**Caribbean Fury #5 – Caribbean Cruise**

**Summary by fitzpatv, Oct 2022**

**Setting the Scene**

After a lull of over a month in the Caribbean theatre, tensions are rising with Venezuela, which is angry over the Manodez raid and being encouraged by the Soviets to seize the Dutch Antilles, Trinidad or both. Russian subs are being refuelled in Venezuelan ports and are continuing to raid NATO commerce in the area.

Scenario 5 begins with Venezuela still Unfriendly, not Hostile. Commanding the NATO forces, you know full well that they are going to attack, but not where and when. In the meantime, you have three streams of merchant ships, coming from the States, Panama and South America, converging on convoy assembly areas in the NE Caribbean and need to protect them from the Soviets.

With other regions taking priority for resources, you are stretched thin. At sea, you have five small task groups, plus several individual ships. North of the Dutch Antilles (Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire) are the WW2-vintage cruiser Albany (4th Fleet flagship), escorted by HMS Westminster. Together, they make a decent ASW team, but have very weak air defence, as Westminster is low on Sea Wolf SAMs and Albany has outmoded Talos and Terriers, which are useless against low-flying aircraft and missiles.

Approaching the Mona Passage, between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, are the Long Beach, escorted by the frigate Nicholas. They’re a balanced force, but start a long way from the action.

The DDG Radford, with the frigates Jesse L Brown and Truett, is sailing WSW of Puerto Rico. With supporting choppers, they are strong on ASW, but have only a handful of Sea Sparrows for air defence.

The cruiser Dale and DDG Coontz are NW of Trinidad and make a decent task group apart from their lack of ASW choppers.

To the NW of Colombia’s Guajira Peninsula, which overlaps Venezuela’s Maracaibo region, are the cruiser South Carolina and DDG Tattnall, similarly with good SAMs but no choppers. Further W are the Chilean frigate Almirante Lynch and the Colombian corvette Caldas, which have Exocets (but are unlikely to be able to bring them to bear) and pretty hopeless air and ASW defence.

The frigate Ouellet is patrolling the Anegada Passage, to the W of Sint Maarten and a fast convoy assembly area. Similarly, the Dutch frigate Banckert is covering the Guadeloupe Passage, further S, where tankers are expected to gather. The Spanish frigate Diana is on hand in the Mona Passage, destination for slow convoy vessels and the frigate Talbot and French patrol boat La Capricieuse have been given the lesser-priority zone of the Dominica Channel, halfway down the Windward and Leeward Islands.

For what they are worth, you have three Trinidadian and two Dutch Antillean patrol boats in their home waters and other lightweight vessels at Barbados and Grenada.

The SSN Greenling is patrolling off the Dutch Antilles and the Sea Devil is near Trinidad. The latter has torpedoes only, but Greenling has two TASMs and two Harpoons as well.

Merchant ships randomly spawn (or not, depending on the roll) in each convoy origin area every hour and make their way singly to the assembly areas under AI control.

In the air, you are down to second-line planes at best, with the additional handicap of being distant from the likely battle zones. The only fighters of any value are ten F-16s at Muniz, Puerto Rico and four more at Howard, Panama and these are limited to long-range loadouts, with drop-tanks, two Sparrows and two Sidewinders each. There are also four Colombian Kfirs at Barranquilla, but they are of limited use beyond defending their own airspace.

Your only attack planes are eight Skyhawks at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico and these only have a choice of bombs or a few Shrike ARMs.

Things are rather better where support aircraft are concerned. You have 5 Orion Updates at Roosevelt and 6 older P-3B Orions at Homestead, Miami and Howard. Two of the Puerto Rico Orions have Harpoons and most have ASW weapons, but reloads are in short supply. Roosevelt Roads and Howard have a KC-135 each and there are two long-legged Extender tankers at Miami which can stay aloft for over a day each (other tankers at Homestead are useless). For pure recon, Roosevelt has a pair of HU-25A Guardians which, while not as good at target identification as Orions, have a longer sensor range and are quite useful. The other Guardian models available are rather less so.

You also have some Sea Kings at Roosevelt and some very handy Allied ASW planes elsewhere. The British have a pair of Nimrods at Bridgetown, Barbados and there are two French Breguets at Martinique.

Several Soviet subs at at sea. Venezuela has two diesel subs and a rather worrying surface fleet. In all, they have six Italian-made Mariscal Sucre FFGs, each of which has eight Otomat sea-skimming missiles which pack a nasty punch, as well as 127mm guns, Aspide point-defence SAMs, ASW choppers and decent sensors. These are supported by a similar number of Federacion missile boats, with two Otomats each. There are also a number of less-capable light destroyers and patrol craft.

