

NORTHERN INFERNO, EPISODE 1: OPENING MOVES

Jan Mayen Island, 07 August 1975, 2130Z (2130L)

Moderate Clouds 7-16000 ft, Heavy Rain, Sea State 4

SIDE BRIEFING

CINCLANT has directed the multinational task force STANAVFORLANT to move into the Norwegian Sea at high speed, in response to the Soviet Forces deploying in the area.

Enemy Forces

P-3 Orions on ASW sorties in the Norwegian Sea indicate that Whiskey-, Zulu- and November-class submarines are located in the vicinity of Jan Mayen Island. It is reported that these submarines are deploying to set up a patrol line to the South of Jan Mayen to intercept any NATO shipping.

- Foxtrot SSK - Torpedos
- Whiskey V SSK - Torpedos
- Zulu IV SSK - Torpedos
- Juliett SSG - SS-N-3 Shaddock, Torpedos
- Victor II SSN - Torpedos
- November SSN - Torpedos
- Charlie I SSGN - SS-N-7 Starbright, Torpedos
- Tu-95RT Bear-D MRR

Friendly Forces

STANAVFORLANT

- TU 603.01.01: HMCS Algonquin DDH, FGS Lubeck FF, USS Mispillion AO; 2 CH-124A Sea King
- TU 603.01.02: NRP Almirante Coutino FF, USS MacDonough DDG
- TU 603.01.03: HMCS Fraser DDH, HNoMS Bergen FF; 1 CH-124A Sea King
- TU 603.01.04: HMS Bacchante FFH, HNLMS Van Nes FFH; 2 Wasp HAS.1/AH-12A

Andoya

- 333 Sqn (4 P-3B Orion MPA)

NAS Keflavik

- VP-26 (9 P-3C Orion MPA)
- 201 Sqn Det (4 Nimrod MR.1)

Mission

STANAVFORLANT has been ordered to prevent the Soviet submarines from entering the North Atlantic area via the Greenland, Iceland United Kingdom Gap (GIUK Gap).

Execution

1. STANAVFORLANT is to patrol the designated ASW-patrol areas and prosecute all Soviet submarines. Areas allocated are "ASW Patrol Area 1" and "ASW Patrol Area 2". COMSTANAVFORLANT is to divide his forces as required to patrol areas.

