

Typhoon Squadron: Into the Chaos

By Jagged Fell III

Colonel Triji Boliv was finishing his meal in the Wing X Mess Hall when his commlink informed him that he was to report to the briefing room immediately. He had a good idea why he was being summoned. The Fleet had just exited hyperspace, for what felt like the hundredth time in recent weeks, and they must have arrived at their destination, finally.

He was the squadron commander of Typhoon Squadron, assigned to the Imperial Star Destroyer Challenge, a part of the Fleet known as the Emperor's Hammer. His squadron had a long and storied history full of greatness and of hard times. Many names and faces that he once knew had moved on to other units within the fleet, retired from active duty, and others, gone, never to be heard from again. He had reformed Typhoon Squadron just a few months ago, and while it had many great pilots with whom he had served with for years, and a few fresh new faces by way of recent recruits, it was still not up to full strength. His squadron only had seventy-five percent of its full operational strength now, but they would perform whatever task the Emperor's Hammer assigned to them, for they are "The Storm From Hell."

As he stepped into the turbolift to the wing command deck, he quickly called his executive officer, "Locke, pass the word to the squadron; everyone is to report to the pilot's briefing room by 0820." "Will do, Colonel. Any word on what is happening?" asked Locke. "No, but I think our journey is done and time for us to get to work," he responded. "Copy that. Meet you in the briefing room in five minutes, Locke out."

He could not have asked for a better SQXO than Colonel Locke Setzer and he knew it. They had served with each other off and on for decades, so he was grateful Locke had joined him in reforming the squadron.

Triji reached the briefing room and proceeded to his place at the head of the room. Soon, his pilots, and those of Tempest Squadron, filed into the room and took their seats. He nodded across the room to his corollary, Major Colo Delste, the Tempest Squadron Commander. The lights came down in the room and Admiral Stryker took the podium.

"As you all know, thirty minutes ago we came out of hyperspace into this system marked XC-50391 on the old Imperial surveys. There should have been an Imperial colony of over three thousand people located on the second planet in this system. But the Fleet's comms section is not picking up any comms traffic. Or any chatter on any EM frequency that we can detect."

"High Admiral Plif has ordered that we have boots on the ground within the hour, and that is exactly what we are going to do. I will now turn this briefing over to Wing Commander Elara."

"Lambda Squadron, off the Hammer, will be transporting over fifty technicians and two hundred stormtroopers down to the reported site of the colony, while Wing X will be a part of their fighter screen and escort."

"Tempest Squadron, you will be flying combat patrols around the Fleet in orbit while Typhoon, you will be escorting the shuttles to the ground. Once landing operations have concluded, you will provide

Combat Air Patrol for the area around the colony, and start a preliminary recon of the immediate vicinity of the colony site.”

“We are deep in the Unknown Regions here, and have had reports of several hostile alien species in the area. Be on high alert for any signs of alien activity, and report immediately signs of either the missing colonists or potential hostiles. That will be all. Report to your fighters at once for immediate deployment.”

As soon as Lieutenant Colonel Denys Elara stepped away from the podium, the lights came up in the room and pilots began to hurry from the room for the lifts to take them down to the Flight Deck. When Triji entered the squadron’s Ready Room five minutes later, he was pleased to see all his pilots nearly finished donning their flight suits and life-support systems. He decided on setting Colonel Setzer’s Two Flight the task of the Combat Air Patrol, as they were his only flight who were at full strength. He would lead his under-staffed One Flight and Three Flight, under Major Prost Varsis, in escorting the shuttles and begin their reconnaissance sweep of the area.

As they settled into the cockpits of their TIE Defenders, and the fighters started to be moved into launch position, he keyed his mic and spoke over the squadron’s assigned frequency. “Two Flight, head straight down and start your patrol. Everyone else, form up on the shuttles to escort them down.”

He was shoved back into his pilot’s couch as the Defender rocketed out of the Challenge’s hanger. He took a moment to enjoy the sheer exhilaration of flying before swinging up and around the edge of the Challenge’s bow, checking his rear sensors to make sure his pilots were following behind, especially Three Flight’s two new recruits who had just joined the squadron as they traveled out on this deployment.

The space around him just looked wrong to him. This area of the Unknown Regions was filled with cataclysmic supernovae, black holes, and other strange phenomena. This gave the sky a mottled appearance filled with splashes of bright colors of every hue of the visible spectra, and likely much of the spectrum outside human visible range, too. In his over twenty years with the TIE Corps of Emperor’s Hammer, Triji Boliv had never seen a tighter cluster of stellar events in what should have been a velvety expanse.

