**Caribbean Fury – Hot Tamales**

**Summary by fitzpatv, Jul 2022**

**1. Setting the Scene**  
Well, after a fortnight’s play (plus time spent hiking in the Scottish Highlands to give my life some balance), I’ve finally finished the first of the Caribbean Fury scenarios. Not sure whether what follows counts as an AAR or a short book!. I’ll split it into sections. Make no mistake, this is a huge scenario, even by Fury standards and requires considerable commitment to play.  
  
As part of their grand strategy for waging war on NATO, the Soviets have enlisted the aid of numerous disaffected nations and movements around the globe. They may well be ‘turkeys voting for an early Christmas’, but they serve Moscow in tying down Western forces while causing local havoc that can’t be ignored.  
  
Cuba’s geographical position enables her to command the approaches to the Gulf of Mexico, threaten the wider Caribbean and also menace parts of the Southern United States, especially Florida. While her armed forces are somewhat outmoded, the Soviets have somehow managed to infiltrate a large force of modern fighter aircraft, plus Fencers and support types onto the island under the noses of the Americans.  
  
In Central America, Nicaragua has long been at odds with the USA and is a ready recruit to the Warsaw Pact cause. It so happens that the current regime in neighbouring Honduras has similar leanings. Both countries have been supplied with some old Soviet MRCAs to supplement their equally-aged American and French cast-off aircraft.  
  
Guatemala has a claim on Belize, which Britain is obliged to protect. While not entering the war overtly, they have armed and supplied a substantial guerrilla army, which is poised to invade the small republic under cover of the other hostilities.  
  
Meanwhile, in Panama, the local Miskito people resent American influence in their country and have assembled a remarkably large force of guerrillas with Soviet support. This is well-placed to attack the vital artery of the Panama Canal.  
  
Finally, the leftist regime in Venezuela has been at odds with America for some time and contemplates aggression against the former and current British, French and Dutch colony islands in the Antilles.  
  
Despite this diverse array of threats, the US is still defending its own backyard and has formidable resources to deploy. The problem is that they are initially caught completely flat-footed and suffer from a couple of serious strategic mistakes. In particular, policy has been to rely entirely on the Air Force for defence, with the result that there isn’t a single SAM site in the entire Continental USA!. Almost as bad is the total lack of ground combat troops at the Canal (hard to explain).  
  
Cruising in the Gulf of Mexico is the John F Kennedy CVBG, consisting of the conventionally-powered carrier, with the cruiser Yorktown, destroyer Conolly and frigate Reuben James for escort. JFK has a squadron each of F-14A Tomcats and F/A-18C Hornets, plus the usual array of Vikings, Prowlers, Hawkeyes, Shadows and choppers. This constitutes a potent force which the enemy are ill-equipped to counter, but it can’t be everywhere at once.  
  
Off the Carolinas is the cruiser Long Beach, with the frigate Nicholas. The destroyer Kidd and SSN Sea Devil are relatively nearby. This force will take time to get anywhere useful, but has TLAMs and decent self-defence capability.  
Various small naval groups or single ships are scattered across the region. Feeling vulnerable off the W tip of Cuba are the destroyer Arthur W Radford, with the frigates Jesse L Brown and Truett. Radford bristles with TLAMs, but the group has only a few Sparrows for air defence and not much ASW cover, either.  
  
The British frigate Westminster is off Belize, the weak French Ventose S of Haiti, the weaker Spanish Diana N of Grenada and the Dutch Banckert en route from Europe, NNE of Sint-Maarten in the Northern Antilles.  
  
East by South of Banckert, the US cruiser South Carolina is on her way to Charleston, accompanied by the destroyer Tattnall. With no ASW choppers, they look very insecure.  
  
Off Panama, the frigate Ouellet is supported by three weak patrol boats. The Radford force is on its way to relieve her. The cruiser Dale is alone off Nicaragua on anti-piracy patrol.  
  
There are two other SSNs on station – Trepang in the Florida Straits and Greenling watching Venezuela.  
  
Otherwise, the US Coast Guard has a number of patrol craft between Florida, Cuba and Haiti, the fleet oiler Leroy Grumman is inbound to Miami from the NE and the frigate Copeland and SSN Spadefish are readying at New Orleans and Galveston, respectively.  
  
Defence of the Panama Canal is in the hands of a mixed force of short-ranged aircraft, with a few old-model F-16s (Sparrows at best) and lots of recon and ground attack types (the range of NATO aircraft is bewildering and took several sides of A4 to list and detail). On the ground, there are several batteries of low-end, vehicle-mounted Chaparral SAMs, some Stinger teams and not much else.  
  
Over the border to the East, Colombia is friendly and has a selection of outmoded aircraft which might render assistance, depending on the whims of the AI.  
  
At Puerto Rico, you have F-16s, Skyhawks, Orions, choppers and a tanker plane. Range is an issue and the Stratotanker will clearly be vital for getting most of them into action.  
  
I’ve always found it anomalous that the USA maintains a high-value military base at Guantanamo Bay, on the territory of an unfriendly power. This will now be put to the ultimate test, as that garrison are isolated and vulnerable. Unlike the Canal situation, you do have a strongish force of mechanised infantry, with some Abrams tanks, mobile artillery and I-HAWK SAMs. There is also an air group, mostly comprised of Skyhawks and choppers but also including some Pioneer UAVs. Trouble is, it is pinned-down by Cuban Gammon (and other) SAM sites, which greatly interdict any combat flying.  
  
In Belize, the British also have a decent force of combat troops, the infantry being backed-up by three SP artillery batteries and some unconvincing Blowpipe MANPADs. Some of the Scots Guards troops are on an unfortunately-timed exercise in the jungle near the border settlement of Big Creek. At the airport are three Harriers, mainly equipped for ground attack but with some Sidewinders, plus a few choppers and Belize Defence Force recon planes.  
  
