VARIANTS

SUPER TASKFORCE
Enhancing the Simulative Value of SPI’s Newest Naval Game
by Charles Kamp

TaskForce is quickly becoming a widely liked, avidly played game. It has a number of extremely interesting game elements in it (one being the absence of traditional combat results tables). What originally started out to be the naval version of AirWar got transformed into a true “playable” game. This of course leads us thinkers back to re-inventing some of the considerations streamlined out of the game.
—Redmond

Task Force went through at least two major design/development philosophies during its creation. The original concepts of designer Dave Isby stressed the simulation aspects, while the final product reflected designer Joe Balskki’s emphasis on playability. While the game does not purport to be the last word in modern naval analysis something which would require a heavy amount of classified and conjectural data — it lends itself to the gifting of additional elements not addressed in the original. This article presents unofficial suggestions, from professional naval officers and others, which highlight some important aspects of the modern naval scene.

RECENT SHIP CONSTRUCTION

Charts showing the game characteristics of additional US and Soviet ships accompany this article.

1. The Soviets are currently building three new classes of surface combatants, the lead ship of each having deployed in 1986. The nuclear-powered battle cruiser Kirov is the largest primary surface combatant to be built anywhere in the world since World War II. The missile destroyer Sovremenny is apparently designed for surface action, with a secondary mission of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW). The Udaloy class missile destroyer is expected to replace the backbone of the new Soviet ASW forces. The Soviets also achieved a quantum improvement in their submarine arm with the appearance of the Oscar class SSN. Kirov, Sovremenny, and Oscar all employ a new SSN, designated SSN-X-19.

2. The US Navy has acquired four modified Spruance type destroyers which were being built for the late Shah of Iran. They mount the Mk 25 SAM system found on our newer missile ships. Renamed Kidd (DDG-993), Callaghan (DDG-994), Scott (DDG-995), and Chandler (DDG-996), they will be commissioned in 1981-82.

3. The ships designated Sims and Cone in Task Force represent the first mark of the Ticonderoga-class missile cruisers (CG-47). Advanced ships in the class will have improved AA capability with the mounting of a Vertical Launch System (VLS).

4. The US is the only nation to retain battleships in its naval inventory. There appears to be a good possibility that one or more of them will be reactivated for service with some modifications. The great staying power of the battleship in the face of conventional weaponry coupled with tremendous firepower, make it an interesting anachronism in modern naval combat. In Task Force, the battleship should be permitted to initiate gunnery combat from an adjacent hex against an enemy task force, for at least one round, during which no enemy ships can return fire. Additionally, each hit it scores should be treated as a flotation hit as well as a systems hit. US battleships being considered for active service are Iowa (BB-61), New Jersey (BB-62), Missouri (BB-63), and Wisconsin (BB-64).

The USN plans to establish patrol hydrofoil squadrons in the coming two years, which would appear in at least two areas covered by the game. One squadron will be based at Key West, Florida for service in the Caribbean, and another may be based at Sylly for use in the Mediterranean. Each squadron will consist of six boats. The first six PHM’s will be Pegase (PHM-1), Heracles (PHM-2), Taurus (PHM-3), Aquila (PHM-4), Arias (PHM-5), and Gemini (PHM-6).

MOVEMENT

Submarines are not limited to speed by mode. Nuclear subs may move up to two hexes per turn regardless of depth, while conventional submarines are limited to one hex per turn in all cases.

ACTIVE ASW SEARCHES AND TASK FORCE ASW CAPABILITY

1. Non-Soviet task forces determine their Search Value normally. All Soviet task forces determine their Active ASW Search Value by summing the number of ships which have an S capability and dividing the number by 3. Round off fractions to the nearest multiple of 3.

2. Soviet conventional submarines get a modifier of add 1 when subjected to active ASW search. They are very quiet.

3. All submarines with SSM capability may attack enemy submarines (with their ASW Strength) which are in an adjacent regular box, to simulate the effects of SUBROC and SSN-15/16.

