**Northern Fury #26 – Land of Fire and Ice!**

**AAR by fitzpatv, Jun 2022**

By the evening of the 28th February, US Marines are securely ashore on Iceland. The Reykjavik-Keflavik area has been sealed-off and other Soviet forces are isolated in the NW of the country. Their 234th Air Assault Regiment is trying to hold onto the N and E parts of the island and some of the troops in the NW have formed a column which is attempting to break through to Akureyri and join them. To prevent this move, the US 6th Marine Regimental Landing Team devises a risky airmobile operation. A company of Marines will be moved from reserve around Bakkaflugvollur to the Bakki (Oxnadalur) Valley to the W of Akureyri to block the road the column will need to take. This will leave the Marines between the latter and the Akureyri garrison.  
  
To carry-out this operation, you have 16 transport helicopters (10 CH-46, 4 UH-1, 2 CH-53), with 4 F-18 Hornets and 4 Harriers for escort (though they are loaded-out for ground attack). Also under your direct control are 6 AH-1 Sea Cobra gunships. These assets are based at Heimaey and Bakkaflugvollur, but there is a Forward Arming and Refuelling Point (FARP) at Point Cherokee in Central Iceland, which will be very useful as a midway staging post, even if it has no stocks of weapons.  
  
There are some Hawkeyes, Prowlers and Hercules tankers under AI control/missions and these provide useful support, while keeping to a sensible distance.  
  
You are ordered to commence operations one hour in at 18:00Z and to have the block in place by 21:00. There are three marked landing zones around the valley where Observation Posts (OPs) have to be established. Other than that, there are no clear instructions as to what needs to be achieved to score VP, which is a real hindrance to the player.  
  
The Soviets are known to have some Floggers (G variety) and Frogfoots operational somewhere in N and E Iceland. Grouse and Gecko SAMs can be expected and, very worryingly, there is a Gargoyle site and a Big Bird radar around somewhere, though HOW is anyone’s guess at this late stage of the campaign. Otherwise, you can expect the usual range of Soviet ground troops.  
  
To begin with, you have the issue of using the Cargo rules to load troops and equipment onto the choppers. Compared with the situation in Jar Heads on Ice, this is pretty straightforward, though two lifts will be required. I felt it best to take a balanced force and get Stinger MANPADs and Javelin A/T weapons down early at the expense of leaving some of the infantry to Lift 2 though, in practice, it doesn’t make much difference.  
  
28/2/94 17:00Z : Having done the loads, I created a Ferry Mission from Bakkaflugvollur to Cherokee. As the AI-controlled Prowler was able to stooge around within Gargoyle range of Keflavik, I concluded that the monster was probably not lurking there to interdict the initial lifts.  
  
18:00 : The CH-46s and UH-1s flew to Cherokee from Bakkaflugvollur and refuelled. As Bart points-out in the briefing, the choppers will unload their cargo on arrival here, so you have to remember to reload it again. There is a bit of an interval between the arrival of the first and last whirlybirds due to the limitations of the airfield at Bakkaflugvollur. As a result, I had to modify my schedule for the onward flight to the LZ.  
  
19:00 : The two CH-53s, carrying mortars and Humvees, left Heimaey for a direct flight to the LZ. I timed the other choppers to arrive at about the same time, between 19:45 and 20:15. Two Hornets with Sparrows and HARMs were sent from Heimaey as combined escort and SEAD. All choppers were told to fly at 2,000’ ‘Terrain-following AGL’ and to approach the valley from the SE to take advantage of the 3,000’ + mountain range between it and Akureyri. Incidentally, I actually climbed some of the mountains in this area back in 1987, including one very close to the location of OP C (it’s called Hvannadalsnjukur and was quite exciting). Radars were dark by default, relying on the Hawkeye.  
  
Around 19:30, an ATC radar suddenly lit-up at Akureyri. Funny, that?!. Despite all precautions, we were spotted, perhaps by ground-based observers hidden in the valley, on later evidence. Not a lot I could have done about that, but at least we weren’t ambushed by MANPADs for flying low. Instead, two Floggers popped-up from Akureyri. Nervous of the Gargoyle threat and unwilling to give the game away, my escorts were too far off to intervene in time and, in truth, there was little reaction time anyway. The MiGs shot down two CH-46s and all four UH-1s (two had unloaded first) and damaged two more Sea Knights with cannon, all of which cost me 60 VP. The Hornets arrived and destroyed both Floggers before zapping the radar with a HARM, but this scored nothing. Despite hassle with damaged choppers attempting to RTB (corrected by Unassigning them), the bulk of the infantry were landed though, unluckily, most of the Stingers and Javelins were on the choppers that were lost and more of the former were expended firing at the MiGs. There was no sign of the mortars unloaded from the CH-53s, for whatever reason, not that it mattered.  
  
