

# FIGHTER SQUADRONS

## OF THE ALLIANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BATTLE OF YAVIN (May 1999)

by [Jeff Boivin](#)



*The Battle of Yavin Was a Victory for the Rebel Alliance*

## THE SQUADRONS

At the Battle of Yavin, there were four fighter squadrons:

The novelization of the movie indicates : "Yellow squadron will cover for Red on the first run. Green will cover Blue on the second," Red was a Y-Wing squadron, and Blue was an X-Wing squadron. So we start off assuming Green is the second Y-Wing squadron, and Yellow is the second X-Wing one (based on the number of starfighters from a picture provided below, and a list of pilots also provided, there were more Y-Wings and X-Wings than the number of pilots in Red and Gold squadrons.)

In the movie, X-Wing "Blue" became Red squadron, and Y-Wing "Red" became Gold squadron (the color also changed from yellow to gold). And we do see Gold

making the first run, and according to the novel, "Yellow" squadron was covering for them somewhere off-camera (1). So "Yellow" squadron became Blue for the movie, because it was an X-Wing squadron in the novel.

So Y-Wing squadron Gold made the first run, covered by X-Wing squadron Blue.

Now, the same goes with the second run, made by "Blue" (Luke's squadron), covered by "Green." "Blue" became Red in the movie, so the squadron covering them off-camera (1) was Y-Wing squadron Green.

# THE FARLANDER PAPERS

The book *X-Wing: The Official Strategy Guide*, an expanded version of the limited edition "Farlander Papers", relates some additional events surrounding the Battle of Yavin. It states that Red, Blue and Gold squadrons were assigned to Yavin Base from the frigate *Independence*. There is no mention whatsoever of Green squadron, meaning it was probably permanently

assigned to the base. Upon reaching Yavin, Keyan Farlander, the main character of the story and member of Red squadron, relates:

"Red Squadron got several transfers, including Biggs, Wedge Antilles, Jek Porkins, and a few other veterans. Gold and Blue also gained personnel as the High Command gathered its resources in preparation to meet the Death Star."

Some pilots from Farlander's Red squadron are named in previous missions, though aside from Hamo

Blastwell, none of those pilots are specified as having taken part in the battle. They are Samuel Raider and Naeco. Captain Ernek Marskan is also mentioned as being Blue Leader in previous missions.

In the book (and the game), the Death Star attack itself is laid out as three separate missions, part of Tour of Duty III:

Operation 12: Begin Death Star Assault: Destroy a

communications satellite, while identifying a new TIE fighter. Farlander misses the formal briefing on Yavin.

Op 13: Attack Death Star Surface: Farlander and another X-Wing pilot from Red squadron are sent to destroy towers and gun emplacements. This is followed by Farlander's temporary reassignment from Red to Gold squadron (2).

Op 14: The Trench Run: This is the final assault depicted in the movie.

In the book, the torpedo shot that destroys the Death Star is still made by Luke Skywalker, using some tips he got from Farlander.



# ***REBEL ASSAULT***

In this game from Lucasarts, the player assumes the role of Rookie One, a young pilot who recently joined the Alliance. The whole storyline takes place simultaneously with the events in *Star Wars IV: A*

*New Hope* ,  
ending with the Battle of  
Yavin in the final chapters  
(Rookie One is flying  
X-Wing Blue 3):

Chapter 12: TIE Attack:  
Reveals that there was a  
Star Destroyer in orbit of  
the Death Star. Four

X-Wings from Blue Squadron go through waves of TIE fighters launched from the Star Destroyer before they can reach the Death Star surface.

## Chapter 13: Death Star Surface: Rookie One

destroys lots of cannons  
and towers on the  
surface.

Chapter 14: Surface  
Cannon: Rookie One  
destroys a big cannon  
that is protecting the  
exhaust port.

Chapter 15: Death Star  
Trench: Blue 4 (Harris) is killed, Blue 2 (Murleen) is hit and pulls out, Blue Leader (Simms) shoots and misses. Then Rookie One destroys the Death Star with help from Commander Farrell, who is flying an A-Wing.

Note that the fate of the Star Destroyer after Chapter 12 is never revealed. There is a continuity problem with the last part of Chapter 15, however. It is revealed that Rookie One is the one who destroyed the Death Star, instead of Luke Skywalker. But that part

of the story is meant to parallel the sequence from the movie, so Blue Leader misses the shot (like Red Leader did), Blue 4 is killed and Blue 2 is hit and has to pull out (like Biggs and Wedge did), and Blue 3 destroys the Death Star.

