

Battle of Vestfjord: The Hornet Missions README

This is one of a set of two mission packs, one for the DCS F/A-18 Hornet and the other for the Heatblur F-14 Tomcat. Both mission packs are concurrent: they take place in the same air wing at the same time and place, in a fictional 1998 WWII scenario. Some of the missions are technically the 'same' mission played from two different perspectives. Launch times may differ slightly, but in each you will hear some of the radio calls from the other. In some the mission objectives are the same, and different in others. Some of the numbered missions are unrelated, like an F-14 TARPS run on one cycle while the Hornet mission involves hunting enemy naval units in the Norwegian fjords. So on and so forth. There is one mission that 'branches' for the Hornets: depending on the outcome, you will play one of three missions as the next one. Of course, since these are mission packs and not campaigns, you can still play all the missions at any time, in any order you want. So, the two 'branching option' missions that don't apply can be considered bonus missions on any given playthrough.

The two mission packs (one each for the Tomcat and Hornet) comprise 'Phase I' and are collectively named 'The Battle of Vestfjord'. This is a Leyte Gulf style, large scale naval battle that takes place over about three days. It is heavy on air-to-air and anti-ship, blue-water naval combat operations. There is a LOT going on in the background of these missions, and the briefs are designed to immerse you in an even broader sense of a struggle for control over the GIUK gap and the north Atlantic. Weather is a factor in some missions, even the enemy itself in one of them.

All the missions are designed to be playable by the 'casual' player. I would characterize them as semi-realistic, not 'ultra' realistic. The units, liveries, etc. do not necessarily conform to true historical norms, because this is an 'alternate reality' 1998 anyway, and in DCS 'you use what you got.' (More American and Soviet naval units, please!) Getting the highly prized 'Mission Complete' graphic and sound clip will require you to trap on the carrier. For missions at night and in bad weather, proficiency with the ICLS / ACLS systems and procedures is a must, but if you can't do these things, you can still play the missions. Since it is not a campaign, you advance when you choose the next mission to play. All missions start hot either on the catapult, or in rare cases hot on the flight deck. You don't have to start the engines each time, run those checklists, and wait for INS alignments, etc. It also eradicates 99% of the frustrating game-breakers that pop up every update with the deck crew on the supercarrier. If you are judicious with your fuel, AAR is not required, but is available for almost every mission for those who like to do it, or those who burn more gas than they intended in a fight.

My mission design philosophy revolves around finding the right mix between scripted events and player agency. I want the player in control of their destiny, not a participant in an interactive movie with a pre-determined outcome. As such, many of the missions are somewhat 'open ended' in terms of success and failure. If you make it back to the Boat (in most circumstances), it's 'Mission Complete' and you can self-evaluate how you did. The missions all include custom briefing images, kneeboard cards, and AI-generated custom voice communications using a paid

version of Naturalreaders TTS. I don't like it as much as Speechify but it allows for a monthly rather than yearly subscription, and the product is workable at least. TTS files are then washed through Audacity to 'radiofy' them and convert them to .ogg files the game can use. The missions are set up so that even if you ignore the radios completely you will still hear most of what you need to hear to complete a mission. Again, it is all designed with the casual player in mind. There are still lots of opportunities to make calls using the F10 function (mostly for flavor and immersion) which prompt more custom communications, and in the Tomcat missions there is always some fun (and often humorous) banter back and forth between you and Jester. In addition, Jester is programmed to do some tasks for you when he should without needing to be prompted through the menu. At other times, you'll need to ask for what you want. Right now, the list of Hornet missions for Phase I looks like this:

For the Hornet:

BVH 01 Opening Moves:	Ready Launch to aid in fleet defense scenario against mass bomber raid.
BVH 02 Sink the Moskva:	Conduct a coordinated saturation missile attack on an enemy surface group
BVH 03 Hide and Seek:	Search for a second enemy force while the CVBG is under EMCON, and the Hawkeyes are down.
BVH 04 Action off Andoya	Participate in the largest naval battle since Leyte Gulf. Sink the Kirov if you can!
BVH 05 Sinking Cripples	Conduct mop-up ASUW strike against surviving enemy surface ships.
BVH 05a (Branch 1)	"Finish the Job" The Kirov is damaged but still afloat. Provide TARCAP while we remedy that.
BVH 05b (Branch 2)	"Securing the Flank" Close Andoya air base ahead of schedule after a clean sweep at sea.
BVH 06 Night Hunt	Night hunt of smaller enemy surface units hiding in the fjords

As of now all but the last two missions in each pack are completed, with only final polishing needed to prep them for release. Mission 6 for both platforms are still under construction.

