**Baltic Fury 4, Ride of the Valkyries.**

**Playtest Report by maverick3320 Feb 2022**

**SITUATION**

Full disclosure: I've tried this scenario a number of times, and due to a combination of poor operational art and a very Western-like inability to suffer large losses or send my men into certain doom, I have yet to complete the scenario. After receiving some expert advice I've decided to take a look at my strategy and give it another go. Here's how it went.

My overall objective is to strike a number of NATO targets in Denmark and Germany, primarily airbases and ports. To accomplish this task Pact has roughly five squadrons of fighters: Two squadrons of Flogger Ks, two of Flogger Gs, one Su-30 Flanker G and one Su-27S Flanker B. The strike assets are significant. Nearly 100 Fencers and Flogger Hs, along with some Backfires and Badgers. ECM/ELINT assets are strong, and Foxbats armed with AS-11 Kilters and Fencers with Kryptons (in addition to the older Soviet ARMs) make up a strong SEAD punch. One key constraint is the timeframe: 16 hours to strike dozens of targets.

My plan is straightfoward: establish air superiority, hunt enemy SAMs, and then strike fast enough to allow at least some assets to re-arm for a second attack, if needed.

0300Z: Ten AS-4 Kitchen TERCOM armed Backfires life off from bases in Eastern Europe. The intent is to shut down Nordholz AFB, which has only a single runway and taxiway and is home to Tornados, Fulcrums, and AMRAAM-armed F-4 ICE aircraft. Hopefully this will eliminate NATO's most powerful southern fighter base as I'm not entirely convinced I have the fighter assets to take NATO on in a fair fight.

0315Z: A massive host of Flankers and Floggers take off over the Baltic skies, supported by Fencer and Brewer jammers. I've decided that the NATO front-line fighters discussed in my intel report are NATO's center of gravity and must whittle them down before sending in any significant strike forces. With about 40 Flankers and 60 Floggers we are facing a light squadron of F-16CGs, several contingents of Tornados, a good size group of F-16A/Bs (35+), and a small number of the much-respected NATO Mig-29s, in addition to F-104s and Drakens. A squadron of F-15s are operating out of Norway but my G2 assures me that they are tasked out elsewhere. I remind him that this is the Soviet Union, and failure is not tolerated lightly...

0330: The short distances of the Baltic bring together the forces together quickly. I've decided to conduct two separate fighter sweeps, a northern one composed of the Su-27S Flanker Bs based at Wicko Morskie and the Floggers on Gotland, and the southern forces composed of the Su-30s based in Western Poland and the Floggers at Kolobrzeg. NATO CAPs are up from multiple airbases; some fancy footwork by Pact pilots bring the initial northern Tornado CAP into SAM range (SA-10s on Gotland), where they are both shot down. Over the next thirty minutes the Pact air takes the fight to the Jutland peninsula. Flankers are used to snipe NATO air from long range while Flogger Gs try to distract the AMRAAM and SkyFlash AAMs. Flogger Ks, with the hated (or loved!) AA-11 Archers, try to turn things into a knife fight, scoring several up close kills against NATO F-16s. Fencer jammers follow closely behind both forces, hoping to mitigate some of the effects from the superior NATO missiles.

0430: Low on fuel and ammo, the Pact air sweeps begin to return to bases. The Pact forces have so far been wildly successful. Losses include a Flogger G, three Flogger Ks, and a Su-27S Flanker B. In exchange, Pact has bled NATO: 12 Tornados, six Fulcrum As, eight F-4 ICE, four F-16CGs, 10 F-16A/Bs, and eight Starfighters don't make it home. Pact AAMs performed admirably, keeping NATO air at bay and even allowing a quick strike on Rodvig Naval Base by a lone Fencer, hitting several piers with LGBs. More importantly, while the NATO southern air was tangling with the Flankers and Floggers, twenty Kitchen missiles ripped toward Nordholz. As the missiles got closer alert Fulcrums started taking off and several of the missiles were quickly shot down by Alamos and even an Archer. An I-Hawk SAM picked off another Kitchen, and three Kitchens malfunctioned, but five of the massive missiles struck home on the runway and three on the taxiway. The surviving Mig-29 that took off was last seen flying north on the Jutland peninsula searching for an alternate landing area.