He did not like it. The stars seemed to him to shine with an open hostility towards the Fleet before him; he almost thought he could feel their malevolence. He shivered for a quick moment before he focused his thoughts on the task at hand and plunged down through the Fleet towards the rally point just beyond the Fleet’s flagship, the Imperial Star Destroyer Hammer, some twenty kilometers distant.

The Fleet of the Emperor’s Hammer consisted of six Star Destroyers, all of the latest Imperial Class II variety, the Modified Frigate Phoenix, and a captured MC90 Mon Calamari Starcruiser named the Renegade. While all the other ships of the fleet projected power through their harsh, rigid, Imperial geometric design, the Renegade with her smooth, almost amorphous lines stood apart. Fighters were streaming from nearly every ship and quickly taking up their respective positions around and in the Fleet.

As he reached the rendezvous point for Lambda Squadron, Triji throttled back his top-of-the-line fighter and began to orbit the shuttles as they finished gathering together. Almost immediately, the shuttle’s Squadron Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Gytheran, came over the inter-Fleet frequency reporting that his force was collected and they were starting their decent into the atmosphere of the green and blue planet below them.

They headed for a point on the northern hemisphere of the planet where the old Imperial reports showed the colony had been established over twelve years ago. It was eerie descending on what should have been a thriving Imperial world, but was silent as a tomb on every frequency Triji scanned though. This world had seemingly abundant natural resources and there was no apparent reason for the colony to have failed. However, that was the job of the specialist and technicians aboard the shuttles to determine, not his.

As they broke through the cloud layer and approached the site of the former colony, Triji was shocked at the utter destruction he saw below. What was once a sizable Imperial colony that looked to have expanded well beyond the borders he had been told to expect, had been brought under intense fire from above. However, the characteristics of the damage was not what Colonel Triji was used to seeing. The buildings had not been struck by turbolaser fire, which tends to blast apart buildings and vehicles, but instead the colony had been hit by something that seemed to have partially melted the ferrocrete and durasteel buildings and equipment.

The expansion of the colony pointed to their having more than the reported thirty-two hundred that was in their briefing package, possibly indicating that the colony had not been destroyed until fairly recently. They would have needed time to grow their numbers to the point where they would have needed to expand the colony beyond the original defensive fortifications. However, those fortifications did not seem to have helped much in the assault that struck the colony. The damage in the central part of the colony was no less than elsewhere, maybe even more extensive, if that was possible.

After the shuttles of Lambda Squadron deposited their cargo of personnel in several places around the colony, Triji led his force to the center of the colony and keyed into his ship's guidance system a standard polar search pattern that would have him and his pilots perform ever widening arcs centered on the colony. He ordered them all to remain well within sensor range of each other, while keeping a sharp eye out for any hostile forces that might still be out there. They all set their speed to just under seventy-five percent of their maximum atmospheric velocity to enable them to gather a more detailed picture of the area they flew over, scanning out more than half a kilometer to either side of their fighter as they flew on.

Three hours later, as Lambda Squadron was returning from the Hammer with more materiel and the survey teams, all hell broke loose! His group of five pilots had scanned just over eighteen thousand square kilometers or seventy-five kilometers in all directions from the center of the colony, when they heard an urgent radio message from one of the survey teams exploring the colony. They had triggered some kind of booby trap in the old central government building. Five members of the team had died horrifically via some kind of acidic poison mist released in the room they were standing in. At the same time, an explosion rocked the military annex attached to the government building.

Triji suddenly saw his sensor screens light up with possible contacts as dozens of fighters race into the sky from shielded positions around the far perimeter of the colony. Triji could only assume the enemy were either remote or droid controlled fighters, as the lifeform readings from all the craft come back negative.

"Typhoon Squadron, this was a trap! All ships form up and cover one another! Two Flight, get to our position as fast as you can; we have over thirty atmospheric fighters of unknown type about to engage us."

“Negative One, we have twenty-four fighters heading for the shuttles that just broke through at fifteen thousand meters. I have radioed them to retreat back into orbit as these fighters don’t seem to be space capable, but we need to cover their withdrawal!”

“Understood, once the shuttles break atmosphere, go suborbital and get here as quick as you can. We will do what we can to hold them off.”

“Roger that!”

“Typhoon Squadron, don’t take chances, but cover our people on the ground. Remember, these fighters seem to be atmospheric craft only. Use that to your advantage.”

