



SAGITTARIUS

DEC 3303

ISSUE 4

EYE

THE ALLIANCE

WHO ARE THEY?



“
WHEN MY CANOPY
BREACHED, THE
ONLY THING
BETWEEN ME AND
THE VACUUM WAS
MY **REMLOK**”

remlok



3303

Remlok is the main provider of outfitting for pilots. It manufactures multi-tool boxes that are in some ships, the Remlok Suit which is a pilot flight suit and the Life Support Remlok Survival Mask that protects people when the canopy is breached by providing oxygen while in a depressurized cockpit.

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SAGITTARIUS
EYE

Editors: Souvarine, Wilfrid Sephiroth

Design Editor: Chetan1987

Writers: Louis Calvert, Edelgard von Rhein, Whitmann

Design: Mat2596, Krillakov

Advertisements: Ulon

Cover design: Qohen Leth

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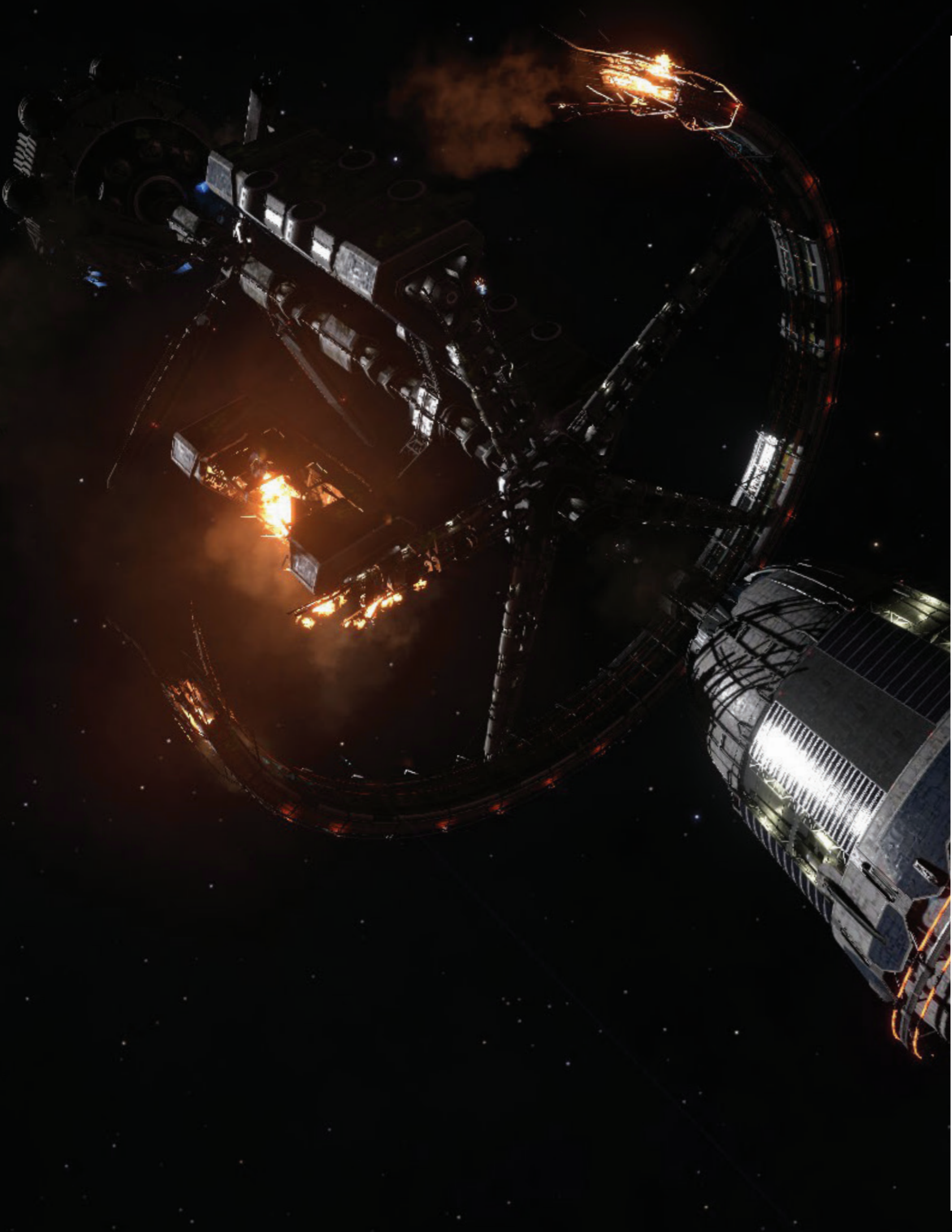
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sagittarius.eye@gmail.com

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EDITORIAL FOCUS



The Pleiades burn.

As this issue of Sagittarius Eye was getting ready for publication, a sudden, deadly – and not entirely unexpected – Thargoid attack has shaken the delicate equilibrium of power in the Pleiades.

A number of AEGIS research stations in that sector have been severely damaged by a Thargoid strike. Security footage recorded by the Oracle station security network, and disseminated through the Galnet, shows three Thargoid vessels disabling the stations' defence systems and attacking them with heavy weaponry. The casualties are in the thousands – and the body count is sadly likely to grow. The stations have sent out a call for help, to all independent commanders capable of contributing to the evacuation of civilians towards the rescue ships mobilized in the area.

We flew to the Pleiades to observe, as journalists, and to offer some assistance as fellow humans. As I floated next to Titan's Daughter, flames burning from its leaking atmosphere reflecting on my canopy, all I could think was how this "uncertain war" – as I labelled it just over a month ago in the pages of this magazine – is now all but uncertain. We are at war. Interviewing a few commanders on the scene for fresh reactions, the message that emerged loud and clear from their words, stated with various degrees of anger, was: the Thargoids will pay for it. It is now too late to figure out if there has ever been the possibility of establishing some kind of peaceful contact with them. The flames of war are now raging (what the spark was is still a matter of contention in some quarters), and there's no turning back.

We will cover in depth the inevitable escalation of this conflict in our future issues. For this December issue of Sagittarius Eye, as the year 3303 comes to a bloody close, we cast our gaze back to the Bubble in order to get a better understanding of who we are, what we stand for, and where our allegiances lie, dispassionately acknowledging both our flaws and our accomplishments. If we are at war, what are we fighting for? So in this issue you will be able to learn more about the Superpowers exercising political pressure over our lives – with a special focus on the youngest and most elusive of those, the Alliance – to peek inside the inner workings of a secretive group of mercenaries, to follow the outstanding exploits of the most daring explorers, and more generally to keep abreast of new events and developments in our inhabited Bubble.

The whole editorial team at Sagittarius Eye wishes our readers the best for the end of year celebrations – trying, if possible, to forget the looming alien threat for a few days – with a particular good wish to all those who lost their homes and are now living as refugees aboard rescue ships. No doubt 3304 will be a memorable year.

Wilfrid Sephiroth

Wilfrid Sephiroth is a jaded spacer guided by the disenchanting purpose to uncover the false 'awesome' for the mundane it really is, and to reveal the interesting kernel of seemingly trivial events and happenings. He flies his Asp Explorer—the A.E. Van Vogt—around the bubble, always looking for the next Big Story. Usually, it's the Big Story that finds him first.

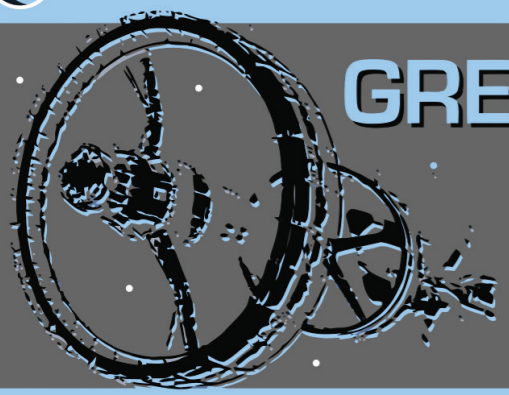
VERY RARE NATURALLY BRED

GIANT VERRIX

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IS YOUR LOOT LEGAL?



