**Northern Fury #25 – Jar Heads on Ice**

**AAR by fitzpatv, May 2022**

This scenario covers the US landings on Iceland. The plan is for one amphibious (Wasp) group to put Marines ashore on the SW coast near the Bakkaflugvollur chopper base, while another (Bataan) lands at the base of the Snaefellsjokull Peninsula, NW of Reykjavik.  
  
Each amphibious group consists of three helicopter carriers and five transports, escorted by a cruiser, destroyer and, in the case of the Bataan group, a frigate. The carriers have plenty of transport choppers and some Harrier attack planes.  
  
Following behind the assault groups are two supporting task forces (Mobile in the NW, Charleston in the S), each with a lone frigate escorting five transports and a rather slow oiler.  
  
Several task groups provide remote cover for the operation. The Eisenhower and Vinson CVBGs have moved on E to screen against the Russian fleet and don’t feature in this scenario. Instead, the Roosevelt CVBG (Theodore, not Franklin D) has arrived with a strong escort of three cruisers, two destroyers and three frigates. They are a bit light on fighters, but have a good hand of strike planes and support aircraft.  
  
The Wisconsin (NW) and Missouri (SE) battlegroups guard the flanks of the operation, each having a battlewagon, cruiser and two frigates. Unfortunately, the battleships have used all their TLAMs in the previous scenario and are vulnerable, essentially useless liabilities. Both groups are a bit lacking in air defence and ASW.  
  
To the S of the Wisconsin group is the Hayler group, with two destroyers and two frigates. The destroyers have a formidable array of TLAMs and are actually much stronger than the battleships!  
  
Away to the SW, there is another amphibious group composed of the helicopter carriers Guadalcanal and Guam, with a cruiser, destroyer, frigate and 12 transports. They have no direct role in the landings, but need to reach an Assembly Area SW of Reykjavik, which is a stretch in the 12 hour time limit.  
  
Still further back is the command ship Mount Whitney, escorted by two frigates. They actually play little part in proceedings and are probably there to give the player something else to worry about.  
  
The SSNs Ray and Gato distantly cover the flanks of the battlegroups. They have a few TLAMs and Gato has some nukes on board, so take care not to use them by accident!  
  
Near Heimaey, the amphib Shreveport and frigate Flatley are still on-station after the last scenario. The island is now home to four Hornets, with another eight in transit, as well as some Harriers and Super Cobras. Also on their way there are Hercules tankers and Prowlers from Greenland and Hercules transports bringing supplies from Goose Bay.  
  
Nuuk and Kangerlussuaq on Greenland each have a squadron of attack and Sparrow Hornets, which can be used as desired. There are also some Orions and, under AI control, Sentries and Hercules tankers. The ubiquitous Dragon Lady and Rivet Joint recon planes are on their familiar beats.  
  
Mercifully, the Russian air presence is less than hitherto, but all the usual suspects are represented. They have no conventional SSNs, relying instead on SSGNs and a Tango-class diesel sub. A few extra SAM systems have been brought out of secure storage for this moment and they include moderately dangerous Grumble and Gainful batteries as well as Grisoms and MANPADs. While Fencers and Frogfoots are a threat, there is no Backfire strike, probably because it is being absorbed by Eisenhower and Vinson. Further dangers are Styx SSM batteries onshore, a Scarab ballistic missile battery (for use vs land targets only) and, you are told, mines in Faxafloi near Reykjavik. The latter are a worry, as your mine countermeasures assets consist of two vulnerable Sea Dragon choppers per amphibious group (the Guadalcanal group has a small minesweeper and midget sub and has two mine-clearing tugs en route to join it, but they will never get there in time).  
  
Forget the official Difficulty and Complexity Ratings. This is a dauntingly complex and far from easy scenario. My notes run to over 25 sheets of A4 and you’ll see how much good they did me!. Before you start to play Command, you have to wrestle with the big task of loading your troops and their gear onto the hundred or more landing craft and choppers available. The scenario uses the Cargo rules and each vessel or aircraft has a capacity measured in the three dimensions of Mass, Area and Crew. Each item of ‘Cargo’ has similar ratings. I went through the amphib groups ship-by-ship and drew-up load plans, uncovering a number of issues.  
  
Firstly, in each group, all the infantry are on one helicopter carrier (Inchon and Iwo Jima) and NEITHER OF THEM HAS ANY BOATS!. You therefore have to fly the Marines ashore using choppers and are realistically limited to those already aboard these ships unless you want to waste time and sorties on re-basing. It also means that losing one of these carriers wipes-out all of the infantry for that landing!! A further complication is that the choppers all start on reserve loadouts and have to be readied for Cargo before you find-out what they can actually carry. There’s also the issue of whether the Marines should be carried using a Cargo or Marines loadout – I guessed Cargo and was right.  
  
It soon becomes evident that you are not going to be able to land everything in the 12 hours, let alone in one run. Some of the landing craft can’t carry what their parent ships are transporting and the two types of RHIBs are especially useless, with low endurance and capacity for a few troopers only. The LCVPs can basically carry a single Humvee each – a wonderful piece of design!.  
  
