**Baltic Fury 4 – Ride of the Valkyries**

**Summary by fitzpatv, Jan 2023**

Not sure how suitable the scenario title is here, since valkyries are associated with Scandinavian and German mythology and the player has to play the Soviet side, but nonetheless…

Six days after the NATO retaliation at Bornholm, the Soviet 15th Air Army, reinforced, rested and now based partly in Poland, is tasked with achieving air and sea superiority over Jutland. They are ordered to close 16 runways, 11 taxiways, destroy 22 piers, 2 OECM and 3 fighter sector control stations and, optionally (as it is hard) an HQ and two runways in the Netherlands (using long-ranged missiles only in this case). There are bonus points for any dispersal airfields closed or installations destroyed.

NATO has pulled its air groups back to Jutland, the Nordholz area in Germany and the Netherlands as a result of the Soviet ground advance, which has taken Neubrandenburg and Laage airbases, partly isolated Hamburg and Bremen and directly threatens Kiel. All bases in Zealand have been abandoned, as have Kiel and the airfields at Leck, Eggebeck, Jagel-Schleswig and Husum. On the other hand, they have received substantial aircraft reinforcements, including US Eagles and Dutch F-16s, as well as old F-104 Starfighters taken out of storage by the Danes.

NATO’s logistics problems have largely been resolved and, despite hints to the contrary in the briefing, they have no shortage of high-end missiles like AMRAAMs. SAM defences in Jutland and the Nordholz region have been augmented, there is a Patriot site near Leeuwarden in the Netherlands, remaining warships provide additional cover and Stinger MANPADs have been assigned to most target sites.

For the Soviets, Bornholm has been repaired and more Grumbles installed. It now houses a mixed group of 28 Flogger fighters (Model K and G). In Poland, there is a recon squadron at the forward base of Sniatowo, another 34 Floggers at the port of Kolobrzeg, 18 Polish Fitters at Swidwin (suspect due to defections from here in the last scenario), 22 Flankers at Miroslawiec (inland), 19 more at Wicko Morskie (on the coast), plus 77 MiG-27s and 32 Model H Flogger strike planes at Broczyno, Nadarzyce and Wilcze Laski.

More aircraft are massed in the Kaliningrad region, where there are 3 Cub OECM planes, 69 Fencer strike/SEAD planes, 7 Fencer E recon, 3 Fencer F and 8 Brewer jammers and 14 Foxbats (8 SEAD with 130nm ranged Kilters, 6 ELINT). You also have a few Badger ELINT and Madcap AEW planes under AI control, which will re-base to Neubrandenburg.

Further back, there are another 20 strike and 2 SEAD Fencers at Tukums in Latvia and 18 Backfires at Bykhov in Belarus. Of the latter, just 4 carry Kitchen stand-off weapons, with the rest being armed with a variety of iron bombs, negating much of their usual usefulness.

Scope for re-arming is very limited, given the 16-hour scenario time duration, a lack of quick turnround for the bombers and empty magazines at some bases. The game also starts three hours before dawn, adding a further limitation given that most of the Soviet bomber loadouts are daytime only.

At Tartu in Estonia, there is another Backfire squadron with 22 airframes, along with 17 Badgers, but using these overwhelmingly bomb-armed planes costs VP (with various options available). Rightly or wrongly, I chose to do without.

At sea, the Russians have 2 Sovremennys and 2 Kashins screening Bornholm under AI control. On land, there are numerous mobile Grumble sites available and the Polish Gammon battery from the last scenario (now-reduced by two-thirds).

So you have a lot of resources, perhaps too many to co-ordinate effectively given the game mechanics. I did some preliminary calculations, which showed that I had 245,060 damage points of payload on my strike aircraft (assuming I didn’t use Tartu), with which to eliminate 59,221 points of targets (excluding the optional ones in the Netherlands and taking the briefing’s stipulation that they needed to be damaged 90% to score VP). This seemed to allow a fair margin for losses and bombing inaccuracy, but I suspected I would need it.