REMEMBER GALACTIC SALVAGE LAWS

THE DIAMOND FROGS

JEWELS AMONGST PILOTS OR GALACTIC POND LIFE?



■ Sunrise over Planet Daisy

When the brief was floated in the Press Room at the Sagittarius Eye office, this writer's ears perked up. The Diamond Frogs are an enigmatic outfit - in my years as an investigative journalist I've come across their name many times. Some dismiss them as little more than pirates, and they're rumoured to associate with some of the spaceways' less reputable pilots.

But they are also spoken of with respect. Unlike other mercenary groups, they don't recruit. In fact, nobody your correspondent has ever spoken to has heard of anyone being inducted into their ranks. They are a closed book, an exclusive club of few members - and yet their name is familiar to almost everyone who keeps half an eye on the news.

So I tentatively raised my hand for it. Yeah, it could be dangerous. Not everybody out there in the black was a nice guy, I knew that as well as anyone. But I was damned if I was going to cover another new starport opening or Senator's garden party. I wanted to get my hands dirty.

I set to work. It quickly proved devilishly hard to get a lead - beyond the anodyne advert for their mercenary services up there on the galactic network for anyone to see, there's precious little known about them. From their 'official' material I gathered that their leader is known as 'Big Frog', who sounded like a gangster. Beyond that, I couldn't really glean much beyond their memorable strapline:

The Galaxy calls for wet work. And nobody does wet work... like a Frog.

Time to do some digging, I thought.

Working late at the office I brought up my network of contacts. Over the years you meet people in this game, and I suspected one or two of the old hands might know someone who knew someone.

It got late. Not that there's any sensation of time on this damn hulk. Newspapers can't afford those swanky office in the habitation ring - we get a few dingy rooms above the docking bay, where the gravity's so low I need to put my waste paper basket on the wall if I want to be able to throw my copy into it.

The office was dark except for the island of sickly yellow light around my desk. I could see the end of my Kamitra cigar glowing in the inky window opposite. Figure after figure shimmered into life in front of me as the hours wore on, the HoloMe generator stuttering in the smoke. Time after time I made my enquiries, saw the flickering figure shake their heads and wink out.

Finally, at around 2am Galactic Time I struck lucky.

An old contact I knew through an acquaintance eyed me

suspiciously when I mentioned the story I was working on. Lips pursed, he said he might know something - but only if I could guarantee his anonymity.

Damn, I thought. I'm in deeper than I thought.

I nodded. With a little persuasion the hazy figure started to speak. I listened silently, scribbling down a detail here and there, as a picture began to emerge.

It was all tied up with GalCop. I knew GalCop all right - both iterations, the one from the history books and their new incarnation as a huge coalition. I'd heard about the great rivalries between them and some of the other giant, multi-star system organisations in a bid to become one of the great political forces of the galaxy, nigh on eighteen months ago. 'The Dangerous Games', the pundits called it. All ancient history now - Yuri Grom and the EG Pilots took that prize. But it had been muttered that the competition had left a bad taste in some people's mouths.

The Diamond Frogs had been a key member of the GalCop coalition. In fact, they were a significant multi-system government in their own right. GalCop came away from that competition bitter, and apparently the Diamond Frogs had been accused of mounting guerilla-style revenge campaigns against those that they'd perceived had slighted them ever since. Starships targeting system security vessels, smear campaigns in the galactic media, that sort of thing.

I tried to get more detail from the shifting figure in the HoloMe, but he wouldn't be drawn. After a short while he looked left and right and muttered that he had to go, that he'd already said too much. "Remember - no names!" He hissed, and then abruptly the hologram flickered out. I was alone in the office again. I sighed, stubbed out my cigar and stood up.

As I rode the elevator to my habitation wing, dog tired, I reflected that I was a little closer. I hadn't got much but I knew now who I had to seek out.

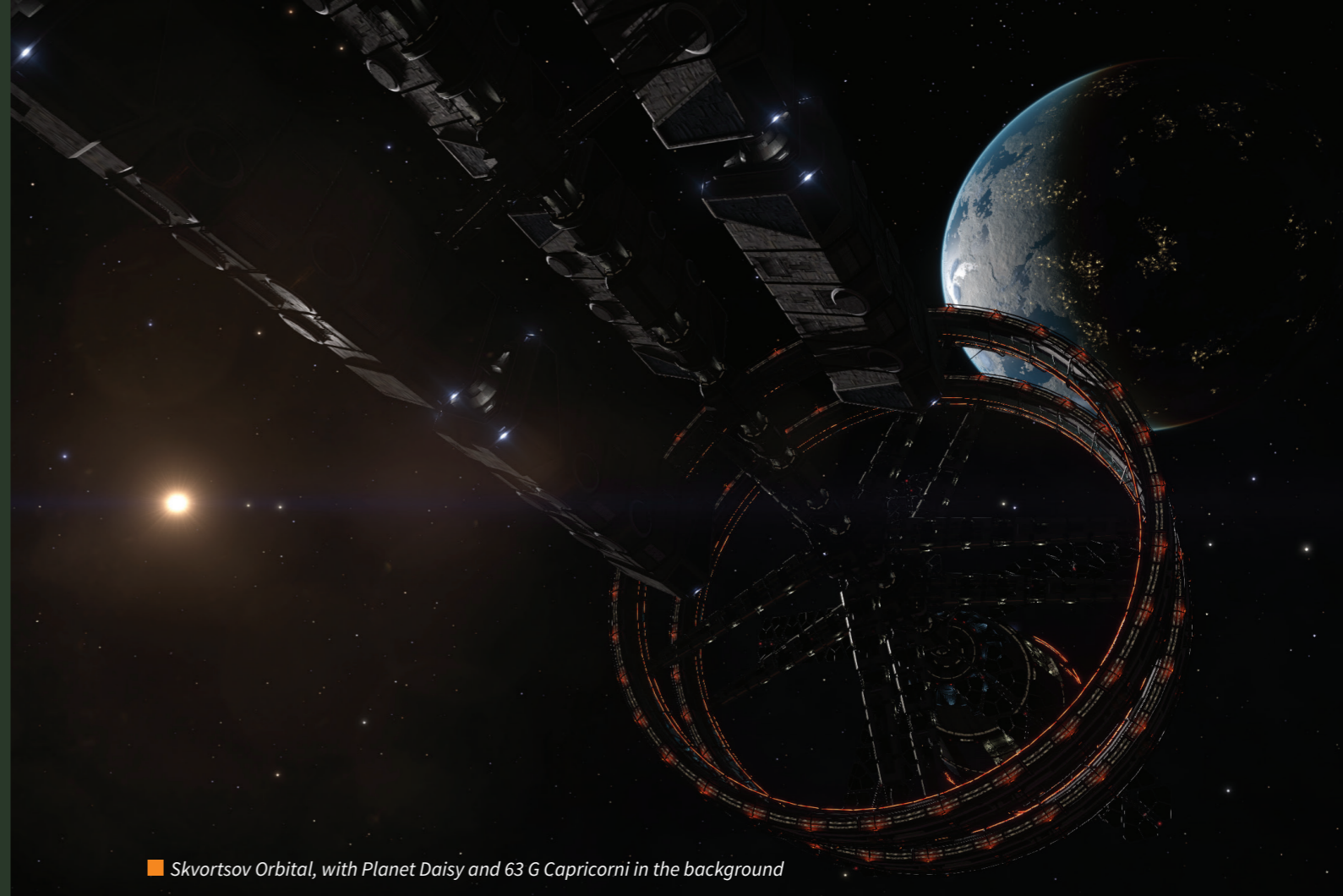
A few hours' kip later and I was in the hangar. The techs were finishing up the refuel on my press ship, and I was waiting for the all clear. I was headed for 63 G. Capricorni, reputed to be the home system of the Diamond Frogs.