4. Shipboard Area ASW weapons are limited to vessels having one of the following ASW missile systems: Ikara (British), Malafon (French), SUBROC or ASROC (US), FRAS-1/SSN-14 or SSN-15/16 (Soviet). The accompanying ship list adds or deletes Area ASW capability from the appropriate counters according to these criteria. On the whole, fewer ships are rated as having Area ASW capability; however, see helicopters, following.

HEHELICOPTER SEARCH AND ATTACK

1. The number of helicopters a task force may use for any flight operations is equal to the total number of helicopters on ships of the task force divided by 3. Round off fractions to the nearest multiple of 3.

2. Helicopter searches (for task forces) are conducted normally.

3. Helicopter ASW searches may be regular (considered 1 action) or intensive (considered 2 actions). Two helicopters are necessary to perform a regular search, while four helicopters are needed to perform an intensive search. These helicopters must all be eligible for flight operations as described in paragraph 1. The Search Value of a regular search is 2 for non-Soviet helicopters and 1 for Soviet helicopters. The Search Value of an intensive search is 4 for non-Soviet helicopters and 3 for Soviet helicopters.

4. Helicopters may attack enemy submarines which have been revealed by a precise or accurate search report under the
following conditions:
- Helicopters which have located submarines by helicopter ASW search may immediately attack the submarines.
- During task force-initiated ASW combat, a total number of helicopters eligible for flight operations have a combined ASW Attack Strength (see following) greater than that of the ship with the highest ASW Strength in the task force, then the helicopter strength is used.
- During torpedo combat, the total of helicopters eligible for flight operations (i.e., one-third of all helicopters) may combine their ASW Attack Strengths and be employed by the task force player as an Area ASW weapon, which may be used against targets in any sector of the tactical display, once per ASW Phase. In this case, submarines may not have been located prior to the initiation of torpedo combat. In addition, helicopters from ships sunk during the torpedo combat must be removed from the ASW effort.

The ASW Attack Strength of helicopters is 1 Strength Point per two helicopters, rounding fractions up for non-Soviet units and down for the Soviets. Therefore, the total helicopters available for ASW action in a torpedo combat may be employed as \textit{en masse} against one submarine or divided among several, at the discretion of the task force player.

**SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILES**

- The accompanying Surface-to-Surface Missile Chart lists weapons available in Task Force, along with their actual maximum range in regular hexes, accuracy, and type of warhead carried.
- The Tomahawk is included in the chart as a separate type.

**RESOLUTION OF HELICOPTER AND AIR ASW ATTACKS**

1. Although long-range ASW patrol attacks, and carrier-launched air ASW attacks, may take place only during the Long-Range Patrol Phase and the Air Operations Phase, respectively, submarines located precisely or accurately by any means may be subjected to air-delivered ASW attack and need not have been located by the air unit; specifically, an additional player may use more than one long-range patrol or carrier-launched ASW squadron to attack a single hex containing a located submarine. All must attack individually, however. The same holds true for helicopter ASW Search/Attack missions.

2. All attacks against submarines by long-range patrols, carrier-launched ASW squadrons, and helicopters are resolved in the same manner as ASW combat initiated by a task force. Results are apportioned against one or more subs in the case of aircraft attack, but are applied only to the specific sub under attack in the case of helicopters involved in a torpedo combat.

**SOSUS PLACEMENT AND EFFECT**

1. The placement of SOSUS markers should be limited to megahexes containing only shallow water.

2. SOSUS Search should be conducted as the same as a Subron Passive Search. The search must, however, be directed against the megahex occupied by the SOSUS marker. Results are the same as in Subron Passive Search (including adjacent megahex location of subs in shallow mode).

**LONG-RANGE ASM ATTACKS AND INTERCEPTION**

BOMBING ATTACKS AND SHORT-RANGE ASM ATTACKS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED AS NORMAL, BUT LONG-RANGE ASM ATTACKS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED AT A GREATER RANGE AND IN THE MANNER OF SSM ATTACKS.

