, but, overall, the results are not great. Rogachevo is still very much a question-mark. It's a long way to reach for a strike. Are TLAMs warranted? It's something to consider.

**ASW group**

Around noon radar operators report the sudden appearance of a group Soviet ships in the Barents, off northern Norway. They can't explain where it came from, or why they didn't spot it before, and keep mumbling about "atmospherics" and "anomalous propagation". In any case, this group's got its radars on, so it's quickly identified as an ASW group, and it's headed west. It's not a threat at the moment (my submarines are forbidden to operate there), but it does act like a radar picket, which I would prefer to avoid.

"Call the Clemenc - er - no? Reloading, you say?" Unfortunately, the Etendards on the Clemenceau are not available to hit the group, so the call goes all the way south the Foch, which hasn't even crossed PL Alpha yet. A pair of Etendards (the only ones currently loaded with Exocets) head north with a VC-10 tanker in attendance and manage to sink one of the Pauks.

**Central Cleanup**

Shortly after mid-day, a TARPs bird is sent to make a recce run of all the enemy airbases west of Banak, reporting numerous aircraft on the ground at Tromso, some at Bardufoss, and a few at Andoya. There's nothing at Evenes, but a SA-8 gunner there reminds us that some of the defences are still active. The TARPs bird also makes a gesture towards Bodo, but there are a pair of active Ganefs and a big surveillance radar still active in the region, so the pilot waves it off and heads back to the carrier.

Meanwhile, the F-18s on the distant Enterprise have spent the morning loading up with a pair of 500 lb LGBs each, and the entire force of them launches and heads east. Confident that they are free to operate at high altitude, without SAM or fighter interference, they begin a deliberate hunt for parked aircraft and other targets, reminiscent of the 'tank plinking' of ODS. All exposed aircraft are destroyed at Tromso, Bardufoss, and Andoya, as well as the remaining SHORADS at Evenes. The score of destroyed airframes is probably up over two dozen by the time they are complete. I may need to make another follow-up to engage the hardened shelters (particularly the big underground ones at Bodo and Bardufoss), but that gets expensive in terms of large ordnance, and even though I've resupplied the carriers, my number of penetrator warheads is limited.

**Evening Briefing**

The evening intel briefing brings good news, in that the Russians seem to be withdrawing from southern Norway. Apparently, their southern Su-24s have pulled out, back to the Leningrad area, which would put them some 900 miles from my closest carriers, and generally far from my theatre of operations. (Unless they've actually gone elsewhere, of course. Or have tankers.)

The not-so-good news is that they're sending 3 or 4 new battalions of modern heavy SAMs into the Bardufoss region. I just cleaned out Bardufoss! Hopefully they won't pop up just as I'm making operations in that area. Even with resupply, my HARM stocks are not endless, and these new forces may be tough to counter.

**Night Shipping Strike**

Once darkness has fallen, the remaining ten Etendards on the Foch finish loading Exocets and take off to head north. Tanking en-route, they head for the location of the ASW group, which is still heading west towards my forces. Four of them peel off and make a run on the small ships, sinking all of them, before turning back to their carrier. The remaining six turn east, drop to low level, and fly towards a riskier appointment near Murmansk.

Their job is to sting the big task group stationed there, and provoke it to respond, so the loitering ES-3 lurking in the darkness can get a read on what's out there. The Etendards swing in and approach from the north, popping up just long enough for their radars to get a contact on the enemy. Three missiles are launched at each of the closest two enemy ships, BOL, with missile activation timed to happen only moments before impact. Then the Etendards drop down to the waves again, and escape westwards, while their missiles close with the enemy. Despite the radar-off, sea-skimming approach, the Russians spot the missiles 4 to 5 miles out, and instantly light off every radar they have and start shooting. None of my missiles reach their targets (no surprise), but the rich ELINT haul is well worth it, and the delighted crew on the ES-3 heads back to the carrier to report.

The task group is powerful. Really powerful. I had expected a Kirov, of course, probably a Slava, some older cruisers, and an assortment of the remaining destroyers and frigates that made it back to base. You know, the rag-tag remnants of their surface fleet. Instead, I've got five assorted Udaloys and Sovremennys, two Slavas, not one, but two Kirovs (when was the last time you saw that?), and, to my astonishment, the Kusnetsov! I thought she had sunk weeks ago.

**The Plan**

As we speak, strike aircraft of all sorts are converging off NW Norway, loaded with Harpoons, SLAMs, Exocets, and HARMs. They'll refuel as best they can from the tankers, before moving on the Murmansk group. I had intended to lead the attack with SLAMs, hoping their discrete no-radar approach would let me take the outer ring of escorts by surprise, but the Soviets' ability to spot the radar-off Exocets five miles out puts this plan in some doubt. (I can't come in overland - there's at least one SA-10 on the island there, and the concentration of airbases and the port will certainly be well defended.) I don't expect to destroy many (possibly none) of the high value targets, but I should be able to wreck a number of the escorts, and consume a very large number of the enemy SAMs. That way, when they do sortie, my subsequent attacks will be more likely to succeed.

I can see that there's a pair of MiG-25s up from Rogachevo. I'm going to leave them alone for the moment, rather than provoke a scramble, and hope that I can get in discretely without being spotted. I've got essentially all my tanker support tied up with my strike aircraft, so there is little left to bring extra fighters along. The AMRAAMs on the HARM-carrying F-18s will have to be my primary defence. I could be in real trouble if the enemy spots the raid in advance, particularly if the Kuznetzov gets her AEW helicopter up. Fortunately, there's been no sign of her air-wing yet, and I really want to get this strike in before that becomes active. The flight in will be tense...

Other upcoming operations include plans to finish off the air defences near Bodo, and an attempt to knock out some of the major hardened shelters at Bodo and Bardufoss.

We shall see...

