**Baltic Fury 5 – Ivan’s March Across the Belts**

**Summary by fitzpatv, Feb 2023**

By February 25th, the advancing Soviets have cut-off Jutland from the rest of Europe by land. Their 38th Guards Airborne Corps now aims to seize a series of key points across the Great and Little Belts, while ensuring passage of its 6th Guards Motor Rifle Division to Danish ports. You can only play the Soviet side.

While this is a relatively short scenario at just 8 hours, it doesn’t lack complexity. The Russians and their Polish allies have large formations of paratroops to move from their bases at Donskoye near Kaliningrad, Lotnisko and Szczecin in Poland, plus some Spetsnaz at the captured German airbase of Laage. There are also naval infantry to be moved by sea from Bornholm. Plenty of transport aircraft are available, as is a flotilla of amphibious ships, but it isn’t possible to take everything in one go and the player has much latitude over what is loaded and sent where.

You are given a list of 22 major objectives across the arc of islands S of Copenhagen and reaching W to Jutland and each of these scores 25VP if occupied for (I think) over an hour. This is done by landing ground troops within boxes of reference points or moving them directly onto those targets which lack such zones. There are also 7 minor objectives which score 10VP each.

Your amphibious flotilla consists of 16 Pomornik and Aist hovercraft, 17 slower Polnochnys and Ropuchas and an Alligator. A group of four Natya minesweepers are approaching a mined channel through the outer Belt, covered by a single Nanuchka PCFG. Two Krivaks, two Pauks, 4 Stenkas and a couple of Kilos provide ASW cover and can be supported in this by Mails and Haze choppers. Some more Hazes are on hand for minesweeping duties if required.

Two squadrons each of Flankers, Flogger K and Flogger G fighters provide air cover from Bornholm and Poland, though these formations are a little worn-down by earlier fighting, with 18 Flankers available in total. A large force of Fencers can be called-upon for strikes, but are well back in Kaliningrad and the Baltic States and are limited to various dumb bombs. There are sufficient SEAD, EW and ELINT planes on call, with AEW provided by computer-controlled Madcaps in mid-Baltic.

In addition, there is a large body of Candid transports waiting in Lithuania under AI control, assigned to conveying supplies to the captured Danish airbases. They only take-off towards the end of the game and, beyond adding realism, serve no purpose other than slowing down processing.

Similarly, you are given a swarm of helicopters way back at Daugavpils in Latvia, which you are vaguely told need to move-up to Denmark. You only find out where once you have taken it.

NATO naval forces are on their last legs and they only have a single Willemoes PCFG, an MTB with decent torpedoes and the Danish sub Tumleren, plus a minelayer and some requisitioned fishing boats and yachts. In the air, they have the usual range of fighters, but the German Kormoran Tornadoes are still out of action and there is little strike threat. The heavier SAMs are back in Jutland and only a few Stinger teams and Bofors guns pose a danger to most Soviet operations. The main danger comes from fighters and a number of artillery and Patton tank groups scattered across the map, which are capable of hurting unwary desantniki.

Judging from my experiences in the last scenario, I reckoned I’d need a powerful fighter sweep, controlled via a CAP Mission over the targets, at some point to create a window for the paradrop. There was also the option of an earlier sweep to enable Fencer recon and strikes at ground formations. Dropping paras from altitude would largely negate any threat from Stingers and Chaparrals. As the drop would not take more than a couple of hours and the Donskoye planes would not be ready until about halfway through, I saw no need to hurry and planned to hit all the targets at once and overload the defences. The Natyas would need to clear the indicated minefield (there are three others, which should be left well alone) but would require cover against the Willemoes and sub.

Since the last scenario, I had downloaded the latest game update, but was surprised not to get the much-touted War Planner. The option to choose the distance at which fighters released missiles was welcome and I told the Flankers and Floggers to wait until the enemy got a third to a half of the way into their envelope. In practice, the AI still fired at the earliest opportunity and the Auto Evade behaviour was the same suicidal rubbish it has always been, so I’m in some doubt as to which version I currently have…

Note that there are Exclusion Zones over the Copenhagen area and the minefields but, in practice, these do not hinder movement and combat.

I decided to send the hovercraft on ahead to effect landings on the two islands of Mon and Falster, as this could be done without negotiating the minefields. They would carry tanks and heavy equipment with which to carve-out a beachhead. The slower transport ships could catch-up later. I noticed that what can be loaded on each ship follows some kind of organisational restriction, not that it had much practical impact.

