

Anti Rogue - Part 1

By Jagged Fell III

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...

Wedge Antilles, veteran of both Death Star attacks, hero of the Rebellion, has set out to reform Rogue Squadron with the aid of fellow Death Star II veteran Tycho Celchu. The group of pilots he has assembled contains Gavin Darklighter and Corran Horn, who will soon go on to be legends of their own in the Expanded Universe.

But what if Ysanne Isard had convinced the Emperor's Hammer to battle against the Rebels rather than trying to do it herself?

Colonel Triji Boliv was in the bow officer's mess aboard the Imperial Star Destroyer Challenge. The Challenge was a Class II Star Destroyer belonging to the TIE Corps of the Emperor's Hammer, the finest Imperial faction that remains in this fractured galaxy after Emperor Palpatine's death six and a half years ago. Boliv was the Squadron Commander of Typhoon Squadron, one of the finest squadrons in the TIE Corps. He was proud to be its commander and was pleased with each of the pilots under his command. He however was not pleased with the amount of datapad work that came with being a commander.

It was the end of a month, and that meant that, once again, the Monthly Squadron Evaluation reports were due to Admiral Stryker, the Battlegroup III Commander, to whom the Challenge, and her pilots, reported. He had chosen this officer's mess as it afforded him the best view of the new system that they had arrived in a few hours previously.

They had journeyed towards the Core, that was evident from the densely packed stars out the view port. The local gas clouds in this region of space gave the stars a blueish hue that seemed to fit the verdant blue-green world they were stationed above. Triji planned to head to the navigation areas after he finished his report to ascertain the name of the system he saw outside and why they were here.

He saw a message waiting icon appear in the corner of his display but chose to ignore it for the moment as he was almost done with this blasted report. When he was finally finished, he took a moment to enjoy the view out the transparisteel window before tabbing over to his email in-box to see what next the day had in-store for him.

He had two messages waiting for him, both from his commanding officers. The first, and the one he had seen before starting work on his MSE, was from his Wing Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Denys Elara. Even though Elara was only a Lieutenant Colonel while Triji was a full Colonel, she out ranked him as the Emperor's Hammer had a curious organizational structure where your rank did not inform who commanded whom, but the positions that each pilot occupied in the TIE Corps was the deciding factor.

This was further evidenced by the fact that he also had two generals in his squadron whom reported to him.

Elara's email was brief and, unsurprisingly, was a complaint about his most "colorful" pilot, General Master.

FROM: LC Elara
SUBJECT: Request from higher ups
Admiral Stryker, and others in the Battlegroup III Command Staff, have requested that I forward to you their hopes that you will be able to keep General Master out of their breakroom from now on. And they requested that you keep him away from them in general, if possible.

I second their request.

WC/LC Denys Elara/Wing X/ISDII Challenge/Battlegroup III

Triji wasn't sure what Master had gotten up to this time and would have to make sure to ask his Squadron Executive Officer Colonel Locke Setzer to look into it, and to counsel Master to behave himself, even if only for a little while as everyone cooled off.

The message that had come in moments before was from Admiral Stryker and Triji was happy he had not delayed too long in reading it.

FROM: AD Stryker
SUBJECT: Typhoon Squadron 1-1 thru 1-3 Report
Colonel Boliv, please have Typhoon Squadron 1-1 thru 1-3 report to the briefing room at once for a time sensitive mission. Note: The rest of the squadron does not need to attend the briefing.

BGC0M/AD Stryker/Battlegroup III

P.S. Specifically, General Master, does not need to come to the briefing.

Well, whatever Master had done apparently had really gotten under Stryker's skin this time but Triji would deal with that after his mission. He activated his commlink and called General La'an and Sub-Lieutenant XateSix to meet him in the briefing room. Maybe he was about to find out from the Admiral where they were and why they had come here.

Triji got to the briefing room and was taking his seat next to La'an just as Admiral Stryker was entering the chamber.

The admiral wasted no time and quickly stood upon the briefing dais as the lights in the room dim and focused on him.

"Ysanne Isard," Admiral Stryker began, "has reached out to the Emperor's Hammer for aid in destroying the Rebellion that killed our beloved Emperor."

“Even though High Admiral Plif has his reservations about committing the Emperor's Hammer's forces to aid a lowly Intelligence officer who seized power after the Emperor's death, he cannot abide the continued existence of the criminals who took our glorious leader from us. High Admiral Plif has tasked Battlegroup III with the duty to support Isard in her quest to root out the rebel scum.”