0445: Perhaps incensed by the strike on Rodvig, NATO throws 40 aircraft into the air nearly simultaneously, including multiple F-15Cs, but is too late to catch the first Pact fighter wave, of which many are already on the ground refueling and rearming. Fencer Es and Foxbat Bs, having taken advantage of the scrum to reconnoiter parts of the Jutland peninsula, manage to draw four more Tornados into Gotland's SA-10 Grumble network, downing all four. The remaining NATO air continue to loiter over Western Denmark.

0615: Pact Flankers and Floggers, having rearmed and refueled, start to take off. Wave two of the Fighter sweep hopes to take advantage of the NATO fighter scramble and strike another blow that would allow our strike forces relatively clear lanes to their targets all over the Jutland peninsula. The plan is to have a "left hook" of the Southern Pact fighters and a "right hook" of northern aircraft, baited near Rodvig by several Pact aircraft radiating heavily and acting obnoxiously. Keeping with the theme of taking advantage of fighter scrums, a pair of Mig-23BNs take off armed with OFAB-250s, targeting the GM 406 ground radar near Jagel-Schleswig AFB. Currently in the air for NATO are six F-16CGs, six F-15Cs, 14 F-16A/Bs, and four Starfighters. In opposition we have 18 Su-30s, 14 Su-27S, 18 Flogger Gs, and 26 Flogger Ks.

0630: Two hunter-killer SEAD teams take off. Each team is composed of one Foxbat F armed with four AS-11 Kilters, two Fencer Ds armed with 2 Kryptons each, and two Fencer Ds with Kazoos, targeting several of the known I-Hawk sites picked up during the initial recon. Taking off from bases further east of the fighters, it is hoped that they will arrive on scene just as the air to air battle is complete and the skies relatively clear.

0710: I launch a strike to deal with a nasty Sea Sparrow battery near Korsor naval base: six Su-22M Fitters loaded out with Kyles, Karens, and Kedges (I never seem to know which Soviet weapon will work at any given time). Another sneak strike of four Fencers with LGBs takes off to start working on Holmen Naval base.

0712: sweeping in from the sea, the two Mig-23BNs lace the GM 406 radar with clusters, just in time to start dodging Hawk missiles. Three missiles end the mission for one of the Floggers, but the radar is destroyed and the other Flogger escapes east at full burner.

0715: Man, those F-16CGs seem like they are everywhere, and now I've just picked up another group of six F-15Cs and four F-16s heading in from the Netherlands. The NATO hordes never stop!

0750: After a furious second fighter sweep the losses are mounting on both sides. NATO has now lost 10 F-15Cs, six F-16CGs, eight F-4 ICE, six Mig-29s, 14 Tornados, 32 F-16A/Bs, 16 Starfighters (86 aircraft!) and as my SEAD teams and Fitters start to creep in, NATO still has 20 aircraft in the air, including six more F-16CGs and two F-15Cs. Either NATO has a fleet full of F-16CGs or they are turning those fighters around in a hurry. Pact is down a Flogger H, four Flogger Gs, six Flogger Ks, and an Su-27, but the bulk of the fighters are now back at the bases for the three hour re-arm. I have left in the air three Flanker Bs, four Flanker Gs, four Flogger Ks, and two Flogger Gs. This simply isn't enough to cover the SEAD strikers so I'm going to have to get creative.

0814: I chicken out and send the SEAD teams home. I couldn't distract the enemy aircraft enough to create breathing space. Two more F-16CGs take off. Ground crew of the year for those guys. Upside: I manage to trap and kill four F-16CGs by luring them into the Grumble net. Not terribly realistic, but whatever, I'm still angry with my G2. Downside: with six fighters left in the air, I now have four more F-16CGs, four F-15Cs, and thirteen other aircraft charging toward my lines. Time to boogie home. I'm down to 14 Alamo Cs at Wicko Morskie and one Alamo C at Miroslawiec; several times I've had F-15s and F-16s evade 10+ missiles while flying at 80 feet ASL. This could be a problem.