The Warsaw Pact has 41 Flankers and 62 Floggers and, according to the briefing, there are 48-68 front-line and 41-92 Sidewinder-armed NATO fighters to contend-with. Given the deficiencies of SARH missiles and the reduced lethality of all air combat under the new settings, it was hard to be optimistic about gaining air superiority.

Clearly, the strategy had to be one of eroding enemy CAP first, using SEAD aircraft to reduce the SAM threat, then mounting a big strike effort near the end. After all, our attack planes mostly had one sortie only in them, so there was no point in going early and risking heavy losses. Each NATO fighter eliminated would make the eventual task easier.

I decided to send the mainland Grumble batteries W to positions just behind the marked FLOT (Front Line of Theatre) boundary in order to interdict planes in the Nordholz area. As I’d feared, this manoeuvre fell foul of the wretched land navigation system. North Germany has more than its share of lakes and marshes and, as the software seems not to recognise the presence of roads, it is very easy for land units to drive into these and come to an irretrievable halt. Only a couple of batteries got far enough to make themselves useful late in the game but then, if I’d left them where they started, they would have played no role at all.

25/2/94 03:00Z: Pre-dawn strike options were limited to SEAD (but NATO radars were turned off) or hitting the ports and Vaerlose airbase in the Copenhagen area with the Backfires from Bykhov. Overall, it seemed sounder to concentrate on the fighters. At least the weather was clear.

We soon detected several ships in the inner Danish Belt, some of which could have been SAM traps, albeit easily avoided.

I sent-up a Fencer E, with 2 Floggers and 2 Flankers for escort. As both pairs of fighters were launched as groups, I found that the AI had imposed Group Doctrine rules and reversed all of my carefully-prepared settings for Evasion, BVA cranking, Winchester disengagement and conservation of missiles. Angrily sorted this out and was careful to send fighters out individually or on crafted Missions thereafter. Not for the last time in this scenario, I wondered whether I was in charge or whether the AI was playing itself.

Predictably, lots of NATO fighters began to appear – an early strike would not have been a good move. An air battle developed over Jutland as I gradually fed-in planes at a rate I could manually control. The problem was that, with Alamos, you have a choice between evading as soon as you are fired back at, in which case you miss or pressing grimly onward, in which case the enemy turn side-on, your missiles go blind and you risk losses when theirs don’t. I am not convinced that AI SARH missiles like Sky Flashes have to obey the rules. Mostly in this phase, I took the aggressive approach in order to at least do some damage and losses were consequently high. We lost 7 Flankers and both Floggers for 2 Tornado F.3s, a US F-16, 4 Danish F-16s and 3 Starfighters. At 3VP per NATO and two per WP plane lost, this left me 12 points ahead but, in terms of front-line fighter losses, it was less encouraging. A further problem was that Russian radars often had trouble detecting targets, which did much to negate any range advantage – both Floggers were downed by Sidewinder F-16s because they had to close to within the enemy missile range before they could shoot and were then outnumbered 2:1. The successes of the authors of other AARs were achieved under earlier rules.

Another annoyance was the Polish Gammon battery engaging targets at low odds, inhibiting Soviet fighters from firing at the same planes unless I did it manually. I had to put it on Weapons Hold – quite a contrast to its deadliness in the last scenario – I ask again, does the AI have a hard-coded advantage in combat?

On the positive side, a suicidal F-104 pursued our RTB’ing planes too far and was Grumbled by the Bornholm SAMs, there was no evidence of NATO HAWKs in Zealand and the Nordholz CAP did not intervene, encouraging me to think I could concentrate on the Jutland-based aircraft first.

04:00: I sent-in 4 more Flankers and tried the cautious approach, evading at Afterburner, then coming back until I got a clear shot. This worked better but required a lot of micro-management. One Su-27 was damaged and out of the game, but we destroyed 2 Tornadoes and 4 Danish F-16s. Again, the enemy pursued and two more Danish Falcons fell to the Grumbles.

05:00: Another quartet of Flankers managed to destroy 2 American F-16s and 4 F-104s without loss, then two more suicidal Starfighters were Grumbled.