Chapter 12 would fit nicely if it took place at the same time as *X-Wing*'s Op 12. Chapters 13 and 14 could take place during *X-Wing*'s Op 13, and Chapter 15 during Op 14.



# THE STRATEGY: SURFACE ATTACK



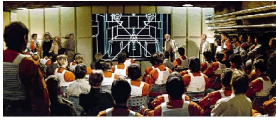
Pilots and starfighters from Red, Gold and Blue Squadrons were re-assigned to Yavin base from the *Indepe  
ndence*

. Green squadron, permanently stationed at Yavin Base (3), was made up of a mixture of Y- and X-Wings and more pilots than starfighters. Priority was given to the best-skilled pilots, so

some shoving around was required to place the more experienced pilots in the bigger squadrons. Pilots like Biggs, Wedge, Luke and Porkins were assigned to Red squadron, which they decided would have

twelve starfighters.  
Gold squadron was  
made up of at least  
seven Y-Wings. Blue  
Squadron was  
comprised of both  
A-Wings and  
X-Wings.





*Viewed from two different angles, gives an idea on the number of pilots*

The formal briefing given by General Dodonna in the movie only covered

the final stage of the attack: the trench run to reach the exhaust port. But there were some smaller stages preceding that, designed to weaken the Death

Star's defenses as it approached the Yavin system. The first such mission included destroying a communications satellite in order to block the Death Star's transmissions

to the rest of the Empire, and attacking an orbiting Star Destroyer and its TIE fighters.

A second mission was a surface



attack made by a small number of fighters, mostly X-Wings from Red and Blue squadrons. During that second mission, the Rebel pilots managed to

destroy a number of gun turrets, towers and even a big laser cannon that was protecting the exhaust port. That cleared the way for the final assault.

# THE STRATEGY: TRENCH RUN

After a quick  
debriefing on

Yavin 4, all the squadrons were sent for the final assault when the Death Star was 30 minutes away. For the trench run, Alliance

strategists  
decided that  
Y-Wings should  
have the first run,  
because being  
bombers they  
carry more  
torpedoes. The

more experienced  
squadron was  
Gold, and they  
enforced it by  
re-assigning  
Keyan Farlander  
to that squadron.  
They would need

backup from  
fighters who had  
a better chance of  
diverting TIE  
fighters. They  
went with Blue  
squadron,  
because it had

the speedy  
A-Wings. Red  
squadron would  
have a go with  
the second run in  
case Gold didn't  
make it. They  
would have



Green squadron  
to cover them, but  
being X-Wings  
with mostly  
veteran pilots  
they didn't really  
need a big  
back-up.



*[click on picture  
to enlarge](#)*

The above  
screen shot

from *A New  
Hope Special  
Edition*

shows the  
number of  
fighters that  
were sent for  
the attack.

According to the numbers, there were twenty X-Wings and eight Y-Wings. Red Squadron consisted of 12 X-Wings, that

left eight to be divided among Blue and Green squadrons. Gold squadron had 7 Y-Wings, and the other one went to Green

squadron. Some  
A-Wings (seen  
only in an  
*X-Wing*  
cut-scene) were  
already part of  
Blue squadron.

The names of the pilots can be pulled from various sources, and the list was recently completed by Decipher's *Spec*

*ial Edition*  
*expansion set*  
. Keep in mind  
that the rest of  
this article will  
use the  
numbers from  
the above shot,



and will not  
account for any  
off-screen  
starfighters  
(except for two  
A-Wings seen in  
the games  
*X-Wing*

and

*Rebel Assault*

):

Red Squadron

(X-Wings)

Red Leader =

Garven "Dave"

Dreis

(4)

Red 2 = Wedg  
e Antilles

Red 3 = Biggs  
Darklighter

Red 4 = John  
D. (5)

Red 5 = Luke  
Skywalker

Red 6 = Lt.  
Jek "Tono"  
Porkins

(6)

Red 7 = Elyhe

k Rue

Red 8 = Bren

Quersey

Red 9 = Lt.