0823: Two more F-16CGs take off. Two F-15Cs and two F-16CGs fly over the Soviet DDGs west of Gotland and evade every SAM (over 30!) fired. Since the Pact ships are not under my control, their SAMs simply force NATO air down to 80 feet ASL, where even my Grumbles can't target them. Eventually after forty-ish SAMs or so the four craft are dispatched. I have no fighters currently available. My Flanker Gs are now arming with Alamo As and Archers only, as the base has run out of Alamo B/C/Ds. A bit later, a strike package of two Mig-27s with LGBs and two with Kedges lift off for another (hoped for) quick strike into Holmen naval base.

0945: A message comes across that a number of key Danish officials will be traveling to Aarhus (in Northern Denmark) and we are tasked with sinking the ferry within the next hour. At the moment I have approximately eight fighters ready to fight, and NATO has a standing CAP of six F-15s, six F-16CGs, and eight other aircraft (presumably F-16A/Bs) approximately 25 miles from the ferry (which is traveling at 40 knots). I don't think this one is going to happen; I doubt I could even get a strike aircraft there in 40 minutes even without a CAP (Swidwin is the closest base at 200 miles).

1002: the four ship Mig-27 strike package targeting Holmen Naval base leaves a few piers damaged. The two Mig-27s with Kedges would not engage the piers, even at 12000 ASL, which was lower than I wanted and drew MANPADs, which thankfully missed.

At this point it looks like I can summon up a credible third fighter sweep around 1100 zulu. With only eight hours left in the scenario at that time I'll need to get rolling on the SEAD. I'm hoping that if I can seriously degrade the remaining CAP that should open things up a bit for my strike aircraft.

1030Z: a message from some Spetnaz that they have cleared the way for us to destroy a bridge near the island of Fyn. Google Maps tells me that, like the previous target, our comradely planners have decided to pick a target literally underneath the standing NATO CAP. Can these guys read a map? Thankfully, unlike the previous tasking from higher, this one doesn't have a time limit.

1055Z: the third wave of fighters lifts off: 10 Flanker Gs, 10 Flanker Bs, 18 Flogger Ks, and 12 Flogger Gs. The bulk of my ready SEAD forces take off; it's now or never. The airbases empty out of Flogger Hs and Fencer Ds; around 70% of my strike force takes off and heads west. This violates one of the principles of war - mass - in that normally I like to strike everything hard at once, but I'm doing it for two reasons: 1) I'm hedging; 2) I don't know if I can manage everything at once. I usually don't also have strike forces in the air while the SEAD situation is open, but time is running short if I want to have any type of follow up strike(s). Strike forces include 12 Fitter Ks, six Foxbat F (SEAD), 22 Flogger J, 10 Flogger H, 64 Fencer Ds. Primary targets are I-Hawks, a German DDG parked in an inconvenient neighborhood, and the nearby runways/taxiways. Due to range limitations Floggers are generally heading south, Fencers north, and Fitters in the center.

1112Z: A message comes across that a mobile NATO HQ has been located near Flensburg and should be destroyed.

1119Z: An example of a fairly typical NATO vs PACT air battle. Two Flanker Gs and Two Flogger Ks vs F-16A. PACT air are on auto attack, with BVR weapons set to fire at 75% max range. When the first BVR missile is detected the F-16A immediately takes the fight down to 80 ft ASL, giving a 30% sea skimmer bonus:

1. AA-10D, 7% hit chance: miss (87)

2. AA-10D, spoof

3. AA-10D, 37% hit chance: miss (55)

4. AA-7D, spoof

5. AA-7D, petered out (?)

6. AA-10D, 7% hit chance: miss (80)

7. AA-11, 29% hit chance: miss (49)

8. AA-11, 52% hit chance: hit (32)

Those F-16s are slippery. Will NATO run out of aircraft before I run out of missiles? I'm seriously considering limiting engagements to AA-11s only at this point, since I can't even launch the aircraft without the proper loadout.

1122Z: Message: a Polish Fitter has crashed? Of course, it was one of my Fitters carrying an AS-9 Kyle ARM...

