**Baltic Fury 2 – Borscht on Bornholm**

**Summary by fitzpatv, Dec 2022**

The Soviets (under my control for the first time) move to capture Bornholm and use it as an advanced air and SAM base. NATO decides not to write the island off as indefensible and makes an all-out effort to hold it.

Note that this scenario uses ‘Realistic Submarine Communications’. This means that subs go off-grid and can’t be given orders if they go deep, making no allowance for their skippers’ initiative. Best bet is to stay shallow, which is often compulsory in the Baltic, anyway.

This was also the first time I’ve played since downloading the update that came with the Falklands DLC. As a result, the performance of SAMs and A2A missiles varied from previous norms – more later.

To facilitate their mission, the Russians have a substantial naval force. There is a screen of 5 diesel subs in the Western Baltic. Two ASW groups feature an assortment of Grisha, Pauk and Parchim corvettes to the E of the island, backed-up by 4 Krivak frigates (all sailing singly). Further out is an SAG, consisting of the powerful frigate Neustrashimyy, 2 Sovremennys and the cruiser Grozny. A squadron of 4 Matka hydrofoils with Advanced Styxes is SE of Bornholm and five similarly-armed Tarantuls are coming down from the NE. An Alpinist AGI is off the Polish coast S of the island and is best gotten out of the way.

At Kaliningrad’s Baltysk Naval Base, there are 5 Ropucha, 14 assorted Polnochny and 2 Alligator amphibs and 20 hovercraft (7 large Pomorniks and 13 smaller Aists), led by the Ivan Rogov class LPD Vasily Trushin, which carries 3 Ondatya landing craft. Close escort for this convoy is provided by a Kanin-class destroyer, 10 Stenka patrol craft and 11 minesweepers. A fifth Ropucha is outside the harbour, as there isn’t enough docking space for him (Russians refer to their ships as male). Finally, the supply ship Vilyuy is coming down from the Leningrad area, carrying stores and engineers for the garrison once the island has been secured. The intention is to ferry-in some Grumbles later (after the scenario expiry time).

Soviet air strength is greatly reduced from the previous scenario, partly because most of the front-line aircraft are deemed to be operating over Denmark and Germany under separate command (this region is covered by an exclusion zone, which keeps-out ALL Soviet units). Your fighter assets are limited to 16 Flogger Ks at Donskoye, near Kaliningrad and 28 shiny new Flanker Gs at Tukuma in Latvia. The problem with the latter is that (as well as being remote from the area of operations) they are crewed by cadets. They are also considered High Value Aircraft and cost 5VP if lost.

For strike operations, you have no less than 72 MiG-27s and 8 Fitters at bases in the Baltic Republics. However, these are daytime-only aircraft and the scenario starts in darkness at 6pm. Most are armed with bombs and rockets, though some Fitters carry Kegler short-ranged ARMs. As NATO has only Stingers on Bornholm, which are useless below 200’, low-flying seems an option.

Three Mainstays are available for AEW and there is the usual healthy supply of jamming planes. Four Mails provide ASW capability to supplement some Russian and Polish choppers which are only really useful for patrolling the approaches to Kaliningrad. You also have a couple of Bear recon types and some SAR aircraft (yes, the Downed Pilot handicap gets transferred to the Soviets in this scenario, despite their total lack of concern for such things when the AI is in charge).

The assault on Bornholm is to be conducted by two brigades of paratroops and one of Naval Infantry. To carry the former and their artillery, you have a fleet of 24 Cub, 12 Curl, 12 Coke and 3 Cock transports, spread between Chkalovsk and Khrabrovo airbases, near Kaliningrad. The Naval Infantry are at Baltysk and can be carried by the amphibs, along with the SAMs of the 141st AA Missile Brigade (which, you are told, need to be on Bornholm by the end of the game).

Everything has to be loaded using the Cargo rules. In short, the paratroops and their gear fit onto the transport planes, with the heavy equipment needing to go on the Cokes and Cocks, while the ships can carry most, but not all of the other troops. The Vasily Trushin relies on her Ondatyas (lousy capacity) to offload when not in port and the SAMs are best loaded on the Ropucha landing ships. The four Cokes at Chkalovsk have Cargo loadouts and can’t actually take anything – best to leave them at base. There are some fuel issues, which will be discussed later.

14/2/94 18:00Z: A Bremen-class frigate with Harpoons and decent SAM defence was located off Neustadt naval base and lots of shipping W of Bornholm, fleeing the area of operations.

Five Spetsnaz teams in Denmark couldn’t move due to the Exclusion Zone. One took-out two radars near Skrydstrup, but this scored no points and they had no other clear targets within range. This situation persisted and they played no further role.

