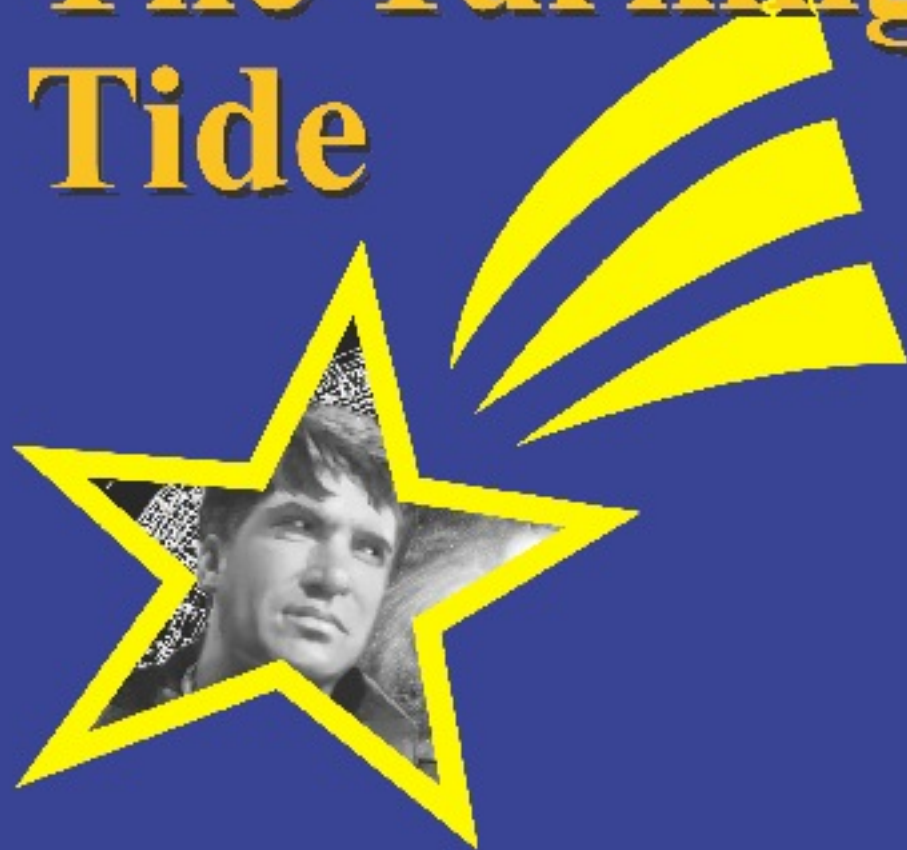
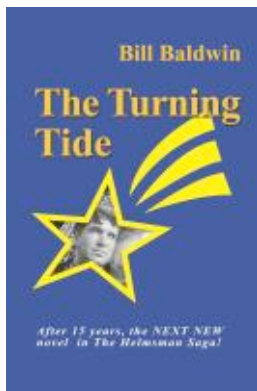


Bill Baldwin

The Turning Tide



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THE TURNING TIDE

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2012

THE TURNING TIDE

Third Edition



HELMSMAN'S
WINGED COMET

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The Helmsman (Classic Edition: 1985) • (Director's Cut Edition: 2003)

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The Defenders, 1992

The Siege, 1994

The Defiance 1996

"Last Ship to Haefdon" (nv) *Oceans of Space*, ed. Brian M. Thomsen & Martin H. Greenberg, DAW 2002

The Enigma Strategy 2009

NOTE: A Wilf Brim Glossary
especially for *The Turning Tide*
begins on page
347

The Galactic Almanac

(and handy encyclopedia)

Invasion of Emithrnéy/Bax (52014)

From the Edition for Standard Year 52016

Contents [hide]

- 1 General Information
- 2 Imperial Forces
- 3 Preparations
- 4 The Attack
- 5 The Anomaly
- 6 General Trafford's Order to Withdraw
- 7 Admiral Brim's Partial Countermand
- 8 Military Consequences
- 9 Personnel Consequences
- 10 Addenda

General Information.