There are notional recon groups in the Dutch and French West Indies, but they play little role in events.  
  
The Continental USA harbours a great many aircraft of all types (other than heavy bombers), but they will take time to get ready and many are subject to diversion to the war developing in Europe as the game progresses. Some are flown by instructors and there is a premium cost to getting these guys shot down. Key West, like Guantanamo, is under the 155nm umbrella of several Cuban Gammon sites, making low-flying de rigueur in the vicinity (Gammons are useless below 650’). Lots of older Phantom and Corsair (!) strike planes will move to Patrick Air Base, near Orlando and MacDill, near Tampa, as the scenario progresses, following pre-set Ferry missions.  
  
Well, that just about sets the scene. By the way. ‘Hot Tamales’ is the name of the American plan to handle the crisis.

**2. Initial Moves**  
Big problem!. You’re going to repeatedly face situations where trouble is happening all over the map, making it nigh-impossible to control your forces as well as you would like. Bart advises mitigating this using Missions, but if you do this, the AI will invariably find a way to screw-up. For me, there is no substitute for manual control. Basically, you’re going to be awkwardly panning around the board from one situation to another, trying to juggle balls in stressful fashion and, unless you are very lucky, you are going to suffer for it. Can’t be helped. Perhaps the scenario could have been broken-down into smaller ones covering Cuba/Florida, Belize and the Canal, but this would have blurred the overall strategic picture.  
  
JFK’s course helps her to support Florida and Belize and attack Cuba. I gave her planes as many Phoenixes, HARMs and AGM-84s as possible and had radars and OECM active.  
  
I was really worried about the Radford group and ordered them to head out of Dodge, West, at Flank with radars off. The thought of a Fencer strike did me no good at all.  
  
Also worrying was South Carolina’s lack of ASW choppers, so I sent her an Orion from Puerto Rico and had her move to rendezvous with Banckert.  
  
At the Canal, I wasn’t sure whether I’d be facing Central American airstrikes, guerrillas, Venezuelan airstrikes or all three. It was even possible that the Russians/Cubans might mount a long-ranged raid or send missile-armed Osa boats. I sent-up a maritime recon and an OECM plane, hoisted an aerostat for radar and otherwise sat tight.  
  
There was no real defence against Venezuela, so I had to rely on received knowledge that they don’t get actively involved in this scenario.  
  
Belize was very exposed and there was little choice but to hold-on as best I could, sending Westminster in-shore to provide a bit of SAM support.  
  
I couldn’t see Guantanamo lasting and devised a desperate plan to charge the enemy Gammon site at low altitude and accept some losses to take it down early.  
  
Overall, I aimed to roll with the initial punches, try to save assets, then move gradually onto the counterattack.

**3. Onslaught**  
13/2/94 12:45Z : The USCG cutter usefully detected a Styx SSM battery at the Easternmost tip of Cuba, covering the channel with Haiti. Reporting this, she got the Hell away.  
  
Two remote radar sites at either end of Panama were demolished by Miskito guerrillas, costing 3VP each. Recon planes were sent to investigate. A two-pronged attack, then…  
  
13:00 : A suspicious infantry unit was spotted by an SAS patrol in the Belizean jungle. Put local forces on alert and sent a Harrier and two Lynx choppers to prosecute. Best thing to do with SAS recon teams is to have them stay put and not engage, as they are very stealthy but lightly-armed.  
  
At 13:13, Guantanamo came under attack from Cuban artillery and foot infantry. We had one 105mm SPA unit, which was outranged and outnumbered by the Cuban 122mm guns. It attacked the enemy infantry, while 5 helicopter gunships took-off to take-on the guns at minimum altitude.  
  
As war was declared, I was given various choices for deploying US-based squadrons as they became available. On balance, I decided to keep most of them at their existing bases and use the plentiful tanker support to get them to targets or patrol zones. This maximised the number of sorties, as most of these planes had long turnround times.  
  
Back at Guantanamo, enemy guns destroyed three OP bunkers, but were then silenced by Cobra and Huey attacks. The US SPA and choppers then took-out seven Cuban infantry platoons around the base. Helicopters and Skyhawks then battered the Gammon site covering the base, taking-down 8 launch rails, 3 radars and 3 protective ZU-23-2s. Floggers swarmed in and, with the SAMs, downed 4 Skyhawks and 2 Cobras, but were engaged by I-HAWKs and lost 8 of their number. Friendly aircraft lost cost a base 3 VP, enemy planes and complete ground facilities/units score two apiece.  
  
Unfortunately, the scenario uses the Downed Pilot/SAR script. As discussed elsewhere, this is full of bugs, unfit for purpose and costs extra points whenever a pilot bails out (60% chance) and is not rescued to an often stringent timescale from a dangerous location with enemy planes and SAMs about. It is generally better to have a pilot killed outright, as it will usually cost fewer points. As Bart says, you can use the Editor to turn it off, but I didn’t feel that this was sporting and soldiered-on, cursing…  
  
A Skyhawk detached from the fighting at Guantanamo and managed to damage the Styx battery at the E tip of Cuba. Fighting died-down and, for now, the base had survived.  
  
Meanwhile, an engagement was developing near Belize City, with Guatemalan-backed guerrillas pressing in from the jungles to the W and SW. The Brits inflicted some punishment (one VP per enemy unit destroyed), but had the complication of needing to evacuate their isolated ground units near Big Creek. This involved using Puma helicopters to pick them up by flying to two Patrol Zones, then convey them to corresponding Drop Zones near Belize City. This isn’t helped by the presence of Honduran fighters and ground-attack planes, to say nothing of rebel MANPAD teams, which encroach on the Patrol Zones.  
  