Bart draws attention to a game issue with the AAV amphibious tanks. In reality, they are fully swimmable, but not in the database. He therefore advises that you leave them on board their parent ships and send LCUs to the beach area, whereupon they will spawn ashore. This works.  
  
I considered re-basing boats between ships, especially for the Mobile and Charleston, which have lots of spare craft and very little cargo. This would, however, mean slowing down the task groups, there is considerable uncertainty as to how many boats can fit on which ships and the operation might have to be done under fire. In the end, I didn’t bother.  
Of course, none of this actually matters a damn – more later.  
  
With the admin over, I settled down to play a game of Command. As usual, I deleted every existing Mission except the Vestmannaeyjar Ferry, along with their unsightly mass of reference points, then created my own simpler structure.  
  
Knowing that an Oscar strike was likely, I had to protect the amphibs at all costs. The best bet was to keep their ‘radars dark’ and switch-on the radars on the CVBG and battlegroups, drawing enemy attention to what were, after all, supposed to be escorts.  
  
26/2/94 08:00Z : There were three enemy infantry bunkers S of Keflavik, so I gave them a TLAM each. Two were shot down by Grisoms, the third wrecked its target. This scored no VP, so I desisted. I did blast a ZU-23 site, which scored 3VP. Plenty of TLAMs to burn for once.  
  
There was an immediate spate of biological and false subsea contacts – far more than usual. This was to be a constant nuisance throughout the game. It didn’t actually do the Russian subs much good, but it added to my workload as intended and generally made the game less enjoyable.  
  
An Oscar then attacked the Missouri group from the E. With no fighters nearby, I had to rely on SAMs and these did very well, shooting down all 18 missiles to my great relief. As an Oscar carries 24 and the AI isn’t known for tactical restraint, I was left wondering whether it was keeping six back for the amphibs or was simply on 75% ammo. I’m sure Bart intended to sow this uncertainty.  
  
A second Oscar then let fly at the Wisconsin group, probably from somewhere N of Akureyri. In total contrast to what had happened before, 16 Shipwrecks sufficed to completely demolish the entire Wisconsin group, at a cost of 885VP, leaving me with a deficit I had little chance of retrieving unless there were mega-points for the landings. Worse, the remaining two missiles just happened to be on a perfect course for the Bataan group. I’d had two Tomcats screening the amphibs and, with difficulty, these Shipwrecks were stopped.  
  
What could I have done about this?. An Oscar is a bit like the proverbial elephant in the room, in that it can do whatever it likes, letting fly at 300nm range at minimal risk to itself. I didn’t have time to get fighter cover to Wisconsin, even had I known she would be targetted – perhaps I should have kept radars dark until I could, but the TF was close to shore and easily spotted, anyway. It was otherwise a case of relying on SAMs and, this time, they let me down. I could maybe have detached Wisconsin and sent her W at speed, but this might not have saved her. If I’d left the radars off and avoided detection somehow, the Oscar would have been able to batter the amphibs later. What was more important?.  
By now, C-130s were delivering supplies to Heimaey, but this scored no points.  
  
A large Soviet armoured column was spotted moving WNW from Central Iceland towards the Stykkisholmur airfield, on the Snaefellsjokull Peninsula, which had been captured by British Special Forces. There is an option to divert supplies from Heimaey to Stykkisholmur, but I saw no compelling reason to do so. For now, I had Heimaey’s Harriers fly-in low and attack the column, doing some damage.  
  
09:00 : As if we didn’t have enough problems, Icelandic fishermen confirmed that the waters around Keflavik and Reykjavik were mined. This didn’t mean that the planned landing zones were. The Bakkaflugvollur area had been clear in the previous scenario, so I gambled that it was still so. As for Snaefellsjokull, all I could do was have the Sea Dragons try to sweep a path ahead of the transports and hope for the best. I planned to send the landing craft in a narrow column, with LCVPs carrying single Humvees in the lead, so as to minimise the risk.  
  
SEALs on Heimaey spotted some Spetsnaz on the S tip of the island. I sent a Cobra to hose them down, but it was slow to take-off and they vanished. This charade repeated a few times and I eventually destroyed two-thirds of the Russian unit with a TLAM, but never finished it off.  
  
Once they had dropped supplies at Heimaey, the Goose Bay Hercules returned under AI control. Of course, this meant flying over Reykjavik while I wasn’t looking and I lost one to a Fulcrum and Flanker. Reacting, I got the MiG-29, but the Su-27 escaped to its lair. All air losses cost a base 5VP in this scenario.  
  
Eight Frogfoots from Keflavik tried to raid Heimaey. CAP splashed seven and the other fled, but I lost a Hornet to an Aphid at close range. The raid caused lots of mobile units to illuminate around the capital and I responded with TLAMs, inflicting considerable damage.  
  
Meanwhile, Hornets from Roosevelt and Kangerlussuaq hit the column, destroying numerous AFVs, but two F-18s were lost to fighters.  
  