A chorus of acknowledgments rang-out on the comms, and then Triji was diving into the thick of the enemy forces firing as he went, his wingman General Jarek La’an right behind him. He quickly determined that the enemy fighters were no match for their TIE Defenders’ defenses, since they seemed to be fully unshielded, but as they were designed for atmospheric operation only, were more maneuverable than the TIEs. The enemy fighters were not using laser cannons, but projectiles of odd composition. The rapid spray of solid masses accelerated towards the squadron’s ships impacted harmlessly against the TIE’s shields. But the molten spheres of some white-hot, viscous substance, did immense damage to the shields. One solid hit to Triji’s rear shields took them down nearly twenty-two percent from their maximum charge.

“Don’t worry about their flechette launchers, but watchout for those strange plasma balls of theirs! We can only take a couple of hits from them before we will be in real trouble.”

Triji inverted and dove for the deck shaking the bandit off his six just as a second plasma sphere shot towards his damaged aft shields. The alien ship didn’t have a chance to go for a third shot as shooting up from below, La’an let loose a full quad burst and disintegrated the atmospheric fighter as he flew through its debris cloud.

“Thanks, Two.”

Triji pulled out of his drive and rocketed up taking out another fighter on his way through the maelstrom. He checked his sensor displays and it showed his squadron was more than holding its own. Of the original thirty-seven enemy fighters only twenty-two remain, but the data feeds from the other TIEs show several hits had been sustained from the weird plasma weapons.

He finished his climb and inverted to drive back through the largest of the engagements, making two deflection shots as he went, but only one brought down its target; the other only scored a glancing blow that did not seem to stop the fighter in its attack on the port shields of the newest squadron member, Lieutenant Jagged Fell III. But just as the fighter released its plasma weapon, Fell cut his throttle and the deadly projectile flew harmlessly past the nose of his TIE. Fell slewed his fighter around and got on the tail of his erstwhile attacker and quickly put two dual laser shots into the enemy and dived away in pursuit of his initial quarry.

Now Triji’s sensors showed only twelve enemy fighters remaining. Just as he was starting to feel that the battle would soon be over, all twelve fighters disengaged from Typhoon’s forces and dove directly towards the colony buildings below, firing all the way.

“Typhoon, they are going for the ground troops! Stop them and fast as you can!”

The flechettes that could not hurt his TIE Defender, had no such trouble killing the few foolish stormtroopers not under cover below. They must have come out from their positions to watch what they assumed was going to be a glorious Imperial victory over these new alien fighters, and they now were paying for that over confidence with their lives.

Triji dived and shot as fast as he could, getting another three of the enemy fighters before he had to pull up to avoid the half-melted buildings below. Of twelve suicidal fighters, all were destroyed by his pilots, but not before they had inflicted serious damage to several areas of the colony.

“One here, we are all clear. Two Flight do you need any help up there?”

“Negative, One. All fighters destroyed.”

“Any casualties?”

“They were able to take down Lieutenant Yoyo’s port shields, but only superficial hull damage occurred. The plasma sphere must have used up all its energy punching through and didn’t have enough left to carry on.”

“How about Lambda Squadron? Any of the enemy attacks get through to them?”

“No, we kept them off the shuttles until they made it to space but it was a close thing.”

“Good work.”

Switching over to the Fleet wide frequency, Triji pressed his mic switch, “Challenge, this is Typhoon One. We were engaged by sixty-two atmospheric fighters. No loses to Typhoon Squadron, but the final attack wave did significant damage to the ground forces here. Request reinforcements and evac shuttles for the injured on the ground.”

“Typhoon One, this is Colonel Elara. Beta, Gamma, and Epsilon Squadrons are on their way escorting the evac shuttles. When they arrive on station, Typhoon Squadron is ordered back to the ship for debriefing. You, Typhoon One, are ordered to report to High Admiral Plif aboard the Hammer directly.”

“Roger Challenge, Typhoon Squadron to return to base once relief arrives, and I will proceed to the Hammer to report to Admiral Plif.”

Colonel Boliv stood at attention, after telling High Admiral Plif about the events down on the planet.

“Good. While I do not easily bear the deaths of those lost on the ground, the enemy lying in wait for us tells me that this colony was destroyed very recently, and is of some unknown importance to them. We should be able to get some clues from the wreckage of those fighters you faced, while the destroyed colony itself should point us in the direction of those who are behind this assault on our people. I am very interested in discovering the nature of the plasma weapons you reported them to have used, and how their hangers were able to be shielded from your reconnaissance sweep. Tell your people good work out there today and to get some rest; this will not be the last that we tangle with this foe. I mean for us to utterly destroy them for this cowardly ambush and the attack on our colony. You are dismissed.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

Triji left the room and traveled back to rejoin his squadron on the Challenge. He knew that Typhoon Squadron would rise to any trial that this Chaos region could throw at them for as their motto says, “We will fly the winds of death...”