06:00: With the airspace temporarily clearing a bit, time for some tentative strikes. A Polish Fitter ineptly failed to take-out the Rodvig OECM station with Karens when one hit was needed. Another repeated the fiasco – three malfunctions in succession on chances of 15%!. Two Tornadoes intervened and were disposed-of by escorts at a cost of one Flanker. A third Fitter finally did the job, but failed to clobber the nearby Holmen OECM station with its second Karen and scored no VP into the bargain. The small print of the briefing says you score 25VP for runways, taxiways and piers, but says nothing about OECM or sector stations. Perhaps the latter count towards the 80% of targets you are supposed (in Utopian fashion) to take-out, but this is not enforced in any way. Why, then, are these bunkers on the target list?

07:00: Two more Fitters with Kedges took-out the medium piers at Rodvig for 25VP each. NATO fighters intervened and 2 Danish F-16s and 2 Starfighters were shot down for one Flanker lost to Phantoms from Nordholz, which was now taking notice. Another pair of Fitters then tried to attack the runways at Vaerlose, but everything went wrong. I expected Stingers (even though my Fencer E had found none), but hoped that my Kedges would have a 100% range advantage. Targeting issues meant that the Kedges weren’t released quickly enough and couldn’t suppress the MANPADs due to the OODA rules (which didn’t equally affect the Stingers). Given the AI’s customary accuracy, both planes were lost for one hit on a taxiway.

Things also deteriorated in the ongoing air battle. Two Flankers were lost to Phantoms and US F-16s, not helped by the enemy making three successive spoof rolls and scoring two hits with three shots. With the Wicko Morskie squadron getting worn-down, Miroslawiec entered the fray and put down a Phantom, also damaging an F-16 without loss. I’d had high hopes of the Alamo D IR-guided missiles, however, but was finding that they simply couldn’t acquire targets. Do the things only work at night or something?. Players could do with more information about this sort of thing.

08:00: I sent out 4 more Flankers and 3 Fitters. Two of the latter managed to knock-out the taxiway and hit the runway at Vaerlose for 25VP, bombing with Kedges from 15,000’. The other was intended to test the HAWK at Karup on Jutland with a Kyle ARM, but was surprised and destroyed by two US F-16s which suddenly appeared. Its escorting Flanker was distracted by 2 Danish F-16s and downed one. The other three were outfought by Phantoms and US Falcons and two were lost after reverting to the aggressive air combat approach.

09:00: Another Fitter managed to disable the Vaerlose runway, but the usual targetting issues allowed the Stingers one shot which was, as ever, lethal. Its escort took-out a Danish Falcon, but took damage due to the radar and SARH issues. Another Flanker then engaged a Danish F-16 N of Copenhagen. Four Alamos went blind as the target kept turning side-on, the Alamo D remained unusable and the Russian pilot had to risk closing to Archer range to get the job done, helped by the Dane being on Engaged Defensive.

At 9:45, we were informed that a catamaran with senior Danish officers onboard was about to leave Odden in NW Zealand and make the short crossing to Ebeltoft on Jutland. Given its 40 knot speed, there wasn’t much time in which to sink it. As it happened, I had a Fitter just about to hit the Holmen OECM station with Karens, so I diverted it. Almost immediately, the Polish pilot defected, baling-out and letting his plane crash. Either the events were linked or this was just horrible luck!.

10:00: I sent two Soviet Mig-27s with Kedges after the catamaran. With fighters absent for once, they arrived in time and did the job for a heartening 100VP. At +267, the score was down to a Minor Defeat (with 250-point scoring bands).

There was then a syntax error relating to a Backstop CAP event. This was either good or bad news…

At 10:30, I was told to destroy the old bridge connecting Fyn to Jutland, where a traffic logjam included some Danish logistical vehicles. However, it transpired that the Backstop CAP was very bad news, as swarms of fighters began to appear and centred their patrol over the bridge. There were about 30 of them and they included planes from the Dutch bases. We weren’t doing this anytime soon!

I decided that the port defences at Holmen, Copenhagen were weak enough that I could mount a strike at them. As the ten piers constitute the most durable of all the targets, I deployed 6 bomb-carrying Backfires from Bykhov for their firepower. Success would give me at least a Draw. There were Stingers defending the port and I had to risk them to have decent bombing chances. This approach cost me three Backfires and only three piers were taken-out. The escorting Flankers did well to screen the strike and escape, downing an F-104 in the process.