To add to the crescendo of troubles, the Soviets and their Cuban friends mounted a major airstrike on Key West. This destroyed 3 aircraft, 4 AvGas tanks and a radar on the ground. Four F-16s from Homestead Base, Miami intervened in time to destroy three escorting Floggers, keeping low to avoid the Gammon threat. A nearby dry-bulk carrier was attacked by Fencers and Cuban naval vessels, went off-grid and later sank for -25VP.  
  
A couple of suspicious patrol craft appeared N of Panama. One turned-out to be Venezuelan, so I left it alone. The other was a Honduran/Nicaraguan Gucumaz, so a Dragonfly attack plane sank it with bombs for 5VP.  
  
As if we didn’t have enough to do, the French requested that a liaison team be transported to MacDill base from Martinique in a Transall transport. Made sure the route was well clear of any trouble and sent him on his way.  
  
14:00 : Who would have thought that Honduras and Nicaragua could have such a big combined Air Force?!. A huge force of MiG-21s, Flogger attack models and old-model Mirages came swarming-in to attack the Canal. To stop them, I had 6 light-armed fighters, plus Stingers and Chaparrals. Four Falcons did some damage to the initial wave of Fishbeds, but successive misses on 88, 77 and 89% chances allowed one to bomb the Canal, costing me 25VP. This kind of luck was to haunt me for the rest of the game. Though the offending plane was then destroyed, another took-out a radar and was missed by my second flight’s last two Sidewinders on 75% chances. I finally got it with cannon, but couldn’t afford this, given my lack of ammo and planes. My last pair of Falcons took their toll of the raiders, but I couldn’t stop them all, so Howard Airforce Base took hits, costing us unspecified High Value Aircraft (8VP) and invisible Downed Pilots who couldn’t be rescued. On the positive side, the Chaparrals made good shooting and the enemy losses were colossal, ensuring that nothing on this scale could be repeated.  
  
Back in Belize, I scrambled my three Sidewinder-armed Harriers and put them on CAP over Big Creek, sent all the Lynx choppers there to Belize City and brought-in two light-armed Sparrow Tomcats from JFK in support. A Harrier destroyed a hostile Dragonfly, eliminated a MANPAD team with rockets, then re-based to Belize City. However, on the way it was taken-out by a Tiger II fighter while I was watching the Canal. Another Harrier took revenge, then downed a Flogger H, but more bandits kept appearing and there was no protecting the infantry near Big Creek, who began taking losses from the Dragonflies. When the F-14s arrived, they got rid of two Tigers, but then had to RTB, being unable to refuel from the Stratotanker I sent over Yucatan to support them. My Harriers destroyed another Flogger and then sank a Guaymuras patrol boat. Enemy infantry came pressing-in and were attacked by our artillery and helicopters.  
  
Some MiG-21s tried to attack Homestead and were intercepted by the two available F-16s. One Falcon couldn’t get airborne due to runway congestion, but the other zapped a Fishbed and this or fuel considerations caused the enemy to abort the small-scale attack.  
  
At the Canal, a Kiowa Warrior recon chopper found guerrillas advancing from the SW. Attack planes launched from Howard and eventually managed to demolish the entire force, MANPADs first. Trying to use the Hercules Pave Spectres with their 105mm guns was murder!. They need to be over 5,500’ AGL and, even then, have boresight issues and constantly try to move to inappropriate altitudes. The operation was hindered by enemy aircraft breaking-off from their attacks on the Canal, which happened in parallel. This cost us a Bronco, but these little planes carry Sidewinders and shot down a Mirage in reply.  
  
14:00 : Eagles from Tyndall Base, Alabama and Falcons from Jacksonville, Florida intercepted a Fencer strike heading for the cutter Pea Island (heading desperately North) and shot-down eight of the dangerous Russian planes. Pea Island reached safety.  
  
By now, the raid on the Canal was mostly over. The Pedro Miguel Lock was 75% damaged and the Centennial Bridge 66% . Nine US aircraft had been lost for 58 hostiles.

**4. Turning the Tide**  
15:00 : By now, the Pumas had rescued some infantry from Big Creek and were readying for a potential second lift. Note that doing this generates some Lua errors, perhaps because the script takes no account of losses. Meanwhile, the British artillery chipped away at the advancing guerrillas, helped by using the Belizean Defender aircraft as a spotter.  
  
It was time to think about some retaliation!. Now at a safe distance, Radford destroyed a surface search radar at the W end of Cuba with a TLAM, scoring 7VP. An exploratory TLAM attack on the nearby Gammon site was thwarted by defending Grumbles, which have a 50nm range, but fewer altitude blind spots. I launched a 38-missile follow-up, mainly to make the Cubans use-up SAMs.  
  
16:00 : JFK’s Sparrow Tomcats disposed of two more Tigers over Belize. For now, at least, the rebel ground forces there appeared to have been eliminated.  
  
Our second TLAM strike unfortunately coincided with a big Russo-Cuban air surge in the Florida Channel, which caught our CAP low on fuel. Two pairs of fighters struggled to down a Fulcrum, but then had to flee. JFK, with her fighter group now fully-operational, launched Phoenix Tomcats to clear the airspace. Two Foxhounds and a Fulcrum penetrated flagrantly into Floridian airspace Two Falcon ADFs from Jacksonville intercepted one MiG-31, which was making for aircraft ferrying into Patrick AFB. They got within range, but then suffered spiteful luck as the Russian hit twice on 61% chances, while my missiles went wide on similar odds. Worse, I was left with two more downed pilots – in Florida! - and could make no attempt to rescue them with the damned Foxhounds still about. Meanwhile, a pair of JFK’s Tomcats disposed of the other two hostiles. After a ridiculous amount of missing, two more Falcons from Jacksonville finally killed the first one.  
  
Incidentally, I think I’ve finally realised why Phoenixes (in particular) always seem to go briefly ‘blind’ shortly after launch. It is because the AI often has its aircraft spinning in tight circles when not engaged offensively. As a result, this triggers the Doppler Notch effect explained by AndrewJ in my ‘Land of Fire and Ice’ AAR. Do we have a bug here, or does this reflect real-world defensive flying tactics?.  
  