Naytaan

Red 10 = Ther  
on Nett

Red 11 = ? (7)

Red 12 = ? (8)

Gold Squadron  
(Y-Wings):  
Gold Leader =  
Jon "Dutch"  
Vander  
(9)  
Gold 2 = Tiree

Gold 3 = Ryle

Torsyn

Gold 4 = Lt.

Lepira

Gold 5 = Davis

h "Pops" Krail

(10)



Gold 6 = Hol

Okand

Gold ? =

Commander

Keyan

Farlander (1 1)

Blue squadron  
(X-Wings and  
A-Wings):  
Blue Leader =  
Captain Merrick  
Simms  
(X-Wing)

Blue 2 = Com  
mander Ru  
Murleen  
(X-Wing)  
Blue 3 =  
Rookie One,  
name unknown

(X-Wing)

Blue 4 = Thurl

ow Harris

(X-Wing)

Blue ? = Com

mander Jake

Farrell

(12)

Green  
squadron  
(X-Wings and

Y-Wings) (13):  
?

That leaves  
some blanks

that are not mentioned in any "official" source.

However, many other pilots were named

never officially  
assigned to any  
squadron. Mine  
is not the task  
to assign them  
to their  
respective



squadron/fighter, but I include them here for completeness.

- Travis

- Commander Hamo Blastwell (14)
- Naeco (14)
- Sam Raider (14)
- Captain

Ernek Marskan  
(14)

- Lt. Wenton

Chan (15)

- Fin Danglot

(16)

- Talos Merkin

(10) We know that two pilots from Red Squadron are not named. There are also four pilot-less

X-Wings and  
one more  
Y-Wing. They  
can be taken  
from this list.

# THE LOSSES

As in any  
battle,  
everything did

not go as was  
planned, and  
the Alliance  
suffered some  
tragic losses.  
In the movie,  
we see some

pilots who get  
killed. The  
pilots seemed  
to attack in  
wings of three  
fighters. As  
mentioned



before, a first surface attack resulted in two Red squadron losses: Red 6 (Porkins) and Red 9

(Naytaan).  
During the  
trench run,  
Blue 4 was  
Killed In  
Action (KIA),  
Blue 2 was hit

and had to  
pull out and  
Blue Leader  
shot  
unsuccessfully  
at the exhaust  
port. Another

run by three  
members of  
Gold  
squadron  
resulted in  
their deaths;  
in order Gold

2, Gold  
Leader and  
Gold 5. During  
Red Leader's  
trench run, his  
two wingmen  
were

destroyed,  
Red 12 and  
Red 10,  
before he  
himself was  
killed after  
also

unsuccessfully  
shooting at  
the exhaust  
port. The final  
run was made  
by three  
others from

Red  
squadron.  
Red 2  
(Wedge) was  
hit and had to  
leave, Red 3  
(Biggs) was



KIA and Red 5  
(Luke)

successfully  
hit the target.

*Galaxy Guide  
3: The Empire  
Strikes Back,*

*Second Edition* states that Wedge and Luke were the only surviving members of

# Red squadron. Farlander mentions in *X-Wing: The Official Strategy*

*Guide*  
that Gold  
squadron was  
entirely  
destroyed  
himself  
excepted, and

that Hamo  
was Missing  
In Action,  
probably  
dead. Surely,  
others were  
killed but they

were not  
shown in the  
movie, again  
for time  
restraints.

# THE SURVIVORS



In the movie,

we see the  
*Millennium*  
*Falcon*

, two  
X-Wings and  
a Y-Wing



escape just  
before the  
explosion  
(above  
picture). The  
X-Wings

were Luke  
and Wedge,  
and the  
Y-Wing is  
Keyan  
Farlander.



click on  
pictures to

enlarge

In the *X-Wing*  
*g game*  
, at the same

time of the  
explosion,  
we can see  
two  
X-Wings,  
two Y-Wings

and two  
A-Wings  
escape.

According to  
Rebel  
Assault, one

of the  
A-Wings was  
piloted by  
Commander  
Farrell.



click on  
pictures to



enlarge

In *Rebel*  
*Assault* ,  
five X-Wings

and two  
Y-Wings are  
seen leaving  
the Death  
Star, one  
X-Wing

being Blue 2  
(Murleen).