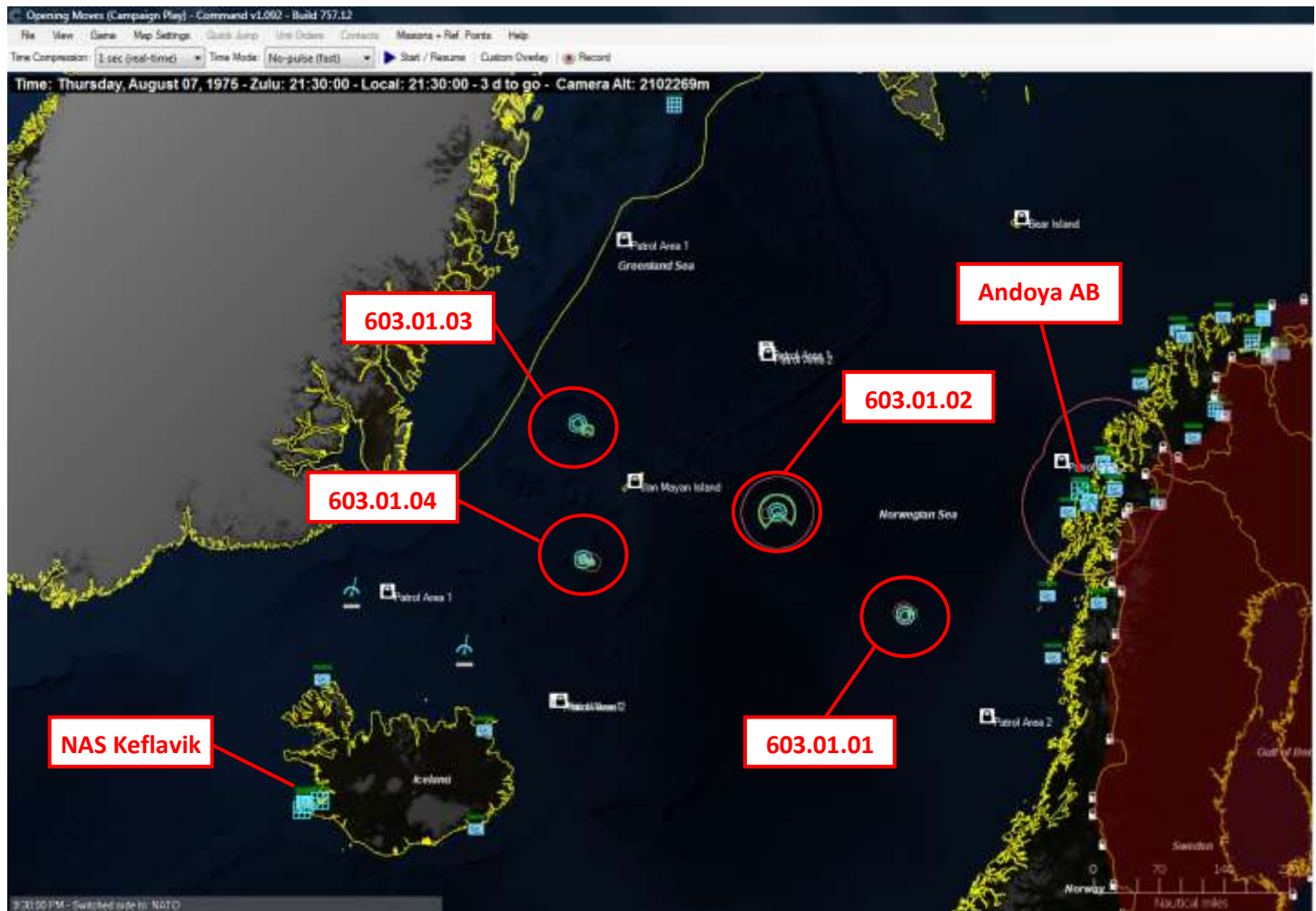
2. Land based air assets to assist STANAVFORLANT in assigned patrol areas.

Command & EMCON

Command: HMCS Algonquin CTG

EMCON: Alpha - limited emissions

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND SETUP



Eight destroyers/frigates and land-based air support sound great, until you realize that you have almost zero counter-air assets and you're operating way north of comfortable territory. The long-range SAMs (SM-1ER) onboard USS MacDonough don't cover a lot of ground, with only a 40-nm reach. Here's hoping they don't send out the Badgers/Backfires!