The Russians were operating a few Bears as patrol planes in the Northern Caribbean, so a Falcon from Puerto Rico intercepted and downed one S of Haiti.  
  
More rebel guerrillas were found by our useful Kiowas in Eastern Panama and engaged by Howard AFB’s planes. There were a lot of them, but they were wiped-out with some unexpected aid from the Colombian Air Force, who lost four planes to MANPADs.  
  
Our TLAM strike on Cuba was swarmed by Russian fighters and failed completely. Bad timing.  
  
The Cubans made a second push on Guantanamo, with nine companies of T-55 tanks, supported by ZSU-23s. They destroyed a few base ground facilities, but were then smashed by aircraft and the deadly Abrams and SPA units. Some 36 Cuban tanks were left burning.  
  
17:00 : Pumas picked-up the remaining troops at Big Creek and headed for the Drop Zone, arriving safely. Disappointingly, this scored zilch and, worse, I was later fined 25VP for losing Big Creek (a plot event I could do nothing about). CAP was switched from Big Creek to Belize City.  
  
18:00 : I used some of the old Phantoms that had arrived at Patrick AFB to bait the Cuban Gammon sites around Havana by flying into range, then diving away at Afterburner. This was quite successful in wearing the enemy SAMs down. I christened the F-4s ‘Amondeii’s Wallies’ after a decoy spell invented by a player in my D&D campaign!.  
  
Suddenly, I realised that Cuban mechanised infantry in BTRs were swarming Guantanamo!. Once surprise had worn-off, things went disastrously for Fidel’s boys and they were annihilated by artillery and tanks before the base choppers could even take-off.  
  
Two Honduran Mirages attacked the Canal. Both were destroyed by CAP, but the one shot they got-off inevitably cost us a Falcon ADF. In the process, we discovered that some rebel MANPADs had somehow survived the earlier battle and were approaching the Canal from the West.  
  
19:00 : I launched a HARM and AGM-84 strike from JFK. As the Gammon sites weren’t radiating, I launched 16 HARMs at a protecting Grumble battalion. Of 24 Grumbles fired, 15 hit on chances of 55% or less, while a fighter’s Alamo hit the last HARM on a 26% shot. What can you do?.  
  
A Pioneer UAV spotted two more ZSUs around Guantanamo and our artillery crisped them. However, the badly-damaged Gammon site was somehow still able to engage the drone and hit it first time on 55%. I sent the 105mm SPA after it and finished it off. At 2VP, Gammons don’t score what they are worth.  
  
A Puerto Rican Falcon got rid of a second Bear, despite the Russian pulling-off a 15% jamming roll.  
  
20:00 : Four rebel Gimlet teams popped-up W of the Canal while I was concentrating on Cuba and managed to down both Pave Spectres and a chopper sent against them. A Gimlet does 0.7DP, a Pave Spectre has 20, so how?. I really had no choice but to throw planes at the Gimlets or ignore them, owing to the aforementioned lack of infantry and artillery. It cost me a fourth plane, but I eventually got rid of them.  
  
While this was going on, there was a Goblin contact within 2nm of JFK?. This was utterly weird. It was motionless and had to be a false alarm, since it hadn’t attacked, but it stubbornly refused to resolve itself and kept re-appearing even after I dropped the contact. Never seen this happen before.  
  
Two Fencers took down a radar near Miami with Kryptons, losing one of their number to CAP.  
  
The AGM-84 strike on Cuba was a complete fiasco. Four out of five planes ran out of fuel just before they could attack, then tried to fly to a tanker over Yucatan when JFK was much nearer, repeatedly countermanding my orders to keep low and miraculously surviving. One plane managed to loose, but five SAMs accounted for the two missiles.  
  
The Transall with the French liaison team arrived at MacDill, eventually scoring 10VP when they were driven to Tampa.  
21:00 A third Bear was downed over the Bahamas. No more appeared.  
  
22:00 : Ten planes with HARMs from Eglin and Tyndall attacked Cuba, but struggled for targets, with most enemy radars switched-off. I found a few and this woke the others up. The HARMs scored no hits, though a supporting Orion from Jacksonville managed to sink a Cuban Grisha corvette in the Florida Straits for 5VP. Foxhounds and Flankers pursued, escorts intercepted and destroyed 13 Russians for one loss (plane missed a MiG-31 on 45%, dived to minimum altitude on Afterburner, turned 90 degrees and saw the SARH Amos dive 20,000’ and hit me on 35%). I couldn’t hit the last bandit, a Flanker which evaded six missiles and got home.  
  
Some Floggers foolishly patrolled too close to Guantanamo and lost three of their number to I-HAWKs. An apparent strike followed, but resulted in four more downed Floggers, at which point the others turned-tail.

**5. Attrition**  
14/2/94 00:00Z : Since the Cubans no longer had an offensive land capability, maybe it was time for the US to conquer the E of the island?!. I sent all Guantanamo ground units with ammo on offensive sweeps.  
  
A big raid came-in on Key West. No vital damage was done and 20 Russian and Cuban planes were downed for one Falcon. Most were Floggers, but their number included a Fulcrum.  
  
A sneak raid on Guantanamo took-out an AvGas tank. It turned-out that this had been done by a ZSU-23, not a plane. A Super Cobra completely missed it with its Hydra rockets, then unaccountably refused to engage it with TOW anti-tank missiles.  
  
A lone MiG-21 approached the Canal. The newly-arrived USS Dale missed it on 46, 65 and 74 before the final RIM-67 splashed it. Like pulling teeth…  
  
Two Flankers turned-up at Key West, catching three Falcons (down to Sidewinders) and a Jayhawk chopper (trying to rescue a downed pilot). As usual, the Russians hit with their first shot and downed an F-16. Two more Flankers reinforced the first pair and, with my luck at its rancid worst, it took an enormous amount of effort and attention using 8 fighters to destroy them all – at a final cost of three of our own. Amazingly, though, the Jayhawk actually saved the downed pilot!. It helps that you only have to fly over him, without the need to go to minimum altitude and hover with everything else going on.  
  