I sent a couple of Floggers towards Bornholm and one shot down a Seeker UAV that was patrolling over the island for 2VP (standard for NATO aircraft in this scenario). There was no other NATO air activity beyond a Sentry deep in the Exclusion Zone. Evidence was that there were no air defences on Bornholm beyond Stingers and AA guns.

At 18:30, the main convoy finished loading and headed for Bornholm at 12 knots, so as to keep station.

A Foxbat recon plane overflew Bornholm at 17k’ (above Stinger range), but could not detect any targets.

One of the ships fleeing the scene was moving at 12 knots to the others’ nine and was probably the minelayer Falster, reported to have laid some eggs around the island. The Kilo B-224 was conveniently placed to waylay her.

There was a stated need to send two Halo and two huge Harke choppers from Khrabrovo to Swidwin in Poland, so I moved them accordingly, splitting the risk by leaving an interval between departures.

A submarine attacked the ASW Group SE of Bornholm, sinking a Pauk corvette for -5VP. I’d ordered the Krivaks to support the lighter ASW vessels from a distance. A Grisha slowed to get a sonar fix on the enemy SSK and the frigate Rezkiy then sank her with one of the deadly long-ranged Silex torpedo-carrying missiles for 25VP. Turned-out that she was the Danish Nordkaperen, which had served me so well last time. Couldn’t help some regrets.

One of our four Matkas took-out a Coastal ACSR radar on Bornholm with an Improved Styx. I figured that, as these weapons were outranged by NATO’s Harpoons, they were best expended against land targets. A basic SRS radar then lit-up on the island and not only the Falster, but a trawler (presumably used for AGI work or minelaying) gave themselves away by going Engaged Defensive, while the chaff of neutral fishing boats did not. The Matkas moved to engage.

19:00: B-224 torpedoed and sank the Falster for 5VP.

A Fencer E overflew Bornholm and found 3 batteries of 105mm howitzers, 6 assorted armoured units, a 40mm AA and three other ground targets besides the SRS. Big improvement on the Foxbat, with good endurance to boot.

20:00: A Matka destroyed the SRS and damaged a 105. He then went RTB due to expending his Styxes. As he did so, he was sunk by a German U-Boat.

B-224 disposed of the dodgy trawler. The surviving Matkas and the arriving Tarantuls finished-off the artillery and thinned-out the Danish Scorpion tanks a little. Overrode their RTB reflex by adjusting Doctrine for Withdrawal/Retreat to ignore ammo expenditure, then sent the Matkas inshore to bombard targets with their 76mm guns. The Tarantuls withdrew.

21:00: The Harkes and Halos arrived at Swidwin, but this scored no points and could have been omitted.

U-22 was spotted by a Mail doing a ludicrous 11 knots E of Bornholm. Having had no success looking for the other German sub, Rezkiy sank her from range. It needed two Silex shots, leaving the Krivak with just one left.

Two Matkas bombarded Bornholm, destroying some AA, APCs and all but one of the Scorpions.

22:00: I realised that I had some unused Ropuchas at Baltysk and loaded them, sending them after the convoy at 16 knots.

The Matkas finished the Scorpions and headed for base.

U-28 was detected S of Bornholm. I wanted to use a Mail, but Rezkiy auto-engaged with his last Silex, did the job and went RTB. I overrode this and sent him to add his 32 Gecko SAMs to the convoy escort.

U-9 was then found E of Bornholm. Again, the Mail was beaten to the punch by a Silex from the Krivak Letuchiy. Those things are lethal. At +102, the score was now a Minor Defeat.

The Grozny engaged the approaching Bremen with his Shaddock battery. All 16 Russian missiles were destroyed by 16 Sea Sparrows and 8 RIM-116s, which was pretty good shooting by the AI and left the German ship with more SAMs than I’d hoped.

23:00: Meanwhile, the convoy had been moving steadily W, covered at first by ASW choppers. HMS Unicorn was then detected rather too close to the NW. A Stenka had considerable difficulty identifying her as she went Engaged Defensive, but fish didn’t behave like that. Two other Stenkas joined-in, along with two Polish choppers under AI control and a Mail under mine. The British sub was as slippery as an eel, but was eventually caught and sunk.

U-16, which had previously sunk the Matka, re-surfaced S of Bornholm and took-out a Grisha III. Another frustrating hunt ensued, with 2 Mails, a Grisha II, a Pauk and a Foxtrot finally exacting retribution. It proved useful to take ASW assets off Auto Evasion, especially as subs will dive and go temporarily off the comms net if you don’t. That was all the NATO subs sunk.