11:00: We were given another difficult mission. The NATO HQ directing the defence of Jutland had been detected near Eggebeck and Flensburg, but was expected to move, so time was short.

Four Flankers tried to thin-out or at least wear-out the fuel of the massed NATO CAP. They killed two Starfighters and escaped.

12:00: There ensued a lengthy process of dodging in and out with Flankers, trying to tire-out the enemy CAP. This resulted in two Tornadoes destroyed without loss. Covered by this, 5 Backfires attacked Holmen with Kitchens, disabling two more piers. Not enough, but bombing requires luck.

13:00: A lone Polish Fitter finished-off two piers at Holmen. Another 6 Backfires then succeeded in levelling the rest of the port with bombs, taking the score to +502 and Average. The last Backfire made a speculative attack on the suspected HQ near Flensburg with two Kitchens. Despite SAMs and a posse of chasing fighters, one of the missiles got through and obliterated the marker. However, I hadn’t realised that this wasn’t the actual HQ and therefore scored no points. Presumably, you need to send-in a Fencer E to locate the real target, but this would be suicidal.

14:00: At this point, I was sorely tempted to take the Draw and wind-down the clock, as I held-out little hope of scoring another 250 points. I took the view that I had done so and could now see what would have happened had I been less cautious.

Attacking Korsor’s 5 piers and the Jutland airbases would require removing the fighter swarm, at least temporarily, then seizing the window of opportunity with strike planes, while having SEAD aircraft on hand to hit the HAWKs, plus jamming planes and maybe a Fencer E in case it could get a run at finding the HQ. To this end, I began scrambling planes from the bases in Latvia and Kaliningrad, aiming to have them assemble around Bornholm. All Flankers were assigned to a CAP Mission over Zealand and Fyn, which would hopefully keep them out of SAM range. This was a departure from my usual micro-management tactics for air combat, but there was no way I could simultaneously control that many planes and I had to admit that the AI could target better than I could in a mass melee. I made sure that the Mission Doctrine suited my preferences.

At 14:45, I was told that the emissions from the HQ were dropping-off so, presumably, I’d missed my window there.

A huge air battle duly ensued over Denmark. It was basically AI vs AI as I concentrated on controlling the strike planes. Inevitably, both sides took severe losses, but the VP schedule meant that this tended to favour the Soviets. Most kills seemed to be made by Archers at close range. As the Flankers ran out of weapons and airframes (not many survived), I threw all of my Floggers into the fray and these achieved the window of opportunity the bombers needed, temporarily clearing the skies and occupying the Mission CAP zone.

Despite the presence of a Chaparral battery and Stingers, plus my getting the altitude requirement for some of the weapons wrong, all five piers (and all SAMs) at Korsor were destroyed at the cost of a few MiG-27s. A volley of Kazoos did for the Fyn-Jutland bridge, which scored 50VP.

Considerable trouble was caused by a Bremen-class DDG in the lower inner Belt. A fighter melee broke-out directly over it between Floggers and enemy Phantoms coming from the S and I lost a number of fighters to the ship’s SAMs before disabling her with Krypton ARMs and Kazoos. Perhaps I should have pulled the MiGs back, but they would have taken losses doing so and the Mission would simply have sent them back again. They did at least get rid of the Phantoms. The destroyer was later finished-off by more bombers rushing up from the Polish bases as soon as the skies were clear, scoring 25VP.

More fighters kept arriving from N and S, trying to break my hold on the airspace but, for now, the Floggers were holding the line. Most of the Northern contingent were Danish F-16s and Drakens and not too hard to deal with.

Our SEAD planes had hit three HAWK sites and a couple of radars and there seemed to be a gap in the HAWK coverage over Vandel. In any event, the NATO SAMs had switched-off as soon as the ARMs hit, so there was nothing more that the SEAD Fencers and Foxbats could do. The Floggers were running low on fuel, as were many of the strike planes, so I had to act fast. While they still could, 6-8 Mig-27s aimed for the narrow SAM-free corridor. Unfortunately, the HAWK had NOT been disabled by the ARM hits and opened fire, downing several planes before I could pull them clear. Worse, fighters scrambled from Vandel and accounted for most of the rest of the contingent as they fled, handicapped speed-wise by their fuel situation. Our SEAD planes scored more hits on the HAWK and probably knocked it out this time.