As I charged the drive for the leap into witchspace which would take me into the Frogs' back yard itself, the Weasel's computer threw up an 'anarchy' warning.

Nobody's going to save me out here if anything goes wrong, I gulped.

The Frogs govern eighteen star systems now. They're said to be utterly lawless, and accept nobody's authority in their space but their own. I wondered that they had time for mercenary services between all this conquest.

I did a quick check for pirates when I landed. I'd man-



■ Skvortsov Orbital, with Planet Daisy and 63 G Capricorni in the background

aged to get a meeting beforehand, so I should have been expected - but somehow I wasn't sure that my safety was guaranteed. Cautiously I began the 500-odd light second supercruise to Skvortsov Orbital, where I'd been told to meet the 'Big Frog' himself.

The flight controller curtly guided me in, and I was met at the pad by a heavy. She said she was a member of System Security, but I thought she was going to mug me. I tried to hide behind my press badge. Growling, she hustled me towards a rapid transit unit.

I found myself shortly after in a bar. Of course we're meeting in a bar, I thought. Looking around, I saw it was one of those perennial places where it's never closing time and the drinks are always flowing. In a booth to my left a brawny tech was sipping something vile while two Xihe Companions fawned over her. I dimly recalled that those things were manufactured somewhere nearby.

Standing at the bar was a male figure in a black flight suit - one of the Pilot's Federation standard-issue ones, with the Remlok down. Odd, I thought.

I slunk to the bar and asked for my contact. Wordlessly, the bartender raised his eyebrows and nodded at the black-suited figure. Surprised, I turned to him. The featureless Remlok glittered back.

"You're Kermit Laphroaig?" I stammered. The helmet nodded.

"I'm from Sagittarius Eye," I continued. "We spoke last night."

"I know who you are," he said. The voice sounded distorted, like it was being fed through a speech changer. "What do you want to know?"

At a twitch of his neck the Remlok silently retracted, revealing a haggard face. His skin had a greenish pallor, and wisps of lank hair flanked a wide, shiny bald patch on the top of his head. He bent to light a foul-smelling cigarette. Despite the flight mask he wore large sunglasses, through which he eyed me inscrutably.

I tried to make a bit of small talk, but it was clear that this spacer didn't have a lot of time for that. I plunged in.

"What led to the creation of the Diamond Frogs?"

"Well, I think the statute of limitations is up so I can probably give you a fairly accurate answer," he drawled, pausing to blow acrid smoke over my shoulder.

"The short version was 'it was all a scam that went horribly right', sprung from a secret cabal of freedom fighters not far from the heart of the Empire, to a sizable cluster of independent planets under our, ah, contracted security."

I had a feeling that I was going to get a lot of obfuscation.

"That's what we do on paper, anyway," he continued. "Diamond Frogs Security and Pay-Day Loans, Inc (with an association with Bear O'Mulligan's Coffee Bar). At one time, however, we belonged to the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance, around about the same time that whole thing when all those Powers started rising up. What was with THAT?" He laughed wildly.

"Like, nice branding and all but in practice it was like Discount Parts Club of the Month."

As he paused for breath I felt an opportunity to show I'd genned up.

"Ah yes, Jotunheim. Are you still involved in anti-slavery initiatives?"

"Sorta. The only slavery we allow in the Jotunheim system are in the form of the hold-outs from the old Imperial regime of the Jotunheim Autocracy. They were notorious for being bad enough to make the rest of Imperial Society rethink the whole 'owning humans' aspect of their culture.

And in that case, it isn't so much 'slavery' as it is 'capture and release and then hunt them down for sport', because the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance are a fun loving people, too."

I remembered reading of the Jotunheim Autocracy in my research - decadent slavers of the most old-fashioned lean-



■ Skvortsov is known to export "tea"



The Frogs consider the space between Xihe and 63 G Capricorni to be their territory

ings, practicing the kind of inhuman people-trading not even Zemina Torval condones.

"You were exiled originally, I gather. What led to that?"

"From Jotunheim? The Empire, I suppose. The one led by what's-her-name, the regal one. Probably that old bat, Torval, too. She's still mad that I made fun of her 'combat mining' lasers concept, after I pointed out that was like trying to pass off a remodeled Sidewinder off as a 'mini-Cobra'. I don't think she liked that, but she must have not been too offended because that dozen or so assassins she sent my way really sucked at their jobs."

He paused to drink and take another puff of his cigarette.

"Actually, the formation of the Diamond Frogs didn't happen until a mysterious Imperial faction—that we later learned had fled their own home system of Catsupuria not a few months before—suddenly had a lot of money to throw around and buy up Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance property. We were up to our asses in private navies, suddenly engaging in proxy wars on the Emperor's behalf. Before we knew it, half of us were taking up fighting positions out in Jotunheim's outer giants, no pun intended. The other half decided to bail out to another system about 80 light years away, to lay low and start raising funds and pilots for a counter-offensive. That's what began the Diamond Frog Initiative."

"I see. So how many Frogs are there now? And why don't you accept new members?"

"Well, the exact number of Frogs out there is officially 'exactly as many as there needs to be'. The Diamond Frogs, be-

ing a private company—on paper, anyway—only keeps a set amount in their roles at one time, and they tend to be terrible at dying. Besides, they're just 'the Face'," he chuckled.

I could tell I wasn't going to get much by way of detail. Nothing that Laphroaig didn't want to share, anyway. I decided to push my luck.

"You've made enemies amongst the galaxy's powerful organisations. Have you often found yourselves in conflict with other groups?"

"Hell, we usually find ourselves in conflict with each other. That's one of the other reasons we have lower numbers in the Diamond Frogs, and that isn't even bringing in Zakuz into the equation."

Apparently Zakuz was a particularly violent member of the group. Laphroaig's authority over his obstreperous band seemed relaxed at best, and I became glad that my interview was with him alone. I decided to lead the conversation back in a neutral direction.

"What are you as a group most proud of?"

Laphroaig flashed his wan grin at me.

"First thing that pops into my head is from the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance days, which people still call 'The Great Palladium Cloud Caper'. Our home station is Big Harry's Monkey Hangout, orbiting the Planet Daisy. Daisy is a fairly young terraform that the Autocracy bought generations ago, to turn into a pleasure planet. That's a whole other story, though.

"A year after Jotunheim was liberated by the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance, I was brought on to recruit some roughnecks, bootleggers, privateers, and any other pleb who wanted to shore up the system's legitimacy. Remember, this

was a fledgling free democracy sprouting a light-spitting distance from the heart of Imperial space. We'd not only need security that the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance was struggling to provide, but traders who'd feel safe enough to swap stuff without getting stabbed too much.

"So I say to myself: hey, we're on this big old service station, and the change of ownership was messy and final and sudden. Maybe there was something on board that would be valuable and small enough to fit in the back of, say, an Asp. Sure enough, there was tens of thousands of tons of palladium that had been transferred right before the revolution but never registered to the ship manifest. After I filled up the back of my Asp, I determined the best thing to do with the rest of it would be a publicity stunt.

"See, the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance could have eventually sold it all at market value, but time was an extreme factor. We badly needed credits and basic supplies. The ringed orbiting bodies of Jotunheim had been picked clean of major mineral resources, and Daisy's agriculture, yadda yadda. We were frogs of action," he rambled. "Free palladium most certainly did become us."

I took a slurp from the violent-tasting drink pouch I'd been given, nodding it him to continue.

"Once we put out word that there was free palladium at Big Harry's Monkey Hangout, we had traders coming from all over. Once we started pirating any traders on the way out who came empty handed and not with the supplies we needed, we quickly created trading partners we could trust. We also got a shit-ton of empty, slightly used Sidewinders, Haulers, and Adders.