15/2/94 00:00: Four Yurka-class minesweepers arrived off Bornholm and began looking for mines. Though none are listed on Scenario Platforms, trust me, there are plenty there…

01:00: Intel suggested that NATO planned a major air operation after daybreak – what a surprise!. It was possible to request extra Floggers from the base at Pyarnu, Estonia (a city I’ve visited) but this costs lots of VP on a sliding scale, depending on how many squadrons you ask for, so I didn’t bother. You can also request air support from the Poles (Fishbeds and Fitters) but their lack of quality dissuaded me. Then again, they cost no VP if lost, but I didn’t know that at the time. For now, I ordered the Stenkas and two of the minesweeper squadrons to stay clear of Bornholm, while consolidating all escorts with SAMs around the convoy. I’d also sent four Grumble battalions down the coast from Kaliningrad towards Kolobrzeg in NW Poland at the start of the game, in the hope that they would be able to enfilade the approaches to Bornholm (people forget that they are MOBILE SAMs). All ASW and missile craft were already withdrawing E.

At 1:48, there was another warning about Danish missile boats sortying from small harbours where they’d been hiding. These weren’t indicated on Scenario Platforms…

02:00: Decided to initiate the airborne operation before NATO air activity got underway.

Enemy PCFGs began to appear in the approaches to Kiel and Copenhagen. Thankfully, they weren’t as close as initial indications suggested!. Contacts resolved as 6 Danish Willemoes boats to the NW and 6 German Gepards leading 4 Danish Flyvefisken to the W. The Danes carried Harpoons, while the Gepards only had shorter-ranged Exocets, but made-up for it with lots of RIM-116s for air defence. Bremen brought-up the rear. I ordered some of my Sepal long-ranged SSM batteries around Kaliningrad to engage.

Soviet paras landed all over Bornholm, meeting little initial resistance. With their artillery and armour gone, the few light Danish units encountered went down quickly. The Desantniki moved fast to set-up a helipad on the island. The transport aircraft all made it home safely, though the Cokes had limited endurance and had to be diverted to other bases in Poland and elsewhere. The howitzers they brought-in were to be vital.

NATO missile boats Harpooned the four Yurkas S of the island, costing me 20VP.

03:00: Our initial volley of Sepals was disappointing, with just two Willemoes boats sunk with 16 shots. The Gepards proved capable of screening the Flyvefisken with SAMs and it wasn’t possible to give Sepals waypoints to circumvent this. The AI was also very lucky with spoof rolls and malfunctions.

Fanning-out across Bornholm, the Desantniki took Ronne airport for 250VP and the harbour for 100 more. We captured a Dragonfly light attack plane, a Little Bird chopper and 3 Cessnas at the airbase (despite my fears, they didn’t sortie regardless) and also discovered two military trawlers in the harbour.

Given the success of the landings, I decided that I didn’t urgently need the troops en route by sea and turned the Polnochnyy and Alligators back for the time being, given the impending aerial threat. As the SAMs were needed, the Ropuchas continued with the Trushin and other escorts, with the Vilyuy still some way behind.

A second Sepal strike on the Willemoes craft got just one with four shots (a 30% spoof roll and two malfunctions). I muttered to the AI that it couldn’t be lucky forever and fired some more.

Meanwhile, the Grumbles were having trouble with the game’s lousy land navigation system and were getting unaccountably stuck NE of Kolbrzeg. I decided that their current position would do and halted them, moving the convoy (less detached ships) under their reassuring umbrella. With plenty of time, I could wait-out the air strike there.

04:00: Another four Sepals sank two more Willemoes. The score of +502 was still only Average.

B-224 ambushed and sank all six Gepards!. That took the sub’s score to eight ships and was helped by the AI mindlessly sailing on into the torpedoes, which were fired as near as I could manage. That got rid of the enemy SAM cover, exposing the Flyvefisken. Kilos can be really dangerous when well-used.

The two Danish auxiliary trawlers predictably sortied from Ronne, but were sunk by our land-based artillery for 10VP.

The surviving Willemoes survived her fourth Sepal, but her outrageous luck finally ran out and more missiles sank three of the Flyvefisken as they belatedly tried to escape.

05:00: The last Flyvefisken, the Skaden, was wrecked by a Sepal before she could get away. Bremen also withdrew and did not come back. The naval attack was pretty suicidal, which was why I didn’t try anything like it in the last scenario.