20:00 : After the three OP had been occupied for a given interval, I was awarded 25 VP for each, but the score of +15 was still a Major Defeat. How I was to score more points remained a mystery.  
  
21:00 : After refuelling at Cherokee, the undamaged CH-46s headed back to Bakkaflugvollur to pick-up the second load and the CH-53s moved to do the same at Heimaey. The two damaged choppers were out of the game, but this didn’t matter much, there being ample capacity.  
  
22:00 : A CH-53 dropped-off the two remaining Humvees from Heimaey at the safest of the three LZ locations without any problems, then returned safely. Arriving at Cherokee, the remaining six operational Sea Knights were faced with a two-hour turnround time before they could complete the second lift.  
  
1/3/94 01:00 : The second lift began, flying at 1,000’ AGL with two more Hornets for escort. This time, everything went fine, the remaining cargo was delivered and all choppers got back safely to Cherokee.  
  
Suddenly, we detected numerous Soviet paratroop units, supported by a 120mm mortar, around our positions. How long they had been there was anyone’s guess – they might just have spawned. I mounted a series of sorties with the Hornet escorts, Harriers and Sea Cobras and these demolished the Russian force, taking-out the mortars and 20 paratroop elements. In the process, a Harrier was shot-at by a Gecko site N of Akureyri, but escaped unhurt. The Cobras needed to be re-based to Cherokee to give them enough endurance to attack. Four were left without targets and did a sweep towards Saudarkrokur, to the NW, in case the column was approaching, but they found nothing and RTB’d. None of this scored any points.  
  
03:00 : Unsure of what I needed to do, I moved some infantry to cover the valley better and ensured I had some between the two Blocking Position reference points on the map. It seemed to make no difference to anything.  
  
At 03:30, I received a daft message about taking ground fire (nothing was) and notification of a Counter Attack Event. Soon afterwards, several Floggers launched from Akureyri and a Gargoyle and Big Bird radar illuminated in the mountains NE of town. Why they had not done so earlier added to a prevailing sense of unreality about the scenario. There was also the question of what to do about it. One of the Hornets was shot-at by the Gargoyle, but was far enough away to escape with a power dive. Otherwise, the S-300 imposed a No Fly Zone over the area of operations, clearing the way for some Frogfoots that approached from E Iceland.  
  
04:00 : I did what I could, sending-in my fighters (all four Hornets) at low altitude in an effort to intercept the Frogfoots and firing HARMs futilely at the radar (small numbers of HARMs are as much use against Gargoyles as throwing pebbles at a wall). The terrain kept the fighters safe from the Gargoyle but, by the same token, made it very difficult to attack the Russian planes without exposing myself. All Sparrows fired (and we only had a few) went blind soon after lunch. Perhaps some players can make use of the minutiae of terrain elevations to intercept moving targets without being detected in such situations, but I lack the necessary skill and eye for detail and find the map far from clear in this respect, giving me a general idea only. Any thoughts here?. The Frogfoots had some trouble locating their targets, but eventually managed to obliterate the two infantry squads on OP C. This didn’t cost any points, but might have stopped me scoring some. The fact is, I still don’t know.  
  
05:00 : I tried to re-occupy OP C, but there wasn’t time. There was no trace of the column from the W that we were supposed to stop.  
  
So it ended in a Major Defeat, with a score of +15. So far as I can tell, the only way to score points is to establish the Observation Posts and the only way to lose them is having aircraft destroyed. Perhaps you score for occupying all three OP at the end of the game? Perhaps you need to occupy a specific blocking position in the valley? It just isn’t clear.  
  
For the record, NATO lost 6 choppers and 18 ground elements, the Soviets two fighters, a radar and 23 ground elements. The blocking position had been established and the defences of Akureyri weakened, but at significant cost. To be honest, it was a risky plan just to trap an estimated 150 men and 20-30 vehicles (per the briefing). The Gargoyle was an implausible low blow.