“Isard's first mission is to support the interdiction of smugglers with known rebel ties. In support of that mission the ISDII Challenge and the MC90 Mon Calamari Starcruiser Renegade have been deployed to the Rachuk System to support Imperial Admiral Devlia's operations. You will be taking your directives on this mission from Admiral Devlia, but now I will turn this briefing over to Lieutenant Colonel Elara for your detailed brief.”

With that the admiral stepped down from the podium and left the room, obviously needing to attend the dozens of other tasks he had before him today. Elara ascended to the top of the platform and keyed the panel to power up the holographic projector. The scene before them showed their current system and the ships and stations in the vicinity. Triji saw a representation of Typhoon Flight 1's TIE Defenders leave the ISDII Challenge and fly past the Rachuk Command station on their way to a hyperspace exit towards another system.

Elara began their briefing and informed them that, “The Interdictor Cruiser Black Asp under Admiral Devlia's command has trapped a smuggler ship with known rebel ties in the Chorax System.”

“The Pulsar Skate is captained by Mirax Terrik, a childhood friend of Rebel Squadron Commander Wedge Antilles of Rogue Squadron.”

Now the projector showed the TIE Defender racing into the Chorax system and past an Interdictor to disable the smuggler craft.

“Travel to the Chorax System and disable the Pulsar Skate before the rebels can mount a rescue operation. If the rebels do mount an operation to free the smuggler, show them the truth of our motto, ‘Strength to Rise; Power to Fly.’”

The simplicity of the dogfight between the Typhoon craft and the rebel X-Wings now in the display was quick and comical. After all the fighters were destroyed it showed the TIE craft racing from the system.

“Once the smuggler is disabled and all possible reinforcements have been dealt with, return to the Rachuk System and the ISDII Challenge for debriefing.”

The lights came back up in the room and Triji led the Typhoon pilots to the ready room to don their flight suits and life support gear before they went as one to the hanger to board their fighters. While the TIE Defender was not the absolute pinnacle of starfighter technology in the Emperor's Hammer any longer, it was still a superior craft to any that the Rebels could field and should make short work of any opposition so foolish as to try to fight them.

Triji powered up the fighter and, as he finished his startup sequence, he keyed his comm unit and said, “Typhoon 1-1 ready for launch.” The Flight Controller quickly cleared him to launch and he maneuvered the fighter out into the void of space and the pale blue light beyond the magcon field.

La'an, flying in Typhoon 1-2, and XateEsix, Typhoon 1-3, formed up on his wing as they flew on to the precalculated hyperspace jump point on their way to capture the smuggler. Admiral Stryker's voice

came over their comm units as they neared their exit, "Go to the Chorax System and capture the smuggler Mirax Terrik. If any other Rebels come to her rescue, show them no mercy."

Hyperspace swirled around them as they flew towards their target. After Triji came out of hyperspace he wondered to himself at how different the stars can look after such a short journey. Whereas the light from the stars in the Rachuk System is full of blue hues, here in the Chorax System red dominated. The gas giant in the distance, with its pale yellow, brown, and orange colors perfectly melded into the bloody mist that seemed to fill the space all around them.

Above Triji he saw the arrowhead silhouette of the Interdictor Black Asp and directly in front of him he spotted the trapped smuggler ship, desperately trying to evade capture. The Pulsar Skate was a VCX-100 freighter, a well-equipped craft, and likely able to defend itself well from pirates and the like, but it would have no hope against the three super fighters screaming towards it.

They had just closed to within a few kilometers of the smuggler when they sensor boards lit-up in warning.

"Twelve rebel X-Wings just entered the system!" General La'an called over the radio channel.

"I see them, let's focus on the ones attacking the Black Asp first!" Triji ordered for indeed, four of the rebel fighters had immediately begun torpedo runs attacking the interdictor. For some inexplicable reason the Black Asp was not able to lay down defensive fire, it would all be down to the three TIE Corps pilots to save the interdictor from these anarchists. And image analysis of the craft showed a squadron crest linked to the famed rebel unit, Rogue Squadron. Their most elite fighter unit. There was also a lambda shuttle accompanying them that was staying to the rear of the action.

Suddenly a radio message from Admiral Devlia came over their comm systems. The Black Asp must have been broadcasting what was happening in Chorax back to Rachuk.

"Do not attack the shuttle. I want the Rebels to witness the destruction of Rogue Squadron!"

The pure ridiculousness of the order was too much for the squadron's newest pilot. "Colonel, those orders don't make any sense!" burst out Sub-Lieutenant XateEsix.

Triji too thought the orders asinine, but he knew what was expected of a pilot in the Emperor's Hammer. "Nevertheless, we will follow our orders," he reminded the green pilot and got back to work destroying the rebels before him.