"Oh! But I completely left out the best part. We didn't have

anyone land inside the station to trade, because it wasn't back up to full function yet. We just dumped it outside the station, creating a 'cloud' around it, and allowing us to watch which traders dumped stuff for us to use and who didn't. Was pretty much hell on the sensors screens that day, as you may imagine. Good times."

His glasses reflected the bar's striplights at me as he smiled at the memory. I decided to use the lull to probe a little in the direction of my surreptitious tip-offs.

"Have you been to war with any other groups?"

He nodded. "We've been at war with more groups than I can remember, and more still that wish they could forget the day we crossed their shipping lanes. It's important to remember that while the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance had a noble cause—freedom from tyrant slave drivers—the Diamond Frogs are purely mercenaries trying to raise as much money as we can beg, borrow, or steal. Sometimes we do all three at once to save time. But I digress."

"Any particularly memorable examples?"

"There was the Emperor's Grace, based out of Novas. Not a small potato outfit - guy who ran it answered to Emperor Raisin 'I'm too good for life extension drugs' Duval, bless his wrinkled soul. Anyway, I forget the guy who actually ran it now, let's just call him Grace.

"Grace, he extended his armies from Novas out to establish legions on many many planets throughout the Bubble - you've surely come across a couple in your travels. Not the worst, but being traditionalists, still pretty much a pack of kill-joys. And not everyone in the Empire is down with killing joys, not when it impacts their bottom line, if you follow.



"We got a contract from a prestigious company to make the Grace flinch a little, get them to pull some forces back home and weaken patrols all over their sprawl, covert style."

I nodded, scribbling furiously.

"So we mosied over, all covert-like, and found out that, as it happened, Traditional Novas Order was vying for a bigger piece of the control pie from Grace. Our tactician, which is a reanimated skeleton in a prototype survival-recover system space suit—long story—got the idea to help things along and encourage free elections, rather than engage in guerrilla warfare and bring a grumpy army down on us. I was pretty drunk at the time when he briefed me, but I ended up agreeing it was worth a shot."

"Doesn't sound your usual metier. What happened next?"

"It worked. Traditional Novas Order were declared the new rulers of Novas, which probably ruined Gracie's breakfast over that morning's newfeeds. They eventually did win Novas back, not before an intense recount and re-recount election later, but the damage to their credibility was done. Seems the Emperor's Grace's greatest asset was their alleged power in their systems, and not many took them too seriously after that."

I sensed that Laphroaig liked ruffling feathers this way.

"What are the Adamant Toads?" I asked, remembering another obscure reference I'd seen the previous evening while trawling the networks.

"Aren't you the curious one? 'Adamant Toads' ultimately means 'Members of the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance who aren't Diamond Frogs'. The Toads aren't just those who we send back to Jotunheim, although with their help we did liberate Jotunheim for the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance within months. The Toads are charged with helping the Revolutionary Jotunheim Resistance's stability, and now growth, as well as helping the Diamond Frogs expand their own bubble around 63 G. Capricorn, our home system. Code name: Mother Goat."

I decided to be blunt. "Have you ever engaged in piracy?"

I thought I detected a slight stiffening in the heavies lounging around the room, and I caught my breath a moment. But Kermit just smiled again.

"Technically, it's 'privateering'. We only engage in self-defensive tactics outside of contracts that specifically ask for First Blood... or in cases where traders pick up tons of our palladium without leaving anything in return. Which sure looks like piracy from where I'm sitting!

"All kidding aside, I guess we do engage in what could be construed as 'piracy' in a narrow minded, if legal sense. But we're not above the law, we just get creative with interpreting it. Most of the Frogs got their start liberating slaves from the Empire, and since slaves are considered property, well, maybe we've been pirates from the very beginning. Doesn't make us bad guys. We don't steal from those that can't afford it."

He coughed dryly. "Now, are we done? You got enough

words to stuff your little magazine with?"

I decided that I most definitely had. I nodded and thanked the spacer, who shook my hand with what felt like a five-fingered piece of shoe leather.

He turned around and clicked his fingers at one of the bored-looking Xihe Companions nearby, jerking his head towards me. "Call it a goodbye present," he rasped over his shoulder. Then he was gone.

The machine lithely made it's way over to me.

"No, thank you, I really am fine..." I stammered. The bartender sneered. Deciding that I didn't need to experience the local hospitality any further, I made my escape.

Back in the Sagittarius Eye office I reflected on what I'd

seen and heard. Despite the generally menacing air about Kermit Laphroaig, and the naked hostility of most of the people I'd seen on his space station, I realised that I'd enjoyed talking to him. Sure, not all of it was pretty. But I realised that neither was it rare.

Wars, conflicts, rivalries and crime are the norm in our galaxy. In the heart of the Federation it might seem lawful I suppose - despite all those politicians and corporate bigwigs paying each other off all over the shop. And the heart of the Empire is governed, too, although that certainly doesn't mean the same thing as 'free'. But most of humanity lives in places like 'Mother Goat', where might is right. Spacegoing people band together and struggle for whatever they can get, because there's no authority to tell everyone what to do. They're on their own, blazing their own trail.

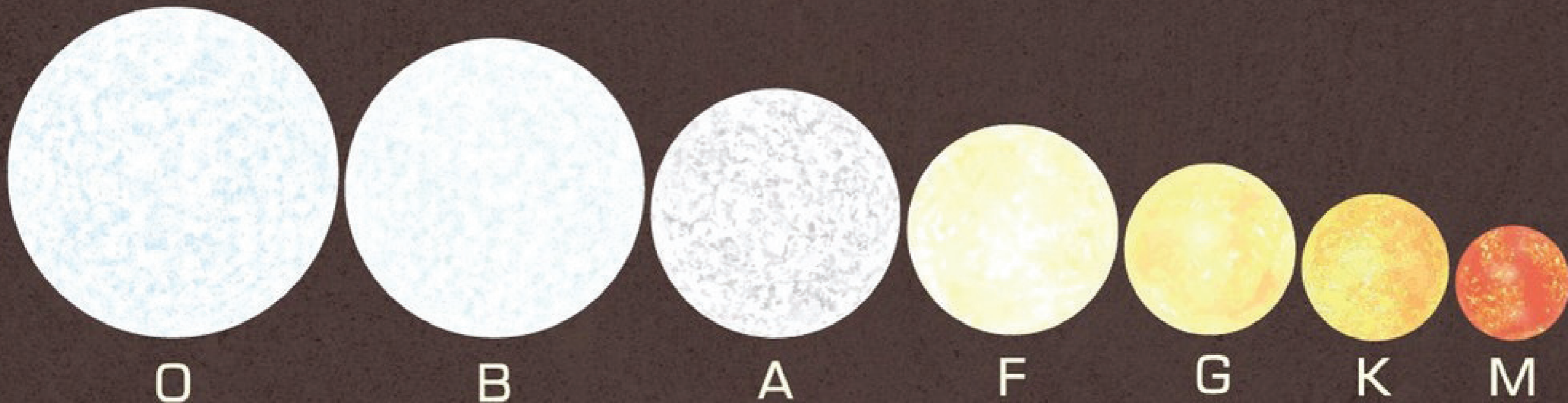
It's a jungle out there.



Souvarine is an experienced field reporter. He writes about current affairs, galactic politics and discovery. His Sidewinder-class press ship, the Salty Weasel, can often be spotted in the heat of the action, ferreting out the story.

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REMEMBER THE ANCIENT MNEMONIC

“OH BE A FINE GIRL KISS ME”



UNIVERSAL
CARTOGRAPHICS

The Alliance

Who are they?

The Alliance of Independent Systems (AIS, or just 'The Alliance') is the Galaxy's youngest superpower, being born only 73 years ago in the wake of a rebellion fought against the squabbling Federation and Imperial powers on Alioth. It gained member systems by virtue of being a viable alternative to Federal or Imperial law, and being generally more accepting of individual system's differences. So, what is the Alliance? How does it present an appealing government for member worlds? Historian Sima Kalhana speaking to Galnet in 3302 succinctly described the Alliance thus:

"Today, the Alliance is widely seen as a paragon of democracy in an increasingly autocratic galaxy. It is governed by a body known as the Alliance Assembly, the primary function of which is to establish common policies and treaties among the Alliance's member systems, and act as an arbitration body when necessary. The notional head of the Assembly is the prime minister, but in reality it is the Council of Admirals that wields the greatest degree of power."