The Foxbats destroyed in the last scenario have been more than replaced by fresh deliveries and supplement Venezuela’s existing Sidewinder-armed F-16s and obsolete Mirage 5Vs. Attack planes are numerous and include a squadron of Mirage 50EVs, which carry an Exocet each. There are also Flogger H, Mirage IIIEV (bombs), F-5 Freedom Fighters and Tucano ground-attack planes. In support, the Venezuelans have Cub jamming planes, at least one Boeing tanker and some maritime patrol aircraft (which are recon-only).

Along the coast, the Venezuelans have a number of SAM batteries, including some Grumbles smuggled out to them by their Russian friends.

So, you face the prospect of an invasion convoy, escorted by six Sucres with 48 Otomats, six PGMs with a dozen more and some 15 attack planes with Exocets. To stop this, you have a sub, a handful of Harpoons, two TASMs and not much else. You are also outnumbered in the air, with only a slight quality advantage, by an enemy who is close to his bases, while you are far from your own. Mission Impossible?. This is how it worked out…

**Convoy Protection**

1/4/94 14:00Z : It was clear that I needed to get the Albany TG away, fast, so I ordered them N at Flank. While Albany’s 100 Talos missiles could be used against a convoy, they have a surface range of just 25nm and she would be blown out of the water long before she got within this. Similarly, TG Radford were kept well clear of trouble. Both groups converged on the Mona Passage.

I decided that TG South Carolina had the SAMs to make an attempt to screen the Dutch Antilles and kept them on course, but Lynch and Caldas were sent back to mind the approaches to Panama.

Initially, I ordered TG Long Beach to join Diana and patrol the Mona Passage, with the option of moving them forward later.

TG Dale was given the job of screening Trinidad, with Sea Devil in support, Greenling lurked off Aruba, aiming to make an attempt, at least, to oppose any invasion force.

All other competent ships were kept patrolling their pre-designated zones (after editing the Missions to ensure Weapons Tight). Weak patrol craft were told to get clear of the danger zone at Flank.

Similar orders were issued to the motley collection of non-combatant aircraft at Trinidad and Curacao, which headed for Barbados and Barranquilla, respectively.

Orions, a Breguet and a Nimrod were assigned to back-up the patrolling ships at the various Channels and Passages, while some P-3s were allocated to protect some of the leading merchant ships, as these were the most likely to be attacked first.

A tanker station was set-up halfway from Puerto Rico to Venezuela and F-16s sent-out in support, with the aim being to predate Venezuelan aircraft once hostilities began. The Extenders at Miami headed for a new base at Roosevelt.

As it turned-out, the two Lynx choppers at Curacao couldn’t quite reach Barranquilla in one go, so had to refuel at Aruba (where they were given Ferry loadouts for extra range). The Antillean patrol boats were given ridiculous courses by the AI for no good reason and I had to correct these manually to get them clear of two shadowing Venezuelan patrol craft and away. Greenling soon detected a Federacion-class PGM near the exit from Maracaibo.

Ouellet found a Victor I in the Anegada Passage, so an Orion pounced and sank it for 30VP, to take the score into positive territory and Average. She was then re-assigned to guard a merchant ship.

15:00 : An update arrived on Venezuelan strength. Intel suggested that they couldn’t attack both Trinidad and the Dutch Antilles and were more likely to go for the latter. On this basis, I sent Dale W.

A Nimrod found and sank a Tango diesel sub in the Dominica Channel for another 30VP. The various ‘Channel/Passage’ patrol zone missions were a dead giveaway.

By now, all aircraft that could fly had reached Barbados from Trinidad, while two Dutch Dorniers had made it to Barranquilla.

16:00 : My Breguet got in on the act and bagged a Kilo in the Guadeloupe Passage. Word arrived that Venezuela was staging a ‘popular’ demo outside the dastardly Dutch Embassy in Caracas. There was unrealistic talk of a civilian evacuation – should I have moved those non-combat aircraft?.

17:00 : A Guardian detected numerous ships off the Venezuelan coast, broadly heading for the Dutch Antilles. Their radars were dark and a Cub was confusing matters with her jamming.

18:00 : There were simultaneous Soviet submarine attacks in different parts of the map!. A Victor II bravely torpedoed the Trinidadian patrol boat Cascadura, which cost no points. This proved to be a mistake, as our Nimrod, having been re-assigned here from Dominica, came down on her like a ton of bricks and took prompt revenge.