01:00 : No let-up as several Fishbeds and a Flanker headed for Florida. All were destroyed without loss.  
  
A trio of Honduran Tigers attacked Belize. Two were shot-down by Harriers and the other fled.  
  
We finally got rid of the ZSU at Guantanamo, needing three aircraft to do it.  
  
Our ground forces began hunting-down SAMs across Eastern Cuba, getting rid of a Grumble at Holguin and a Gainful nearer Guantanamo. SA-10 Grumbles score 10VP and Gainfuls 7. The Cubans have a lot of both.  
  
02:00 : Two Honduran Floggers were downed near the Canal. Eight more made the mistake of attacking HMS Westminster with bombs and lost seven of their number to her Sea Wolves, the other turning tail.  
  
Launched a second HARM strike from JFK, with six Hornets. Tomcat escorts downed a Fulcrum which tried to intercept. A Grumble site took some damage.  
  
03:00 : Typically, while I wasn’t looking, something damaged Canal infrastructure with explosives. Our Kiowa could not find the culprits, probably rebel saboteurs.  
  
The Cubans had, by now, lost control of the East of their island and the Guantanamo troops were wreaking havoc at Holguin and Santiago de Cuba. I kept my remaining 500-odd rounds of 105mm SPA ammo back, as I had bigger plans for its later use.  
  
We had also exhausted the Cubans’ Gammon ammo, leaving fighters free to engage their counterparts over Havana. However, our luck refused to change. A Tomcat missed some Flankers with Phoenixes on 35, 44 and 59 and another missed a pair of Floggers on similar odds. Were there no low numbers on the virtual dice?. We did, at least, kill a Haze ASW chopper with Sparrows on the way home to JFK.  
  
An Orion sank two Cuban Koni-class frigates in the Florida Straits for 15VP each. She also reported a Grisha crippled from an earlier sortie.  
  
04:00 : We belatedly found two guerrilla units W of the Canal. Appallingly, two flights of attack planes went RTB at the last moment instead of striking them. I eventually brought-in more planes and got the job done.  
  
A Tomcat downed a Flanker and Haze over Cuba, despite more poor shooting. Our next F-14 sortie hit nothing at all.  
The latest distraction was Honduran/Nicaraguan patrol boats attacking merchant shipping with light weapons off their coast. With Dale off the Canal. I had only Orions from Puerto Rico to send there.  
  
05:00 : Another Tomcat sortie accounted for two Flankers, but the next one missed with all four Phoenixes. This wasn’t working. Instead, I tried using weak aircraft as bait to lure the Russians out from behind their Grumble shield and into deadlier range. This soon bore fruit, as two Flankers were drawn-out and bagged by AMRAAM Falcons from Homestead.  
  
Once again three units of rebels popped-up near the Canal. We destroyed them with Super Cobras. Although they are anti-tank weapons, TOWs are very effective here, as they nearly always hit for a point a time and a typical gunship carries eight. However, Gatun Lock 1 was 72.7% damaged and on fire (no hoses?). We couldn’t prevent such sneak attacks and I couldn’t be everywhere at once.  
  
06:00 : Rebels in Belize began advancing N and were credited with destroying a Scots Guards unit that wasn’t there, having been evacuated earlier. Probably linked to the Lua error during the helicopter lift. After this, the rebels did not press their offensive and things quietened down.  
  
A HARM strike from Tyndall used-up more Grumbles, damaged a Guideline and destroyed a jammer vehicle. Escorts lured-out and downed another Flanker.  
  
The damaged Grisha foundered off Havana. At +150, it was still a Minor Defeat.  
  
07:00 : More aerial skirmishes near Florida saw a Flanker and Haze downed. A second Flanker then needed NINE AMRAAMs to kill!!  
  
We were knocked-back 50VP when Gatun Lock 1 burned-out. Story of the scenario so far.  
  
A 10-plane HARM strike failed to score a single hit. It seemed that there were always more fighters. Four Flankers tried to pursue and paid the price.  
  
A stray Flogger overflew Guantanamo and ate an I-HAWK.  
  
An Orion engaged the Central American patrol boats, sinking the Copan, Choluteca, Ulua and Tegucigalpa with Harpoons for 5VP each. Escorting Falcons overflew an out-of-comms merchant ship at low altitude, but could get no meaningful update on her status. Unfortunately, the Out of Comms rule needs looking-at. I understand that a unit can’t communicate its status without its radio, etc while out of sight of friendly forces, but visual examination should, at least, be able to ascertain course, speed, type and approximate condition. Instead, the NOCOMM unit is effectively invisible to its own side (though not the enemy). You can actually deduce more about hostile units. Please fix this, someone.  
  
Two HARM aircraft from JFK managed to hit a Grumble site. The Cubans have fired 171 Grumbles so far.  
  
08:00 : Tried hard to lure two Flanker G fighters from Cuba. Two AMRAAMs then missed on 47, while a third was jammed on 10. Things evened-out a bit, as follow-up sorties got both bandits and two reinforcing Flanker Bs.  
  
While this was happening, more guerrillas appeared at the Canal and damaged another piece of infrastructure. This seemed to have been done by a Gimlet team somehow – choppers managed to take it out without further loss.  
09:00 : Another Canal facility was destroyed by invisible guerrillas. After some searching, three units of infantry were found and eliminated, but when would this ever stop?.  
  
Two Flankers tried to attack an Orion over Florida and were eventually destroyed after being maddeningly lucky.  
Numerous Cuban patrol craft were located in the Yucatan Channel. Vikings from JFK engaged and sank an Osa boat and three Chinese-made, torpedo-carrying HQ-331 hydrofoils.  
  
