

Lightning Strike

The Shadow of a New War

by **Margaret Weis and Don Perrin**

(text deleted for brevity) . . .

My Lord, little can be made of the accounts of the pickpocket and thief Vlemtor. On the odd chance that something of value can be made of his tale, I have included the document that he claims to have stolen from an "evil spy," as he puts it. It is obviously a forgery, created solely for profit.

OPERATION LIGHTNING STRIKE

Orders—3rd Quadron, 1st Strike Army

Situation: Friendly Forces

◆ The forces of the Dark Queen are in good order. All fighting units report high readiness. This Quadron is prepared for extended operations of 96 hours without resupply or reinforcement.

Enemy Forces

◆ The forces of Ansalon are in decay. Fighting between various groups of humans, elves and dwarves ensures that no overwhelming threat will be faced. The only organized organization of military might in the north of the continent is the Knights of Solamnia. Their tactics are outmoded, and their organization is brittle. Still, they should not be underestimated.

No detachments. Two squadrons of Blue Dragons (Lightning Flash Squadron and Electric Doom Squadron) will be attached for Quadron Air Cover. They also will be used to ferry the First and Second Wings, Eighth Shield, to their Landing Zones north of Valkinord.

Mission

◆ The Third Quadron will capture and hold Valkinord so that the armies of the Dark Queen may land unopposed.

Execution

◆ The Blue Dragon Squadrons will reconnoiter the beach landing site at dawn, 24th Thirdmonth, 366. They will land, unload the First and Second Wings, Eighth Shield, near the beach. They will fly air cover for the landing. If

opposition is sighted, they will proceed to engage the enemy. If the site is clear, they will remain in the area.

◆ The Quadron will land at 0800hrs. The Quadron will go south to Valkinord, destroying any opposition in its path. It will be at the outskirts of Valkinord by 1700hrs. By 0800hrs the following day, the Quadron will hold the port areas and surrounding settlement.

◆ Valkinord poses problems because of its ruins. The new city settlement's inhabitants could use the ancient walled defenses, but a swift attack by the Quadron should reduce the risk of this.

◆ This operation will cease, and then *Operation Rolling Thunder*, the final conquest of the Solamnic Plain, the High Clerist's Tower and Palanthas, will commence once the remaining units of the First Strike Army (First, Eighth and Ninth Squadrons) have landed at the port of Valkinord. The Second, Third and Fifth Strike Armies will land over the next three days, assembling the largest, best equipped, and best trained military force ever to have graced the Continent of Ansalon, and all for the glory of the Dark Queen.

Groupings and Tasks

◆ All Shield tasks will be outlined in the Quadron Battle Plan. During the conquest of Valkinord, the two Blue Dragon Squadrons will patrol the areas inland of Valkinord. If any opposition is encountered, the First and Second Wings will engage by land, supported by the two Squadrons. The Seventh Shield will be on standby at the West end of the city ruins. Should the reconnaissance force become engaged, the Shield will destroy the opposition.

Coordination and Movement

◆ The Quadron's lead elements will cross the start line at 0300hrs, 24th Thirdmonth, 366. The last element will cross by 0400hrs. The ships *Dauntless* and *Devestator* will land the main Quadron force by the timings stated. The Blue Dragon Squadrons, with the First and Second Wings, Eighth Shield, will launch by 0400 to be in position on the beach by their stated timings.

Order of March

◆ The Quadron's Order of March will be as per the Quadron's Battle Plan.

Action on Contact

◆ If any unit is engaged, it will close with and destroy the enemy, using all necessary firepower and mobility. All units supported by a Gray Robe will send word via ether messenger to Quadron Headquarters. All units not so supported will immediately send a runner, regardless of size of enemy contact.

Magic State

◆ All units are to be "Top High," or prepared for all enemy magic interference. All mages and clerics must be on alert for the presence of enemy magic use. Should such use be detected, Mages are NOT to engage, but to send word to Quadron Headquarters. The Quadron Mage Warfare (Thorn) Compgroup will counter any magical threat.

Priority of Targets

◆ All opposition from enemy magical sources must maintain first priority. These must be destroyed with minimal delay. Flying units, especially Dragon equipped units, will be next on the priority list. Knights of Solamnia follow, then other military forces encountered.

Dress / Equipment / Weapons

◆ Uniform dress will be as per Quadron written standing orders of . . .

(Rest of document has been burned.)

As you can see, My Lord, this is pure rubbish. To admit this level of organization and training by the forces of Evil seems to be a child's playtime story. We know that evil turns upon itself, making this sort of document a pure fantasy. And those remarks about the Knights, My Lord . . . I nearly slew the forger myself in rage. Thanks be to Paladine that I have been trained in the arts of self control and mercy. My regards to you and the Knights at the Whitestone Glade.

Sir Donald, Knight of the Crown
Commander, North Keep

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