More damagingly, a Victor III sank the MV Sprinter S of Hispaniola for -25VP. Two Orions and the Breguet winged to the hunt in an ad hoc search area around the sinking.

Recon confirmed that the Venezuelans only had two PGMs in the Maracaibo sector and that any invasion would come from the SE.

19:00 : Not helped by a biologic contact nearby, ships spawning on the hour during the attack and a simultaneous false contact off Puerto Rico, one of the Orions had the honour of terminating the Victor III. So much for the Soviet submarine threat but, at +125, the score was stubbornly Average, so we had to stop Venezuela somehow…and intel was that they were going to attack within hours. Rules of Engagement restricted us to attacking only those units committing hostile acts or in clear self-defence, while steering clear of the Venezuelan mainland.

Long Beach was ordered S at Full as Albany and Radford converged on the Mona Passage. By now, we had determined that four Sucres were escorting at least one LST SE of Bonaire and Curacao, with two Almirante Clemente gun-armed destroyers out in front. The other two Sucres were off some shoals to the E of Bonaire.

The two Lynxes got underway from Aruba to Barranquilla and eventually made it.

**Defending ABC**

20:00 : Venezuelan artillery got the ball rolling by shelling Aruba from Punto Fijo on the nearby mainland. Aircraft meanwhile overflew Port of Spain, but we had nothing to oppose them with.

The two Federacions loosed four Otomats at South Carolina without success. Greenling, which had been shadowing them, gave chase as they turned away at 16 knots, happy that the PGMs had no ASW capability.

An air battle commenced over the islands. It soon turned-out that Venezuela had a Goa site on Punto Fijo and a Grumble on the mainland opposite Curacao, almost able to reach Hato Airport. Though unable to micro-manage every duel, I lost four F-16s from Muniz for 3 VP each, but downed an enemy F-16, 6 Mirage 50EVs, 2 Mirage 5Vs and 3 F-5s for two each to take the honours 24-12. What would become a recurring theme was Sparrows going blind whenever an enemy plane turned side-on, which tended to encourage a close-range dagger fight with Sidewinders. The Mirages managed to loose a pair of Exocets at South Carolina and one was extremely lucky, hitting the cruiser and doing 21% damage. It wasn’t encouraging and the TG was ordered to withdraw at Flank. Dale was likewise sent back to guard Trinidad.

21:00 : Continued aerial duels saw the Muniz and Howard F-16s take a steady toll of the Venezuelans, bagging 3 F-5s, 2 F-16s and 2 Mirage 5Vs without further loss. It helped me to commit fighters singly and predate targets in a clinical fashion.

Greenling caught and sank both Federacions with a torpedo each to earn a total of 10 VP. She then turned to intercept the nearer pair of LSTs, escorted now by one Sucre and approaching Curacao.

As peace moves commenced in the background, another Mirage strike came-in on South Carolina. An F-16 downed one but, low of fuel, had to divert to Aruba and fell foul of the Goa as it landed. The other bandits launched Exocets, which were only stopped with difficulty.

Now that we were out of effective fighters, the enemy began dropping paras from Hercules transports over all three islands. Fortunately, these were few in number and did not, in themselves, suffice to take control. Note that there are no actual Venezuelan ground troops in the scenario and the invasion is managed by Events.

22:00 : Our two Harpoon Orions attacked the NE group of invaders, consisting like the other of two LSTs and a Sucre with eight missiles. Despite the Aspides and 22 Sidewinders fired by enemy fighters, it was our turn to get lucky and we scored a hit on each transport, reducing them to a crawl. Better still, they turned-back towards Venezuela and were abandoned by their escorting frigate.

23:00 : Yet another quartet of Mirages went for South Carolina. Thankfully, all four Exocets were stopped and an F-16 intercepted the raiders on their way back, downing the lot. Meanwhile, Mirage IIIEVs started going for Dale with bombs, the first two pairs being swatted easily enough.

2/4/94 00:00 : With incredible persistence, six more Mirage IIIEVs came in pairs at Dale and shared the fate of their predecessors. A Clemente destroyer began bombarding Curacao and I resisted the temptation to set Greenling on her, as she had bigger fish to fry.

01:00 : The Mirage 50EV squadron switched focus to Dale and lost two planes. Greenling lost patience with the Clemente (the General Moran) and being nearby, put her away with a torpedo for 5VP.