It was now dawn. Four Flankers had arrived over the convoy to augment the Grumbles and the ships’ SAMs. There seemed a risk that NATO wouldn’t attack because they hadn’t detected us, leaving a threat in being until we moved towards Bornholm, so I sent a Sonya minesweeper ahead to do her thing and tempt them out. When nothing happened, I sent four Haze minesweeping choppers up from Khrabrovo, intending to re-base them at the Helipad. Arriving, they found that the pad had room for only one helicopter. Two re-based to the destroyer Zorkiy and the other made for Poland.

06:00: A Fencer E found a Bofors battery on Bornholm and artillery disposed of it. Enemy infantry then began to appear for what became an extended and frustrating game of Whackamole. Desantniki foot patrols would locate the remarkably elusive Danes and the howitzers and mobile mortars would take them out in one-sided fashion. This went on for quite some time…

Meanwhile, the Sonya and Haze began clearing mines.

09:00: We were notified that a large air battle was in progress over Jutland and Zeeland. At 9:20, the warning was upgraded to Amber as the Soviet aerial screen came under increasing pressure. I launched eight Flankers. At 9:35, the alert went Red and I reinforced with four Floggers and four more Flankers. Our comrades promised that the screen would be restored in an hour or so.

10:00: A totally ridiculous number of NATO aircraft began pouring into view, with Phantom ICE and Fulcrums leading F-16s, Drakens and maybe 30 Tornado IDS with HARMs and Kormorans (56 and 52 fired). A desperate melee resulted in heavy losses for both sides. The Soviets lost 4 choppers (including the three retiring minesweepers), 4 Floggers and 3 Flankers, while the Sovremenny Nastoychivyy was mortally struck (30VP) and her classmate Bespokoynyy damaged with flooding. NATO lost an F-16, 2 Drakens, 4 Phantom ICE, 3 Fulcrums and 5 Tornado IDS in this initial phase. Two Grumble battalions were disabled by HARM strikes, but their fire (and the missiles they attracted) was mostly responsible for averting disaster. The enemy concentrated on the warships and the transports and minesweepers were left unscathed.

Meanwhile, more NATO aircraft bombed Bornholm and inflicted significant losses on Soviet ground forces, which cost no points.

The 11 Soviet aircraft lost generated 8 Downed Pilots. This offset the Floggers scoring no VP for NATO.

This was my first taste of the new SAM/A2A missile settings. In general, hitting incoming missiles seems no harder than before, presumably because they fly in a straight line and don’t try to evade. However, it has become much harder to hit aircraft and SARH missiles, in particular, almost always go blind when fired at any sort of range, as all the target has to do is turn side-on (it works every time for the AI and is hard to replicate manually). SAMs have become almost useless against low-flying planes – here, we had Grumbles needing 1% to hit Fulcrums flying nearby at 80’. Rear shots are more effective, but it is difficult to manoeuvre for them in a stramash like this with dozens of planes involved and missiles flying everywhere. Overall, while the changes might make the game truer to life, they have also made air combat a good deal more random, as you really need to be lucky to hit anything. This can, of course, work both ways. Personally, I feel the loss of control.

I mostly kept my Flankers out of trouble by having them withdraw at Afterburner before getting enmeshed in the melee, but this policy couldn’t be absolute due to the need to combat the blizzard of HARMs and Kormorans. Thankfully, the SAMs managed to get the vast majority of them.

As the attack abated, I sent-out my SAR planes in the vain hope that it would do some good. In the end, I rescued one pilot for 3VP. The maximum time of one hour just isn’t enough, especially if the plane is lost near the end of the hour.

Several British Tornado F.3s, plus more Fulcrums and Phantom ICE made a late appearance from Laage and downed a hapless Polish Bryza patrol plane (under AI control), but this cost no points.

Some Floggers engaged a pack of Tornado IDS fighters and F-16s E of Bornholm as I counter-attacked with everything available. They achieved five kills for one loss (inevitable downed pilot), which wasn’t bad for a bunch of MiG-23s.

Flankers, helped by some MANPADs, then cleared away two Drakens and two Phantom recon planes over Bornholm. It was annoying to need so much effort to kill targets that were just mindlessly turning in circles, but you can’t stop your missiles going blind or guarantee a rear shot under such circumstances. This had better reflect real-life, as it really detracts from my enjoyment.

11:00: I could have just withdrawn and taken an Average result, but gambled that there wouldn’t be a second strike. All escort ships with no SAM defence remaining were moved E, while the transports headed for Bornholm, including those withdrawn earlier. Naval escort was limited to the Neustrashimyy and the minesweepers.

Soon afterwards, groups of Drakens and Alpha Jets made for Bornholm. Two pairs each of Flankers and Floggers engaged and were countered by a mob of Tornado F.3s and Phantoms from Laage. We lost 3 Floggers (all with downed pilots) for 5 Drakens and 5 Alpha Jets. The strike did no real damage. Again, a high percentage of missiles went blind.

