**Indian Ocean Fury #2 – Mozambique Madness**

**AAR by fitzpatv, Feb 2023**

In the unlikely event that anyone has missed me, apologies for the delay since my last AAR. Though I’ve suspended my Chains of War series, I’ve still been playing the scenarios and Okinawa Bound is a massive one that takes time. I may yet post the outstanding AARs once I’ve finished that series. Another lengthy (4.5 day) scenario is Mozambique Madness, which I’ve just completed. Here’s how it went…

As WW3 breaks-out, the British Ark Royal CVBG is scattered across the Western Indian Ocean and lacking in clear direction. They are tasked with various training and refuelling exercises in concert with Kenyan, US, French and Spanish units.

Ark Royal is a small carrier with a limited air group, desperately short of ammo. She is sailing through the Mozambique Channel, escorted by the DDG York and the FFG Brave. On the positive side, the TG has decent SAM cover from the latest model of the Sea Dart and adequate ASW capability. On the other hand, the available fighters barely have any reloads and, a couple of Sea Eagle missiles apart, strikes will have to be with bombs and rockets.

The DDG Cardiff is NE of Madagascar, handicapped by having no ASW chopper and only basic SAM defence. She needs to rendezvous with Ark Royal more for her own protection than the carrier’s.

Off the Horn of Africa way to the N, the FFG Scylla is escorting the oiler Fort Victoria, intending to join-up with Ark Royal when practically possible. Also associated with the Ark is the SSN Trenchant, about halfway between the carrier and the Fort Victoria group.

The French have a few ships assigned to protect their colony of Mayotte at the N end of the Mozambique Channel and the nearby, allied Comoros Islands. North of Madagascar, the FFG Floreal has a couple of Exocets and some guns, but has no real air or submarine defence. To her E is the naval freighter Jules Verne, theoretically on her way to Djibouti, another French ally. There are also some patrol boats at Mayotte, but they won’t be ready for some time and won’t be much use when they are.

France also has the small helicopter carrier Jeanne d’Arc, escorted by the weak corvette Amyot d-Imville, 568nm SE of Somalia and the oiler Var off the Horn of Africa. They intend to rendezvous, then head for Djibouti. Jeanne d’Arc has mostly transport choppers, but a couple can use HOT anti-tank missiles.

A Spanish FFG, the Cazadora, is on anti-piracy patrol off the Somali coast, assisted at a distance by the US FFG Gary and the LST Cayuga. These ships are quite well-armed, but divided and, Gary apart, not the swiftest. Gary has a couple of choppers with recon and anti-surface loadouts.

Some 700nm WNW of Diego Garcia, the American helicopter carrier Peleliu is heading for Somalia to make a ‘show of strength’, escorted by the Belknap-class CG Biddle and the Spruance-class DD Fletcher and also accompanied by the amphibious ships Cleveland and Mount Vernon. Most of the aircraft carried are transport choppers, but Peleliu has six Harriers and some helicopter gunships. Trailing behind her is the LST Barbour County, intended to relieve the Cayuga. The SSN Gurnard is cruising helpfully close to the Fort Victoria group.

At Diego Garcia, there are two more American SSNs and a number of auxiliaries, but they won’t be ready for a while. The base also has five Orions (with limited supplies of ASW weapons), some Stratotankers and a Hercules transport.

The Kenyan Navy has a weak patrol boat, inappropriately named Mamba, at sea and another ten craft of various sizes in port at Mombasa but not yet ready. The latter include five decent Nyayo and Madaraka-class PCFGs with Otomat and Gabriel anti-shipping missiles.

Kenya’s air force is based at Laikipia base near Nairobi and consists of Tiger II fighters with rear-aspect Sidewinders and Hawk trainers with short-range rocket-strike capability. Laikipia also hosts a couple of British Nimrods and a Hercules tanker.

As for the enemy, the Soviets are known to have an old Kresta-class cruiser and Kanin DDG at Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, which is sympathetic to their cause. Several submarines are lurking around the Western Indian Ocean, including a Charlie with medium-ranged but powerful Starbright missiles. There are also some AGIs and an oiler.

Mozambique is pro-Soviet, going back to her war of independence from Portugal. She has just one weak patrol boat, but a force of MiG-21s and Italian-made Gina light bombers.