03:00 : Just as we received a message telling us all about how important and dangerous the LSTs were, Greenling intercepted the undamaged pair and their Sucre. The frigate was doing Sprint and Drift and happened to be behind her charges as the SSN approached from dead ahead at Creep and as deep as possible before rising just above the layer to get a firm sonar fix. Keeping my nerve, I sucked the enemy in to the point of no return, then let all three have a torpedo each. Both LSTs were sunk for 50 VP each and the Sucre (Almirante Brion) was crippled and left doing two knots. Things suddenly looked rosy.

04:00 : As Greenling headed away deep at Cruise, an enemy ASW chopper was detected in the area. A waiting F-16 intercepted, but two Sparrows went blind, a Sidewinder hit and somehow only damaged the chopper, then the Falcon was whacked by the Grumble site. It had to be done and the chopper never reappeared, presumably RTB’ing to shore. A second Viper tried to finish her, but lost contact and had to fight-off two of her Venezuelan half-sisters, disposing of one and escaping.

05:00 : One of our F-16s managed to down two of theirs over Bonaire. This took the score to +300 and Major Victory territory.

06:00 : An Orion (carrying our last aerial Harpoons), went after the retreating pair of LSTs. It was always a risky move and she was intercepted and shot down by Foxbats for -8 VP, as was one of the three missiles she loosed, but the others kept going, latched onto the same target and sank the LST for a compensating 50 points.

07:00 : A lone Mirage 50EV attacked Dale. It was missed on 42%, dove to 300’, slipped detection and loosed its Exocet. Our RIM-67s then missed the damned thing EIGHT TIMES on 35% chances before it was finally stopped at similar odds by Dale’s 20mm Phalanx. Phew!! The Mirage then evaded a trailing shot. Running low on SAMs, Dale headed for Barbados at Flank.

08:00 : CAP destroyed 5 Tucanos while they were bombing Curacao.

09:00 : Trouble as three more Mirage 50EVs went after Dale. Again, they made good use of low-flying and got their missiles away but weren’t so lucky this time and scored no hits. Two Mirage IIIEVs followed-up and were destroyed. This left the TG with 26 SAMs.

10:00 : In another raid on Curacao, Venezuela lost an F-16 and F-5 for one of our F-16s badly damaged (it limped home).

Greenling fired her TASMs singly at the surviving LST, now accompanied by a Clemente. Strange things were happening with probability and the crippled transport hit the first Tomahawk on 5% with its 40mm AA gun at the second attempt. This bought time for fighters to arrive and shoot down the second missile.

16:00 : Greenling gave chase, closed with the LST and finally put her down with a torpedo, the 50 points taking the score to +410 and a Triumph.

17:00 : Better still, the Almirante Brion died of her wounds and scored us another 30 VP.

18:00 : The Venezuelans continued to mount sneak raids at low altitude on Trinidad and Curacao, but the damage was tolerable and cost us no points. The attacks were hard to intercept due to our lack of AEW, enemy low flying, jamming from the Cub and the aforementioned problem with Sparrows going blind. We also had to be careful of enemy SAM ranges.

3/2/94 01:00 : Right at the end, Greenling, having moved NE of Bonaire, went to periscope depth to take an optimistic shot at the nearest of the five remaining Sucres, which were having an aimless meeting to the E. Doing so, she detected an approaching Venezuelan diesel sub, the Caribe. Superior in every way and with an Orion detached from screening Long Beach to the N, she closed and disposed of the SSK for another 50 VP. For the hell of it, she fired two Harpoons at a Sucre with ten minutes left. Weird things kept happening and, while there was no Aspide fire, the lucky Venezuelan managed to spoof both missiles with chaff on 15% chances…

So the Venezuelans miserably failed to take the Antilles and I finished Caribbean Fury with a score of +490 and a Triumph. Very satisfying, as I’d not given myself a hope of stopping the invasion. Greenling was remarkable (though not always lucky) and her intervention was crucial, though the Orion attack on the other transports helped, too. The LSTs are the key to the game and I’d have kept them closer together and surrounded by all six Sucres and maintained an ASW chopper over them at all times, going to each island in turn. So, I guess, would Bart but for his concern for play balance.

NATO lost 6 F-16s, an Orion, a patrol boat, a container ship and 16 installations.

The USSR lost 3 SSNs and two diesel subs.

Venezuela lost a frigate, light destroyer, 2 missile boats, a diesel sub, 4 LSTs, 11 fighters and 37 attack planes.

Overall, a challenging and enjoyable, if often exhausting campaign. I’ll leave it up to Bart as to which module I play next.