Modules required:

DCS F-18 (for the Hornet missions)
Heatblur F-14 (for the Tomcat missions)
Supercarrier
Kola Map

User File Modules required:

None currently.

Installation

Place the mission files in your DCS Saved Games missions folder.

Disclaimer

As with all user-created mods, use these files at your own risk.

Phase II

When I eventually get there, this will involve a USMC / NATO counter-invasion of Bodo and the retaking of northern Norway. That's when the missions begin utilizing the Bombcat role for the Turkey, and the Hornet drivers will get their fill of close air support.

In the background info (see next post), I've also hinted that this entire scenario could be a precursor to a DCS recreation of the campaign in Janes F/A-18, although someone else is probably going to have to tackle that.

There is also the potential here for other mission creators to take up the overarching theme of this story either in the Kola or other theaters.

And now for the best part: **It's all Freeware, baby!** None of this naval warfare goodness will cost you a dime, provided you already own the required modules. It's all for the love of the hobby. *If you fly both the Hornet and the Tomcat, you are in for a real treat.*

Flashpoint 1998 . . .

In Russia, instability and economic distress have plagued the administration of Boris Yeltsin. Following the devaluation of the ruble and other economic downturns, residual communist hardliners have banded together with the military and carried out a military coup.

Proclaiming the triumphant return of the Soviet State, the "New Soviet Union" almost immediately embarked on a campaign of aggression to restore former Soviet boundaries. Most notably, there were military incursions into the Baltic States, restoring them to New Soviet control almost without firing a shot. Emboldened by their success, they moved on to a swift invasion of Poland, attempting to seize the country before it could formally become a member of NATO. However, Poland had already signed the Accession Protocol for Poland to the North Atlantic Treaty, and given the suddenness of this aggression by the New Soviets, NATO decided to respond.

Eager to seize early control of the North Atlantic and stem the flow of materiel from America to Europe, the New Soviets launched a devastating conventional missile strike on Keflavik, Iceland, rendering it temporarily inert. At the same time, NewSov forces mounted a rapid, Inchon-style amphibious and airborne invasion of Bodo, cutting off northern Norway from succor as additional NewSov forces invaded across the northern end of the Kola Peninsula. Under the blitz of the NewSov assault, Norwegian forces in the north of the country were overwhelmed and neutralized early, giving the New Soviets additional airbases from which to stage fighters, bombers, and maritime patrol aircraft. SOSUS nets were cut, and the North Atlantic thrown open to New Soviet submarine forces.

The USS *Kennedy* carrier strike group in the Mediterranean fell under attack from mass Soviet bomber raids, and was destroyed. The USS *John C. Stennis* carrier strike group, transiting the Atlantic, almost suffered the same fate. Her group fared better, surviving the raids with major

damage, and was forced to return to the east coast of the U.S. for extensive repairs, effectively knocked out of the war.

Although defeated quickly, the Norwegians were able to get their licks in early. In concert with northern-deployed U.S. and British attack submarines, a large conventional cruise missile attack managed to catch and destroy most of the northern-deployed New Soviet bomber force on the ground, significantly reducing the threat to Atlantic-deployed naval forces. With one carrier sunk and another out of action, the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* carrier battle group with Carrier Air Wing EIGHT has ventured into Arctic waters. Their objective is to break the New Soviet hold on Vestfjord and institute a 'reverse blockade', to aid the beleaguered Norwegians in pushing the enemy back out of their territory and re-instituting maritime superiority in the GIUK gap.

Politically, the resurgent New Soviets are not without their own opposition at home. Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia have quickly banded together with native Russian elements who want democratic government restored. The news outlets have taken to calling them the 'Blue Russians', and the New Soviets the 'Red Russians.' However, for the time being, the New Soviets have firm control over the country and its military assets, and are waging a full scale military assault. NATO, in the meantime, has gone to DEFCON 3 and issued a statement that it will not be the first to use nuclear weapons in this conflict. The New Soviets have made the same assertion, but tensions are incredibly high as worldwide war is waged on the conventional front.