Thus, there  
were at  
least two  
separate

groups  
leaving the  
Death Star.  
We must  
assume,  
based on

the number  
of surviving  
Y-Wings,  
that the two  
scenes from  
*X-Wing* and

*Rebel*  
*Assault*  
show the  
same flight  
group, only  
from a

different  
angle. That  
would leave  
three  
surviving  
Y-Wings

(Farlander  
and the two  
from Green  
squadron),  
seven  
X-Wings



(Luke,  
Wedge,  
Murleen and  
four others),  
two A-Wings  
(Farrell and

someone  
else) and  
one  
Corellian  
Freighter.

# FINAL THOUGHT S

The  
presence of  
A-Wings at  
Yavin is  
acceptable,

considering  
the state of  
the  
Alliance's  
squadron

management during the Civil War. And even if it

consisted  
mostly of  
X-Wings,  
the  
A-Wings

could still  
have been  
part of Blue  
squadron.  
The



legendary  
Deratta  
Destroyers  
was a  
mixed

squadron of  
X- and  
Y-Wings,  
and at the  
Battle of

Endor, Blue  
squadron  
was made  
up of both  
A- and

B-Wings,  
so the idea  
of a  
composite  
squadron is

not  
unusual.  
The final  
count is 30  
starfighters,

counting  
two  
A-Wings,  
and the  
number

seems to  
be accurate  
as in the  
movie,  
Imperial Lt.

Tanbris  
says to  
Vader: "We  
count thirty  
Rebel



ships."

There's

some room

for

expansion,

especially  
regarding  
any other  
fighters that  
could have

been

off-screen.

We'll see if

any future

fiction adds

to that list,  
although  
this chapter  
of *Star  
Wars*

history is  
pretty much  
saturated.

# ENDNOTE

# S

(1) I say  
"off-camer  
a",  
because  
George

Lucas had  
to cut  
down the  
main  
action on



two  
squad  
rather than  
four as in  
his script.

But it  
doesn't  
mean they  
were not  
present.

(2)

Although it  
states that  
Farlander  
was part of

Gold  
squadron,  
one  
passage  
blurs the

issue  
completely  
: "Every  
ship in my  
[Gold]

Y-wing  
group was  
destroyed  
except for  
mine. I

could do  
little,  
though,  
except  
clear away

some TIEs  
and give  
Gold  
Squadron  
a chance



at the  
exhaust  
port." Now,  
how can  
he give

them a  
chance, if  
they're all  
dead?

(3) This  
assumption  
is based  
on the fact  
that only

Blue, Red  
and Gold  
squadrons  
are  
mentioned

# in *X-Wing:* *The* *Official* *Strategy* *Guide* .

(4) The  
name  
Dave is  
from the *Star Wars*

# novelizatio

# n.

(5)

Suspicious  
ly absent  
on  
Decipher's



list.

Perhaps  
due to the  
fact that a  
Red 4

named  
Cessi  
"Doc"  
Eirriss was  
killed the

day before  
in *X-Wing*  
#<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> . But  
the movie  
credits do

name John  
D.

(6) The  
name Lt.  
Tono  
Porkins is  
from the

Marvel  
adaptation  
of the  
movie  
(Issue 6,

reprinted  
several  
times and  
most  
recently as

# Dark Horse's *Cl assic Star Wars: A New Hope*



). It was  
later  
forgotten  
and he  
was

# renamed Jek Porkins in *Galaxy* *Guide 1: A*

*New Hope*  
and  
subsequen  
t works.  
Also, his

nickname  
in the  
movie  
novelization  
is

"Piggy".

(7) Also

absent  
from  
Decipher's  
card  
game, but

a Red 11  
is heard  
reporting  
in the  
movie as

depicted  
on the  
card "All  
Wings  
Report In"





(8) Red 12

is  
mentioned  
in the  
movie  
script. The

shot of him  
blowing up  
is on the " \_

Eject!

Eject!"

# card from Decipher's *A New Hope Expansion*

set.

(9)

Phonetically  
named  
Hutch in  
the  
movie's

closed  
captions,  
and the  
Princess  
Leia

Journal *Ca*  
*ptive to*  
*Evil*  
from  
Scholastic.



(10) Talos  
Merkin is  
erroneously  
y named  
Gold 5 by

# Princess Leia in the Journal *Ca ptive to Evil*

from  
Scholastic.  
There  
were so  
many new

faces for  
her, she  
could have  
confused  
some of

them. On a  
funny note:  
When  
Gold 5  
says in the

movie  
"Lost  
Tiree, lost  
Dutch," in  
the french

dubbed  
version he  
says "They  
got Bill!"

