

Chapter 4: Last Stand

GTD Atlantis

Delta Serpents

07-07-2391

0800 Hours

“Can we hold Delta Serpents?”

“We need to.”

“Captain Ropert. You’ve been put in charge of Intelligence. You know more about their fleet than anyone. This is the fourth time I’ve asked. Can we hold Delta Serpents?”

For yet another time, Ropert was being faced by two of the three Terran commanders. He could tell that Kohler and White wanted a definitive answer, and badly. But he couldn’t bring himself to give them the truth. “I don’t know! We might! That’s as good as I can do! What I can tell you is that if they take Delta Serpents, we’ll be pushed all the way back to Sol... Sirs, with all due respect, we need to think about negotiations.”

Kohler’s eyes were now wild with rage. “Never! Now, get us all the reports you can on their forces. I want to know everything! Then, I’m going to take the reports, load them into the simulators, and we’re going to get every commander we have working on a viable solution. Now, get to work!” Ropert left the conference room with his tail between his legs. None of the commanders were listening to his recommendations. Returning to his ship, one question consumed him: if they didn’t want his opinions, why did they put him in charge of intelligence?

“Nick, with all due respect, do you think that have been a little unwise? Maybe we should have heard him out.”

“No, Daniel! Your sending orders to the Armageddon through a Vasudan communications station was unwise! Telling that impertinent twit to get back to his ship was one of the best things that’s happened since we’ve arrived in Vega!”

“Quiet, Nick. The guards will hear you.”

“Forget the guards. Have you even heard the latest on the Vasudan investigations? They’ve got us nailed, dead to freaking rights. They’ve got our orders to the Armageddon to attack the Meret in Deneb and then move to Beta Aquilae to run the blockade as a cover and finish the job! They’ve got our transcripts saying we knew Chancellor Ryshal was on the Meret! They’ve got papers saying that we knew that Vasudan fighters were going to destroy the Omega Transport and kill Garret. And somehow, they managed to get their hands on ship logs reporting that those Vasudan fighters were actually on the Armageddon! They know everything! They know exactly what we did and exactly how we did it!”

“Nick, you’re talking about the Vasudan investigation. How does that affect us?”

“Come on. You’re not that naïve. It gives the Vasudans one more reason to fight! It gives them an edge. And we’re sitting here in Delta Serpents on our last leg of subspace! Now are you really going to sit here and say it doesn’t affect us?!”

“No... you really think we’re going to lose, don’t you?”

“What do you think? But I’ll be damned if I won’t go down fighting.”

“Listen, where are you going to be stationed during all of this?”

“I’ve taken up quarters on the GTD Relentless.”

“We have days before the battle begins, Nick. We still have a chance.”

GTCv Kingu
Delta Serpentis
07-07-2391
0900 Hours

“Are those tests back yet?”

“Yes sir.”

“Well?”

“Everything came back green sir. They’re finally working.”

“You’re sure? We’re talking about the Mjolnir Two’s, right? They’re working?”

“Yes sir. They even managed to pass a live practice test.”

The news was enough to make Leight’s day. Those beam sentries had caused more than their fair share of frustration. It was about time they were going to do their share of work.

“Get on the comm. Tell Kohler, White and Ropert they’re working And by all means, lets start putting these things in position.”

GTD Relentless
Delta Serpentis
07-07-2391
1106 Hours

“Any news from the Antares front?”

The communications officer closed his eyes as he handed a small piece of paper to the Admiral. “Only this transmission, sir.”

Kohler’s eyes perused over the message for a few seconds before he uttered his first response. “No, damn it!” Curses and screams of rage gushed forth from the commander’s lips. His crew slowly edged its way away from his command chair, with the single exception of his XO.

“What, um, what’s the news, sir?”

The response was slow, Kohler’s mind taking its time to even register that someone was speaking to him. “Admiral Wulf’s forces have lost Antares. The GTVI forces have been all but wiped out. After Admiral Wulf’s ship was destroyed, the few remaining ships packed it in and are on there way here. Two were destroyed just trying to make it through Beta Aquilae. All of the remaining ships are in critical condition.”

“Should I inform Admiral White, sir?”

“Huh? Oh yes, go ahead and tell him. And contact Captain Leight. Tell him to get those sentries ready. We’re going to be defending against quite a force.”

“I’ll get right on it, Admiral.”

“One more thing, get this into all the simulators. We need another plan.”

GTD Erikson
Delta Serpentis
07-07-2391
1215 Hours

“Captain Ropert, Captain Leight of the Kingu reports that the Mjolnir II beam sentries are in place along both nodes.”

Ropert’s eyes almost rolled clear into the back of his head “Are they going to work this time?”

“Everything looks good sir. It seems they’ve finally gotten the bugs out.”

“It’s about time. We may have some hope in this yet.”

GTD Relentless
Delta Serpentis
07-07-2391
2046 Hours

“What about you?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing? And the computers?”