**DAY 5 (MARCH 22 1994)**

**Murmansk Strike**

The day begins with swarms of strike aircraft converging in the midnight skies NW of Norway. Some, from the more distant carriers like the Enterprise, Clemenceau, and Kennedy, pause for refuelling, while the others from the Nimitz, Vinson, and Roosevelt proceed without waiting. The force heads east out into the open Barents, far from land, and then (leaving tankers, ESM, and a fighter screen behind) curves south and drops to low altitude, heading for Murmansk.

As the strike approaches its launch point the distant ES-3 turns on its radar to illuminate the scene, only to find the ships have shuffled around some. They're not emitting, at the moment, so I'm no longer certain exactly who's who! There does seem to be a big contact in the exact same place the carrier was, and another pair of big contacts nearby, but the number of escorts seems to have diminished. Perhaps they've gone into port? )(Actually, it looks like some were lost in clutter in the island channel to the east of Murmansk, or had gone right up against the shore.) Orders are issued, and the strikers lift up a bit and launch a densely packed swarm of Harpoons and SLAMs at the enemy. Roughly two thirds are fired towards the pair of big contacts (and the one escort that happens to be in the flightpath), and one third towards what may be the carrier, and then the missile carriers descend and turn away north.

As the missiles calmly fly through the night, the Etendards follow behind them, staying as low as they can, each carrying its single Exocet closer to the target. Then the distant HARM carriers begin launching, firing two barrages bearing only, without lock-ons, timing them to (hopefully) arrive around the same time as the Harpoons. There's a moment more of calm, but then the Russians spot the missiles, and the entire task group and the SAMs on the neighbouring island light up, and start flinging missiles in all directions. The last of the HARMs get fired, the ES-3 yells out confirmation that the suspect carrier contact really is the Kuznetsov, the Etendards salvo their 10 Exocets at it, and then dive to flee north. After that it's all down to the missiles.

There are a colossal number of SAMs in the air, and the orbiting ESM planes can see the light on the horizon flickering like a furious thunderstorm as missiles get knocked down in rapid succession. The destroyer in the path of the main missile stream gets run over and smashed, and the bulk of the missiles home in on the two big adjacent contacts - one of the Kirovs and a Slava. Their potent close defences knock down many of my missiles, but they each take multiple hits, and when their big ASMs explode they tear the entire ship apart in an instant. Spillover missiles continue onwards, causing confusion in the fleet, and two more escorts get hit and damaged. Almost all the missiles headed for the Kusnetsov are shot down, but, by the sound of excited voice chatter, at least two of the trailing Exocets hit the carrier, and maybe one of the Harpoons too.

My planes continue to egress northwards at low level, before angling east again and rising to tank up for the trip back to the carriers. As they head out a pair of MiG-25s comes sniffing in from Rogachevo, but my few F-14s are able to intercept them before they find any of my attack planes. While the flights disperse and head back to their carriers, staff analyze the data, and are pleased with the result. Confirmed kills on a Kirov, a Slava, and a destroyer; one more destroyer heavily damaged and in imminent danger of sinking, and one lightly damaged by a single hit; the carrier lightly damaged, but apparently not significantly impeded. They've lost about 40% of the task group sunk, their offensive ASM power has dropped in about the same proportion, and they've used copious quantities of SAMs. (Surviving postwar records reveal the expenditure of a colossal 451 SAMs from ship and shore batteries, plus 64 bursts of gunfire of various types.)

The trouble is, I’ve also fired an enormous quantity of missiles. Sinking those four ships took the expenditure of 68 Harpoons, 24 SLAMs, 58 HARMs, and 12 Exocets. I can do this again once, possibly twice, but that would essentially strip me of anti-shipping weapons. However, I really have to watch HARM and SLAM expenditure. If I'm tasked with extensive ground attacks (such as against those new SAMs intel says are arriving at Bardufoss, the triple SA-10 around Banak, or the SA-10/10/20 combo at Murmansk), then I'll have problems if I’ve used all my munitions up against ships. So I may need to cut back on those.

**Bodo Area Attacks**

Further south, the Kennedy prepares for a follow-on attack on the Bodo area, loading an assortment of munitions on its F-18s. The strike doesn't launch immediately, since it is waiting for tankers to return from the Murmansk attack, but it eventually gets underway and arrives in the target area shortly before dawn.

Low level attacks find and kill the pair of Ganefs there, cluster-bombing them without too much difficulty, as well as engaging the surveillance radar further inland. However, as the F-18s pull out from their Snakeye attack on the radar site, they spot an SA-6 a short distance away, and decide to rush it at low level. This turns out to be a bad decision. The SA-6 has an SA-15 in attendance, which opens fire, and, as I react to that, three other SA-6 batteries reveal themselves in succession. It looks like the entire east end of the Skjerstad Fjord is a nest of medium-level SAMs, and I've flown right into it. The F-18s twist and dodge as best they can amongst the hills, managing (with the help of a loitering SEAD flight) to kill two of the batteries and wound a third, but it's dawn now, and my planes no longer have the cover of darkness. Chastened, they flee the scene as best they can, although not all of them come home again. Lesson: stay the heck out of Soviet Army tactical air defences.

Once the Ganefs are knocked down, the other F-18s come in to bomb the big mountain shelter at Bodo using Walleyes, hoping their linear shaped-charge warheads will be useful against the heavily protected target. The results are indifferent, and I'm not even sure if anything important is in the bunker, so I'm not confident it was worth the munitions. One side-effect of the strike is that my passing planes spot a Styx missile battery on the tip of the long narrow peninsula NW of Bodo, and bomb that. HQ seems to think this was significant, so TARPS birds are sent in to make low-level runs along the coast, looking for more, but nothing turns up.

**Daytime Activity**

Most of the day is spent on admin and logistical activities; re-organizing ASW zone boundaries, checking fuel levels, despatching tankers, etc. The Clemenceau group is low on fuel, so she heads south mid-morning, out of the line and towards the tankers waiting near Jan Mayan at PL Bravo. Unfortunately she won't be getting any new munitions, because her dedicated replenishers are over near the Foch, far to the SE. She's got her last loadout of Exocets mounted on her Etendards, but after that she'll only have conventional bombs. I'm bringing up another French supply ship out of Brest, which is joining up with British supply ships out of Portsmouth, but it'll be days before they reach the area.

LZ Baby Ice (the ASW helicopter base on Jan Mayan) is fully set up now, so the Jeanne d'Arc gathers her task group and steams south for Reykjavik. She'll refuel, and then come back with more supplies later in the week. LZ Wolf Dance (the base on Greenland) is partly set up, and the Raleigh is also ordered to Reykjavik immediately, while the other cargo ships stay behind to continue unloading. There's no way I'm sending her out alone in sub-infested waters, so the USS Caron (a Spruance) goes with her as ASW escort. Unfortunately, this leaves the remaining cargo ships only defended by a Perry, a second feeble gun frigate of some sort, and the feebler little Biscuit-Tin (the Beskytteren), which is cheerfully sailing around showing off its shiny new (and operationally irrelevant) patrol helicopter. Of course, the Groton is lurking under the ice immediately to the north, and the Enterprise is keeping a CAP overhead, so maybe things aren't so bad.

ES-3s make a couple of radar reconnaissance runs towards Murmansk during the day. They usually spot four or five radar contacts near the harbour, but the enemy have their radars off, and my planes certainly don't get close enough to try and ID them visually. We're loading Harpoons for another big strike after dark, and hopefully that one will be enough to neutralize their fleet. My F-14s are also operating in the area, making a series of sweeps towards Rogachevo, where they manage to shoot down some more of the MiG-25s.

**SLCMs**!

Around noon, the AEW helicopter from the Ark Royal gets a vampire contact coming in from the north, sea-skimming at 500 knots, on a bearing for the new airbase at Jan Mayan. Cruise missile! Scramble orders immediately go out across the fleet, and AEW aircraft are pushed northward, trying to get a better look at potential launch zones. Radar operators search intently for the swarm of missiles following the first one, but they don't find any. Just one missile. Can it be a nuke?

The Harriers swoop in and shoot it down easily enough, before climbing to wait for orders. It's not long before there's another missile contact, but this one is much farther to the east, north of the Vinson's patrol area. AWACs operators track the missile flying west, before it eventually turns south again towards Jan Mayan. It gets shot down too, while the orbiting fighter pilots elsewhere wonder what's going on.

As this is happening, F-14s and S-3s from the Vinson are closing in on the area where the missiles were spotted, and they detect the next missile being launched. This lets the S-3 immediately head for the exact location of what must be the Yankee Notch intel warned us about. The F-14s dive in to shoot down the missiles as they are launched, until the slower S-3 localizes the sub with a sonobuouy, and batters it to death with a succession of three torpedoes.

(I added a Yankee Notch to my side and took a look at the default WRA. WRA for the SS-21b is currently set for 1 missile per target, just like the nuclear version. By comparison, the default setting for TLAMs is 2 missiles per target. If you want a massed salvo against the base you would probably need to set the WRA to 'use all'. I think in my case I had enough fighters up to catch all the missiles if they were salvoed, but I probably would not have been able to find the sub.)

***Note: This is fixed but the maximum the Yankee Notch can fire in one salvo is 8.***

**Intel Report**

The dinner-time intel report comes in, detailing more of the Warpac's moves to firm up their defences in Norway. Most of it doesn't have an immediate effect on my operations, but HQ is still discussing Russian convoy operations, headed for Svalbard or possibly the other islands in the Barents. I'm pretty sure this is the same convoy I sank already, but what if I'm wrong? Additional MPA are sent to complete a full radar sweep around Svalbard and the islands further NE (staying away from the Rogachevo MiGs), but nothing turns up.

**Murmansk II, the Re-hittening**

As evening comes, my aircraft monitoring the Murmansk TG continue to report intermittent radar contact with four ships, but we're not certain exactly which ones they are. Has the Kuznetsov docked for repairs, or is she still at sea? Are the big air-defence ships deployed nearby, or am I just looking at a collection of destroyers? Do I launch a major strike or not?

Therefore, my ES-3 is sent on a low altitude night reconnaissance run, alone, defenceless, and radar off, hoping nothing decides to come patrolling their way. Thirty miles out they gently climb until they just clear the optical horizon and start scanning with their FLIR. The carrier's still there, along with an Udaloy II and Sovremenny together near the island, and a second Sovremenny (the damaged one?) further away near the mainland shore. There's no sign of the other ships; the second Kirov, and the second Slava are missing, which means they're probably either docked, or possibly hidden behind the island.

It's definitely worth a strike on the carrier, so the sequence begins again: tankers and support planes underway, strike aircraft up, refuelling complete, and then the attack. I'm not bringing the French this time. I only have one shot of Exocets left, so I'll reserve those for the Kirov, when it reappears. This one's all Harpoons and HARMs. The planes make it in without detection, find that there are now five targets on radar, release their missiles and swing away.

The results are entirely satisfactory. With some of their major air-defence ships destroyed, and some presumably away in dock, they have fewer SAMs to hurl my way. Two Sovremennys, and two Udaloys are sunk, and, fighting bravely but futilely against the flood, the Kuznetsov succumbs to the barrage and sinks beneath the waves. There are still two major combatants unaccounted for (the other Kirov and the other Slava), and they do have a significant long-range anti-shipping punch, but they will have to sortie to get to me, and I should be able to detect them in advance if I maintain periodic radar patrols.

**Recce tasks**

As the day draws to a close, TARPS birds are sent out on recce missions to Tromso and Bardufoss. Nothing new shows up at Tromso, but as the pilot flies past the airbase he spots another radar in the hills about 20 miles to the SW. Turning to investigate, he’s fired on by a hidden SA-6, but manages to dive away on burner and break LOS. Radioing the warning back to HQ, he gets asked to recce the next fjord over, where the Harrier was shot down two days ago.

Booming down the fjord at supersonic speed, he spots the hidden SA-6, and blows past it before it can react. A minute later he catches a glimpse of a concentration of vehicles on the east bank, but he’s gone before he can recognize them. Back at base, analysis of the tapes shows them to be bridging equipment, and thus well worth hitting. The F-18s on the distant Enterprise are brought in, and once again use small LGBs from the safety of high altitude to wreck the engineering truck park.

**Tomorrow**?

Plans for tomorrow are uncertain, and will probably consist mainly of monitoring the situation at sea (HQ still insists there’s a convoy out there), and maintaining barrier patrols against subs. The next major land target would be Banak, which doesn’t seem to have much air activity at the moment. It’s got at least three SA-10 surrounding it, so it might be a tough target for little reward. Time will tell.

**DAY 6 (March 23 1994)**

**Activity at Murmansk**

The day starts with the last of my strike aircraft returning to the carriers, and the assembled tankers dispersing and heading back to their bases. A TARPs bird has just completed its run of the Bardufoss area, planning teams are debating what to load for the day's activity, and things are generally quiet.

That's when my forward AWACS gets an extreme-range bogey contact over the Murmansk area, and it's not acting like the occasional ELINT Badgers that I've been ignoring. Then there's a second one. And a third. And a fourth. They're not headed out to a patrol area. Instead they're orbiting tightly over the airbase. This looks very much like a bomber strike forming up. Oh heck.

If these are bombers, I want to meet them as far out as possible, so my closest carriers (Vinson and Nimitz) launch three flights of Sparrow-armed F-14s and send some of them overland across Finland, and others along the coast (skirting the Banak SAMs), to cut off the enemy as soon as possible. I'm going to need fuel, but I've only got one half-empty tanker nearby, and all the other ones are well on their way home, and will take hours to recycle once they get there. Orders go out for the UK-bound tankers to turn around, and start heading north again, with the KC-135s offloading their remaining fuel to the VC-10s, and the VC-10s pressing on to meet my carriers. Those two tankers, now 85% full, will be all I'll get for the next few hours. Meanwhile, the count of orbiting planes continues to rise.

The F-14s continue to head east, radars off, hoping to ID the orbiting bombers with their nose-mounted cameras before they are spotted themselves. They approach nervously, all too aware that there’s an SA-20 lurking out there somewhere, until they finally resolve their targets. They're not bombers at all! It's a tight wagon-wheel of Su-27s, orbiting the Murmansk airbases. This is a bit of a conundrum. I'm outnumbered, they have better long-range missiles than I do, they're fuel-rich over their airbases, and I know there's at least one SA-20 and SA-10 in the region. Charging in is out of the question.

What are they doing? They're awfully close-in for an effective CAP. Could they be waiting to escort some bombers I haven't spotted yet? Were they supposed to have gone to the carrier? (Can't be - they're the wrong model, I think.) Or ferried to one of the airbases I've bombed? It's perplexing. My piqued pilots start to pull back, shooting down a couple of Badgers on the way out to make themselves feel better. Meanwhile the planning staff starts trying to figure out how to get the Flankers out of there. They certainly have the potential to make a mess out of my operations over the Barents.

**New Plan**

My intention of having an ‘easy day’, idly hunting convoys and maybe wondering about considering thinking of Banak goes out the window. If the Soviets are bringing in new units of high-quality aircraft, or getting their bombers ready to go, then the last thing I need is something new in Banak. Banak must go, and it must go soon. Unfortunately, that means a daylight attack, against a heavily defended airbase. The orders go out.

The Roosevelt will immediately conduct an SEAD strike on the concentration of SA-6s deployed around the south end of the Lyngen fjord, and the SA-12 that’s up in the mountains to the NE. Kennedy will immediately conduct follow-on SEAD strikes on the SA-6s near Bodo. While that’s underway, A-6 units will reload for heavy SEAD work, with a combination of HARMs and SLAMs, except for those carrying heavy LGBs for use against the Banak runways. F-18s will load for high-altitude anti-SHORADS work (Mavericks, LGBs), on the assumption the A-6s will be able to knock back the SA-10s around the airbase before they arrive, and they can tackle the SA-15s that are sure to be there. If all goes to plan, the Banak strike will arrive in two waves (SEAD, then bombing) a few hours after dawn.

**Lyngen Fjord and related SEAD**

The Lyngen Fjord attack goes well; much better than the SA-6s I stumbled into down near Bodo. This time I already know where all three SA-6s and the SA-12 are, so my pilots can plot low-level routes through the dark valleys, popping up over ridgelines, and dashing into minimum range before the batteries can react. The SA-12 dies in a rain of cluster-bombs, and the three SA-6s suffer similar fates to Snakeye impacts. The fourth SA-6, tucked into the deep valley near the village of Birtavarre is an unwelcome surprise, but the SAM gunner’s hasty shot misses, and the last of the batteries there is destroyed moments later.

The attacks are so rapid that the escorting HARMs never have a chance to fire, so they are vectored NE towards Banak. One plane fires a speculative BOL shot towards the nearest SA-10, and when it fires back, the remaining HARMs are salvoed towards it. As far as we can tell, some of them came close enough to damage the battery, so the upcoming Banak attack may go more smoothly than anticipated.

Further south, the F-18s from the Kennedy make a similar attack on the remaining SA-6s around Bodo. They arrive later, when it’s already light, and don’t do quite as well, expending a lot more ordnance to accomplish the same thing. The discovery of an additional SA-15 doesn’t help, but they manage to kill it as well.

**Flankers from Murmansk**

While preparations for the Banak strike get underway on the distant carriers, one of the ES-3s is sent along the Barents coast again, checking for any Russian naval activity, particularly a sortie by the two powerful cruisers in Murmansk. The waters are clear, but the ESM operators are suddenly alarmed when they pick up fighter radars launching out of Murmansk. The new Flankers there are active again.

While the ES-3 dives for the deck and hurries out to sea, the orbiting AWACs starts to get a better picture of the enemy activity. There’s only two Flankers, and they don’t seem to be interested in my planes. They’re on a straight-line course for Bardufoss. Could they be ferrying there to reinforce? But Bardufoss’ runways are cratered. Aren’t they?

A returning TARPS bird is hastily vectored to a tanker, and then makes a burner dash into Bardufoss, arriving a few minutes before the incoming Soviet fighters. It hurtles across the airfield, just above the ceiling of the 57mm AAA which infests the area – but not above the 100mm guns which are mixed in among them! Thick black flack bursts envelop the aircraft, and fragments rattle against the fuselage, but luckily the damage is minor, and the pilot makes it out with the news that yes, the runways are still wrecked.

F-14s advance to deal with the pair of fighters, and manage to take them down without loss, although it takes 2:1 numerical superiority and a lot of running away to pull it off. It’s not long before AWACS reports another pair launching from Murmansk and headed this way.

**Banak Strike**

The Flankers’ timing is rotten, because my Banak strike is forming up over the ocean near Tromso now, and readying to advance on Banak. Flankers headed from Murmansk to Bardufoss will almost certainly spot them and attack. I have no choice but to feed most of my Sparrow-carrying Tomcats from Vinson and Nimitz into the fray, in a protracted battle in Finland to protect the SE flank of my assault.

I’m expecting the eight Flankers I saw flying before, but in the end I have to fight sixteen of them, and although I typically have two or three times as many fighters engaged as they do, plus a pair of jammers, they still manage to extract their pound of flesh. Their missiles out-range mine, their countermeasures are comprehensive, and their maneuverability is excellent. Most of all, I hate their long-ranged IR-guided missiles. The ‘no Phoenix’ limit is really making it tough to deal with these guys.

The strike itself finds modest SAM resistance at Banak; certainly less than I had anticipated. There are two SA-10s still active, and a pair of SA-8s at the base itself, but that is all. No SA-6s or SA-11s, no SA-4s lurking in the background, and no nasty SA-15s to guard the others. The strike stays high, using HARMs to cripple the SA-10s, and a combination of SLAMs, Mavericks, and LGBs to destroy the remains of the defences. Then the A-6s are able to advance and reliably deliver their penetrating LGBs to crater the runway and taxiway, and destroy the hangar. One MiG-25 is spotted in the open and destroyed, but that is the only plane seen on the site.

**Back to Svalbard**

Every morning, for the last few days, I’ve gotten a contact report from Svalbard at dawn, telling me about the AAA defences spotted at the end of the runway. This is a sitrep from one of the two Harrier pilots who survived being shot down in the initial attacks. These two airmen, code-named ‘Beagle’ and ‘Vigdis’, have been sneaking into town to swipe potatoes and borscht from the apathetic Soviet garrison, in the hopes that they can evade capture until the war is over.

I’d essentially given them up as lost, until, five-days later, I finally realize that I have the means to get to them. The two SAR Sea Kings on the Ark Royal have an exceptionally long range, and they can actually reach Svalbard (barely) if the carrier is at the very north edge of its patrol zone. The destination is still infested with AAA, so they need some help, and the Enterprise, with it’s F-18s already loaded with small LGBs, is perfect for the job.

While the Enterprise and the Ark Royal steam north towards Svalbard, a tanker, a Canberra, and a U-2 take off from southern bases. I’ve tried to use the Canberras over Norway, with limited success, and I haven’t used the U-2 yet at all, because it’s simply too vulnerable to risk with heavy SAMs around. However, Svalbard is a more permissive environment, and the recce planes arrive and begin to provide useful overwatch.

By mid-afternoon the tanker is there, dragging in the Enterprise’s F-18s, which begin to pummel the remaining AAA, some trapped aircraft and airfield facilities, as well as some dispersed units which seem to be part of some sort of ELINT / COMINT formation. The SAR helicopters arrive an hour later, under the watchful eye of more Maverick-toting F-18s, and make the extraction in good time. They keep the doors open as they fly home. After five days in the field, the rescued airmen add a lot to the atmosphere…

**Afternoon Activity**

Other than the Svalbard rescue, there are also some low priority attack activities in the afternoon.

The Roosevelt’s F-18s start bashing away at the AAA around Bardufoss with 2,000lb iron bombs. There’s a set of POW barracks nearby, and I may need a clear field of operation if I need to mount a rescue. The Mk 84s actually work quite well, as any reasonably close hit will smash a gun, and they’re considerably cheaper than guided weapons.

The distant Kennedy launches another follow-up attack on Bodo, in the south, using much more expensive Walleye glide bombs to finish destroying the mountain-side shelter, and a few of the hardened aircraft shelters. It’s a slow and costly process, usually taking two or three hits to eliminate a single HAS, and I may call it off as not worth the effort.

The Raleigh and Caron make it back to Reykjavik and dock for refuelling, while the Caron starts filling her VLS with TLAMs. The Jeanne d’Arc and Argus are almost back too, and should dock around midnight. The CP-140s have just arrived from Canada, and are now setting up their ASW patrol zone. I’ve also got some replacement fighters flying in from Stateside, to be forwarded to the carriers tonight.

On the other side of the theatre, coastal convoys along the west side of the UK are consolidating and moving north, preceded by the Trafalgar, which has finished its resupply and is headed back to the fight. I’ve actually got a lot of high-value shipping here; 3 T-AOs, 2 Durances, and a pair of Rovers, and they only have one ASW frigate to guard them. Fortunately, HMS Cornwall has excellent sonar, and I’ll be able to give them lots of MPA support. TG de Ruyter is also coming south to meet them, and take some of them north to PL Beta.

**Submarine Activity**

My subs continue to patrol quietly. None of them have seen any sign of the enemy, above or below the layer. I’m starting to think the Russians are slowing their submarine activity too, with no sightings all day, but that thought changes mid-afternoon, when a fast-moving SSN is detected by direct-path contact, only 18 miles N of the Nimitz, and headed our way. Most of the Nimitz’s S-3s are away guarding TG Whitney, but fortunately there’s still one ready on deck. It’s shot off immediately, and firewalls the throttles to get to the closing sub as soon as possible. It takes all four torpedoes to sink what turns out to be a Sierra II. It’s never a good thing to have a modern sub that close to a carrier, but fortunately it doesn’t seem to have called any friends.

When the evening intel briefing arrives, we get word that we can expect more visitors. There’s a Charlie coming home west of Iceland, and a number of subs have been spotted coming out of the Kola inlet, including the unique Papa SSGN. Planning staff are considering whether to redeploy some of our ASW assets in light of this news, when the Nimitz’s S-3s pick up and sink another SSN cruising in at 15 kts from the ENE. That’s two in the same area, coming around the top of Norway. Looks like the intel boys have the sub surge correct, and the planning staff continue to move more assets to the area.

(Postwar analysis shows that the S-3’s sonar operator had misidentified the unfamiliar evening contact as an SSN. It was actually the Papa, sunk before we knew exactly what it was.)

The next SSN shows up only 15 miles NE of the Nimitz, around 23:00 hrs, obligingly right next to an S-3 headed out for its turn on patrol. I’m getting a little worried that all these are direct path contacts. I had high hopes for creeping along with my towed arrays, and getting lots of warning, but so far CZ contacts just aren’t happening. As the S-3 is sinking the Victor, another Goblin is spotted in the Denmark strait, right where the intel boys predicted the Charlie to be. Are they psychic? Not this time. It’s just another whale…

**Plans**

The intel briefing has a few other points of interest. The Soviet withdrawal in southern Norway is ongoing, which is good. As part of this, it sounds like they’ve been minelaying off Narvik – fortunately that’s somebody else’s problem. HQ confirms that the Svalbard convoy they’ve been talking about is indeed the one we’ve already met, so things are going well there.

My intention for tonight is to stand down and have no major strikes. Although, in theory, we could maintain multiple strikes per day, in practice the men need time to rest. Reconnaissance and ASW will continue, of course, but, unless there is an operational emergency, the strike planes will not fly.

The Soviet airbases in Norway and Svalbard have been cratered, and the fighters in Murmansk seem to have calmed down. I haven’t had any recent indications of fighter activity out of Rogachevo either. Next strikes could conceivably be the airfield complex around Murmansk, but an assault into a heavily defended part of Russia would be a massive undertaking, and possibly a bit premature. Rogachevo would be a very long haul with tankers, but it’s looking interesting. It’s definitely a thorn in the flank of any move on Murmansk, it gives the Russians air cover over a good part of the Barents, and its small enough that I might be able to tackle it. Planning staff are asked to conduct a feasibility study.

We shall see…

A little more time to play, so here's another day's worth of 'Tour de Force'.

**DAY 7 (Mar 24 1994)**

**Southern Theatre**

It's a calm night in the southern part of my theatre, as the aircrew get a much needed rest. ASW patrols continue uneventfully, and radar reconnaissance into the Barents finds no shipping. The Jeanne d'Arc and friends finish replenishing at Reykjavik, and head back north to take a new load of supplies to the helicopter bases on Greenland and Jan Mayan. The Arc Royal is heading south to refuel, and should complete the operation shortly after noon. Way down south, the cruiser Worden is nearly ready to dock in America.

Operations resume at dawn, as 'airfield cleanup' attacks recommence. A-6s and F-18s bombard the AAA defences at Andoya and Bardufoss with heavy iron bombs, and even try cracking some of the hardened aircraft shelters, with limited success, F-18s from the Kennedy visit Bodo with another load of Walleyes, and succeed in wrecking more of the shelters there. It's expensive, but the captain has the munitions, and dammit, he's determined to use them! Interestingly, I find I'm keeping a large proportion of my A-6s loaded for anti-shipping duty. Those two heavy cruisers in Murmansk are having a distinct "fleet in being" effect on my operations.

**Morning Submarines**

My submarines finally get into the action when the sonar operator on the Turbulent, just south of PL Delta, gets a CZ contact on a moving sub. It's fairly noisy too, and they rapidly identify it as a Yankee Notch. They could spend a few hours closing in and hunting it down, but that's risky with a long-range cruise missile carrier, which could launch a barrage at any time. So, with a resigned sigh, the captain orders the masts up, and sends a call to the carriers. Soon F-14s are orbiting overhead (to catch any missile launches), while the S-3s close in and localize and sink the sub. The Turbulent monitors it all on sonar, sending occasional position updates, until the Americans have finished stealing his kill.

The Brits get a kill of their own, later in the morning, when a Nimrod suddenly gets a radar contact in the open waters between Iceland and Norway. Somebody's snorkelling! It turns out to be an old Whiskey, and she comes to a sudden end when the Stingray hits home. (This is the first snorkeller in six days - I had expected to see more.)

**Rogachevo - initial operations**

Phase 1 of the Rogachevo begins with a fighter sweep deep into the Barents. Two flights of F-14s precede an S-3, which checks out Murmansk (nothing there, although one of the cruisers' helicopters is up), and then goes further east, well within range of the two known surveillance radars on Rogachevo. They find a Stenka ASW patrol boat, waiting motionless in the mouth of the Kola inlet, but nothing else is about. As the S-3 sweeps north up the coast of Novaya Zemlya, the F-14s approach Rogachevo, and fly ostentatiously back and forth outside of SA-2 range, radars blaring. Nothing comes up to challenge them. Is it possible enemy fighter operations there have been curtailed?

Satisfied that the area is reasonably safe, the F-14s fall back to refuel, and this time they return with the U-2 far overhead, and a pair of SLAM-carrying A-6s. The intention is for the U-2 to take a quick look, and then for the A-6s to split north and south of Rogachevo, and engage the pair of surveillance radars there. However, what the U-2 finds calls for a hasty change of plans. Rogachevo is packed with enemy planes! There are twenty of them, most of them look like MiG-25s, and ramp space is so limited that they're jammed in three or four to a tarmac space. Oh, and there's an SA-10 (or better) parked in the open about 15 miles W of the airbase.

Hitting the radars was a sensible plan, but these new targets are too rich to ignore. The A-6s fire their missiles, bringing them in from the north and the south, behind terrain where the SA-10 can't see them, and direct them into the densest concentration of fighters. The missiles get spotted a few miles out, and two Foxbats scramble immediately, but they're too late to be in position, and the SLAMs are below SA-2 height. Four impacts rock the base, blasting flaming chunks of MiG in all directions, and starting secondary fires amongst adjacent aircraft. Later photo reconnaissance will record 13 wrecked airframes scattered around the airfield, which is a very satisfactory result.

The remaining MiGs don't take this offence lightly, but the waiting F-14s shoot down the first two while the A-6s complete their escape. A few minutes later they have to turn back and fight again when another two Foxbats make a Mach 2+ afterburner dash to try and catch my retiring planes. Radars from two more are also detected briefly, but they don't pursue, and my planes retire to tank and return home.

**Svalbard Port**

HQ has issued an alpha-strike request for Svalbard, and we’ve already visited it twice, to shut the runways and recover our crewmen. However, in all of those strikes we’ve left the naval facilities alone, presuming they’d be useful in recapturing the island. However, this time HQ has specifically asked for the target to be Longyearbyen Port, so the Enterprise dispatches some more F-18s, which destroy the facilities with LGBs.

**Afternoon Admin**

Afternoon brings some reconnaissance, some patrolling out towards Rogachevo, the shootdown of another pair of MiG-25s out there, and the polite cough of the Vinson’s liaison officer inquiring “By the way, sir, did you realize our magazines are completely out of Sparrows?” It seems all the heavy fighting with Su-27s and MiG-25s has used them up! The admiral heaves a heavy sigh, and proceeds to the next re-organization. Enterprise, the ‘spare’ carrier, is ordered to come back east and relieve Vinson. She’s been guarding the ASW bases from air attack, but with two Yankee Notch subs claimed killed, the threat is probably reduced enough to let her go. When she gets to Vinson’s patrol area, Vinson will head south for a fresh load of missiles.

In the meantime, the replacement fighters from the States (2 F-14s, 3 F-18s) are ordered to fly to the Roosevelt, pick up loads of missiles, and bring them back to Reykjavik. They will then operate out of Iceland, and take over the CAP mission for the Greenland ASW base from the departing Enterprise.

Ongoing airfield bombardment cracks a few more shelters at Bodo and Andoya, and the U-2 comes in for a recce survey of Norway. It finds a few damaged air defence elements, including what looks like an SA-10-sized unit east of Bodo, which is a bit of a surprise. I thought everything there was dead.

**Evening Attack**

The Rogachevo attack follows a similar pattern to the morning strike, except with more planes involved. HARMs do the usual suppression of the surveillance radars and SA-10 site, while low-flying F-18s with cluster bombs ruin the SA-2s from the north and south. A-6s with iron bombs contribute to the general mayhem, polishing off surviving SAM sites, and working over some communications vans the U-2 has spotted scattered around the area. One MiG-25 is spotted on the tarmac, and quickly destroyed, and then high-altitude A-6s use their heavy LGBs to crater the runway and taxiway.

There don’t seem to be any Russian aircraft operating in the region, so it seems safe for some of the A-6s to be diverted to sink the ASW patrol boat which was spotted earlier. That done, the entire package is on the way home shortly after midnight.

**Plans for tomorrow**

At the moment, I don’t have any major strikes planned, aside from ongoing airfield cleanup and destruction of residual air defences. I will continue to guard resupply groups, replenish my ships, and conduct ASW patrols. The possibility of bomber strikes still exists, as does a sortie of the Murmansk group (which the U-2 confirms includes the Kirov, Slava, and a Sovremenny – so a very potent surface punch), but I think if I am vigilant I should be able to meet them at range, where I should have the advantage. It is not my intention to strike Murmansk itself, unless ordered by HQ. All subject to change, of course. Tomorrow is another day.

And here's the last few days.

**DAY 8 (Mar 25 1994)**

Day 8 turns out to be uneventful, dominated by maintenance, replenishment, and ongoing patrolling. Soviet aircraft continue to avoid the theatre, and the Kirov is still playing Tirpitz up in Murmansk, and won't come out to fight. A few small raids kill some more hardened shelters and damaged air-defence units, but there is no significant fighting.

In logistical operations, Jeanne d'Arc arrives at Wolf Dance in the morning, and makes the first of her resupply runs. The freighters there are nearly done setting up the base, so she'll hang around for a day and escort them south tomorrow when their job is finished. Enterprise relieves Vinson in Patrol Zone Papa, and the Vinson heads south for refuelling and a fresh load of Sparrows. The Argus reaches Baby Ice (Jan Mayan) in the evening, and starts offloading some supplies.

HQ has requested mining operations in the channel leading to Narvik. I do have Quickstrike mines, but they're buried in the bottom of one of my munitions ships hanging around south-west of Jan Mayan. I suppose I could try and hustle over and rendezvous with a carrier, dig the mines out, and rope them over. Or I could just whistle up a B-52 and have them do it for me. The approval process is slow, but it beats doing it myself, and the mining should happen tomorrow.

**DAY 9 (Mar 26 1994)**

The operational tempo for Day 9 is much like Day 8, and the Soviets take no notable offensive action. The ships at Wolf Dance finish their base-building operation, and head for Reykjavik, escorted by the Jeanne d’Arc group. They will refuel there, before heading back to Newfoundland. The Groton is finally released from its under-ice guard position, having met nothing, and proceeds north to its intended patrol zone, now a week behind schedule. Vinson picks up its Sparrows and some fuel, and heads north again, leaving some of my tankers to head south to top up from the T-AOs south of PL Alpha. The B-52 finally shows up, makes its minelaying run, and flies back to England in time for tea.

One unusual combat tasking comes in, when we are asked to destroy an SS-21 unit in northern Norway, but with a very awkward and unwieldy weapon; a massive C-130-delivered Daisy Cutter. It seems that, in a fit of hysterical political over-reaction, the governments are frightened that the missiles might have nuclear or chemical warheads whose residue could be problematic, unless properly incinerated. Set aside the fact that we’ve been filling the oceans with wrecked nuclear reactors and broken tac-nukes, and littering the land with toxic compounds from ordnance and destroyed infrastructure… These missiles could be dangerous!

F-14 TARPs birds set out to find the missiles, and they turn out to be near where we destroyed an SA-12 a few days back, which explains why that missile system had been in an otherwise unremarkable place. The SA-12 may be gone, but there are a number of MANPADS and AAA units in the area, so F-18s come in with small LGBs to destroy them from safe altitude. Once everything’s secure, the C-130 makes its run and completes the destruction of the missiles.

**DAY 10 (Mar 27 1994)**

The operational slowdown continues into Day 10. Ongoing patrols and replenishment activity continue, but no major strikes or movements are currently planned. It looks like the pace on the ground will dictate the posture of the fleet, until new plans and priorities are established.

And that is that! I think this is the second-longest scenario I’ve played, only behind the trans-Atlantic convoy scenario NF 12.6. Thanks very much for writing such a long and complex scenario for us.

**General Impressions**

This is a very interesting and involved scenario. I like big scenarios, and this one definitely qualifies! It's great to see large-scale movements of ships and forces over time, and fuel and supply status really start to change the equation at this scale. It takes a lot of planning to make it run well, and I'm not sure I ever had my refuelling priorities fully figured out, despite my attempts with extra spreadsheets and charts. My ASW planning needed some help too, and my attempts to set up effective MPA barrier patrols were constantly being ruined by the need to cover the isolated tankers which didn't have effective escorts. I don't think I'd describe the scenario as just maintaining pressure or doing economy-of-force actions. You're definitely engaged in a series of aggressive heavy assaults throughout the scenario.

It’s funny, that for all the work which we went to to set up those ASW stations, they never detected a single sub! I had been expecting a surge of old diesels and Echoes and Novembers to hunt down, but that never happened.

Munitions constraints were an issue in the early game, when low AAM stocks forced me to put many of my forward deployed fighters onto ferry missions, simply because they didn't have the missiles to allow full loadouts. (I used a lot of missiles to stop the Oscar strike, which put a strain on things.) The Enterprise had over a third of its F-14s and F-18s sitting idle for just this reason, and many of the others were on sub-optimal loadouts. The Roosevelt had the same problem, to a lesser degree. An escorted bomber strike at this pont could have been problematic. By day 3/4 I was better off, fat and happy with plenty of missiles and full loadouts. By day 5 I was nervous about HARMs again, after using so many against the Murmansk group, but doing an inventory showed the situation wasn't crippling. Vinson ran out of Sparrows on Day 7, after heavy air-to-air fighting in the Barents, but was able to resupply before it became an issue. I never did send any ships to Rota for SAMs. It was simply too far away, and since there didn't seem to be any bomber raids, and I hadn't used any against the Oscars, the need wasn't acute.

Lack of TLAMs certainly changed my tactics. No more airfield saturation attacks here! Instead, it was SEAD with HARMs, and a lot more low-level CBU and Snakeye work than I normally use, followed by LGBs on the runways. Even when my additional TLAMs arrived I held off using them (or the CALCMs), preferring to keep them in case I needed to mount a major attack on Russian airbases.

Fuel constraints weren't too bad, largely because most of my carrier-group movements were at a low-speed submarine-hunting creep. If I'd been cruising, then I'd have had to be off-station for fuel a lot more often. The American carriers were dominated by munitions requirements, so they got their fuel as a byproduct of munitions replenishment. The northern UK and French carriers cut it close, waiting until day 4/5/6 to refuel. My biggest refueling problem was the difficulty of finding relatively rare diesel fuel. Long live the Preserver! (Of course, if CMO eventually implements aviation fuel limits for ships, then the fuel constraint situation will get a lot more critical.)

Five American carrier groups have a tremendous amount of stomping power, even when they're somewhat fuel and munitions constrained. Once they were all on-station and resupplied, the power they could bring to bear was colossal. The player should be able to kick the doors in on any particular target - provided they've paid for tankers! Without them things get much much harder. If I hadn't had those 10 KC-135s, then it would have been a very different story. I had heavily loaded planes making trips of over 1100 miles each way to participate in the six-carrier strike which cracked the Murmansk group. Three VC-10s and a handful of S-3s could not have handled that! So, the player's tanker choices are crucial.

Balance was pretty good for most of the game, which I think is hard to predict in long scenarios. At the end the player eventually gains overwhelming advantage (in a way which probably couldn't happen in real life), so the last few days were essentially unopposed. As a micromanager, I probably had a little more than I needed, and players relying only on missions will find it more difficult than I did. I think the Phoenix restriction is really good, and it forced me to adopt different, and more interesting tactics. In particular, it made Su-27s and MiG-25s into much tougher targets, since I couldn't stand off outside the range of their pernicious long-ranged IR missiles. I think the player may actually have more air-launched anti-shipping missiles than they need. There are a lot of Harpoons and Exocets out there (plus SLAMs, although I was more frugal with those), and I never truly felt like I was running out until after the Murmansk group had been neutralized. A few less missiles might make it more likely for the Russians to survive long enough to bring the Kuznetsov and friends out to fight. (Of course if you lose a carrier or two, then so much for those Harpoons…)

I should really guard my harbours more carefully. I lost one T-AO to the Tango at Reykjavik, and nearly lost a chunk of TG Algonquin to the Kilo in the same place a day later. It was certainly a relief when the Spruances started arriving in that area. Fortunately there was nothing lurking in the approaches to Faslane or Portsmouth, and I spent a lot of MPA time checking for visitors there.