Across the Channel is Madagascar, which has designs on Mayotte and the Comoros, some patrol boats and amphibious craft with which to back these up and numerous MiG-21s and MiG-19s.

Further North, both Tanzania and Uganda support the Warsaw Pact and see the war as a chance to put one over on Kenya. Both have MiG-21s, Tanzania has MiG-19s and the latter also has some patrol craft and torpedo boats with Seeaals.

Finally, the Somali pirates have been persuaded to co-ordinate their efforts by the Soviets and have a great number of fishing boats and RHIBs armed with RPGs and light automatic weapons.

Neither side has any strong air-to-air weapons. Ark Royal’s Harriers have a very limited supply of AMRAAMs, but they are only good at 5nm or less and need to be conserved. Otherwise, both sides have to rely on Sidewinders, Aphids, PL-2s (all 2nm or so under ‘Tiny’) and cannon, which promises some close-ranged aerial duels. Deciding when and how to attack will be crucial.

Note that I was unable to specify firing ranges for all of Peleliu TG’s SAMs, because the game can’t handle this for three weapon types (it presumably finds the arrays too large). If you try to do this, you will probably crash the game, as I did, resulting in having to re-do a lot of set-up work.

13/2/94 13:00Z (app 16:00L) : I decided that Ark Royal’s first priority was to forestall any Madagascan move to invade the Comoros and Mayotte, so I steered her towards these islands. It seemed best not to waste sorties on CAP and adopt a pop-up approach, using AEW Sea Kings to spot incoming planes while other choppers performed ASW patrols. Floreal and Cardiff were put on rendezvous courses, while Jules Verne was packed-off to Diego Garcia. Trenchant was told to stay put until the situation clarified.

Jeanne d’Arc maintained her initial course and Var moved to link-up with her. Gurnard was assigned to cover Fort Victoria.

Off Somalia, the slow Cayuga was in a very exposed position and tried to steer around the many pirate vessels in her vicinity. Gary and Cazadora aimed to link-up with her, the former moving slowly to optimise her sonar.

For Kenya, the feeble Mamba was instructed to return to Mombasa and the useful Nyayo launched to protect her, trusting that her Otomats would be too much for Tanzanian torpedo boats. The Kenyan air force adopted a reactive posture and an RAF recon Nimrod lifted-off from Laikipia to assist the Gary group.

At least eight Mozambican aircraft launched from Nacala in the N of that country. I recalled my ASW choppers and resisted the temptation to launch any Harriers, watching in resignation as the Ginas bombed a neutral merchant ship. As Madagascan planes headed NW towards the merchant shipping, an intelligence report suggested that they probably didn’t know Ark Royal was around, believing that she was headed into the Atlantic from Cape Town.

The Nimrod spotted Tanzanian warships off the NE coast of Kenya – a long way from where they should have been.

As the Mozambican and Madagascan attacks continued, a 75,000-ton freighter was sunk, costing us 25VP. Trying to intercept would probably have used-up all of our AMRAAMs and might not have downed that many attackers anyway. A half-dozen Madagascan Frescoes overflew Ark Royal above the cloud layer, probably not seeing us as I told my Sea Cat operators to hold their fire.

14:00 : The Comoros government, facing anti-NATO/French unrest, requested assistance and opened its airports for our use, not that they had any useful stores. Anxious to reach Mayotte before any amphibious force, I increased the Ark’s speed to 24 knots. Meanwhile, Peleliu offered her Harriers, which would be of more use in the Comoros than in mid-ocean. I accepted the four Sidewinder-armed fighters, leaving the two planes with bombs on Peleliu. A KC-135 from Diego Garcia and the Hercules at Laikipia were detailed to support the ferry mission, the Herc being re-based to Ouani in the Comoros. I was told that the other Hercules, at Diego Garcia, could deliver ammo, though the mechanism for this was unclear, as the base had only ASW stores. In any case, the US Herc would not be ready for four hours yet.

It was confirmed that the Soviets were inciting Somali pirate attacks and we were cleared to retaliate. It seemed a good idea to save ammo and fire short bursts of five rounds to disable the small vessels, rather than trying to sink them. A motionless pirate would be less able to attack anything. We were told not to attack Somalia itself to avoid harming innocent civilians.