25/2/94 20:00Z: Several unknown ships were detected in the objective zone beyond the minefield, with a probable Willemoes coming down from the N, initially out of range of the Nanuchka’s Sirens. Three US F-16s, two Tornadoes and a Starfighter were observed on CAP. The F-104 had a death wish and rushed forward to be downed by the Polish Gammon battery near Kolobrzeg for 3VP. Both Tornadoes then followed and suffered the same fate.

Ludicrously, the Danish Soloven MTB sailed into its own minefield and was promptly blown-up, with the Danish minelayer repeating the folly and getting herself crippled. Fix required here, methinks. NATO ships score no VP in this scenario.

A Fencer E found some artillery and Patton tanks on either side of the mined channel. It also distracted the remaining NATO CAP while the Nanuchka sank the Willemoes with a Siren. Three more suicidal Starfighters were knocked down by SAMs.

21:00: NATO again got over-aggressive with its fighters and lost a Tornado and a US Falcon, then another Starfighter.

We received the first of a series of messages about probable Spetsnaz activity in the Copenhagen area. This added atmosphere, but had little impact on play.

Twelve Fencers attacked the Danish artillery and armour, taking-out 18 105mm guns and 6 Pattons. Unusually, there were no MANPADs in evidence. Eight Flankers provided cover and, despite being controlled by a Mission, did well, destroying 3 US and one Danish Falcon, 3 Tornadoes and 2 Phantom ICE for one loss. Numbers seemed to push the enemy into Engaged Defensive mode, with unpleasant consequences for them. The only annoyance was the Nanuchka using her remaining Sirens on the crippled minelayer Fyen, only for both of them to malfunction. There weren’t any other worthwhile targets for the missiles and the Fyen sank anyway.

22:00: Four Fulcrums, a Starfighter and an American F-16 made an aggressive push into Soviet-controlled airspace and were all destroyed at a cost of one Flogger. A pair of F4F Phantoms then came-in over the European mainland and bumped into two Flankers from Miroslawiec, which duly disposed of them.

Pomorniks landed troops on Mon and Falster, while the Natyas commenced minesweeping operations. The latter progressed satisfactorily, with 17 mines being cleared in all at a cost of damage to two of the Natyas. It scored no points and frankly made no difference in the wider scheme of things, as there would not be time for any Russian shipping to go through the channel, anyway.

Another dozen Fencers from Chkalovsk destroyed another sextet of 105mm guns and all but one of four Pattons in the area of the Vordingborg objectives. A US F-16 intervened and was shot down, but took a Flanker with it.

23:00: Aist hovercraft unloaded more troops on Mon and Falster. 25VP were secured for taking Mon South, taking the score past the 100 point Minor Defeat level. Landed artillery destroyed the last Patton on Falster and also sank four auxiliary motor yachts that approached the channel and might have been carrying troops. It wasn’t possible for the amphibious forces to advance beyond Mon and Falster due to intervening water obstacles, so we needed the paradrop. It made any further seaborne reinforcement rather irrelevant and, indeed, the Ropuchas and Alligator could not reach the beaches in the scenario time limit.

Two more F-16s, one Danish and one American, were downed by a single Flanker on CAP, with a degree of manual control.

Fencers from Niveskoye largely dismantled the defences around the Korsor naval base, destroying 4 Pattons, 24 105mm guns, a Stinger team and two Bofors batteries. Two aircraft were lost to SAMs and Tornadoes, but they managed to down one of the latter with an Aphid.

26/2/94 00:00: A Fencer E flushed-out a land-based Sea Sparrow site near Nyborg Pier and it was silenced by two Fitters with Kyle ARMs.

Some Danish infantry surfaced near the mined channel and were slaughtered by T-62 tanks.

With Soviet CAP being conserved to support the paradrop, a couple of F-16s had some joy making deep raids into our airspace, taking down a Haze minesweeping chopper, a Mail and a Fencer strike plane. I just had to shrug and get on with it as Geckoes and MANPADs missed them all over the place.

At 00:30, the paradrop transports began lifting off, aiming to swarm the target area around an hour later with 15 Flankers in support along with jammers, Fencer E recon planes, several flights of strike Fencers and some Foxbats with Kilter ARMs. Each transport base was given a checklist of objectives and targetted flights of planes accordingly. Four Spetsnaz teams were conveyed by little Colt biplanes and were assigned a small island to take each.

Fencer strikes cost the Russians two airframes, but softened-up taregts at Halsskov near Korsor, Nyborg and Svendborg.

Advancing T-62s secured Falster North and Orohoved, on the same island.

01:00: A message suggested that Danish communications with Jutland had been blocked. Possibly this delayed the response to the landings.

