**Northern Fury #20 – BUFF Stampede**

**AAR by fitzpatv, Jan 2022**

No, not a horde of naked ‘jarheads’ storming the beaches of Iceland!. As I’m sure you know, ‘BUFF’ stands for ‘Big Ugly Fat F\*\*\*\*\*’ and is a nickname for the venerable B-52. As the second phase of its transit to the UK, the USAF throws the heavy bombers against the defences on Iceland before sending them on to airbases in Southern England.

In all, you get to play with 30 B-52s, as well as a dozen newer, faster B-1 Lancers and the first available B-2 stealth bomber, christened the ‘Spirit of Missouri’. Nineteen AMRAAM-armed F-16s and nine EF-111 EW planes are on hand as escorts and there is copious tanker support, both from the States, Greenland and RAF Mildenhall. There are also some Hornet MRCAs, Prowlers, Orions and Sentries based in Greenland and the Dragon Lady and Rivet Joint remain in-harness for their limited ELINT value. USS Scranton lurks off Western Iceland and is authorised to use up to eight TLAMs as well as her four Harpoons.

The focus is on destroying Soviet logistical facilities on Iceland and a number of targets are clearly indicated, notably ten supply depots scattered around the country but mostly in the Reykjavik/Keflavik region.

Earlier raids have finally begun to make a difference against the Russian defences, which are not as formidable as before. All of the Gargoyle and Grumble sites have been destroyed or run out of ammo and the remaining SAMs are mostly Greyhounds and Grisom/Tunguskas, which can’t engage high-flying aircraft. There’s still a Gladiator/Giant site, but this is primarily an ABM weapon and it did not interfere with me on this playthrough, keeping its head well down. This leaves two problems.

Firstly, there are still unhealthy numbers of Soviet fighters, including the wretched Foxhounds which, for me at least, are by far their best aircraft. I respect Flankers and, to an extent, Fulcrums, but MiG-31s scare me with their excellent radar, missile range/capacity and speed. The nineteen outranged F-16s are going to have a busy time.

Secondly, almost all of your heavy bombers carry iron bombs!. Lots of them, but you need to get right over the target to deliver them, which is highly dangerous with Foxhounds about. Two B-52s have 4 AGM-86s each. These pack an almighty punch and can be fired very safely from 700nm away. The B-2 has 16 GBU-36s, with a range of 12nm, which trusts a lot to her stealth capabilities. Other than that, there are the TLAMs or you have to take your chances and put the lumbering B-52s and somewhat faster Lancers in harm’s way.

A number of Soviet SSNs are on the prowl. While these are only a danger to Scranton, these potentially offer a chance to score some points with your two Orions, though they have a lot of ocean to search. The P-3s also have Harpoons, so they can target the Mayak AGI ship, which is still about or, potentially, cargo ships bringing supplies to the garrison.

As with Anteater’s Revenge, you are given an advance base over S Greenland, which is really a staging area supported by even more tankers than those physically represented in the game. If you are playing the scenario in the spirit intended by Bart, you should launch all aircraft as they become available here (from Hour 3 to Hour 9), then juggle the increasing complexity as the game unfolds. Again, I wrote-out a schedule to help myself monitor this. In practice, the task is rather easier than it was in Anteater’s Revenge, because heavy bombers are blessed with terrific endurance and can mostly outlast the 16-hour scenario limit. I was therefore able to move them into a safe holding area well to the S of Iceland and then deploy them or move them on to the UK as I wished. Tanker support could instead focus on nourishing the F-16s and, to a lesser extent, the EF-111s, enabling them to remain on station.

Ultimately, all bombers from Barksdale Forward Base need to go to RAF Fairford, with F-16s and EF-111s transiting to Upper Hayford and tankers (other than those starting in Greenland or Mildenhall) to RAF Brize Norton. An exception is the B-2, which is ordered to return to the US and can be sent back to Barksdale FB (as can other planes for practical purposes). Planes based in Greenland continue to be so.

23/2/94 18:00Z : For the first few hours, you must make do with the Greenlandic assets, ELINT planes and Scranton. There was no sign of any Russian CAP to begin-with and they were using a Big Back radar near Hornafjordur for air search. I devised a plan to knock this out using a HARM Hornet from Greenland, supported by a Stratotanker, but this fizzled-out in frustration when the radar switched-off as soon as the F-18 got into position, the Soviets coincidentally switching to CAP radars instead. I left the Hornet near the tanker for a while, but eventually sent her home.

19:00 : I decided I might as well use Scranton before she was ambushed by a Russian SSN. Six TLAMs wrecked a supply depot near Saudarkrokur in NW Iceland. I only needed two, as it happened but, when the target has 1,500 DP and weapons tend to malfunction, caution seems advisory. This scored 15 VP. The sub’s other two missiles took-out a warehouse near Keflavik for the same amount. With no active radar apart from the Big Back, which was terrain-masked, the Russians never saw the TLAMs coming. Meanwhile, an Orion located the Mayak off E Greenland and efficiently disposed of her for another 5 VP.