It was an intense battle, the Typhoon pilots being out numbered four-to-one at the start, but while the X-Wing was a capable fighter, and more than a match for many of the TIE line fighters, it was hopelessly outmatched by the superior TIE Defender. The greater maneuverability of their fighters allowed the Typhoon pilots to quickly slip behind the Rogues, and their immense firepower from the quad laser cannons and dual ion cannons made short work of each cross shaped fighter. The few times the Rogues successfully used their numbers to allow one of the X-Wings to take a shot at the TIEs, the stupendous shield strength of the Defender allowed them to quickly shrug off the attack and make them pay for their audacity.

In seemingly minutes the fighters were all destroyed and ejected rebel pilots were littered about the area. While the shuttle was frantically trying to rescue the rebel fighters with its tractor beam, Typhoon

Squadron returned their attention to the goal of today's mission, the Pulsar Skate. As Triji expected, it tried to put up a fight but it wasn't any more of a match for the TIE Defenders than the X-Wings had been. In short order it was disabled and the TIE Corps pilots assumed the Black Asp would soon use its tractor beam to reel in the freighter.

But then Admiral Devlia's voice once again issued forth from their radios, "Captain, bring the Black Asp back to Rachuk immediately."

The Black Asp's captain was obviously incredulous and it could clearly be heard in her voice when her reply came over the comm, "Admiral, the Rebel shuttle has picked up many of the downed rebel pilots. If we leave the shuttle will escape!"

"Captain, do as you are told!"

With that there was nothing the Typhoon pilots could do, they had been ordered to leave the shuttle alone and it had already finished picking up all the downed Rogue Squadron pilots and even now was tractoring in the escape pod from the disabled freighter. With a flash of pseudomotion the Black Asp was gone, and not long after the rebel shuttle too.

As they reentered the Rachuk System Admiral Stryker came over the radio, "Good work Typhoon Squadron. The rebels escaped, but you followed your orders. We have captured the Pulsar Skate and we will examine it for any evidence of the location of the rebel's base in this sector."

They navigated their way back into the Challenge's fighter bay and powered down their ships. Once they finished their post-flight checklist and climbed down to the hanger deck, they made their way to the briefing room as a unit.

They were met by Lieutenant Colonel Elara and Admiral Stryker. After they all took their seats the admiral began, "Admiral Devlia's order for the Black Asp to power down and retreat from the Chorax System allowed nearly all the members of Rogue Squadron to escape on the shuttle he also ordered to be left alone. The admiral's reasoning is baffling, but you followed your training and complied with your orders as is expected of a member of the Emperor's Hammer. The continued survival of the criminal organization calling themselves the New Republic makes more sense now that we see the kinds of decisions that the Empire's leaders are making. They value fear and symbolism above achieving their military objective."

"However, the New Republic has been dealt a serious blow to morale with the wholesale defeat of their premier fighter squadron, and those responsible for the destruction of the Death Star, and our adored Emperor, have experienced our disdain."

"The rebels will likely try to hide the defeat of their prized unit as it would show them for the sham that they truly are. We expect them to field the squadron using new ships as soon as they can, but we in the Emperor's Hammer know the truth, their best was no match for our training and skill. When those felonious rebels come up against us next, they will be destroyed again."

"The capture of the smuggler ship, Pulsar Skate, has allowed our technicians to start searching it for clues to the whereabouts of the Rebel base in this sector. No doubt that without our timely intervention the rebels would have succeeded in at the very least driving off the Imperial Interdictor, Black Asp."

“Strength to Rise; Power to Fly!”

And with that they were dismissed. It had been an eventful day and Triji now had even more paperwork to do as he now had to file his report on the mission. And he still needed to find out what kind of trouble Master had gotten up to yesterday to piss off the higher ups.

Triji was once again in the bow officers mess drinking his caf and looking out the viewscreen onto the majesty of the sky with its seemingly endless expanse of sapphires shining down on them. It had been an interesting few days since their mission to capture the Pulsar Skate. The mutterings among the fighter pilots had been especially intense. While Typhoon Squadron had managed to destroy Rogue Squadron without taking any losses, they still were skilled combatants and to let them return to their hidden base was to allow them to bring possible death to other loyal Imperial service members, maybe even a friend.

Triji had found out that Master had apparently been plastering the Command Staff’s break room with leaflets about “Space Emus”, whatever they were supposed to be. He opened his email and saw a pair of new ones for him to read.