The main thrust of this raid into occupied Effer'wyck was to destroy the Gravity Dock near Epeid City on Emithrnéy/Bax, a massive starship repair complex—vast enough to service the largest starships in the Known Universe and sufficiently impregnable to withstand poundings from the most powerful disruptors at the time. Before the invasion of Effer'wyck by The League of Dark Stars, the Effer'wyckean government had constructed the facility at enormous cost. Ironically, it was now serving as a furtherance to Nergol Triannic's ambition of conquering the entire Home Galaxy. Its destruction would deal a hard blow to The League.

The Turning Tide

The secondary objective of the raid was to capture a new BKAEW detection apparatus that League engineers had just finished installing on Lavenurb/Bax, next planet out from Emithrnéy/Bax. Because capture of this equipment was so important to the war effort, the Imperial Admiralty had decided to risk their new I.F.S. *Montroyal*, a brand-new medium transport starship. It was not enough to simply destroy this new leaguer equipment; Imperial research boffins on Proteus/Asturius needed to find out what made it tick. Doing that required *Montroyal* to bring it home.

Imperial Forces

For this effort, Combined Operations Command cobbled together a middling armada consisting of eight light cruisers, six Free Effer'wyckean disruptor monitors, 16 surface bombardment ships, two flotillas of tiny Electronic Warfare trawlers, and 25 of the latest armored landing craft—in addition to *Montroyal*. This force had been secretly assembled—along with nearly six thousand battle-ready commandos—on two uninhabited planets located less than a light year from the Imperial side of the 'Wyckean Void.

The entire operation was under direct command of Major General Megan Trafford, Imperial Army.

For overhead support, Fleet Command had likewise provided six squadrons, of 16 Starfury Mk 9 astroplanes each, to fight off defending starships—plus another four squadrons of WF Type-327 attack astroplanes, whose job it would be to smother defensive fire from the surface. Considering that a large percentage of the Starfuries were almost brand new and could therefore be depended to fly nearly any time they were needed, the numbers seemed adequate for the job—at least early in the mission, when the Imperials would face only local opposition.

However, when signaled by the Royal Engineers at Emithrnéy/Bax that the new Leaguer BKAEW had been loaded aboard I.F.S. *Montroyal*, two squadrons of Starfuries and two

Bill Baldwin

squadrons of WF Type-327s were to be diverted to this special operation for the remainder of the mission.

Both parts of this secondary operation were under direct command of Vice Admiral Wilf Brim, Imperial Fleet.

Preparations

On the surface, the attack appeared logical and well planned—an operation by, as well as for, the textbooks of interstellar warfare, carrying with it the potential for vast damage to the enemy and prodigious profit for the Empire and its Allies.

However, once the attack was underway, it was clearly understood the Imperials *could* encounter much unwelcome company in *very* short order. Fat Leaguer Marshal Hoth Orgoth commanded nearly fifteen hundred attack and killer astroplanes in Effer'wyck—and had never shown any shyness about using them. With all the myriad things that could go awry during such a large, complex operation, it was also clear that Operation Epeid carried with it the quite-viable seeds of disaster.

Significantly, General Trafford was so certain of success she forbid talk of wasting resources on contingency plans, should the unexpected transpire.

The Attack

On D-Day, 25 Octad, 52014, the diverse ships of the Imperial assault flotilla slowed through Hyperspeed to arrive at an initial point off Emithrnéy/Bax within moments of zero metacycle—a genuine triumph of spacemanship in all respects and an excellent beginning to the operation.

Immediately, four Starfury squadrons fanned out to encircle the main target planet at Emithrnéy/Bax as a Combat Air Patrol. The remaining Starfuries and the four squadrons of WF Type-327 attack astroplanes headed toward the surface for an orbital holding pattern. At the same time, light cruisers and monitors were descending slowly through the atmosphere to secure the gravity-dock perimeter, should such be necessary.

The Turning Tide

Concurrently, while the raid commenced on Emithrnéy/Bax, a much smaller force of Special Services-Assault (SSA) commandos and Royal Engineers landed on Lavenurb/Bax, near the new BKAEW site. When the Commandos had the BKAEW site under control, Royal Engineers began to disassemble the BKAEW equipment (including all special antennae visible on the reconnaissance HoloPics). Subsequently, each piece would be loaded aboard *Montroyal*, which would withdraw as quickly as possible to the Imperial side of the 'Wyckean Void, with no regard to the larger operation.

At first, everything appeared as if it was proceeding perfectly.