22:00 : The Spirit of Missouri carried-out an attack on Keflavik, encouraged by a lack of Soviet CAP (which was mostly off NW Iceland at this stage). How necessary her stealth was on this occasion is hard to gauge, owing to lack of enemy radar. Her impressive firepower, distributed manually, destroyed a depot and two warehouses for 15 VP each, plus four barrack blocks for 1 VP each. Unfortunately, the GBU-36 wasn’t as precise a weapon as I’d hoped and, by targetting the other enemy assets in the area (a staff quarters and some helipads), I missed and wrecked some civilian housing instead, losing 45 VP for an overall gain of just four. The B-2 then escaped with no problems.

Meanwhile, the B-52s with AGM-86s struck and destroyed three more depots in the Reykjavik region. This caused the Russians to wake-up and some of the missiles were downed by Tunguskas and scrambling Fulcrums. I kept some in reserve.

23:00 : Falcons with Raven EW support engaged the stirring Soviet CAP, downing 2 Foxhounds, 4 Flankers, 4 Fulcrums and 5 Flogger Ks for the loss of one F-16. Keep spread-out, close with radars off, illuminate to fire, then switch them off and scram on Afterburner tends to work very well. The 5-1 VP ratio continues to apply, however, so the net gain was just 10 points. Meanwhile, the remaining AGM-86s were loosed, but the Soviet fighters managed to intercept the ones heading for the Reykjavik area. Two aimed at the Vopnafjordur depot in NE Iceland stole through and continued on their way.

24:00 : The Russians made one of those annoying Foxhound/Flanker incursions, which was accompanied by a rash of virtual dice rolls in their favour (we failed to kill the MiG-31s early). We lost an F-16 and a Stratotanker (-15 VP) for both Foxhounds, the Flanker and a Flogger, for a net loss of 16 points. A feature of the game is that, while player-controlled units have de facto morale issues, the AI just doesn’t give a monkey’s about losing planes and fighters just keep suicidally boring into your formation, blazing away until destroyed. A Foxhound is surely worth an F-16 and there is no way that a tanker equates to 15 Soviet fighters, especially when NATO has so many of them. The victory point schedule makes it very hard to win this series of scenarios.

The last pair of AGM-86s almost levelled things up by destroying the Vopnafjordur depot (which presumably contained several times as much supply as the tanker).

24/2/94 01:00 : Needing points to win and unsure where the Minor Victory boundary was, I sent a pair of B-1s against the most accessible surviving depot. The plan was to expose just one bomber at a time and rely on its relatively high speed to escape. Three Floggers tried to intervene from the E, but were butchered by the escorts. The first Lancer missed completely, whereupon a lone Flanker took-off from Reykjavik, nailing an F-16 before another took revenge. The second bomber followed, demolishing the depot for an overall gain of 14 VP. Frustratingly, +107 was still only Average. We also spotted several ships at anchor at Reykjavik.

02:00 : A second pair of B-1s raided the outlying Soviet airbase on the Vestmannaeyjar. Again, the first one did no damage at all, but the second smashed two hangars, an ammo pad, the control tower and a short-range 2D radar. This scored 5 VP, but the score was still Average.

Next, a fifth Lancer took a chance and succeeded in eliminating the depot in suburban Reykjavik. No damage to civilian housing this time, apparently! A mystery aircraft approached from the NE with radars off and required four AMRAAMs to kill – it turned-out to be a returning Fencer E.

With +128 still not enough, the last B-1 I was prepared to risk (the others carried Mk82 AIR bombs which have to be released at low altitude) went after the two surviving depots NE of Reykjavik. Appallingly, it missed completely with 42 bombs at each. Lancers seem to define ‘hit and miss’.

03:00 : As I pondered sending B-52s in to finish the job, a message arrived reminding me to clear the airspace by 06:00. On balance, it seemed best to get on with this. An Orion fired four Harpoons at one of the ships in the harbour but unluckily chose a cruise liner, sinking her. Perhaps because it was docked and empty (?) this cost no points.

All aircraft then transited to their intended destinations apart from a tanker which had been heavily-used and had to return to the Forward Base (you can’t watch everything).

So it finished as a theoretical ‘Draw’ with a score of +128. The US lost 3 fighters and a tanker and hit a couple of civilian targets. The USSR lost 23 fighters, a recon plane, an AGI ship, 8 depots, a radar, 2 hangars, an ammo pad, a control tower, 4 barracks and 3 other buildings. As with Decapitation, I consider that a reasonable effort, especially as I didn’t lose a single bomber. Doing better would require taking more chances with the B-52s, which could cost lots of points if you lose any.