1. The attacking player places his air units on any hexes within the maximum range limits of his long-range ASM units (see following). The defending player may intercept the attacking aircraft with fighter/AEW units in the launch/ready status (not on CAP), within six megahexes of the attacking aircraft. Each intercepting unit may attack a single hex of attacking units and resolve combat as CAP vs. bombers. If both sides are involved, they must be dealt with. In combat between interceptors and ASM aircraft, all losses against the ASM aircraft are considered permanent, while the interceptors suffer no combat losses (Buccaneer and A-6's are treated as in normal combat). Each Damage Point against an ASM aircraft unit reduces the number of waves of ASM's it may launch by one, until it is destroyed.

2. The Soviets may launch long-range ASM attacks from Backfire and Badger units. The primary Soviet ASM is the AS-6, which has a range of 6 hexes and an Accuracy Value of 3. Its warhead may be either HE or Nuke. Each Backfire unit may launch two waves of nine AS-6's each. Each Badger unit may launch two waves of six AS-6's each.

**soviet land-based naval aviation**

The USSR has a very large and important land-based naval air force, which totals about the same number of aircraft as the USN has in its carrier air wings. Task Force scenarios taking place in the Norwegian Sea and the Mediterranean would be influenced by Soviet naval air. Each theater would have, at a minimum, six units of Backfire B and six units of Badger C bombers. Each of these units consists of six aircraft in reality, and would conduct standoff ASM attacks as outlined in the following section. Each Backfire unit has an Anti-Air Value of 3 and a Strength of 2. Each Badger unit has an Anti-Air Value of 2 and a Strength of 2. Each Soviet land-based air unit may be used only once per scenario. They may only attack, have no CAP ability, and are considered "all weather." Backfire and Badger are considered to have unlimited range.
3. NATO A-6 and Buccaneer units may launch three waves of eight Harpoon SSM's each. Harpoon characteristics are identical to the ship-launched version.

4. In Norwegian Sea and Caribbean scenarios, NATO long-range patrol aircraft may launch two waves of six Harpoons per Patrol Point. For the purposes of interception, these long-range patrol units are considered to have an AA Value of 1 and a Strength of 2. They may be eliminated as other air units. In the Norwegian Sea, a total of one long-range Air Point may launch Harpoon attacks, while in the Caribbean all may do so.

**NUCLEAR BOMBING**

Any normal bombing attack by M and H class aircraft may be considered a nuclear attack. A hit achieved by a nuclear bombing attack automatically sinks the target ship. **Note:** A diffusion attack may not be nuclear.

**MINE WARFARE**

Mine warfare is simulated by the active Mine Level in a given megahex. Players use Squadron Damage chits to represent Mine Levels of 1, 2, 3, or a maximum of 4.

1. The NATO/Allied player may place a number of Mine Levels on the map equal to the number of long-range Patrol Points he has available for the scenario. These may be placed at any time during a Long-Range Patrol Phase. They may be moved in different megahexes, or all in one megahex (to a maximum of four). They may be placed in any hex on the map.

2. The Soviet player may place one Mine Level per megahex for each five ship/submarines which enter the megahex. He may place his Mine Levels in separate megahexes, or build up the level to a maximum of four in any one megahex.

3. In both cases, placement of mines is limited to once per scenario per delivery system (i.e., each Soviet ship may contribute toward the placement of only one Mine Level per game).

4. Minefields do not become "active" until the owning player announces such (most advantageously when he has just discovered any enemy task force or subron in a mined megahex). The owning player should write down the identity of each megahex in which he has mines, and place the paper face down in view of the opposing player. When announcing "activation" of a field, he should reveal the paper with the applicable field to the opposing player.

5. Friendly mines never affect friendly ships or submarines. Whenever an enemy task force or subron (in shallow mode) enters a megahex containing friendly mines, and the friendly player has announced that the Mine Level is active, the level of the mine field is revealed and the players roll one die for each ship or submarine (shallow only) which has entered the hex in the current action. A die result of less than or equal to the active Mine Level results in one immediate flotation hit against the ship or sub in question. Each and every ship or sub entering the megahex must roll for possible damage and, once declared active, the mined hex is considered to remain active for the duration of the scenario.

6. Relative sweeping capabilities have been considered and are not addressed further.

**THE CLASSIC SCENARIO:**

**Breakout to the North Atlantic**

- **Notes:** This scenario is similar to 33.43, but with a different emphasis and some significant changes in detail.