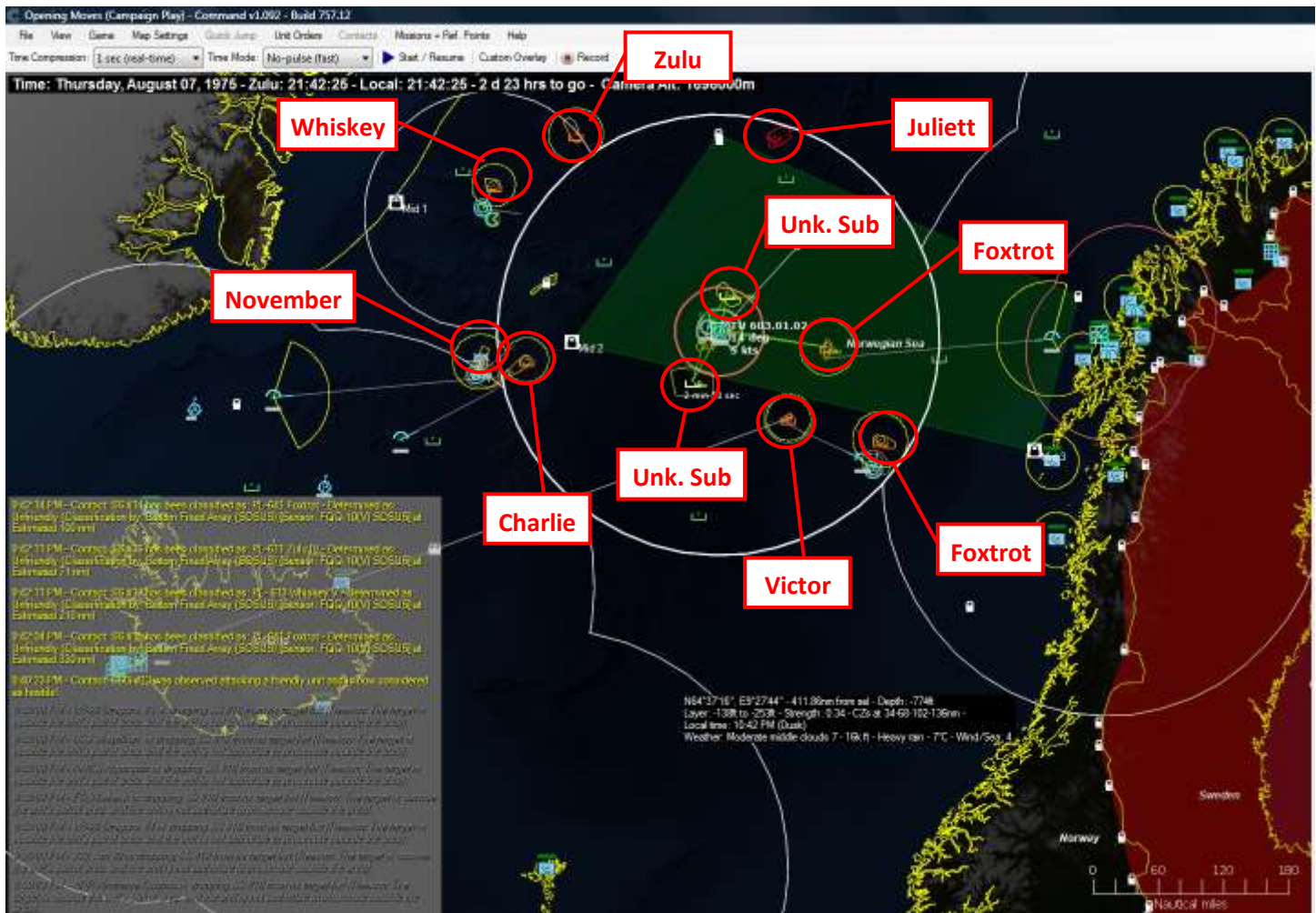
Also, only one of these ships has an inherent standoff ASW weapon, the 6-nm range ASROCs that are also on MacDonough. Which means that if I find my ships in a situation to deal with a sub organically, the sub can deal with them as well. I decide right away to use the air assets as my primary tool. My general strategy is to get P-3s and Nimrods in the air to serve as persistent aircover, and keep the helos on-deck to deal with immediate threats to my ships. I'll assign the MPAs to general area patrol missions, and when a Russian sub is identified I'll set up a specific patrol mission to localize and prosecute each contact.

I split the two default patrol areas by adding another line of reference points to create four zones (NE, NW, SE, SW). I assign one of the four surface groups to each zone on an ASW Patrol mission, and I assign aircraft to each zone on a separate ASW patrol mission. Andoya's four P-3s are assigned to the Northeast zone, the Nimrods from Keflavik to the Southwest zone, and the Keflavik Orions are split between Northwest and Southeast. All patrols are set to NOT prosecute contacts outside the area.