15:00: Gary’s recon Seahawk identified a Somali rig/platform hosting 14 small craft, so I launched her Penguin-armed attack chopper. This closed and wrecked the flimsy platform, rather ridiculously destroying no less than 34 hosted fishing boats, dhows and RHIBs for 1VP each with one missile…

Three vessels ahead of Ark Royal and approaching Mayotte were identified as neutral by a French SAR chopper, so we could relax in the knowledge that we had enough time to head-off any Madagascan invasion.

16:00: At dusk, local time, the Ugandans made their move, sending 24 Mig-21s to bomb Laikipia. Six Kenyan Tigers scrambled on a CAP mission and did well to destroy 13 attackers for one loss. The Tigers could out-turn the Fishbeds and the latter were handicapped by their bombing mission. Enemy planes score a point each and losses cost three, plus the baleful effects of the god-forsaken Downed Pilot script, which generally increases this to five. Our plane was shot down deep inside Kenyan territory, but we had no local SAR planes and, presumably, there were man-eating lions behind every bush…

Aerial recon detected the Iranian tanker Bandar Abbas, providing support to the Somalis. Gary duly picked her off with two Harpoons. This generated an Event, but a bug meant that it scored no VP.

17:00: The Mozambican patrol boat Pebane was bearing down on HMS Brave, leading Ark Royal, no doubt hoping to exploit her lack of gun armament. A Harrier lifted-off and crippled her with rockets before chasing a supporting Cessna Caravan recon plane. Ark Royal identified the Cessna at the wrong moment and arguably wasted a Sea Dart shooting it down. A second Harrier finished-off the Pebane and, since it was able to, disposed of a nearby Madagascan Skadovsk patrol craft for good measure.

Meanwhile, the Nyayo engaged the Tanzanian Navy and sank one of the Manta torpedo boats with two Otomats (one malfunctioned). By now, the Mamba was back in Mombasa – a mistake, as it turned-out…

18:00: Somali tactics were to swarm any target they detected with everything they had. Subjected to this, Gary tried to conserve ammo, but needed 25 rounds to sink the nearest motorised dhow. Reassuringly, she could outrun anything she couldn’t outfight.

Ark Royal decided to deal with any Mozambican or Madagascan recon planes to reduce the risk of attack and put down a second Cessna with a Sea Dart.

The commander of the US Nimitz CVBG notified us of his intention to neutralise the Soviet base at Socotra, at the entrance to the Red Sea. He asked us to move Ark Royal, Peleliu and Jeanne d’Arc to a marked Assembly Area Sierra, E of the Horn of Africa, by the end of the game and also to deal with the Soviet SAG. His communication was then severed for no reason we were able to diagnose and we heard nothing more from him all game. Worrying.

Our Hercules tanker arrived at Ouani, followed during the next hour by the four US Harriers and a Nimrod from Kenya.

19:00: An Orion spotted a second Manta for Nyayo, which did the honours. Tanzania had no more of these potentially troublesome torpedo craft.

Another Orion (I do love them), found a Russian Okhtenskiy auxiliary tug near an island in mid-ocean. As the KC-135 was still on-station, I used it to support Peleliu’s two bomb-armed Harriers, which sank the Soviet for 5VP. What it was doing there, I don’t know.

20:00: As the night wore-on, our Orions located the Soviet SAG some 350nm E of Dar-es-Salaam. It was heading straight for Trenchant, which moved to intercept.

The Madagascan Audacieuse-class patrol-boat Chamois started attacking neutral shipping SE of Mayotte, so two Harriers sank her with bombs. One also disposed of a Madagascan Turbine Islander patrol plane with a Sidewinder.

21:00: By now, the Kenyan PCFG Madaraka was at sea and, despite issues with her Israeli Gabriel missiles (they need active radar for guidance), sank two Tanzanian Shanghai patrol boats. That was the end of the Tanzanian Navy, such as it was. Nyayo and Madaraka headed NE to help against the pirates and get out of range of Tanzanian aircraft while night lasted.