10:00 : Yet another HARM strike took down a Tin Shield radar and hit two Grumble sites.  
  
An Orion sank a weak Zhuk patrol boat in the Florida Straits.  
  
By my estimate (based on 12 per squadron), the Russian foreign legion had four Foxhounds, four Flankers and six Fulcrums left. The former now launched on one of their intrusive sweeps. There’s only one thing worse than a Foxhound and that’s a lucky Foxhound!. I just couldn’t get any early hits in at all with my Phoenixes and this allowed the bandits to close and destroy two Falcons and an Orion that they shouldn’t have gotten anywhere near. The latter counted as a Very High Value Aircraft and cost me 13VP, which is more than six Foxhounds. Can’t be right. At length, the MiGs ran out of luck and were all eliminated.  
  
While this was going on, a half-dozen low-flying Floggers buzzed Guantanamo, losing two of their number despite an infuriating nuber of I-HAWKs going ‘blind’.  
  
A strike on Key West was broken-up, with six enemy planes destroyed. We saved a pilot from the Foxhound scrap.  
  
11:00 : Lots of Central American patrol craft were detected off the Nicaraguan coast. An Orion sank four of them.  
  
Five Hornets went at Cuba with AGM-84s, but scored no hits and suffered two losses, one to a Flanker that was missed four times beforehand, the other to a Grumble at its range limit.  
  
Meanwhile, Cuban MiG-21s kept coming at Key West and kept getting shot down, but a swarm of Floggers now reinforced them from San Julian in SW Cuba. These were engaged by fighters from JFK and 706FS in New Orleans (shortly to be withdrawn and being used while we had them). Of 18 shots at the Floggers at odds between 35 and 72%, only four hit. Unbelievable!. At least we lost no planes. I’d taken the Floggers to be Model G or K fighters and had pulled the weak Key West CAP back to the NE. Unfortunately, the intruders turned-out to be Model B fighter-bombers and, with CAP not quite getting back in time, the first one hit and destroyed nine planes on the ground with bombs. Helped by more Sparrow Tomcats from JFK, they gave chase and, again, destroyed just four bandits with 18 shots, most of them at reasonable odds. Every time I seemed to be getting off a Minor Defeat, something was happening to knock me back. The score was now +124, with Downed Pilot penalties to come.  
  
12:00 : One of the remaining four Flankers lifted-off and was intercepted by two Eagles from Tyndall. A roll of 02 spoofed my first AMRAAM, the second missed on 49 and it took two more to do the job. The Flanker got off two answering shots, which I only avoided by diving to 80’, reducing the Alamo missiles’ chances to just 1%.  
  
Two more Flankers scrambled and were engaged by numerous Eagles. It took ELEVEN AMRAAMs to destroy them. By now, I was firing two at a time in an effort to compensate for the lousy dice.  
  
A Honduran Flogger H tried to attack HMS Westminster, but did not survive the attempt.  
  
13:00 : The last Flanker sortied, drawn by an inviting Tiger II from Key West. For once, it went down easily.  
  
Another HARM strike from Tyndall hit a Gainful site. The Grumble count was now 245 – over six whole sites’ worth.  
  
14:00 : An Orion sank two more Central American patrol boats. Mysteriously, the Osas and HQ-331s in the Yucatan Channel had vanished.

**6. Offensive-Offensive**  
15:00 : Another 10-plane HARM strike from Eglin finally seemed to have cracked the SAMs around Havana. Several sites were hit and two radars and a jammer destroyed. Two Hornets from JFK did more damage, following-up.  
  
Meanwhile, US troops advancing from Guantanamo were nearing the Havana area from the East, taking-down a Grumble site. Another infantry unit reached the E tip of Cuba and knocked-out the damaged Styx battery there for 12VP.  
  
Guantanamo Skyhawks sank three Osa boats off E Cuba with Mavericks, while some Cobras pecked a Stenka/Tarantul patrol boat (without missiles) to death. An Orion from Puerto Rico followed through and sank another Osa and an HQ-331, despite two of her four Harpoons malfunctioning. That left a second HQ-331 to be disposed-of in this area.  
  
16:00 : Despite missing it on 69, an Eagle knocked-down a Haze off Cuba. A score of +200 was still a Minor Defeat.  
  
A Cobra got rid of yet another Gimlet team near the Canal, taking the score to +201 and Average.  
  
Infantry near Holguin finally tracked-down and eliminated the local Grumble site. The things can be damned elusive. They then got rid of another Gainful in the same area.  
  
A Skyhawk from Key West killed a radar with Shrike ARMs. Infantry closing on this Cuban position blasted a Gainful site.  
  
Hueys from Guantanamo sank the remaining HQ-331 off E Cuba.  
  
A Falcon from Key West destroyed a coastal Styx battery with Mavericks.  
  
17:00 : A second Styx E of Havana was eliminated in similar fashion.  
  
The Cuban Yucatan Channel squadron was re-located close to Cancun, Mexico. A Stenka was nearest, so the approaching Radford sank it with a Harpoon. With the destroyer helped by a Harpoon-toting Viking and Hornet, three Osa boats were then put away.  
  
Another Grumble site fell to the US infantry advancing on Havana. The main Cuban SAM strength was now concentrated around San Julian in the SW, where there were three Styx batteries covering the Yucatan Channel. JFK sent a Hornet with TALDs to stir things up. This lured-out the Russians’ remaining six Fulcrums. Despite more shocking luck and prodigious expenditure of AMRAAMs, these were all shot down without loss.  
  
Two Hornets with Walleyes failed to hit Fidel Castro’s HQ near Havana, but did wreck a Comms Hub for just 2VP.  
  
A Puerto Rico-based Orion found another group of Cuban warships off Jamaica and Harpooned a Stenka, then three Osas, leaving two more, plus an HQ-331.  
  