- **Map:** A (Norwegian Sea). See below.
c. Forces (First Player, NATO)
(1) TG 20.5: Saratoga (CVC), Dale (CG x 2), King (DD x 2), Hull (DD), Astvina (FF), Paul (FF), Talbot (FF), Santa Barbara (Freighter #1), Califols (Freighter #2), 1 x Rear Admiral, 1 x Commodore, 2 x Captain. Deploy anywhere on South edge of map. 5 Subs at SS x 4, or megahexes adjacent to South edge megahexes.
(2) TG 20.6: Nimitz (CVN), Virginia (CVG x 2), South Carolina (CG x 2), Pearson (DD), Carson (DD), Fill (DD), Bowen (FF), Voge (FF), Mount Baker (Freighter #3), Kalamazoo (Freighter #4), leaders and deployment same as (1).

3. TU 29.1: Gato (SSN x 4), Ray (SSN x 4), 1 x Commodore, 1 x Captain. Deployment same as (3).
(4) TU 29.12: Shark (SSN x 4), Dallas (SSN x 4); leaders and deployment same as (3).

d. Forces (Second Player, Soviet)
(1) Surface Action Group A: Kiev (CVC), Grozny (CG x 2), Kirch (CG), Chapayev (CG), Bodry (FF), Skory (DD), Zory (DD), Zhemchug (FF), Lubon (FF), Veres (FF), 1 x Rear Admiral, 1 x Commodore, 2 x Captains. Deploy in any north edge megahex or any megahex adjacent to north edge megahex.
(2) Surface Action Group B: Kirov (CG x 2), Isakov (CG), Azov (CG), Moskva (CG), Zharik (FF), Krasny (DD), Bavy (DD), Zelenodolsk (FF), Gangut (FF), Svetly (FF), leaders and deployment same as (1).
(3) Subron C: (See special rules) Protvino (SSN x 2), Kudnya (SSN x 3), Chirok (SSN x 3); 1 x Commodore, 1 x Captain. Deployment same as (1).
(4) Subron D: (See special rules) Perpe (SSN x 3), Komsomol (SSN x 3), Penza (SSN x 3); leaders and deployment same as (3).
(5) Subron E: (See special rules) Kaluga (SSN x 3), Franze (SSN x 3); leaders and deployment same as (3).

e. Surveillance Levels: Both average.

f. Special Rules: Submarines in Soviet subrons C and D are all considered "Echo II" class with SSN Rating of 55. Submarines in Soviet Subron E are considered to be "Charlie II" class with SSN Rating of 60.

g. Game Length: 12 Game-Turns. Game-Turns 8 through 12 are night.

h. Tactical Coordination Values
NATO: 2, Soviet: 4.

i. Air Units
NATO: Saratoga 2 x F4, 2 x A7, 1 x A6, 1 x E6, 1 x A2W, 1 x A2W, 1 x RCN, 1 x F14.
Soviet: 2 x A2W, 2 x A5, 1 x A7, 1 x E6, 1 x A2W, 1 x A2W, 1 x RCN; Sukhoi 1 x A6, 1 x F4.

j. Long-Range Patrol Values
NATO: 1 (one of which may launch Harpoon attacks).
Soviet: may be used for Subron Patrol only, plus 3 which may be used for Task Force Patrol only.

k. SOSUS
NATO: 1 each in megahexes 13, 29, 37, and 53.
Soviet: 0.

l. Victory Conditions
2. The Soviet player receives 5 Victory Points for each of his submarines which exits the south edge of the map from any of the following megahexes: 1, 4, 5, 9, 15, 16, 38, 39. Exiting submarines must have some torpedoes of SSN's left at the time of exit. Exited submarines may not return to play.
SSN Sturgeon
Ray SSN-653
SSN Thresher
Gato SSN-615
SSN Skipjack
Shark SSN-591

Note: For Cono, Sims, etc., see text.