1124Z: Message: another Polish Fitter has crashed, likely due to misplaced Polish nationalism. Come on, Poland, Russia has been nothing but good to you over the years. Where are my political commissars??

1132: The sneaky MOBA SAM section was taken out by a brave Fitter recon pilot who managed to keep the radar locked on while a barrage of Keglers finally took it out. Oddly, I couldn't seem to find the platform listed in "scenario platforms" (or the game platforms, for that matter)?

Side note: I couldn't seem to get autotarget to work on runways with any of the Soviet guided missiles (Kedge, Karen, etc). That is, nothing would happen after clicking on the runway with the weapon selected. LGBs seemed to work fine. Not sure if this is by design, as the Karens/Kedges both list runways in their target descriptions. After some experimentation flying around 2000 feet AGL would allow the missiles to see the target, but they would only manual fire; auto fire still didn't work.

1135: After downing several Pact aircraft and annoying countless others the DDG Emden - the aforementioned NATO ship parked in an inconvenient neighborhood - goes down after taking an AS-9 Kyle amidships, even before the four "decoy" Kazoos reaching it.

At this point the strikes start. With no NATO air presence the I-Hawks are left exposed to the Kilters, Kryptons, and Keglers. While they are fairly effective against aircraft, they really struggle against the Kilters and Kryptons and start falling one by one. As I'm a serial micromanager, I've thrown my strike aircraft into three geographic "buckets" prior to target designation, so my SEAD aircraft are simply loitering 20km west of Denmark waiting for targets to expose themselves. A few Floggers are downed by Rolands or Hawks, but the bombers get through. Kiel, Jagel-Schleswig, and Hosum are the first targets, and the Pact air works it's way up the Jutland peninsula. Loitering Pact CAPs look on, with only a few random F-16s to splash while the peninsula starts to burn. The Danish ports are almost completely destroyed in a matter of minutes, having taken numerous LGB hits. The bridge near Fyn is knocked out by a pair of LGBs. Fencers run amok. Returning Fencers are diverted to Polish airfields - Broczyno, Nadarzyce - in hopes that the shorter distance will give them time to re-arm for a second strike. Further east, dozens of Backfires and Badgers armed with iron bombs take off. I don't know what exactly I'm going to do with them yet, but best that they get moving; seven hours remain.

1155Z: Two F-16CGs take off from Vandel and fire off seven AMRAAMs, taking down three Fencers before succumbing to 12 Pact AAMs. I had already put multiple LGBs on those runways and taxiways; at this point nothing with F-16CGs would surprise me anymore.

1230: Majority of the first wave attack is complete; I would estimate around 60% of the targets have been completely destroyed. Enemy SHORAD has taken out a few Floggers, but overall the strikes were very successful. With 6 hrs 28 min left in the scenario I have a minor victory and given the amount of assets I have remaining, I'm contemplating a strike on the second German warship detected, a Brandenburg FFG parked near the Netherlands, although the amount of AA/SAMs still left over in that area (I've detected at least one Patriot battery) may preclude it. Fencers and Floggers re-arm and prepare for Wave two. Now what to do with all these Badgers and Backfires...?

The second wave is mostly mopping up smaller, diversionary airfield runways. Thankfully few of them have any type of defenses, so my Floggers and Fencers go about their work unhindered. A third wave is ordered in, but at this point all that is left is hangers and access points. A few scattered Drakens, and the last remaining F-15Cs, interrupted occasionally, but were ultimately dealt with.

1719: The FFG Brandenburg shoots down eight Kryptons timed to arrive at the same time as eight Kazoos. Those RIM-116s are powerful. The nearest Patriot battery kills five of eight Kilters, but is silenced by the remaining three. Ultimately every main target (as far as I can tell) was destroyed. I couldn't destroy Korsor Naval Base, as the last two "items" in the base, 40mm Bofors, couldn't be targeted by my LGBs or missiles and were on the move(?), so I just let them go.

Overall this is one of the more challenging Fury scenarios I've played, mainly due to the time constraints and number of targets. It's right up there in terms of most losses as well; NATO front-line air is no joke. Final score was a Triumph, 1929 points.