I also check the EMCON settings; I want the general setting to be all-passive, with active emissions as needed. I turn on all the air-search radars in Iceland and Norway, activate the USS MacDonough's SPS-37 to fill the big gap near Jan Mayen, and HMCS Fraser's SPS-12 to make sure 603.01.03 isn't completely naked. All airborne ASW patrols are set to radar active, with emissions only in the patrol zone. Sonar is set to passive-only, across the board. No sense making it easier for the Russian subs to find my fairly vulnerable surface ships.

THE ACTION

I press start and immediately the screen floods with contacts... SOSUS is impressive. Within about 2 minutes they start settling down. A lot of them are Biologicals and I'm able to filter them out and ignore them pretty quickly. After 10 minutes or so I've got 7 known unfriendly subs, one hostile (an unclassified SSG to the north was 'observed firing'), and two unknowns. A couple minutes later the Hostile SSG was classified by SOSUS as a Juliet



I start setting up patrols to localize and prosecute the contacts... one for the Juliett with a P-3 from Andoya; The November gets a Wasp from HMS Bacchante, the Charlie gets the nearest P-3. I decide that as a modern nuke boat the Victor is a big threat, I launch the ready Sea King from HMCS Algonquin to investigate, even though it's ~100nm away. The Whiskey to the northwest is assigned a Sea King from HMCS Fraser. The two Unknowns, the Zulu, and the two Foxtrots go on the back burner for the time being. The one near 603.01.01 bears watching, but a lot of my air assets are still 4 hours from being ready.

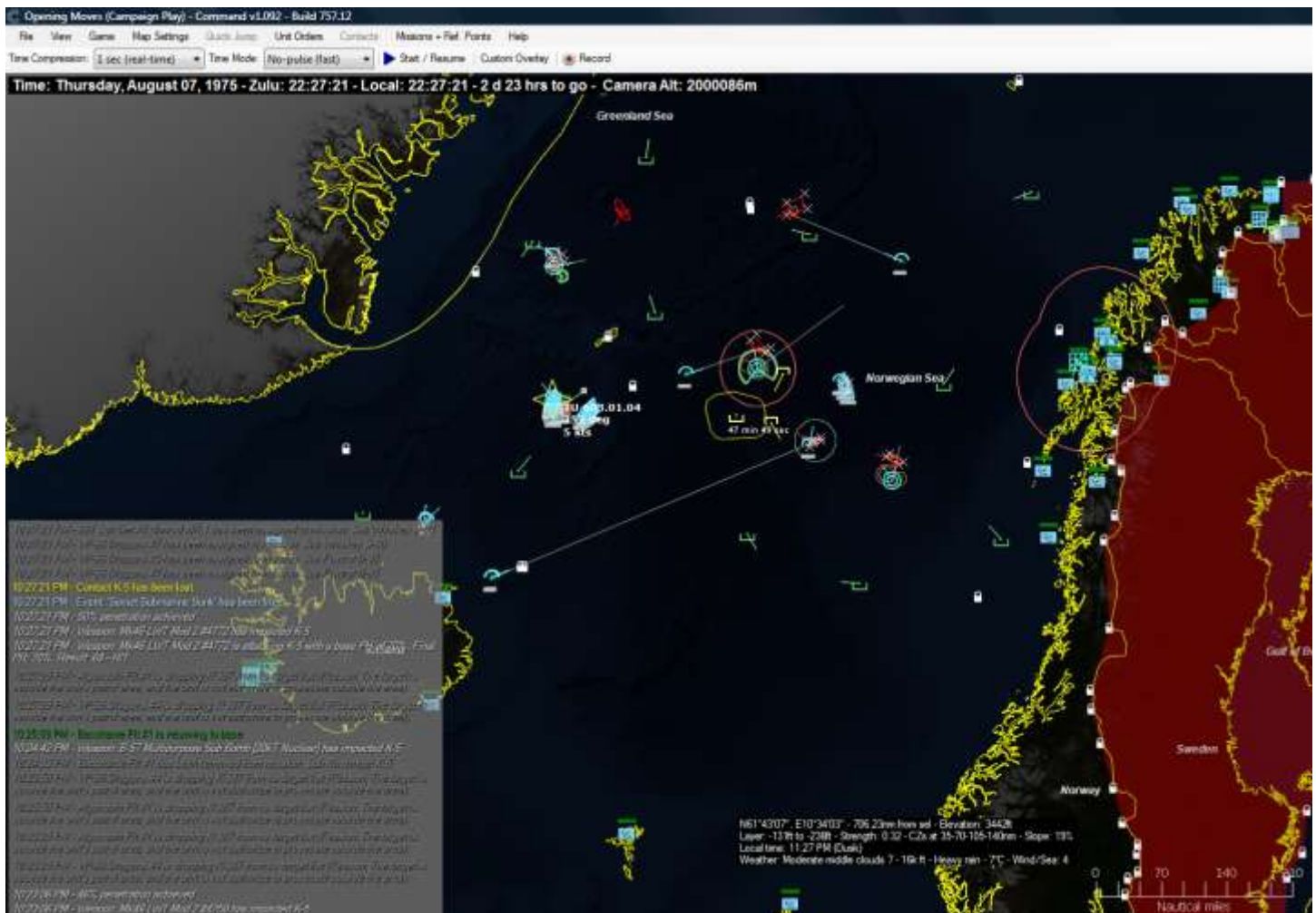
The first thing I realize is that the Wasp is crap. It's only sensor is a Mk. 1 Eyeball, and it's only weapons are depth charges. Basically, it's a very expensive delivery system for DCs, to a target that's already localized by someone else. So I also vector the airborne Nimrod to help chase down the November.