BRITAIN

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS
CVS Invincible
Invincible CAH-1
Area ASW by H only

CL County
Pilt D-20
Area ASW by H only
CL Bristol
Bristol D-23

DD Shkodra
Cardiff D-108
Area ASW by H only

FF Amazon
Active F-171
Area ASW by H only
FF Tribal
Zhan F-124
Area ASW by H only

FF Broadword
Brazen F-91
Area ASW by H only

FF Leader (E) Juno F-52
Area ASW by H only

FF Leader (S) Ajax F-114

FF Rothsay
Rhyll F-129
Area ASW by H only

SS Swiftsure
Superb S-109
SSM is A4

SS Oban
Quay S-21

CANADA

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS

DDH "DD-200"
Huron DDH-281
Area ASW by H only

FF Mackenzie
Qu'Appelle FF-264
Yakon FF-263
No area ASW

FRANCE

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS
CV Clemenceau
Foch R-99
CG Colbert
Colbert C-611
SSM is A4

DDG DeGrasse
DeGrasse D-612

DDG Type C 70
Montcalm D-642
Area ASW by H only

DDG Suffren
Suffren D-602

FF Type A 88
Drogon F-783
No Area ASW

FF Cmdt Riviere
Projet F-748
No Area ASW

GS Agosta
Agosta S-620

ITALY

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS
CHG V. Veneto
V. Veneto C-550
Area ASW by H only;
AA is Standard
MR; SSM is B2

CHG A. Doria
G. Doria C-554
Area ASW by H only;
AA is Standard
MR; SSM is B2

DDG Audace
Audace D-551
Area ASW by H only;
AA is Standard
MR

FF Maestrale
Enero F-755
Area ASW by H only;
SSM is E4

SS Sauro
Sauro S-518

DENMARK

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS

FF Skram
Skram F-352

BELGIUM

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS

FF Wilhelmingen
Willehmingen F-911
No area ASW

NETHERLANDS

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS

DLG Tromp
Tromp F-801
Area ASW by H only; Area AA
is Standard MR

DDG C. T. Adams
Ronald D-187
A4 is Standard MR; SSM is A4

DD Hamburg
Bayern D-183
No Area ASW

FF Köln
Kohn FF-220
No Area ASW

WEST GERMANY

TYPE CL A CLASS /
NAME & NULL NUMBER /
NOTES ON CLASS

DDG C. T. Adams
Ronald D-187
A4 is Standard MR; SSM is A4

DD Hamburg
Bayern D-183
No Area ASW

SSN Shkodra
SSN 591
Area ASW by H only

DIETRICH Mod Kashin
Brave No Area AA

DIETRICH Mod Kashin
Brave No Area AA

SSN Shkodra
SSN 591
Area ASW by H only

NOVA STALIN

"Small Anti-submarine Ship"

FF Koni
Zelousdobok
"escort Ship"

FFL Mirka
Ganzuta
"Small Anti-submarine Ship"

FF Riga
Orel
"escort Ship"

PG Nanucka
Grad
Raduga
Tobury

PTG Osa
Balyk
Michurinsk
Tambisky
Novokuy
Gorny
Poltava
Brestskiy
Kirowski

SSN Charlie II
Kalgua
SSN is A9

SSN Echo II
Frants
SSN is J8

SSN Victor
Letya

SS Foxrot
Penza
Frolovo
Rudaya
Chirok
Perepel
Komsomoleus

TYPE ABBREVIATIONS:
CG: Guided Missile Cruiser; CCN: Guided
Missile Cruiser, Nuclear Powered; CHG:
Guided Missile Aircraft Carrier, CL: Light
Cruiser; CV: Aircraft Carrier; CVL: Guided
Missile V/STOL Aircraft Carrier; CVN:
Aircraft Carrier, Nuclear Powered; CVS:
ASW Aircraft Carrier; DD: Destroyer; DDG:
Guided Missile Destroyer; DDH: Destroyer,
Aviation; DLG: Guided Missile Destroyer
Leader; FF: Frigate; FFG: Guided Missile
Frigate; FFL Light Frigate; PGS: Guided
Missile Patrol Combatant; PGM: Patrol
Hydrofoil; PTG: Missile Attack Boat; SS:
Submarine; SSN: Nuclear Powered Cruise
Submarine; SSN: Nuclear Powered
Submarine.