It seemed a good idea for Gary and Cazadora to use some of their SAMs in anti-surface mode against Somali pirates, but this proved difficult at night as they couldn’t illuminate the targets.

22:00: Given no likelihood of better targets, Gary’s chopper sank a Somali armed fishing boat with a Penguin.

14/2/94 00:00: Five Madagascan Skadovsks were detected E of Mayotte, possibly screening an invasion force. A Harrier sank one and crippled another with rockets. Floreal arrived on the scene and engaged three, sinking one with an Exocet and leaving the others dead in the water with gunfire before moving to join Ark Royal.

Meanwhile, the Hercules from Diego Garcia reached Ouani and, after a realistic time delay, delivered 24 Sidewinders and 44 bombs (this works without needing to load anything, though I did give the plane a Cargo loadout). It scored no VP. After readying, the plane was sent back to Diego Garcia.

02:00: Some Madagascan Fishbeds sortied at night and took cheap shots at some merchant ships without sinking any. The US Harriers scrambled and destroyed three MiGs and a Turbine Islander.

A couple of merchant ships blundered into the Somali pirate-infested zone and were attacked. Gary, Cazadora and Cayuga (the latter having wormed her way out of her exposed position) tried to intervene, but distance and sheer numbers of hostiles made this difficult. At least the enemy lacked the firepower to sink ships easily.

04:00: Trenchant intercepted the Soviet cruiser Sevastopol and destroyer Opornyy, supported by one of the Ouani Harriers (and the Hercules tanker) in case an ASW chopper was about. As it happened, none was and, with their lousy sonar, the Russians pressed-on into no-escape territory. The British SSN put two Spearfish into each and sank them both for 35VP total. One major threat removed.

At that precise moment, the wretched Ugandans decided to attack Laikipia again. CAP belatedly scrambled and downed 7 Fishbeds without loss.

Ark Royal’s Harriers sank the remaining Skadovsks with bombs and rockets.

06:00: Gary and friends eliminated a number of pirate vessels, clearing the way for one of the errant merchant ships, but the other had been immobilised and was surrounded by the swarm.

Cardiff detected a possible sub off the N tip of Madagascar. With no chopper, she took no chances and fled at Flank, revising her rendezvous with Ark Royal for a more Northerly location. Meanwhile, Trenchant was hurrying South to screen Mayotte against a delayed invasion and allow Ark Royal to move N towards Assembly Area Sierra.

07:00: With daylight, I tried using a Hawk from Laikipia to thin-out the Somalis with rockets, but she simply lacked the range.

Suddenly and without warning, the Tanzanians struck Mombasa port and wiped-out the Kenyan ships (nine of them) at anchor by destroying their single dock, using just fourteen 250kg bombs to do so. This cost 90VP, which was really painful given the difficulty in scoring. The smaller Kenyan ships were not worth 10VP. It was maybe unrealistic to have all the ships at the same dock (much as with the pirates at the rig/platform earlier) as this made it too facile for the AI. I could have kept the Mamba at sea and sent two weak patrol boats and a lumbering landing craft out to join her, but they might not have been that much safer there. The other five ships, including an Nyayo and two Madarakas, were not ready at the time. Not sure what else I could have done. Mombasa has no airfield, radar, SAMs or even AA (unlike the Ugandan and Tanzanian bases). I could have mounted a CAP from Laikipia, but only at the expense of that base’s defence and the Tigers could not have stayed on station for more than an hour or two at a time. Chances are that I would not have been able to protect either asset effectively with that approach. Take the hit and soldier on...

09:00: A Sea King investigated the Cardiff sub contact, which turned-out to be fish.

Gary and Cazadora attacked the swarm around the crippled merchant ship. Some of the pirates were evidently out of ammo, so I concentrated on those that were moving in to attack. Using Sea Sparrows from Cazadora proved reasonably effective, but Gary’s RIM-66s were way too inaccurate and I soon desisted here. It was remarkable how much damage the Somali boats could take. One RHIB was struck three times by 76mm shells and still took time to slow and sink, while others survived two such hits. It was quite a contrast with the ease which which they could stop a 3,000DP merchantman. Something isn’t right here. Disabling pirates stopped them attacking, but scored no VP. Eventually, we ran out of ammo that we could use while not being sucked into dangerously close range. I concluded that the merchant ship was doomed (the numbers of pirates seeming inexhaustible) and put the safety of my warships first. The Gary TG withdrew and headed to rendezvous with Peleliu, Fort Victoria, Var, Jeanne d’Arc, Barbour County and Gurnard to the SE of Assembly Area Sierra. Ark Royal planned to join them there later.