At 2146 I get the inbound Vampire warning, two missiles coming toward 603.01.02; at roughly the same time (I didn't make a note) I get the notice that a P-3 was shot down off the North Cape and we're now at war. Based on their direction of approach the Vampires came from the Juliett that was observed firing earlier, which means they're SS-N-3s. Fortunately they're also aimed squarely at the only unit I have with any legitimate air defense capability, the USS MacDonough carrying three dozen RIM-67A SM-1ER SAMs. I light off all the radars on 603.01.02, and at 2152 I fire my first shots of the war. The slow speed and high altitude of the Shaddocks means that I've got the luxury of time, so I fire one SM-1ER at each inbound Vampire. One hits, one misses, and I launch one SAM at the remaining threat; it's

neutralized at 2155. Since I misread the Database and thought the Juliett carries only 2 SS-N-3s, it assumes a much lower priority.

At 2203Z an Orion from VP-26 pinned down the Charlie, the first sub to be solidly localized. The P-3 dropped a Mk. 46, which was spoofed. A second torpedo followed, scoring a hit and presumably damaging the Charlie, and the third scored the kill, first blood drawn at 2208Z. I'd like to claim that I recognized the Charlie as the biggest remaining threat and focused on it... 8 SS-N-7 Starbright missiles, and sitting 30 miles from one of my surface units. However, it's pure dumb luck that it was the fist sub I hit, and it wasn't until afterward that I realized nothing else I had seen carried any real teeth.

At 2221 the Nimrod's pattern of sonobuoys paid off, localizing the November class SSN K-5. The Nimrod dropped a torpedo, which missed. This will get to be a pattern. The Wasp from HMS Bacchante followed up with a spread of Mk. 11 depth charges, which also completely whiffed. I sent the Wasp home to sulk, and ignored them for the rest of the scenario. The Nimrod continued the attack with a torpedo, scoring a damage, then dropped one of it's two B-57 20-kiloton nuclear depth charges. That showed up in the message log as 'impacted', but to quote a certain animated Martian "where's the kaboom?". There wasn't an expanding blue shockwave graphic as I've come to expect from nuclear ASW weapons, and it had no further effect that I could see. I assumed it must have been a dud. I took control of the Nimrod, dropped another torpedo, and the November followed the Charlie to the bottom at 2227Z.