FROM: COL Setzer
SUBJECT: RE: Keep Master out of Trouble
Yeah, how am I supposed to do that exactly? I barely can keep track of where he is, let alone keep him out of trouble. If you can't get him to listen to you, what chance do you think I have? The best we can hope for is that this upcoming mission keeps him occupied, and out of everyone's hair for a couple of days (hours?).
SQXO-CAPT/COL Locke Setzer/Typhoon 2-1/Wing X/ISDII Challenge/Battlegroup III

It had been worth a shot to try and get his XO to take care of the Master problem for him, but he had known it wouldn't work. His second email was from Master and he just shook his head as he quickly keyed to delete the attachments.

FROM: GN Master
SUBJECT: SPACE EMUS
Colonel, what have you heard about Space Emus? See the pictures I found, some of which I have attached below...
FM-TACA/GN Master/Typhoon 2-2/Wing X/ISDII Challenge/Battlegroup III
[You have deleted the rest of the email and all attachments]

He sometimes wondered why the universe had chosen to saddle him with Master as a subordinate. He would have preferred a firm punch in the face.

Anyway, it was time to report to the briefing room to learn of their newest mission.

“Word has reached Imperial Intelligence of a possible disguised Rebel frigate in the Hensara System. I know that Admiral Devlia’s decision to allow the pilots of Rogue Squadron to escape is still a topic

of much discussion among the different flight groups. That stops now. We are not anarchists like the Rebels, nor are we some fresh new recruits without discipline. We are the Emperor's Hammer and we follow our orders, without question," Admiral Stryker held each of the pilot's gaze for a moment before continuing on.

"The best intelligence that the Empire has is that a modified Imperial Customs frigate was heavily damaged and forced to land on a jungle planet within the Hensara System. They have brought in a support ship and made repairs to the frigate but it has not made it out of the gravity well of the planet yet and cannot jump to lightspeed."

"Travel to the Hensara System and destroy the Rebel frigate and any support ship in the system. If there is a fighter escort you may destroy them or ignore them as you see fit, our target is only the capital ships making their escape."

"Here is Lieutenant Colonel Denys Elara who will conduct the detailed portion of this briefing."

As Elara spoke, "You will continue to be flying in TIE Defenders in a full flight of four craft," the holoprojector showed Typhoon Squadron emerging from the Challenge and local Rachuk System around them. "The ISDII Challenge, and its escort ship the MC90 Renegade, are still stationed in the Rachuk System reporting to Imperial Admiral Devlia."

Then the display changed to a new system and showed an Assault Frigate and Corellian Corvette attempting to escape the planet's gravity well.

"Imperial Intelligence has learned of a Rebel spy ship, a frigate, which was forced to land on a remote planet in the Hensara System. The rebels have sent a corvette with repair specialist to get the frigate flying again."

Elara outlined the mission parameters for them succinctly, "You will lead One Flight of Typhoon Squadron to the Hensara System and destroy both the Rebel frigate and the corvette. The rebels will likely have sent a fighter escort for both capital ships. It is not mission critical to destroy the fighters only the capital ships."

The Typhoon icons flew to destroy the two capital ships in the projection when a group of X-Wing icons appeared to get in the way. Then a flight of missile boats appeared and performed salvo runs against both larger ships until they disappeared.

"If needed, you may call for Two Flight of Typhoon Squadron, flying Missile Boats as reinforcements. They will focus on the capital ships first before engaging with the fighter escort. Once both capital ships are destroyed, return to the Challenge for debriefing."

And with the capital ships gone the TIE Defenders and Missile Boats left the system and the remaining rebel fighters behind.

The lights came up in the room and Triji could see the excitement of General Master, just hoping he would be called upon to rain death on the rebels today. The banter was light hearted in the group as they made their way to the hanger and their waiting fighters. When all were ready, Flight 1 of Typhoon Squadron launched and quickly lined up on their exit vector towards Hensara.

“Go to the Hensara System and destroy the Rebel frigate and any supporting capital ships Any fighter escort may be dealt with at your discretion,” Admiral Stryker reminded them over the radio as they rocketed out of the system. Triji knew that his XO, Colonel Setzer, would have Flight 2 of Typhoon out in space and stationed in a system nearby Hensara, waiting for any signal to join in the attack.

Triji’s fighter leapt into the blue maelstrom of hyperspace and settled in for the short journey to Hensara. As they exited into real-space Triji’s sensors quickly appraised him of the situation in orbit. Above the lush, green jungle world he could see the frigate kilometers distant, down deep in the gravity well and it was escorted by twenty fighters, twelve Y-Wings and eight X-Wings. Much closer to Triji there was the corvette and another four escorting X-Wings who already were turning to engage his forces. And strangely enough, another craft was present, a VCX-100 Freighter whose transponder was identifying as the Pulsar Skate 2, the shear cheek.