With the score on +702, I cut my losses and ordered a general retreat, RTB’ing lots of planes en route from Poland, as they would have been massacred without an escort. NATO CAP was relentless and there were about a dozen planes in pursuit. Several of these went too far and were downed by the Grumbles on Bornholm, while the ones sent to the Laage area surprised and disposed of a few more.

On the negative side, I’d re-based some Fencers from Tukums to Laage or Bornholm for fuel reasons, but the AI unaccountably kept moving them towards Latvia and I lost four after realising too late, managing to save the others with manual corrections.

19:00: For the rest of the game, I scored a steady trickle of points by luring fighters into my SAM umbrellas, taking the final score to +730, but the omnipresent NATO CAP made trying for more targets impractical. So it ended in a Draw, just 20 points short of a Minor Victory. Nowhere near as good as the results of the other two AARs, which I read later, but the rules were different then.

The Warsaw Pact lost 35 Flankers, 36 Floggers, 8 MiG-27s, 5 Fencers (including 4 ditched), 4 Fitters and 3 Backfires for 91 aircraft total. Most went down in the AI-controlled slugfest during the Alpha Strike, with the bombers mostly protected by the escort. Air superiority over Jutland was not achieved.

NATO lost 20 Starfighters, 6 Eagles, 8 US F-16s, 27 Danish F-16s, 6 Drakens, 9 Phantom ICE, 3 Fulcrums and 16 Tornado F.3s for 95 aircraft total. They also lost 2 choppers, a catamaran ferry, a bridge, a DDG, 16 piers, an OECM station, 2 radars, 12 SAM and 6 MANPAD elements. A runway and taxiway were disabled.

For the record, NATO used 124 Sky Flash, 97 AMRAAMs and 14 Alamos. So much for the logistical crisis…

I probably need a rest before trying the last scenario in the series, which I don’t feel optimistic about. It’ll be good to move on to another theatre, though playing Chains of War helps. If anyone has any suggestions about what I could have done better, I’d be interested to hear about it.

**Comments from Forum**:

This one is certainly impacted by the new A2A setup. BTW, the ejecting Pole was not linked to the fleeing Catamaran - just bad luck timing.

My only thought is that the Soviets fight in mass, so trickle feeding and going micro on the fighting is probably not the most effective. A mass sweep to overwhelm the defenses followed very quickly by massed bomber formations will probably get you more mileage. But that relies on using missions for the bulk of the action and controlling what you feed into the fray. When I play the Soviets - and I haven't in the new Tiny setup - I set up dozens of missions before game start but don't add any AC. Then I muster a bunch of A2A fighters in one area and about 50-100 miles back I pull in the bombers, I could have a 150 AC or more in the air at the start. Then I start switching AC from the muster areas to the A2A (patrol missions over the target area) and when I detect a slackening of the defences I add more A2A, then SEAD and then tag the bombers onto the strike missions. Casualties in the initial A2A are higher than in a micro battle, but it is quicker and if the timing is right the bombers charge in and have a free(er) ride and the overall losses are less.

Doesn't work all the time, and when it goes bad, it goes very bad very quickly. But when I get the timing right it works and the bombers get through.

I am not sure how this works with Tiny, but my experience with the update is that A2A kills are fewer, but that is OK as long as the sky is clear for 15-20 min as the defending CAP goes Winchester and the bombers put holes in their runways.

**Response**:

That was pretty much what I did do at the end with my main strike and, as you suggest, it gave the bombers a window to hit Korsor and the bridge, which was what I believed they would be able to achieve. I may well try this approach again as the Soviets. Fact is, though, that the score was Average with or without the strike - I just got a lot closer to a win by mounting it. As to casualties, I guess it has always been the Russian doctrine that you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs, so I probably need to suspend my usual concern for the lives of my men - a little, anyway.