10:00 : I lost 6VP for failing to rescue a couple of downed aircrews in a tight timescale. There are very few SAR assets available and stranded pilots can end-up in inaccessible and dangerous places. More on this later.  
  
Lost another Hercules to the Reykjavik fighter trap. Nothing I could do.  
  
A Foxhound appeared. Two AMRAAMs failed to lock onto it and sailed past, giving it time to kill a tanker en route for Heimaey and a Seasprite from USS Flatley. After being missed a few more times, its luck finally ran out and a Hornet downed it.  
  
A Charlie SSGN popped-up SE of Iceland and attacked the Wasp amphib group (radars off notwithstanding) with Siren missiles. I rushed a Tomcat there in time and this helped thwart the strike.  
  
12:00 : Repeated airstrikes wore the armoured column down to just two elements, scoring from one to three VP per complete eliminated unit.  
  
An Orion found and sank a Tango off the tip of Snaefellsjokull for 25VP.  
  
There was then a co-ordinated attack on the Bataan group by a few escorted Fencers from Reykjavik and a second Charlie, off to the W. Our defences held and the Russians lost 3 Fencers and 3 Floggers. I vectored the Orion that had killed the Tango to the Charlie’s likely location, found and sank it for another 25VP. I had a good look for the other Charlie and the Oscar that killed the Wisconsin, but failed to find them.  
  
13:00 : We had uncovered a nest of Grouse and AA sites around a Soviet camp E of the Snaefellsjokull landing zone and these were now battered by air and TLAM strikes. Wisconsin’s UAV, now based at Stykkisholmur, usefully flushed-out a Styx battery and this was destroyed with extreme prejudice, even if it required three TLAMs.  
  
14:00 : Not a moment too soon, as the amphibious landings were about to commence. To my relief, I found that the Sea Stallions could take a couple of infantry sections each, while the Knights and Hueys could take one, plus a light weapons system. On the negative side, the AI routed some of the landing craft in bizarre fashion, perhaps in an effort to resolve congestion issues. It meant that my tidy column plan rapidly got out of joint. Happily, there were no mines – it had been a bluff.  
  
Meanwhile, the destruction of the armoured column was completed and any Soviet bunkers near the landing beaches eradicated by TLAMs. We also intercepted a Fencer F on RTB and shot it down with fighters, which also killed a Flogger which tried to intervene.  
  
Infuriatingly, a Hornet was lost over Greenland because the AI messed-up its tanker refuelling calculations – I can’t watch everything. This led to another points penalty for a lost crew not rescued.  
  
15:00 : By now, Iwo Jima had completed a full lift of infantry to the Bakkaflugvollur beaches. This scored NO VP and neither does landing anything else!!. Perhaps this is another manifestation of the map issues from earlier scenarios, though the actual landing operations worked fine. Essentially, though, I needn’t have bothered with my elaborate loading operation and might as well have left everything on the ships for all the difference it made. As I said, it didn’t matter a damn. Being a glutton for punishment, I continued to execute landing operations for the rest of the game, but the overhead wasn’t particularly playable and did me no good. For what it’s worth, the LCAC hovercraft do an impressive job.  
  
16:00 : We started to score 25VP for each transport (not escort) that reached the designated Amphib and Assembly Zones. This did something to whittle away the points deficit and eventually got the score into positive territory.  
One of Missouri’s UAVs ventured into NE Iceland and found some SAM sites and supply units. These then suffered from visiting TLAMs.  
  
A Soviet mechanised infantry group tried to advance to contest the Snaefellsjokull landings, but was flayed by airstrikes. We lost a Harrier to a Grouse – a strange case of role reversal!.  
  
A Flanker and four Frogfoots sortied from Akureyri, but were downed without loss by CAP.  
  
18:00 : More Russian fighters lifted-off from Hornafjordur. A Flanker and two Floggers were destroyed, but not before they’d intercepted the returning UAV from the NE. Appallingly, the unmanned craft spawned a ‘downed crew’ and cost me more VP. This scenario feature could have heartily been done without. It is completely unfair on the player.  
  
19:00 : Another Flogger was picked-off near Hornafjordur.  
  
20:00 : A few more ground targets were destroyed as amphibs raced to their designated zones at Flank, some failing to get there in time. Basically, you’re best moving everything at Flank from the outset, but I wasn’t to know.  
  
So it finished with a score of +302, which counts a Minor Defeat. NATO lost the Wisconsin, a cruiser, two frigates, 5 attack planes, 3 Hercules, 4 UAVs, 5 choppers, 2 RHIBs and an ammo pad. The Soviets lost an SSGN, SS, 12 fighters, 4 Fencers, 11 Frogfoots, a radar, a Styx, 3 SAMs, 21 MANPADs, 2 jammers, 4 artillery, 28 AA, 44 tanks, 18 mechanised infantry and 41 other ground elements.  
  
Essentially, both landings were highly successful, with no casualties to the troops or transports and not much opposition. How much difference it would have made to the result had any points been scored for this I can but speculate. In practice, it was all offset by the loss of the Wisconsin, which I could do little about and which, frankly, represented a tiny percentage of 2nd Fleet’s actual combat capability.