18:00 : Radford sank another Osa off Yucatan, followed by an HQ-331.  
  
With a pathway cleared through the enemy SAM cover, Falcons from Homestead began mopping-up the Soviet support aircraft (Badgers and Cubs) and Cuban Coot transports that had been operating South of Havana. One Badger and three Coots/Cubs were destroyed.  
  
A Hornet scored a spectacular Walleye hit and obliterated Castro’s Bejucal Command Centre. Whether he was there at the time and whether he survived was unknown. We scored 22VP.  
  
19:00 : Three Phantoms from Patrick AFB attacked the Styx sites to the ENE of Havana, destroying one and damaging another. AGM-84 Hornets did more damage to the SAM sites around the capital, some of which could still fight back.  
Two Badgers and three Coots/Cubs were downed by the marauding F-16s. No more surfaced after that.  
  
A pair of Eagles probed the defences of SW Cuba, putting away a Flogger and avoiding some Grumbles.  
  
Phantoms finished-off the Styx sites facing the Florida Straits, despite losing a plane to a Gainful. A score of +426 was still Average.  
  
20:00 : Corsairs from MacDill attacked what was left of the Havana SAMs with Shrikes, doing more damage. They also destroyed an out-of-ammo Gammon site with bombs and cannon.  
  
21:00 : A Viking damaged the Russian AGI Viktor Leonov S of Central Cuba.  
  
Skyhawks nursemaided-in by tanker from Puerto Rico sank an Osa and crippled the other survivor from the Cuban Jamaica squadron. A second flight finished the missile boat and the HQ-331.  
  
A half-dozen MiG-21s counterattacked, interrupting a Shrike strike, but all were shot down. A Haze also perished in the process, while the Shrikes did more damage to SAMs and demolished a radar.  
  
The Abrams tanks blasted another Grumble battalion in Central Cuba.  
  
Tyndall’s HARM Falcons raided SW Cuba, eliminating a radar and taking the Grumble fired count to 292.  
  
Let off the leash, HMS Westminster engaged the Central American patrol boats near Belize, sinking three with Harpoons. At +517, the score was still Average.  
  
22:00 : 706 Fighter Squadron were supposed to depart from New Orleans but, despite them all being there at the base, this did not happen due to a Lua error. I stuck to the spirit of things and kept them grounded.  
  
An Orion finished-off the Viktor Leonov for a rather generous 30VP.  
  
The Cubans mounted a desperate Flogger B attack on Key West. I deployed overwhelming force in case they got lucky again and downed all five bandits before they got near the base.  
  
Our next wave of strikes began. An escort picked-off a Haze and the attack planes did further damage, though trying to finish-off a disabled Gainful with Maverick EO and cannon was frustrating.  
  
A HARM strike from Eglin hit a couple of the sites in SW Cuba, now feeling the strain. Unlike in Iceland, the US had enough HARMs and Shrikes to get the job done. The Grumble count was now an incredible 344.  
  
23:00 : There was a rare flurry of activity in Belize, with a Harrier downing a Flogger H. The encounter was an example of why you can’t set Missions and let the AI get on with it, as the Harrier (on a CAP Mission) ignored the intruder until I manually controlled it.  
  
Infantry killed another Grumble in SE Cuba. There were still two more we knew about along the spine of the country.  
  
15/2/94 00:00Z : Some Corsairs tried to hit the Lourdes SIGINT Facility, SW of Havana, with Maverick IRs. This did not go well. First, I found that I couldn’t use Mavericks on bunkers. Instead, I fired at some barracks, but could not launch all of my missiles. Lots of Grouse teams then popped-up and shot down both planes as they went Engaged Defensive, contrary to orders and flew around, inviting shots at low altitude instead of getting the Hell out. I had a few problems with aircraft unaccountably reversing-out the Doctrine I had given them – this has happened before. Several targets were hit, but not destroyed, though there was later evidence that they burned-out in fires. Needless to say, both Downed Pilot events came-up.  
  
Two more pairs of Corsairs attacked, this time at 13,000’ to stay safe from the MANPADs. I sorted-out the weapon allocation mechanics and got out OK, but only destroyed one building for a pretty poor return.  
  
A fourth pair went for the Russian naval base W of the capital and found that Cuba’s remaining Koni frigate was in dock. In a rare stroke of good fortune, the Mavericks sank her for 15VP. A Goa site, apparently damaged, came to life and neatly rolled the 8% chance needed to down a Corsair – and the Downed Pilot came-up again. The other Corsair flew clear, destroyed an ATC radar and escaped. Allowing for the blazing buildings, the raid scored about even. Lessons were not to attack below 13,000’, Mavericks can’t hit bunkers and SAMs hit by ARMs can still be dangerous.  
  
The remainder of the Cuban fleet was located NE of Camaguey, roughly facing the Bahamas.  
  
2FS at Eglin disappeared, as per the withdrawal schedule, but I didn’t really need them anymore.  
  
A Hornet loosed more TALDs at SW Cuba. As hoped, this drew-out a Flogger, which needed four missiles to destroy, but no SAMs were fired at the decoys.  
  
An AGM-84 Hornet destroyed a bunker at the Lourdes Facility for 12VP. This was clearly the way to go.  
  
The Cuban ships off Camaguey did a vanishing act despite several tracking planes, but an Orion patrolling S of Cuba found and sank a stray HQ-331. More searching re-located a target in the Camaguey region, an Alpinist-class AGI which yielded a welcome 30VP.  
  
Our roving tanks clobbered another Grumble site at Camaguey, which might have interfered with the sea control mission. By now, our marauders were running out of ammo, except for the 105mm SPA, which kept rolling steadily West around Havana. The Cubans no longer had any control over their country beyond a few strongpoints.  
  