The Anomaly

Then the anomaly occurred—one that immediately destroyed General Trafford's hope for surprise. One of the first two de-orbiting landing craft ran afoul of an escorted merchantman in the process of lifting for space. A furious fire fight erupted, and within clicks everyone was blasting away at anything that moved.

Suddenly, powerful disruptors on the surface went into operation, their blinding discharges fouling Hyperscreens on both sides. Two appeared to fire simultaneously, and immediately, a tremendous explosion erupted in space that blasted the old heavy cruiser I.F.S. *Furious* completely out of the sky—with an immediate loss of its heavy disruptors on the ground— and nearly eight hundred Imperial Star Sailors

Quickly following this, another surface disruptor site exploded with a great burst of radiation fire, signaling that at least some of the Commando force must have made it to the surface and deployed. However, all hope for success on the surface faded when League battle crawlers appeared on the surface. The entire operation began to fall apart at that point.

Bill Baldwin

General Trafford's Order to Withdraw

With the Epeid-Gravity-Dock operation now in dire straits, General Trafford reacted in great haste, ordering all astroplanes and starships to support an immediate exit for the ground forces. This order came before Admiral Brim could accomplish his secondary mission: supporting the capture of the League's powerful new BKAEW unit on Lavenurb/Bax. With the failure of the attack's main thrust, many League starships had already been freed to answer calls of help from the second front.

Admiral Brim's Partial Countermand

Moments after General Trafford issued her order to break off the attack and retreat across the Wyckean Void, Admiral Brim made his fateful decision to support the operation on Lavenurb/Bax rather than to abandon that effort. Countermanding Trafford's orders, he ordered two squadrons each of Starfuries and WF Type-327s to report at highest priority to Lavenurb/Bax, then departed for that battle himself. In later testimony at his Court Marshal, Admiral Brim said his decision was based on the Imperial Fleet's acute need to counter the powerful new League BKAEW, which was already beginning to show results against Imperial shipping of all kinds.

Brim's actions saved the Lavenurb/Bax operation, but only barely. By the time he arrived, the Imperial Marines had nearly completed loading the disassembled BKAEW into I.F.S. *Montroyal*, but unknown to them, both Helmsmen for the big starship had been killed. Taking the situation into his own hands, Admiral Brim landed his Starfury near the big ship, set explosive charges to keep it from enemy hands, then boarded the big ship. Taking *Montroyal's* completely unfamiliar helm, he managed to pilot the big starship home.

The Turning Tide

Military Consequences

No major objectives of the raid were accomplished. A total of 3,623 of the 6,000 men (almost 60%) who made it to the surface were either killed, wounded, or captured. Fleet Command failed to lure the League astroplanes into open battle, losing 96 Imperial astroplanes (at least 32 to flak or accidents compared to 48 lost by the League), while the Imperial Fleet lost 33 landing craft and one destroyer

Personnel Consequences

Although General Trafford was generally cited for the failure, she retained her Imperial Army rank and commission. However, because Admiral Brim had countermanded her orders as senior commander of the failed operation, Trafford convened a court martial against the Admiral. Her testimony at this trial resulted in his being officially disciplined, then deprived of his commission in the Imperial Fleet.

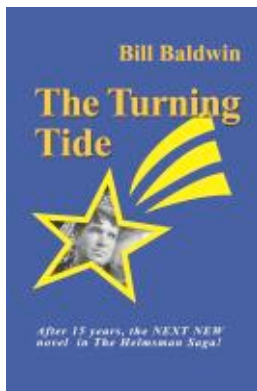
Addenda

It should be noted that Admiralty's decision to relieve Admiral Brim of his commission was not unanimous throughout the Service, nor the Imperial Palace. Soon after Brim's court marshal, Emperor Onrad V announced the following decree:

Know ye by these presents that I, Onrad the Fifth, Grand Galactic Emperor, Prince of the Reggio Star Cluster, and Rightful Protector of the Heavens do make and seal this proclamation by all powers and endowments vested in me at my coronation. From this day onward, Our loyal subject, Wilf Anzor Brim, shall be known throughout all the civilized Universe as Lord Brim, 1st Duke of Grayson. With this title, I also assign, from Royal Land Holdings, the five habitable planets and two non-habitable planets of the star Grayson,

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and all properties, minerals, rents, leases, and
income pertaining from them to his sole
ownership. Decreed this first Standard Day of
Decad in the Standard Imperial Year 5201



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