11:00: An Orion from Diego Garcia reached the Assembly Area to look for subs and promptly went Bingo. Clearly, I needed to get the patrol planes to Laikipia and stage the missions from there. This took time.

Ark Royal had a few anxious moments with what turned-out to be another false submarine contact. It didn’t help that her Sea Kings and Lynxes had no passive sonobuoys, which made identification impossible and led to the waste of a couple of torpedoes, which failed to lock-on. In the end, a Nimrod arrived with the necessary gear and the contact was revealed as a fish school. The Nimrod continued to Laikipia.

12:00: An Orion scouted Madagascar’s Andrakaka naval base and found a single LCT, presumably the limit of their amphibious capability. A Harrier flew across and destroyed it with a brace of Sea Eagles, removing the invasion threat. Ark Royal was now free to move N, picking-up Trenchant and Cardiff en route, though this would leave the defence of shipping near Mayotte in the hands of four US Harriers.

14:00: Orions revealed that there were still dozens of Somali pirate vessels in port at Mogadishu and elsewhere. There was no realistic possibility of eliminating this scourge, especially as we had been told not to attack the docks (Tomahawks from our subs could have done so). There was also no way to prevent merchant ships mindlessly ploughing through the danger area, as they were under AI control. Admittedly it was early in the war and the situation was confused, but broadcasts could have warned all shipping to avoid the area, ships’ masters could have shown some common sense and NATO warships could have told nearby shipping to alter course. None of this is possible and it makes it too easy for the AI to score 25VP windfalls.

16:00: The Ugandans, not learning from bitter experience, sent their last four Fishbeds to Laikipia. Three were downed, but they got lucky (three cannon hits in four shots at 15-20% chances) and destroyed a Tiger. Another downed pilot was fed to the man-eating lions.

19:00: With a clear death wish, the last Ugandan MiG returned, coinciding with the arrival of an Orion ASW plane at Laikipia so that I had to pull it away. The Fishbed was destroyed by CAP, ending the Ugandan threat.

21:00: A new weather forecast predicted Sea State 4, which pirate RHIBs can’t handle. I wasn’t surprised when this had no immediate effect, though it might just have influenced later events.

22:00: Ark Royal finally met-up with Cardiff and continued N, screened by Trenchant running ahead.

15/2/94 02:00: By now, Peleliu, Fort Victoria, Gurnard, Var and Barbour County had all assembled SE of the Sierra zone. It was tempting to try to use Peleliu’s choppers to wreak havoc on the pirates, but it was a long way to go, so I resisted the urge. Keeping ships together optimised ASW defence, which was what was needed.

04:00: Nyayo was still trying to protect merchant shipping off Somalia. She had some success, though the need to conserve ammo meant she had to desist once the enemy boat had been immobilised. I never killed a RHIB with a single hit all game. Eventually, a 300,000-ton tanker steered straight over a fishing boat we’d immobilised earlier. Needless to say, the pirate’s weapons were still operational and it absurdly managed to halve the massive vessel’s speed with them. Worse, an accompanying tanker halved her speed to maintain station. Of course, the tanker could have rammed the pirate in reality. Nyayo battered the fishing boat with 76mm shells, but repeated hits failed to sink it and I had to cease fire while I still had 20 rounds left. What can you do?

05:00: The cargo ship mobbed by the Somalis earlier died of her wounds, costing us another 25VP. Things looked dire.

09:00: Having destroyed several pirates, Nyayo was obliged to clear the danger zone. With Mombasa out of action, she had to head for Mayotte by a route well out of reach of Tanzanian planes. Madaraka moved to relieve her, armed with a single 40mm gun.

13:00: One paltry RHIB managed to stop the undamaged tanker dead in the water. The other continued at 5 knots.

A Tiger intercepted and downed a Tanzanian Cessna SE of Mombasa, then had to withdraw for lack of fuel.