At 2237 the Sea King from HMCS Fraser localized and dropped a Mk. 46 on the Whiskey to the northwest, sinking it with a single shot... not a common occurrence so far. At the same time, a RNoAF 333 Sqdn P-3 out of Andoya nailed down the position of the northern Foxtrot and started a 30-minute effort to sink it, finally accomplished after dropping a third Mk. 46.

The same Orion that sank the Charlie SSGN, VP-26 #11, had moved north by this time and begun tracking the Zulu class SS north of 603.01.03. At 2250 it dropped the first of an astonishing *FIVE* Mk.46 torpedoes on the obsolete diesel boat,

The Norwegian P-3 had by this time closed down the Foxtrot near 603.01.01, and begun dropping Mk. 46 torpedoes. As anticipated, the first one scored a damage; 30 minutes and several torpedoes later, Foxtrot class B-95 was sunk.

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RESULTS AND IMPRESSIONS

The scenario closed with a Major Victory, 7 submarines killed for zero friendly losses. Not a bad start to the war for STANAVFORLANT. There remained three more submarines out there, including the missile-depleted Juliett and one Victor II. I chose to continue the scenario, and all three had been localized and sunk by 0010Z, 2 hours and 40 minutes after the scenario kicked off. The Victor II proved the toughest nut to crack, surviving two Mk. 46 hits before succumbing to a third.

Just for fun I pulled 603.01.01 and 603.01.02 together, and as expected the Bear-Ds followed... and were duly executed upon entering the USS MacDonough's engagement envelope. ☺

My impressions:

- Fun scenario, though the combination of SOSUS, no air threat to the surface units, and no armed opposition for the MPAs made it a bit of a turkey shoot.
- The Mk.46 is a pathetic weapon... remarkably easy to spoof or avoid and a very weak warhead. I have no idea whether it would have any value against a monster like an Oscar or Typhoon, or the titanium hull of the Alfa or Sierras. The only good news is that an Orion or Nimrod carries at least 6 of them, which in this time period seems to be adequate.
- I've gotten used to playing around with modern US, Russian, and PLAN units. Surface ships in this period aren't the absolute bad asses they are today... a modern Arleigh Burke or Type 052D generally dominate the air/seaspace around them, and these guys absolutely do not. While it wasn't a major factor here, I found myself wondering how my single area-defense ship would have performed against even a minimal Backfire/Badger raid.
- ASW helicopters aren't exactly world-beaters either. The Sea King was decent, but the Wasp was nearly useless, and most of my ships had zero aviation capability in any case.



Player Evaluation

Evaluation | Losses & Expenditures | Scoring Log

SIDE: Soviet Union

LOSSES:

1x PLARK-670 Charlie I [Skat]
1x PLA-627A November [Rk]
1x PL- 613 Whiskey V
2x PL-641 Foxtrot
2x PL-611 Zulu IV

EXPENDITURES:

2x SS-N-3a Shaddock [P-6, ASM]
13x Genetic Acoustic Decoy

SIDE: NATO

LOSSES:

EXPENDITURES:

25x AN/SSQ-41A Jezebel LOFAR
4x Type 17054 Active Directional [Mk1c]
3x RIM-67A SM-1ER
13x AN/SSQ-47 Julie Active Range-Only
11x Mk46 LWT Mod 2
8x Type 17053 Passive Directional [Mk1c]
2x Mk11 Depth Charge
21x AN/SSQ-41B Jezebel LOFAR
1x Type 30059 LOFAR [Mk1c]
2x B-57 Multipurpose Sub Bomb [20kT Nuclear]
7x Mk46 LWT Mod 1
1x RUR-5A Mod 4 ASROC RTT [Mk46 Mod 2]

SIDE: Biological

LOSSES:

EXPENDITURES: