**Northern Fury #23 – Swift, Silent and Deadly**

**AAR by fitzpatv, Apr 2022**

On the eve of the landings in Iceland, the USMC attempts to land Recon Force Marines and supplies at four Drop Zones in an arc from NNE to E of Reykjavik. The player controls the Marine Corps aircraft assigned to this task, while everything else is controlled by the AI.  
  
You have six Hercules (Combat Talon) transports, each with an assigned Drop Zone (DZ). Eight Eagles with Sparrows are available as escorts and further support is provided by six Hercules tankers, two Compass Call EW planes, two Pave Spectre (Hercules) gunships and a pair of Phantom recon birds. All of these aircraft are based at Thule in NW Greenland. You also have the services of four Hornets, armed with bombs and stationed at Kangerlussuaq, further S in Greenland.  
Under AI control are the Eisenhower and Vinson CVBGs plus an array of aircraft of various types operating out of Greenlandic bases (Kangerlussuaq and Nuuk).  
  
The Soviets still have rather too many fighters of the usual types scattered across their Icelandic bases. On the positive side, there is no naval presence, no active radar and SAMs are limited to Grisoms, which cannot engage targets above 13,000’ ASL (neither can their supporting AAA). There are some Russian ground troops, but there’s no real need to worry about these until you get Marines landed.  
  
Major issues are the unreliability of AI-controlled support, the vulnerability of the transports and the inadequacies of your Eagles, which are under-armed for the job and have major fuel issues, exacerbated by the tanker station you’re given over Central Greenland being too far back. Anyway, I gave it a go:  
  
25/2/94 18:00Z : Launched my Compass Calls, transports, Eagles, gunships and recon Phantoms in that order. Kept the Hornets in reserve to help the Marines once they had landed and launched the Hercules tankers later to support the transports’ return flight. The intention was to approach over the Snaefellsjokull peninsula, as this appeared to afford the optimum path for avoiding enemy airbases.  
  
Eisenhower mounted a strike at Akureyri, enjoying some good fortune and taking-out a Flanker, 3 Floggers and 7 Fencer Ds, mostly on the ground, without loss. Although the pop-ups told me I was scoring a VP for each Russian plane, this wasn’t translated onto the scorecard, which remained at zero.  
  
19:00 : Two Sparrow Tomcats from the Eisenhower CAP were foolish enough to engage a Foxhound and were both lost. I noted resignedly that the 10 VP found their way onto the scorecard, much that I could have done about it…  
  
20:00 : Two AI-controlled Hornets went after a Fencer F near Isafjordur. I wasn’t unhappy about this, as the plane could potentially have detected the transports with its decent radar. Chronically, both F-18s went Bingo just as they were about to attack and then made easy pickings for a pair of Floggers which scrambled to help the Fencer. Another 10 VP gone.  
  
Launched the tankers as the transports reached the existing Stratotanker station over Greenland.  
  
My four flights of Eagles had refuelled enroute and now arrived off Iceland. One pair took-out the Fencer F, but were left in a state where they had to go back for fuel again.  
  
21:00 : Special Forces already on the ground had detected some Soviet BMDs, infantry and a jammer vehicle on my flight path to the DZs. This provided some employment for two of the four bomber Hornets, which now arrived and destroyed the jammer and badly mauled the APCs, not that it scored any points. This may or may not have prompted Soviet fighters to scramble from Reykjavik. Thankfully, two carrier Hornets covered the bombers’ retreat, downing a Foxhound for the loss of one of their own. Two Flankers flew E for some reason (suggesting the timing was coincidental) and were shot down by Eisenhower’s planes. One of these was then swatted on her way home by more bandits which scrambled from Hornafjordur. More Eisenhower CAP then intervened and disposed of a Flanker and two Floggers without further loss. The whole episode left me another 10 VP down.  
  
22:00 : By now, the transports were approaching Snaefellsnes. The DB suggested that para- and cargo drops could be made from up to 30k’ ASL, so I dropped to 28k’ to allow a margin while staying well out of reach of any SAMs. At this point, Soviet aircraft happened to launch from Keflavik. There were no active radars or planes already in the air, so I have to conclude that the scenario is just designed this way, based on when the Hercs are likely to arrive. Our Eagles, handicapped by the location of the tanker station, had been unable to remain on-station and two flights were hurrying back while the other two were on their way to re-fuel.  
  
There was no choice but to pull the transports back. Vinson’s CAP intervened with Phoenix Hornets. In each case, I was just too late. In the ensuing dogfight (with the Russians prioritising the transports), I lost the two Hercs destined for the furthest pair of Drop Zones, plus a Hornet, for a Flanker, Fulcrum and 4 Floggers. At least total disaster had been averted and the Hercs were only worth 5 VP each (though, clearly, there was a much higher cost on lost potential VP).  
  
Fatalistically, I sent the surviving four transports in again. Unbelievably, a Flanker promptly took-off and my returning Eagles were JUST too late to intervene (and went Bingo Fuel for good measure). With no further help forthcoming from Vinson, one transport survived long enough to reach the nearest DZ, ‘Tarawa’. To add insult to injury, it was the one carrying the supplies, which it duly dropped to the Soviets before being shot down on the way out by yet another Flanker. This scored 55 VP, which offset the 30 for losing all the transports.  
  
It’s worth noting that Vinson’s CAP was stationed too far back and failed to impose a ‘no fly zone’ over Reykjavik and Keflavik, which could have greeted any scrambling fighters with a hail of missiles. Given control of the carrier, I MIGHT have been able to save at least some of the Hercs.  
  
I then RTB’d all of my surviving aircraft. The game continued for about three hours. Vinson’s CAP shot down two Flankers without loss, more by luck than judgement. Right at the end, Eisenhower struck Akureyri again and destroyed three Russian planes on the ground for one loss. Of course, all this merely cost another 5VP.  
  
The Soviets maintained a strong CAP over the Drop Zones for the rest of the game and I counted five fighters in the area at the finish.  
  
So the final score was -20, for a Minor Defeat. We scored the 55 for the single futile drop, but lost 30 for the transports and another 45 for AI-controlled aircraft losses. Nothing was scored for the 29 Russian planes destroyed, though 29 VP might not have materially affected the outcome. Regardless, it was undoubtedly a NATO defeat and the lost Hercs should, arguably, have cost more.  
  
Perhaps I should have launched the Hercules tankers earlier and moved them much further forward to support the Eagles. As they move at the same speed as the transports, this would have meant delaying the departure of the latter so that I could have them arrive (perhaps) at the same time as the escorts. Whether eight Sparrow-armed fighters could have protected the Hercs (which would have been targetted by priority by the enemy), is open to doubt. Apart from that, please tell me what else I could have done!

**Second Run**

I've already given it another go. This time, I launched the transports, tankers and EW planes first and waited an hour and a half before following up with the Eagles.  
  
The Akureyri raid cost 2 Tomcats, but took out a Flanker, 3 Floggers and 3 Fencers. The incidents with the Foxhound E of Iceland and the Hornets near Isafjordur played-out exactly as before, leaving the score at -30. Eisenhower's CAP then needed 5 AMRAAMs to kill a Fencer E N of Akureyri. They then downed a Fulcrum and a Flogger.  
  
As you said, the Eagles can't refuel from the Combat Shadows. Having rendezvoused my planes a safe distance W of Snaefellsnes, I sent the transports in at 28k' and top speed of 325 knots. Not really sure how enemy ELINT could detect them when they were not emitting. This time, I hadn't attacked anything, so I remain unclear as to what put the hostiles on alert. The Eagles gave them a headstart, then followed with as much endurance as they had.  
  
Russian CAP again rose to attack. The eight Eagles interposed and sacrificed themselves to clear away the first wave, helped by a carrier fighter, which was also lost.  
  
This gave the transports time to reach the Tarawa and Guantanamo DZs and drop their loads. Two were lost on the way out when more Soviet fighters launched, as was the DZ Argonne plane before it could make its drop. The DZ Beirut Herc circled NE of its objective and avoided attention before coming-in, making the drop and escaping SW over the Vinson group.  
  
All remaining USMC aircraft then got home.  
  
Once on the ground, the Marines encountered some Soviet patrols. They destroyed two of these for 3 VP each, but one Force Recon unit was lost to a mechanised infantry patrol with just 10 minutes left for 10 VP, which cost me a Major Victory.  
  
There were sundry aerial skirmishes, including the second Akureyri strike, which cost some more VP. The scoring needs looking-at, as Russian aircraft destroyed (29 of them this time, same as before) should score at least 1 VP each and penalising the player for losing units they don't control and can't realistically protect is a bit below the belt.  
  
Nevertheless, I finished with a score of +221 and a Minor Victory, proving that the scenario can be beaten. Have to say, though, that I didn't enjoy it much.