Alliance pilot Commander Sereina puts it more simply:

"Why Alliance? Probably because the two other superpowers are bleeding lies and corruption, and I appreciate that everyone joining the Alliance remains independent and not chained by its superpower. That's basically what the Alliance is; A group of independents that will lend their hands in time of need."

Forging the Alliance - Argent & Turner

To understand the Alliance, you've got to go back and understand the people that took the helm early on, shaped the core and guided it into what it has become. Essentially a pair of genius intellects that found each other in the midst of a rebellion.

In 3228, at just 23 years of age, Mic Turner was among the first to fly out to defend Alioth during the rebellion, and he won the respect of his peers for his piloting skills and bravery. Around this time Mic met Meredith Argent, the brilliant scientist and engineer, who led one of the rebel cells during the war.

It's rumoured that Argent and Turner, with the backing of the nascent Alliance, built a prototype long-range ship specifically for an expedition to find the Thargoids. At this time, the insectoid aliens had not been seen for over a century and were slipping into the realms of myth and legend.

For a famous duo, they slipped easily into anonymity later in life. Mic Turner never returned from one of his exploration missions, and Meredith Argent went on to helm tech companies and many consider her to be one of the best engineers in the galaxy. There are stories told in backwater spacer bars like the Squirrel's Nest that Turner's wrecked ship was found way out in unexplored space. They say that his ships logs were recovered, containing all sorts of secrets, but the Alliance claims to have no such records and that he was simply - tragically - lost on an expedition. Whether any of this is true, no-one but Argent and Turner really know. Bill Turner, the galaxy-famous Engineer based on Alioth is as elusive as his parents, refusing to comment much on family business.

The Alliance Matures under Mahon

During the first few decades of its life the Alliance grew steadily. It's clear that the anti-Federation-Empire sentiment shared by all Alliance signatories is a common thread, but in addition to that the Alliance is known for technological excellence and some of the most renowned corporations in the Galaxy trade under the Alliance banner. Despite all these successes, it's not been until fairly recently that the Alliance as a political entity has really started to take a place in the Galactic consciousness, and this is thanks in part to Edmund Mahon. The political commentator Marcus Macmillan had this to say about the new Prime Minister:

"Some would argue, and I count myself among them, that Mahon is probably the greatest leader the Alliance has seen since its inception. He isn't much to look at, but his drab exterior belies a cunning mind and a will for the Alliance to bring its values to more systems. He is also an expert at ensuring that the concerns of individual systems are properly represented within the Alliance, something that is seen as very attractive for new member systems."

Mahon has won over a sizable number of previously independent commanders in his short time in office. The Alliance Office of Statistics (AOS) was first made famous spearheading Edmund Mahon's rise to power and expansion in the political arena. The AOS is based out of Gateway, one of the key worlds in Alliance space and they welcome everyone who supports the Alliance.

In stark contrast to the fiercely independent Alliance of the past, Mahon and the council of Admirals has been taking a new path over the last couple of years. During the recent Federal-Imperial conflict which arose over 'access rights' to the Pleiades Meta-Alloys former Federal president Jasmina Halsey, who has become one of Mahon's most trusted advisors, made an announcement in which she seemed to address the ongoing cold war as much as the resurgent Thargoids: "Understanding. Cooperation. These must be our watchwords. We have to go beyond party politics and petty point scoring. Only by working together can we hope to avoid bloodshed."

The Alliance Elite Diplomatic Corps (AEDC) is a political organization formed entirely of independent commanders and has taken Mahon's calls for unity to heart. In the spirit of the Alliance tradition for cooperation the AEDC developed successful partnerships not only with other independent pilots but with many influential organizations and individuals as well. Among most noteworthy sponsors of AEDC are notorious business magnate Victoria Wolf, Commodore Helena Stone of the Alliance Navy and famous diplomat with aristocratic heritage Hubertus von Weissenborn.

California Nebula Science Programme

In October of 3302 the Alliance made an unusual move - it sent a flotilla to the California Nebula, prompting widespread concern and accusations of attempting to claim the organic structures discovered there by independent commanders. An Alliance spokesperson claimed the station would serve as "a centre for scientific study, supporting our ongoing research into the organic structures and meta-alloys".

The Alliance then made a galaxy-wide request for supplies and resources, which included geological equipment, hazardous-environment suits and pesticides to help establish this outpost. Since then, several more installations have been set up in the California Nebula and groups of Alliance-aligned commanders have moved out there to support operations. What are the Alliance doing out there? Is it a coincidence that the first of these 'science' bases is named for Mic Turner? On the surface this is clearly a simple homage to one of the key figures in the formation of the Alliance, however given the large collection of rumours surrounding Mic Turner's expeditions and possible contact with the Thargoids, and the now confirmed link between the Barnacles and the Thargoids - the name might have much deeper meaning.

In contrast to the rumours of secret research being conducted, The Alliance has made their starports and facilities in the California Nebula available to all travellers and this has allowed many groups seeking a more solitary lifestyle to make a home in the Nebula. Commander Inhb1ted UKCG, spokesperson for the The Allied Order of Exemplars, recently praised the freedom and diversity allowed within the Alliance:

"We actively support president Mahon's Legislative efforts as much as our non-aggression policy and galactic isolation allows. We are a multi-faith para-science group exploring consciousness theory and its applications through the use of genetic augmentation, nootropics, cybernetics and haptic interfaces. Our local aims include providing economic counterbalance and tentative oversight to Turner Research Institute activities in the California sector. In Darwin Research Facility visitors are able to retreat into our exclusive Zero-g meditation globes, or sign on for one of our AOE talks for the wildest cutting edge scientific and spiritual theories. And don't forget after all that relaxing you need to party too - all our nightclubs are in the top ten percent of all nightclubs out there. "

Unity as a Smokescreen?

AEGIS represents the first - ever - joint venture between the Federation, Empire and Alliance. Given what we know of the formation of the Alliance, this is a stunning act on behalf of Prime Minister Mahon, getting into bed with not one enemy, but two. Remarkably it was Mahon who called for tighter bonds in the face of the aliens at our doorstep:

"The discovery is unquestionably a remarkable one, but at this stage it would be irresponsible to speculate on its implications. I will say only that, at this point in time, the need for solidarity has never been greater. It is my sincerest wish that the human race moves forward as one, united in purpose and philosophy."

However, it seems the Alliance may maintain independent operations in the Pleiades too; Commander Blain Crighton, who is widely known for a comprehensive project detailing the many different governmental and societal organisations of humanity, has publicly noted the following:





JAMESON MEMORIAL

TYPE 10 DEFENDER



Edmund Mahon

"In all the new Aegis Research expansions systems the IPSAL Project, Rational Logistics and Cooper Research Associates are there too...Cooper Research Associates is an Alliance corporation; if Aegis Research is a Tripartite organisation backed by the Federation, Empire, and AIS [Alliance of Independent Systems] then why is the AIS keeping a separate operation in all Aegis systems?"

Does this demonstrate that the Alliance is playing a longer game? There are rumours, often spread by the fringe group the Children of Raxxla, that before her death the disgraced Imperial Senator Kahina Loren told trusted companions that she had attended a secret meeting with Edmund Mahon where he revealed he had secret knowledge of the Thargoids. However, Loren and the Children of Raxxla have long been associated with extreme conspiracy theories, so it's unlikely there's any substance to these rumours.

Is the Alliance Finally Developing its own ships?