01:00 : A strike on Havana scored a pile of points for multiple Walleye hits on the Lourdes bunkers. A few SAMs and a Haze also perished, but a Corsair tried too hard to pursue a second chopper, merely damaged it with a Sidewinder and was then shot down itself by a pop-up Grouse (they’re appropriately-named), with another Downed Pilot resulting (the chance is only 60%, but…).  
  
We continued to search the seas off Camaguey, finding and sinking a Zhuk patrol boat with our Orions and Harpoon Hornets (tanker support).  
  
02:00 : 122FS at New Orleans should have departed, but didn’t. Is there a Lua issue with this location?.  
  
We finally found the enemy ships off Camaguey and four Osas were sent to the bottom, leaving another and an HQ-331 at large.  
  
A Harrier destroyed an interloping Tiger over Belize.  
  
AGM-84 Hornets wrecked two more Comms Bunkers at Lourdes.  
  
Finally, the 105mm SPA reached SW Cuba and began the work of demolishing the SAM sites there, taking-out a Grumble in short order.  
  
Broncos from Howard AFB wiped-out a small force of guerrillas in the Darien Isthmus.  
  
A pair of Eagles needed 8 AMRAAMs to kill two Floggers.  
  
A big Phantom strike eliminated several SAM sites and AA batteries. One F-4 got into a turning circle which prevented it getting any target in its boresights. Told it to attack automatically, so it promptly dipped to 12,000’ and was instantly shot down by a Grouse (no Downed Pilot for once).  
  
03:00 : Long Beach got into the action and destroyed a Styx site we’d found in SE Cuba with a TLAM.  
  
Harpoon Hornets caught the remaining Osa and HQ-331 at Camaguey and disposed of them. The score was now +812 and a Major Victory.  
  
The SPA wrecked a Grizzly and a Gammon site in SW Cuba.  
  
04:00 : A Haze was shot down by an Eagle over SW Cuba, where it was no longer safe for the enemy to fly.  
  
Another Phantom raid with Paveways did more damage to Havana’s defences. Trying to target with Paveways at night is enough to make a saint swear.  
  
The SPA took-out a Gainful and somehow got damaged in the process, though it subsequently repaired itself. It then destroyed a Guideline site.  
  
05:00 : A lone Flogger H tried to raid the Canal, but was shot down by USS Dale.  
  
USS Long Beach destroyed a Tin Shield radar in Central Cuba.  
  
Six Phantoms tried to attack Jose Marti Airport, Havana, but found it very hard at night and only destroyed one parked aircraft.  
  
06:00 : The withdrawal of Training Wings at Eglin and Tyndall reduced our stock of aircraft, but it had long ceased to matter.  
  
The Goa site at the Russian Naval Base was blasted with a Walleye, but a follow-up attempt to hit the Soviet HQ there with TLAMs, while damaging it, inevitably hit a nearby hospital and cost us 5VP. A naval dock was also destroyed.  
  
Lots of frustration dealing with the three Styx batteries at the Yucatan Channel. Our artillery could fix their position well enough to fire, so I sent-in the Hornet that had eliminated the Goa. After the enemy failed to respond to a preliminary TALD flock, I risked closing and smashed one of the SSMs with the plane’s second Walleye.  
  
07:00 : A Gainful site was taken-out with Maverick IRs in SW Cuba, despite more targetting issues.  
  
08:00 : A Hornet destroyed the remaining Styx batteries with Walleyes. Our SPA then found and finished a disabled Grumble site. Fighters dispatched another Haze.  
  
09:00 : Corsairs did something to reduce the forest of AA guns around Havana with bombs, flying at 13,000’ to avoid the MANPADs.  
  
The SPA beat-up San Julian airbase, blasting several MANPADs and AA guns and cratering the runways. There seemed to be no planes left there.  
  
10:00 : Another Phantom strike with Paveways bulldozed more of Havana’s AA guns.  
  
Arriving off Nicaragua, the SSN Greenling took down three of that country’s surface search radars with TLAMs.  
  
11:00 : More Phantom sorties did more damage to targets around Havana.  
  
It was time to loose our remaining TLAMs. Greenling clobbered a basic Honduran height-finding radar, while shots from Conolly, Spadefish and Sea Devil wrought further havoc on the Lourdes facility at Havana – a rich mine of VP.  
  
To finish, Greenling picked-off a Honduran patrol boat with a TASM.  
  
So it finally finished in a Major Victory, with a score of +973 (suspect you need 1,000 for a Triumph). NATO lost 19 fighters, 18 attack planes, 4 support aircraft, 12 choppers, a UAV, 18 ground facilities/radars, two Canal locks and 12 infantry elements. A civilian ship was sunk and our Colombian allies lost 4 attack planes.  
  
The USSR and Cuba lost 103 fighters, 59 attack planes, 12 support aircraft, 9 choppers, 3 frigates, 2 corvettes, 19 missile boats, 9 torpedo hydrofoils, 5 patrol craft and 2 AGIs, plus 136 ground facilities/radars, 279 SAM elements, 18 artillery, 154 AA, 36 tanks, 72 APCs and 36 leg infantry. They also lost Cuba in all meaningful terms.  
  
Honduras and Nicaragua lost 8 fighters, 77 attack planes, 15 patrol craft and 4 radars.  
  
The Guatemalan-backed and Miskito rebels lost 238 infantry and 38 MANPAD elements.  
  
Well, that took almost as much effort to write-up as it did to play!. Overall, it was a totally absorbing and largely entertaining scenario, even if it is not for the faint-hearted or short of time and has a number of undesirable features.  
  
I now have to consider what to do next. By the end of Hot Tamales, Cuba and their Russian support force had been totally and comprehensively defeated, at a great expense of effort. To be frank, I don’t see why I should have to do it again in Scenario 2 and am tempted to go straight to Scenario 3 instead. This is provisional, pending analysis of Scenario 2 to verify whether this conclusion is accurate.