18:00: Long after the threat had seemed to pass, the Madagascan air force returned and made a dusk attack on three immobilised merchant ships SE of Mayotte. Their location made it awkward for CAP to launch and get there in time, but no sinkings occurred and the US Harriers disposed of a trailing Fishbed and a Cessna.

16/2/94 07:00: The Madagascans mounted another sneak attack and, again, CAP was slow to react. Two MiGs were shot down in a long chase over Madagascar, but they took a Harrier with them (a cannon shot hit the engine). At least there was an SAR chopper at Mayotte and this rescued the inevitable downed pilot and got the 3VP back.

13:00: By now, Jeanne d’Arc, Gary and Ark Royal had reached the rendezvous SE of Sierra and the assembled armada headed into the probable danger zone. Much searching with two Orions and a Nimrod had found only biological contacts there.

16:00: After tremendous effort, the Nimrod finally found a sub in Zone Sierra. It was an Akula and two torpedoes put paid to it for 25VP. At +40, it was still a Major Defeat. Using ordnance meant that the Nimrod could conduct no more ASW patrols and had to switch to pirate-monitoring (partial loadouts are not supported), leaving us with two Orions, which couldn’t be on-station all the time. It was, therefore, a matter of managing the task force’s helicopters.

21:00: Ark Royal reached Zone Sierra, scoring 250VP and totally changing the complexion of the game. I kept her in the bottom right corner of the zone to avoid enemy sub detection as best I could.

23:00: Jeanne d’Arc joined Ark Royal for another 250VP. Suddenly, it was a Major Victory!.

17/2/94 01:00: Peleliu reached Zone Sierra for another 250VP, taking me dizzyingly into Triumph territory. It was now a matter of holding our positions and playing out time. I could have withdrawn a bit, but deemed this unsporting.

Nearing Diego Garcia, the Jules Verne stumbled on a Soviet Moma AGI. An Orion launched to shadow her and the SSN Houston sortied to sink her, doing so for 5VP.

Between 04:00 and 19:00, the Mozambicans sank three freighters off their coast for -75VP total. Nothing we could do about that. Meanwhile, Madaraka helped steer some merchantmen through the pirate-infested waters, greatly helped by the Somalis withdrawing en masse to a set of confined patrol zones around their ports. All RHIBs disappeared, which just might have had to do with the Sea State and not just fuel, ammo and the risk that Ark Royal or Peleliu might have been around by this stage.

So it finished as a Triumph with a score of +723.

NATO and allies lost 3 fighters, 3 PCFGs, 4 patrol boats, 2 landing craft and 2 ground installations, as well as 5 neutral merchant ships.

The USSR lost an SSN, cruiser, destroyer, AGI, tug and a chopper.

Madagascar lost 7 patrol boats, an LCT, 8 MiGs and 3 patrol planes.

Mozambique lost a patrol boat, 2 patrol planes and a chopper (which crash-landed).

Tanzania lost 2 torpedo boats, 2 patrol boats and a patrol plane.

Uganda lost 24 MiGs.

The pirates lost a tanker, a rig/platform and 63 assorted craft.

Overall, this scenario is a sustained effort, with spells of high excitement interspersed with long periods when it pays to play on Turbo. It looked hopeless and unbalanced until the windfalls at the end changed everything. In a way, it determines its own outcome, given that the player is likely to get Ark Royal, Peleliu and Jeanne d’Arc to the assembly area and the AI is at least as likely to score the points it did for the Mombasa raid and merchant ship sinkings. Staying focused on the main task is vital and losing any of the three key ships could be very serious. One risk might be getting hit by the Mozambican and Madagascan air forces at the start (I think my restraint was wise). Another is submarine attack, which is hard to gauge as I still have no idea where the Charlie, Victor III and Tango were.

Next time, we’ll pay a visit to Socotra and find out what happened to the Nimitz to interrupt her communication.

**Notes from update:**

Gave the Kenyan's some UH-1 to extract downed pilots from man eating lions

Broke up the Mombasa port and spread the ships around a bit, added a bit of ammo as well. Also fitted out the airport at Mombasa, there is no ammo there but it will make a good base for MPA

Made the mechanics for the ammo resupply run clear.