Despite a long history of engineering excellence and the largest commercial shipyards in known space at New Rosyth, Alioth, the AIS has lagged behind its older counterparts in ship development, relying mainly on commercially available ships to bulk out its fleets. While the AIS boasts many ship developers they have never had a signature 'Alliance' ship to rival the Core Dynamics Federal line or the elegant Gutamaya Imperial ship line.

If recently leaked information is true, then that's all about to change. In a move greeted with massive speculation from all market sectors, early development plans for a ship known as the 'Chieftain' have been released. It's early days yet, but



Chieftain

we do know that it's a collaboration between Lakon Spaceways and the Alliance itself.

The capabilities of this new ship are unknown, but judging from the seats we see in the cockpit plans it's not a small ship. Some speculate that it's a type of heavy attack ship comparable to the Federal Gunship, while others speculate that it's a new type of inter-atmospheric craft due to the unique out-rigger engine configuration. What we do know is that Lakon aren't known for making pure combat ships, and while the venerable Asp and the affordable Diamondback can make fine combat vessels, it's fair to say Lakon design primarily for

utility. Is the Chieftain Lakon's attempt to enter a new market, or are we seeing the development of an entirely new type of multi-role ship?

The other ship we know Lakon have been working on for a while is the 'Type-10 Defender', while little is known of the exact details, insiders who have seen early test flights compare it to a "Weaponised, heavily armoured Type-9". This is apparently another collaboration between the Alliance and Lakon, if rumours are to be believed, it's the first confirmation of a full-scale response to the Thargoid threat that goes far beyond simply creating new weapons modules. Such a development could indicate that the Alliance is anticipating full-scale war, and if other rumours are true, the Alliance may well know more than anyone else about what's to come.

Another rumour that's been floating around recently is the return of an old classic in the form of the Krait, a ship retired since the spaceframes produced by Faulcon DeLacy were unable to be modified around the new FSD technology. It seems they are set to develop an all new version of this wildly popular craft for 3304 - however it remains to be seen whether this ship will be added to the new Alliance line-up.




Krait

The Alliance of the Future?

Born from rebellion, the Alliance of Independent Systems has grown from a small group of disgruntled systems looking for a better deal into a fully fledged superpower. While currently they can't go toe-to-toe with either the Federation or the Empire on a military level, the Alliance is certainly punching above it's weight on the political front.

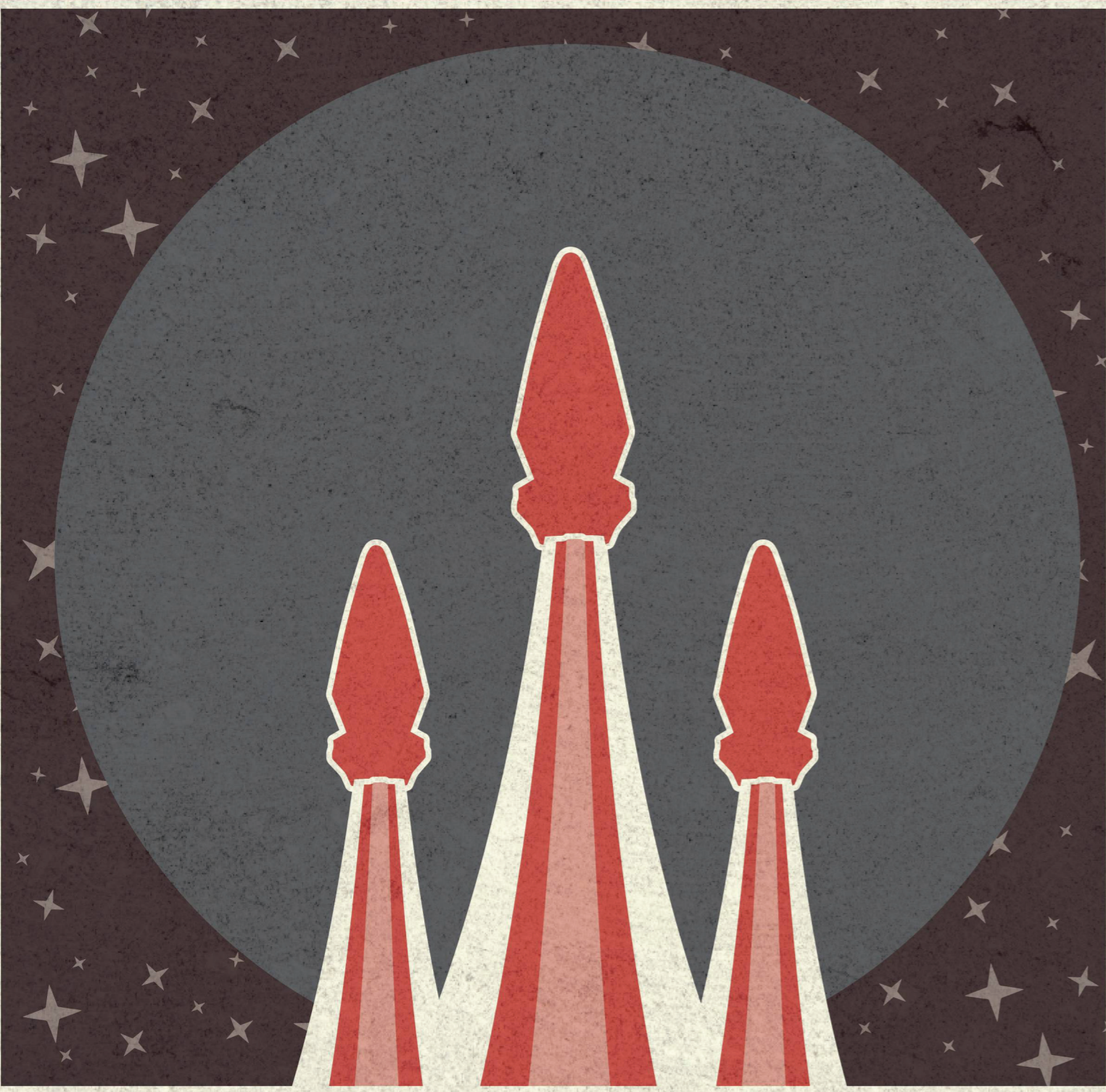
The biggest question right now is 'What will the Alliance become?' Mahon's government seems determined, at least publicly, to call for unity and peace at every turn. Will they emerge as the peacemakers of history? Or will they emerge as the great betrayers that withheld vital information about what might turn out to be humanity's greatest enemy?

It seems likely that the majority of Alliance supporters will hope for peace, but it's fair to say that, given the investment already made in these new ship designs, it's apparent that the Alliance leadership is gearing up for war.



Louis Calvert enjoys nothing more than exploring the facts behind a mystery and getting to the 'truth' of the matter. Not disciplined enough for a career in the Sciences and not dedicated enough for a career in Law Enforcement, his only recourse was to become a journalist. He can be found chasing a story in his battered Cobra, the Lady Macbeth.