Running the paradrop was a time-consuming and intense exercise. It required keeping an eye on lots of moving parts and reacting quickly whenever a transport group approached its target. Air combat was largely left to the AI via the CAP Mission. Some of the objectives have very confined dimensions and precise timing is often required – there were several annoying overshoots. Incredibly, I dropped several units on the Stogo road bridge site (which is tiny) and STILL managed to put them all down outside the defined area, something I only corrected late in the game.

In summary, all the objectives were captured. Problems were caused by fighters and I-HAWK sites near the W extremity of the target zone and the Fredericia Bridge and five Cubs were lost in this sector, but I had plenty more on the way and these succeeded once the CAP had been driven-off and Kilters had damaged the SAMs. The Soviets also lost 4 Flankers and 6 Fencers (the latter dismantling most of the waiting ground defences) but destroyed two Tornadoes, 10 Danish F-16s, two F-104s and a Fulcrum. Just one infantry unit needed to be taken-out by the desantniki (after the latter had been told that their guns could not fire underwater when they were clearly on dry land – moving cured this).

02:00: We were warned of possible Danish counterattacks, which was a problem as we had very few strike aircraft available. The desantniki would have to fend for themselves. I extended the endurance of four Fencers by re-basing them and launched four Hinds from Bornholm with little expectation. As feared, the latter lacked the endurance to be of any use.

Two pairs of Flankers were lost over North Jutland as more NATO fighters appeared. This was mainly because their Mission doctrine allowed them to investigate unknown contacts within weapon range (even though they weren’t). As a result, they flew N towards Aarhus while I wasn’t looking and got themselves outnumbered and handicapped by their malfunctioning Alamos (NATO maintains some otherwise redundant fighters up there all scenario). Unfortunately, I had to have this setting earlier to prevent fighters ignoring NATO CAP that was heading for the transports. With the paradrop over, I was able to reverse it out, but too late to save four planes and 8VP.

Danish infantry materialised around Vordingborg, at Nyborg, on Bogo By island and at Korsor, the latter supported by four Pattons. All of these groups were swiftly destroyed, with the Fencers making themselves useful at Vordingborg. Another infantry unit then popped-up at Snoghoj and was dealt-with in turn.

As objectives were confirmed as secured, the score rose above 500, but stayed depressingly Average. The capture of Tasinge Flyveplads revealed it to be the planned destination of the helicopter regiment at Daugavpils. Against my better judgement, I organised the ferry operation, even though the choppers would never get there in time, possibly lacked the endurance and the risk that it would further impact a funereal game speed. The latter wasn’t helped by all the superfluous AI-controlled units approaching Denmark from the East.

Infuriatingly, another Danish infantry unit popped-up near Tasinge. It was easy enough to deal with, but these conjuring tricks, while plausible in the jungles of Belize, are scarcely credible in open farmland in Denmark. They are far too stealthy.

03:00: Two serious counterattacks took shape NE of Korsor and W of the Fredericia Bridge, both involving tanks and mechanised infantry. However, the Danes had left it too late and the game ended before they got anywhere dangerous.

Despite securing all objectives and inflicting far more losses than I took, I was only awarded a Minor Victory, with a score of +695. Goodness knows what you have to do for a Triumph!. Some of the victory point schedules in the series are frankly hard to take seriously.

The Warsaw Pact lost 11 fighters, 9 Fencers, 5 Cubs, a Mail, a chopper and 90 transported elements. No doubt, they will have reflected that you can’t make an omelette without breaking a few eggs – it’s always been the Russian way.

NATO lost 7 US and 12 Danish F-16s, 7 Tornadoes, 6 Fulcrums, 2 Phantom ICE, 2 Phantom F4Fs, 7 Starfighters, a PCFG, an MTB, a minelayer, 6 auxiliary vessels, a radar, 66 artillery, 28 tank, 12 SAM/AA and 54 other ground elements.

Victory point schedules apart, this scenario would benefit from reducing the numbers of moving parts involved. The AI-controlled ships and transports, the combat helicopter regiment and even the minesweeping and non-hovercraft troopships could all have been omitted with little material effect.

**Comment from Forum:**

The original design for the scenario had the player controlling all of those other assets, two airborne divisions, an MRD and Army Troops on the transports and would have been 72 hrs long. At the risk of it being a massive 'click-fest' I trimmed it down considerably. Perhaps I was being nostalgic keeping in many of the units that would follow on, but my justification was that the player should feel they are a key player in a massive operation.

I'll look at the VP schedule and the tone down the NATO aggressiveness both at sea and in the air. A cagy enemy is harder for the player to deal with and more fun I think.

Some of those Danish counter attacks were meant to be Home Guard (Dad's Army) types who live in the local villages (with many of the smaller weapons handy). I figured that they could assemble easily, be quite stealthy until they attacked and then get wiped out with ease.