(11)

According  
to *X-Wing:*  
*The*  
*Official*



# *Strategy* *Guide* , Farlander was in this squadron

although  
his callsign  
is never  
specified.  
Also

absent  
from  
Decipher's  
list.

(12)  
Command  
er Farrell  
is from the  
game *Reb*

*el Assault*

, and

seems to

have

arrived late

in the  
battle in  
his  
A-Wing, at  
the same

time  
Rookie  
One  
changed to  
an A-Wing.

(13) This  
squadron  
is only  
mentioned  
in the



movie  
novelization,  
therefore  
my

inclusion  
of it here.  
Since  
there are  
seven

known  
Y-Wings in  
Gold  
squadron,  
and eight

are shown  
on the  
picture, I  
presume  
that the

extra  
Y-Wing is  
in Green  
squadron.  
Same with

the  
remaining  
number of  
X-Wings.

(14) These  
pilots are  
from *X-Wi  
ng: The  
Official*

# *Strategy* *Guide* and were friends with



Farlander.  
Except for  
Marskan,  
they were  
part of Red

squadron  
although it  
is  
mentioned  
they were

transferred  
shortly  
before the  
trench run.

(15) "Rebe  
l Pilot"

card in

Decipher's

*Customiza*

*ble Card*  
*Game*  
*Premiere*  
*Set*  
**. His**

appearanc  
e in the  
movie  
seems to  
suggest he

was flying  
an X-Wing.

(16) Rebel  
Pilot  
template  
from *Galaxy  
Guide 1:*



# *A New Hope*



# SOURCE

# S

*- Star  
Wars:  
From the  
Adventures  
of Luke*

*Skywalker*  
by George  
Lucas,  
Ballantine  
1976.

# - STAR WARS EPISODE IV: A NEW

HOPE,  
20th  
Century  
Fox 1977.

- *Star*  
*Wars* #6  
by Roy  
Thomas,  
Marvel

# Comics 1977.

- *The Art  
of Star*



# *Wars* edited by Carol Titelman (includes

movie  
script by  
George  
Lucas),  
Ballantine

1979.

- *Galaxy*  
*Guide 1:*  
*A New*

# *Hope* by Grant Boucher, West End Games

1989.

- *X-Wing*

*Space*

*Combat*

# *Simulator* *Game* by Larry Holland and Ed

Kilham  
(some  
copies  
includes  
"The

# Farlander Papers" by Rusel DeMaria), Lucasarts



1992.

- *X-Wing:*

*The*

*Official*

# *Strategy* *Guide* by Rusel DeMaria, Prima

Publishing  
1993.

- *Rebel  
Assault*

by Justin  
Chin,  
Lucasarts  
1994.

*- Star  
Wars: The  
National  
Public  
Radio*

# *Dramatiza* *tion* radio play by Brian Daley,

Ballantine  
1994.

- *Galaxy*  
*Guide 3:*

# *The Empire Strikes Back, Second*



*Edition* by  
Michael  
Stern and  
Pablo  
Hidalgo,

1996.

- *Star Wars: The Customiz*

*able Card*  
*Game*  
*Premiere*  
*Set,*  
Decipher

1996.

- *Star Wars: The Customiz*

*able Card*  
*Game A*  
*New Hope*  
*Expansion*  
*, Decipher*

# 1997.

# - STAR WARS EPISODE

# IV: A NEW HOPE SPECIAL EDITION,

20th  
Century  
Fox 1997.

- *X-Wing*



*Rogue*  
*Squadron*  
#<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> by  
Michael A.  
Stackpole

# and Mike W. Barr, Dark Horse Comics

1997.

- *Star Wars: The Customiz*

*able Card*  
*Game*  
*Special*  
*Edition*  
*Expansion*

, Decipher  
1998.

- *Star  
Wars*

*Journal:*  
*Captive to*  
*Evil* by  
Jude  
Watson,

# Scholastic 1998.

*Thanks to  
Abel G.  
Pena, and  
Pablo  
Hidalgo*



*for some  
input and  
feedback.  
And  
thanks to*

*Jim Fisher  
for the  
screen  
grabs.*