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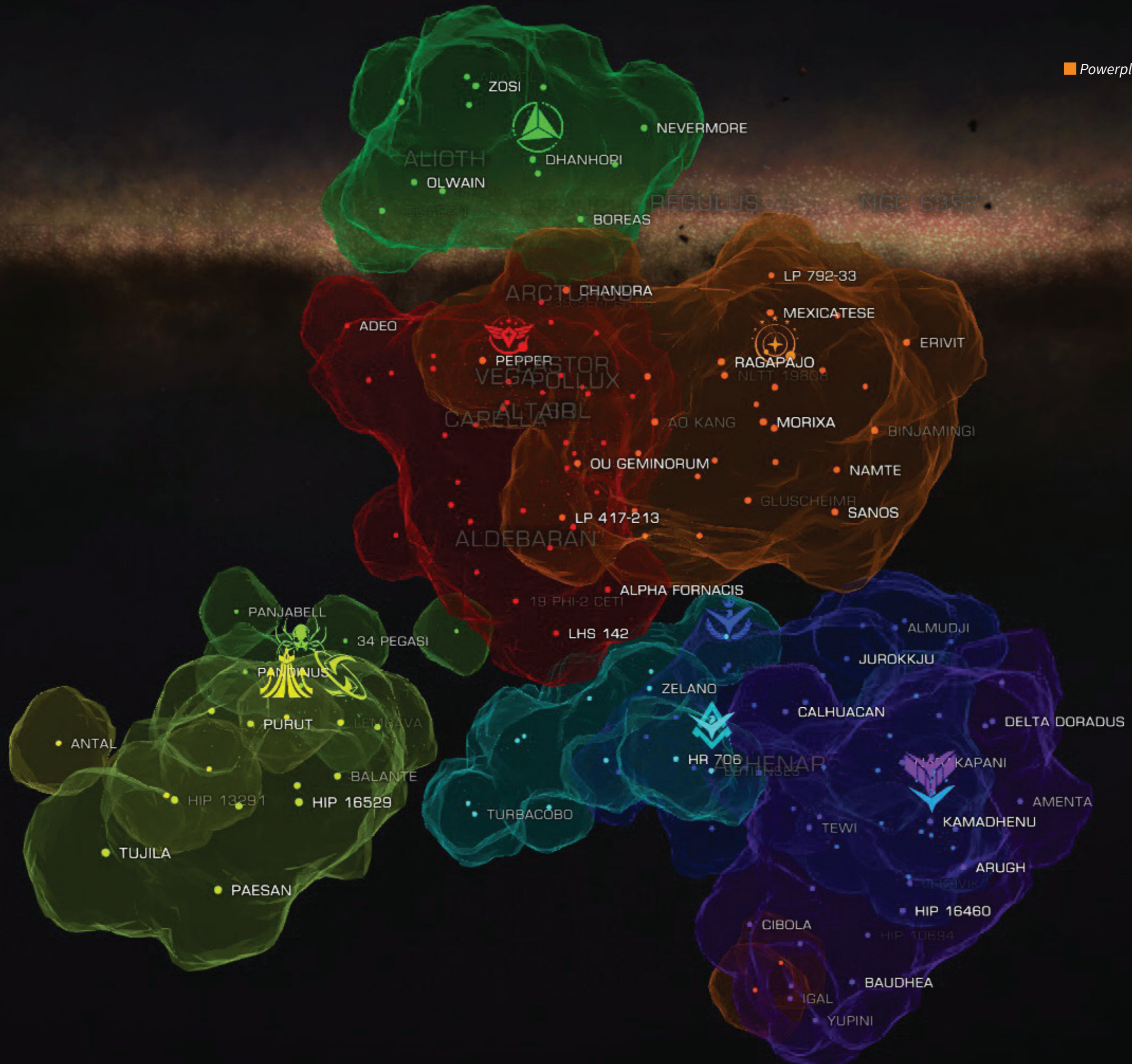
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GAME OF SYSTEMS

MEET THE MAJOR POWERS:





Our distant ancestors thought that by the time we would become an interstellar species we would be living utopian lives free from work, taxes, and even death. As anyone living in the 34th Century knows, that's never been the case, and it doesn't look like it's looming on the horizon either.

What we have done instead is taken our politics to thousands of star systems. Even the best-planned colony world eventually develops ideological schisms as the population grows, and just like on old Earth (the birthplace of Humanity for those of you without a historical education), we do love dividing up our territory into 'mine' and 'yours'.

Welcome to what many refer to as 'Powerplay' - The shifting political landscape governed by territorial claims made by one or more of the eleven major powers in the Bubble of human space. It's possible to think of Powerplay as a very slow interstellar war, usually conducted under a facade of politics, and only sometimes involving actual shooting.

Each of these individuals command vast numbers of star systems - numbers which grow or shrink depending on the ebb and flow of Powerplay (known as 'PP' to many spacers). Each Power governs their territory as his or her own morals and politics dictate. Even if you don't directly declare yourself for one of these powers, each time you dock, trade, turn in combat bonds or relieve a passing trader of their cargo, you're almost certainly doing so under the purview of one of these eleven people and the major galactic governmental style they represent.

Who are they and what do they stand for?

The full answer to this is far beyond the scope of this article, however we can paint in broad strokes. Both of the Duvals, Patreus and Torval represent the Empire, though each represents a fairly significant difference in the ancient superpower's core philosophies moving forward. Winters and Hudson represent the Federation, competing as two sides of the same coin and mostly arguing over taxes and military budgets. Mahon stands as the only voice of the Alliance, and whatever it is they stand for these days other than being opposed to whatever the Federation and Empire do. The other four represent various independent styles of governance; Delaine is known as "the pirate king", and that should tell you all you need to know. Antal is the leader of the massive Utopia movement, a technological commune that might lead to a higher evolution of humanity, or might turn out to be the biggest cult in history. Yong-Rui is the heir of the Sirius Corporate Empire and represents both a government and a corporation, with all the benefits and flaws that implies. Grom is the 'new kid on the station', resigning as an Admiral of the Federation to lead an independent neo-free-socialist-state that values personal freedom while adhering to the strict laws he dictates.

Many independent commanders choose to align themselves into large wings, or enrol in some of the more established organisations in support of a particular power, such as Lavigny's Legion who fly in support of Arissa Lavigny-Duval. Their official recruitment material declares:

"Lavigny's Legion is a large force devoted to, above all else, the well-being of the Achenar Emperor, Arissa Lavigny-Duval, her citizens, and her lands. Lavigny's Legion consists of the strongest, most dedicated Imperial commanders in the galaxy. Our Legionnaires protect Imperial freedoms whilst serving our glorious nation both in local space, the uncharted black, or in operations in hostile territory. We take pride in everything that our Emperor has graced us with. Legionnaires bleed purple to their very core."

Which one is the best?

To many independent commanders choosing a power is as much about finding a home as it is earning a living. The group Winters' Wolves, lead by Commander N.R.Crosby, found an

ally in Felicia Winters and have remained fiercely loyal to this day:

"In 3301 an alliance with the Federation and specifically the Shadow President Felicia Winters was signed and the Hai-Malists or Winter's Wolves were formed. The policy of the Winter's Wolves is to not resist assimilation with the Shadow President but to cooperatively assimilate into the Shadow President's domain, and to retain their unique culture and cooperative society as it stands now on 41 Lambda Hydrae, known locally as Wayola or Land of the Great Plains. To this day the respect from the Shadow President and the Wolves for each other has been a very beneficial arrangement for both parties."

Not all commanders choose to settle for whichever power claimed their homeworlds. Pilots have the freedom to make their ship a home, so the question of supporting a Power is genuinely a choice, one that planet-bound mudbooters rarely have. Because of this choice, many pilots seek to find the 'best' allies - in this case, whomever meets your needs and personal moral compass. Some Commanders like to work for a Power and then move on when they feel the time is right, others pick one and fiercely defend their chosen patron to the death, if necessary. Some choose for economic reasons, like Commander Vauban and Commander Matzov, who combined forces to pirate some pirates and then found they needed a way to launder profits from black market sales of twice-stolen goods. As they had both recently taken to a bit of mining, the Pan-Galactic Mining Corporation was set up as a front. This small mining business developed ties to Sirius Corp and Li-yong Rui to further legitimise the group and in so doing helps to keep galactic commerce flowing in keeping with Li-Yong Rui's aims.

And because there's always another choice, some commanders never choose and try to avoid the whole messy politics of it all. Each power has his or her advantages and inevitable disadvantages, and all of them will expect you to work for your salary... if you do pick a side.

Supporting your chosen Power

Obviously, independent pilots don't have the time or inclination to go back to school to understand the exact process by which intergalactic government happens - if we did we'd be politicians rather than pilots, right? Instead, the powers reduce all this complexity to a simple concept: Command Capital (CC). This represents all the money, the influence, the politicking, the bribes, favours, arranged marriages, black-mail and charisma-laced speeches that go into politics. Each power "spends" Command Capital on keeping what it has, and trying to grab more systems from everyone else.