Triji keyed his mic to give his orders and a quick report back to Rachuk, “The frigate is deep in the planet’s gravity well. Destroy the corvette and then go for the frigate.”

La’an remarked about the smuggler, “It seems the smuggler got a new ship.”

Admiral Devlia’s voice issued forth from his comm, once again, “Do not attack the Pulsar Skate. I want the Rebels to witness your victory over Rogue Squadron!”

What was with this guy and wanting them to leave witnesses after battles?! Triji briefly wondered if he could be a secret rebel sympathizer, it would help explain these weird orders he kept on giving.

But of course, the new guy couldn’t keep his disgust quiet, “Again?! Again?!” XateEsix exclaimed.

“Cut the chatter, we follow our orders in the TIE Corps.” Triji had to get through to his newest member that even though they may not agree with their orders, they had to obey them all the same.

His moment to think about such things had come to an end as he, and the rest of Flight 1, closed to attack range with the X-Wings. Devlia had been right, Triji once again saw the Rogue Squadron markings of the S-Foils of the X-Wings around him. He was surprised that the resource strapped rebels had replaced twelve fighters so quickly.

No matter, they didn’t last any longer today than they had in the Chorax System. As the last of the closer four X-Wings was consumed in a ball of fire he turned his attention to the wider battle. He, and the rest of Flight 1, could easily take out the now defenseless corvette, but the other twenty fighters were quickly approaching, and there was the frigate to consider. It still would all be doable, but why take a chance with his men’s lives when he didn’t have to. He keyed the signal to Locke to bring Flight 2 into the fight.

In no time at all, the four Missile Boats jumped into the system with him and started towards the corvette as the TIE Defenders set themselves to do battle with the X-Wings who were just about in range.

“Crikey! Look at the size of that space emu!” Master called out over the radio.

“Come on Master! Be a little serious,” Triji shot back. “We are in the middle of a battle.”

“But Colonel, space emus are real and very dangerous!”

“I knew I was going to regret calling your flight in...”

Triji focused then on the job at hand, keeping the rebel fighters off the Missile Boats as they took care of the capital ships with their load of heavy rockets. And it didn't take long for the corvette to be exploding into space dust!

"One down! One to Go!" La'an called out in celebration.

Now the rebel fighters were really giving it their all, Triji took a few hits on his aft shields and had to quickly break his plane of movement to shake the X-Wing off his tail while redirecting some energy to restore his shields to full strength. But he would not be denied and looped back around to finish off the Y-Wing he had had under his guns just moments previously.

He could hear over the radio Locke, Master, and the others of Flight 2 calling out ranges to the frigate and turbolaser locations to one another. They seemed to be taking pleasure in systematically taking out the frigate's point defenses before going in for the kill. And with that the frigate was in atoms too.

The rebel fighters were maneuvering to protect the escape pods heading both towards the surface and out into space. But Typhoon's mission here was done and it was time to go home. Triji signaled the return to base order to all the TIE Corps fighters and turned to burn his way out of the gravity well and into hyperspace beyond.

As they returned to Rachuk, Admiral Stryker came over the air saying, "Good work Typhoon Squadron. You followed your orders, and the Pulsar Skate escaped. Return to the Challenge for debriefing."

He landed his TIE without hardly a bump and powered down its systems. As he climbed from his cockpit, he saw that all his pilot's had likewise extricated themselves and were making their way to the briefing room for the Admiral's customary post-mission hot wash briefing. Admiral Stryker was already waiting for them in the room.

"You once again showed the superiority of the might and training of the Emperor's Hammer with your defeat of the Rebellion's most lauded squadron. You performed well and removed those capital ships from their service to the criminals who think they can undo all the accomplishments of the Empire our Lord, Palpatine, built."

"Again, the local Imperial Admiral Devlia ordered us to not pursue a total victory over the Rebel forces, much to our frustration, but you did your duty and obeyed the orders you were given. You have upheld the highest principle of the Emperor's Hammer and are to be commended."

"All hope of destroying Rogue Squadron may not be lost however. The Imperial Intelligence agent Ysanne Isard assigned to this operation, a man named Kirtan Loor, has indicated that he believes he can find the base from which the renegades have been deploying. He proposes to use the wreckage from the ships you destroyed and the trails of ionized fuel left by the ships that entered the atmosphere of the planet to find the system in which they are currently hiding. We can only hope that Agent Loor is correct and that the Imperial command staff will permit us to finally bring about the end of these disgraceful Rogues. 'Storm is our business, destruction is our target, fear is our ally.'"

Triji was pleased, twice his squadron had gone up against the rebels very best, and twice they had destroyed them with impunity.

TO BE CONTINUED