I tried using subs to pick-up the downed pilots. This was often done by US subs in WW2 but, even when I surfaced a sub, the game wasn’t having it. Another flaw of that wretched script.

12:00: A Bryza got the high-end NATO CAP excited and paid the price. Alarmingly, the interception meant the Fulcrums and Phantoms got wind of my retiring SAR choppers (would NATO really attack rescue planes?). In the event, the Hazes were saved by the Grumbles, which downed two Fulcrums, which kept flying in circles on Engaged Defensive until their luck finally ran out.

13:00: A tense time for the Soviets. A Haze, several minesweepers, a couple of fighters and the Neustrashimyy covered the Trushin, Ropuchas and the Vilyuy as they inched towards Bornholm.

15:00: As Trushin arrived, he promptly went RTB for no conceivable reason. Happily, I was able to override this by Unassigning him and then launched his three Ondatyas. As the LPD and Ropuchas entered the marked (and mined) zone, they scored 25VP each and were told that they needed to stay there for four hours to unload. At +698, it was now a Minor Victory.

Despite prodigious minesweeping efforts, two of the Ondatyas promptly hit mines, one being sunk and the other damaged. Unloading their derisory cargo (which then couldn’t swim ashore), they returned to the Trushin.

Now aware of the VP Schedule, I launched the seven Pomorniks from Baltysk. Decided that it wasn’t worth using the shorter-ranged, low-capacity Aists. This proved wise.

The Ropuchas went inshore behind a minesweeper and manually unloaded the SAMs which were, mercifully, able to move inland. This scored no VP, but did give us some SAM cover.

17:00: Somehow, despite all precautions, Vilyuy managed to strike two mines en route for Ronne harbour. These did over 25% damage and triggered her Withdraw Doctrine, which I angrily overrode. Despite the game’s best efforts, she reached port and scored 100VP. It was now a Major Victory.

18:00: Travelling as suggested in the Briefing at 55 knots, the Pomorniks abruptly went RTB. Thankfully, I was looking at the time. I had to individually Unassign them, re-base them to Kolobrzeg, then order them to Bornholm. They eventually arrived, but scored no points. I manually unloaded their cargo and they then proceeded without incident to Kolobrzeg.

About this time, the Whackamole on Bornholm finally petered-out, though I suspect there were still Danish troops at large on the island.

19:00: Got a message that the Trushin and the Ropuchas had finished unloading and could withdraw. Each category scored 25VP, not each ship. I guess that the unload time was realistic, though no cargo was actually transferred from the Trushin (waste of effort loading it). The ships headed E at Full, along with the minesweepers (as I now knew a safe zone for the Polnochnyy and Alligators).

22:00: The 12 Polnochnyy A and B transports arrived, scoring a total of 300VP and taking me into Triumph territory. There still remained the worry of a second strike.

23:00: The two Alligators arrived for 50 more VP. I didn’t bother unloading any of these ships because of mine risk, lack of VP reward, risk of dumping units in the water and a desire to limit the clutter on the map.

16/2/94 00:00: The two lumbering Polnochny C transports arrived for 50 more VP. By now, the Bespokoynyy had brought her flooding under control and was well on her way to Kronshtadt with 41.6% damage.

04:30: There was no further award for offloading transports, so they all withdrew.

06:00: The scenario ended as a Triumph, with a score of +1,268.

The USSR lost a destroyer, 2 corvettes, a missile hydrofoil, 4 minesweepers, a landing craft, 3 Flankers, 8 Floggers, 5 choppers, 88 ground and 5 Grumble elements, plus 2 Polish patrol planes. A total of 16 Russian aircraft losses generated 14 downed pilots (a ridiculously unlucky 87.5%), of whom just one was rescued.

NATO lost 6 diesel subs, 16 missile boats, a minelayer, 3 trawlers, 37 planes, a UAV, 4 radars, 200 ground elements, 6 MANPAD elements and 33 mines.

Overall, another long and challenging scenario, despite the emphatic win. The NATO air strike was truly scary stuff! As expected, it was interesting running the Soviet side and it gave me extra insight into the capabilities of some of the units I’ve been fighting for so long (I hadn’t realised that a Foxtrot’s sonar can’t identify a fish at three paces). Kilos, Silex and Fencer Es were big successes and it was fun to use the Grumbles as truly mobile SAMs (I should probably have moved a few more up as I could have done).

Next time, I try to ruin what I’ve just achieved as NATO (why the scenario is called Warsaw Uprising I have no idea, judging from the Briefing). They say that schizophrenia is a state of mind...