“Only one possible solution. And it’s a long shot, a real long shot.” The news was disappointing but at least it was some hope. The officer went over the one viable solution with Kohler and the other officers four times, each time looking for something, anything that would help. But it was useless. The computers were right. They had one shot at this, and it was a real Hail Mary. “Sir, once again, I must strongly suggest that we consider reopening negotiations”

“We will not surrender!”

“Why?”

“Why not surrender? Are you”

“No! Why am I in charge of intelligence? Why? It’s obvious you don’t want my opinion. Why did you pick me?” Ropert stood waiting for an answer he would not get as Kohler stared off into the deep emptiness of space. “Sir?” Fed up, Ropert slammed the door behind him and stormed back to his ship. He would not talk to Kohler again.

GTD Erikson
Delta Serpentis
07-08-2391
1100 Hours

“Helm, move the Erikson further back in the lines, closer to the Atlantis. I want to be there if this doesn’t work.” The bridge crew stared in confusion at the order, but when no follow up came, they were forced to obey without knowing the reason. It was unlike Ropert not to tell his crew the reasons for his actions. His officers were beginning to worry.

GTCv Kingu
Delta Serpents
07-08-2391
1203 Hours

“Okay, we’ve got twenty-four hours. Keep running tests on the sentries. They’re crucial.”

“On it, sir.”

“And get a communication out to the Erikson. I need to talk with Ropert.”

GTD Relentless
Delta Serpents
07-09-2391
0015 Hours

“Twelve hours left. Are all the ships in formation? Good. What about the beams? Are they still working? Everything okay? Good. Good.”

“Sir, are you okay? You sound like you need some rest.”

“Maybe it is time to rest up some before the big battle... Send for me if you need me.”

GTD Erikson
Delta Serpents
07-09-2391
1316 Hours

“Here they come!” Ropert’s scanner showed the first Vasudan ships coming through the node. “Sentry reports!”

“All sentries activating. One Vasudan ship down.”

Ropert gave a sigh of relief. It would still be quite a battle, but working sentries was a sight for very sore eyes. “Okay, move in on that destroyer coming through the node. Weapons, all forward and starboard beams on my command... Now!!” The Erikson moved in on a Beset destroyer, a more than favorable match for the Terran ship. The beams of the Erikson were carving into the ship as another Terran vessel approached to help. No contest for two Terran destroyers, the Beset didn’t last long enough to release an ample fighter defense.

GTD Relentless
Delta Serpents
07-09-2391
1525 Hours

“A Naunet moving off the port side!”

“Move in. Ask the Atlantis to cover.” Kohler watched the Vasudan super-destroyer approach another Terran ship and open fire. “Now! Get in there and attack!” The Relentless and Atlantis moved in as the small Terran cruiser was slowly beaten into oblivion. Once it was gone, the Vasudan ship turned to concentrate fire on the Relentless. But it couldn’t withstand two Terran destroyers, and was quickly vanquished in the attack.

Each time a Vasudan ship moved into the system, a Terran ship was there to combat it. The GTA had mustered every ship from the backwaters to the Antares survivors, every last one. Old Leviathans had joined the ranks with Princeton destroyers. Ships were running on skeletal crews so the GTA could take ships out of mothballs. Meson warheads had been placed like mines all around the node. And every ship was armed to the teeth. When the Vasudan fleet started to arrive in massive numbers, drones loaded with explosives dove into the hulls of enemy ships. The Terran fleet knew this was their last chance and most were ready to fight to the last ship, if necessary.

After hours of conflict, the Vasudans still showed no signs of stopping. Their economic boom during Terran economic struggles had allowed them to amass quite an arsenal of ships. More and more destroyers were flowing through the node. Finally, the Terran commanders felt the time was right. They slowly pulled away from the nodes, allowing the Vasudans ships to group as they came in. One by one, the activation lights of the Meson warheads came on. The Terran ships kept up attacks on the outer Vasudan ships, holding their enemy near the nodes. Three minutes later, the warheads detonated, wiping out dozens upon dozens of Vasudan vessels.

The blast could only be compared with that of the Capella sun those many years ago. Bridge crews had to shade their eyes from the blast portrayed on the screens in front of them. Ships everywhere, mostly Vasudan but some Terran, were erupting in giant balls of flame and debris. Small pieces of hull bombarded nearby ships, punching through decks as if they weren't even there.

When the shockwaves had finally dissipated, the Terran commanders surveyed the scene before them. While surviving Vasudan ships were scattered and disorganized, the Terrans were just regrouping. This was just the break they needed.

Terran ships grouped up on their enemies, sometimes three to one. The battle didn't last long after that. Vasudans had long stopped coming through the nodes, and the Terrans were fighting like never before. During the lingering hours of the battle, the human commanders and pilots wiped Delta Serpentis clean of their enemies. No prisoners. No mercy.

Within hours of the battle, Terran commanders were already regrouping for another battle. They were primed. They were ready for action. And they still had a thirst for blood. Final orders went out from Kohler and White and the massive Terran fleet marched forward, poised to retake Beta Aquilae. Ready to take Vasuda itself when they got there...