Even the Utopians need some version of Command Capital in order to defend against pressure from outside. The independent commander group The Dhammacari are fervent in their devotion to Simguru Antal, as this extract taken from an article circulated on Antal's homeworld Polevnic shows:

"In 3303; at a time of turmoil, a call to arms was issued across inhabited space for humans, able in body and mind, to converge and defend Utopia. They would form a temple-colony to propagate the Simguru's teachings, ardent in the belief the only way humanity can be saved is "harmony through technology". A feudalistic monastic society, led by a Grandmaster, inspired by historical counterparts, devout in dispensing Antal's teachings."

The territory of each power is governed by 'control systems', these are important local hubs within the territory of a superpower. The control system requires maintenance - whether this means exercising military might to keep the boot firmly down, or financing civic works to keep the population contented, it's all reduced for simplicity to Command Capital. However, each control system also receives income from systems around it. These are known as 'exploited systems', and generate CC in the form of trade, conscripted forces, military support, traded works of art, labour forces, valuable

minerals, manufacturing power, et cetera.

When a superpower controls a system it applies 'control effects' to that system. Control effects are varied and dependent on the power, but could include shutting down all black markets, increasing penalties for criminals or legalising specific commodities. The effects reflect, to some degree, the overall ethos of the controlling power and are one of the more immediate benefits to controlling a system.

Show Me the Money!

Assuming the reward of helping your chosen Power maintain a grasp on target systems, or expand explosively into new ones isn't enough - then fear not - you'll also get paid!

Each power realises that the time of an independent starship pilot is valuable, and offers a tiered salary structure as recompense. This is measured in 'merits'. A merit is just a handy space I.O.U from your chosen power until it's time to pay up. There are many ways to earn merits, depending on how a commander wishes to devote themselves to a particular ideal or system. Often the safest way to earn Merits is by delivering goods for your power, but this is also a fairly slow way to earn your way to the top! If you're that way inclined you can also embark on rampage and slaughter your way through the enemies of your favourite Power, thus earning quite a reputation in the process. This is dangerous, and arguably immoral - although that might not really be much of a consideration for some pilots out there! Remember that whatever you do, there's pilots out there making similar decisions - To Kill or not To Kill?

Each week you'll get paid for your work! Sadly, the pay scale isn't that great when you're on the bottom rungs, but that's all the more reason to work your way up. If you're dedicated you can earn in the region of 50,000,000 (fifty million) credits per week! - certainly more than the annual salary of a reporter that's for sure (editor, take note...).

Of course not all rewards are physical, and it might be that a commander needs a place to hide amongst like-minded people after a job goes bad, or seek to repair some of the karmic damage they've done. The Sap Core Legion could be just the thing for a pilot in that situation as this transcript of their latest recruiting hologram demonstrates:

"If we are having this conversation, you no doubt have something to hide. And here in the Alliance, we have offered new beginnings. Whether you did something dirty for the Federation, heavy guilt laden Imperial woes, maybe someone

hates you enough that you don't want to be found.... a clean slate. You may end your days mining our beautiful blood moon... or be part of something greater. Give back what you have taken. Here at Sap Core, we do what must be done, no questions asked. We will keep our part of the galaxy clean, no matter the cost. So others may have the peace that we all dream of but can never grasp. We only ask one thing, full disclosure."

Not all that Glitters is Gold...

But wait, there's more! Not only can you earn yourself a tidy retirement fund, you can also gain access to some exclusive items if you gain enough favour. These rewards include (but are not limited to): The Imperial Hammer, a multi-shot railgun; Prismatic Shield Generators - stronger Shield Generators; The Pack-Hound Rack: a medium seeker missile rack that fires a salvo of 'drunk' missiles; The Containment missile: a dumbfire missile that reboots the target's FSD; and the Pacifier Frag-Cannon: a large fragment cannon with tighter spread and longer range but lower damage than your regular cannon.

Each of the eleven has found a unique way to materially reward loyalty. For some, these trinkets are enough of an enticement to sign on the dotted line.

Powerplay - The Game of Systems...

Not everyone is cracked up to fly the flag for a particular power, and there's no shame in that. It's worth remembering though that if you don't pick a side, a side might end up picking you. A case in point: The independent commander group Guardians of Tranquillity run Tranquillity Station, a High Tech station that orbits the terraformed world of Handroo, which stands at a political crossroads between the four major powers of Patreus, Antal, Yong-Rui and Hudson. They had this to say to the SAGi:

"We were exploited by Pranav Antal and were not particularly happy about it; they, the joyless 'Utopians', stifled the hedonistic and easy-going atmosphere in Tranquillity; we're glad they're gone! Since then, a partnership with Sirius Corp has been fostered and our Powerplay position is to support Li Yong-Rui. Perhaps Sirius Corp see the potential in Tarach Spice; maybe it has medicinal applications? It certainly helps us feel better."



Louis Calvert enjoys nothing more than exploring the facts behind a mystery and getting to the 'truth' of the matter. Not disciplined enough for a career in the Sciences and not dedicated enough for a career in Law Enforcement, his only recourse was to become a journalist. He can be found chasing a story in his battered Cobra, the Lady Macbeth.





What would you do
if you only had 25 minutes to live?

OXYGEN DEPLETED IN: 25:00



The Buckyball Racing Club presents:

The Last Gasp

A race against the clock!
Coming January 3304

<http://buckyballracing.org.uk>

Here in the SAGi office we always take a tremendous amount of interest in the events commanders organise. So we are making this column a monthly feature, bringing you the most happening happenings organised by pilots, for pilots, so you can get involved if something tickles your fancy (or anything else).

First up this month, [The Minerva Centaurus Expedition](#). On Sunday November 19th 3303 more than fifty pilots met outside Kippax Ring in HIP 72043, home of the Institute of Galactic Exploration and Research (IGER). The expedition, organised by the Colonia Citizens Network (CCN), will cover over 100,000 light years and four months. Expedition Leader Yanick hopes that this trip will help to more extensively map the relatively unexplored regions along the eastern side of the galaxy.



Though the expedition is well under way, interested pilots can still join in and catch the main party. There are weekly meet-ups at waypoints to have fun with fighters and SRVs, so if you're keen on joining in, make your way first to <https://forums.frontier.co.uk/show-thread.php/372565-Minerva-Centaurus-Expedition>

Next, an upcoming event organised by the galaxy-renowned Buckyball Racing Club. Shorter in scale and duration than other Milky Way-spanning events they've put on in the past, January's event promises nonetheless to be just as breathtaking.

[The Last Gasp](#) will involve daredevil – or possibly sui-

cidal – commanders switching off life support, flying as far as possible and returning to the starting station before their 25 minute supply of emergency air runs out. Organiser Alec Turner told SAGi that "the concept works like a dream". Find out more about the Buckyballers at <http://www.buckyballracing.org.uk/>

For those of you who like nothing better than pitting your wits, builds and guns against others in combat, there is a club for you. Commander Bazinga! says of the PvP Hub:

"Fights are daily – if people want to fight, they will be able to find one. The PvP Hub is a supportive environment in which to learn PvP. Teams are balanced according to ship capabilities and skill level, and pilots will be guided or trained how to fly in a wing."

New to PvP or a veteran mean cold killer, the PvP Hub will welcome you with open arms – and loaded weapons. Find out more at <https://discord.gg/JYRK44W>

Finally, for those looking for festive fun and frolics of a more eclectic kind, the lovely folks from Deep Recon X have put together The Twelve Days of DRX-Mas. Spanning multiple days – December 26th to January 6th – the variety of events ensures that no matter how you fly, there will be an activity for you to get involved with. Make contact - they really are a terrific bunch and happy to welcome one and all to the fun. The details can be found here:

<https://forums.frontier.co.uk/show-thread.php/393763-It-s-the-most-wonderful-time-of-the-year-The-12-Days-of-DRX-Mas-3303?p=6188753#post6188753>



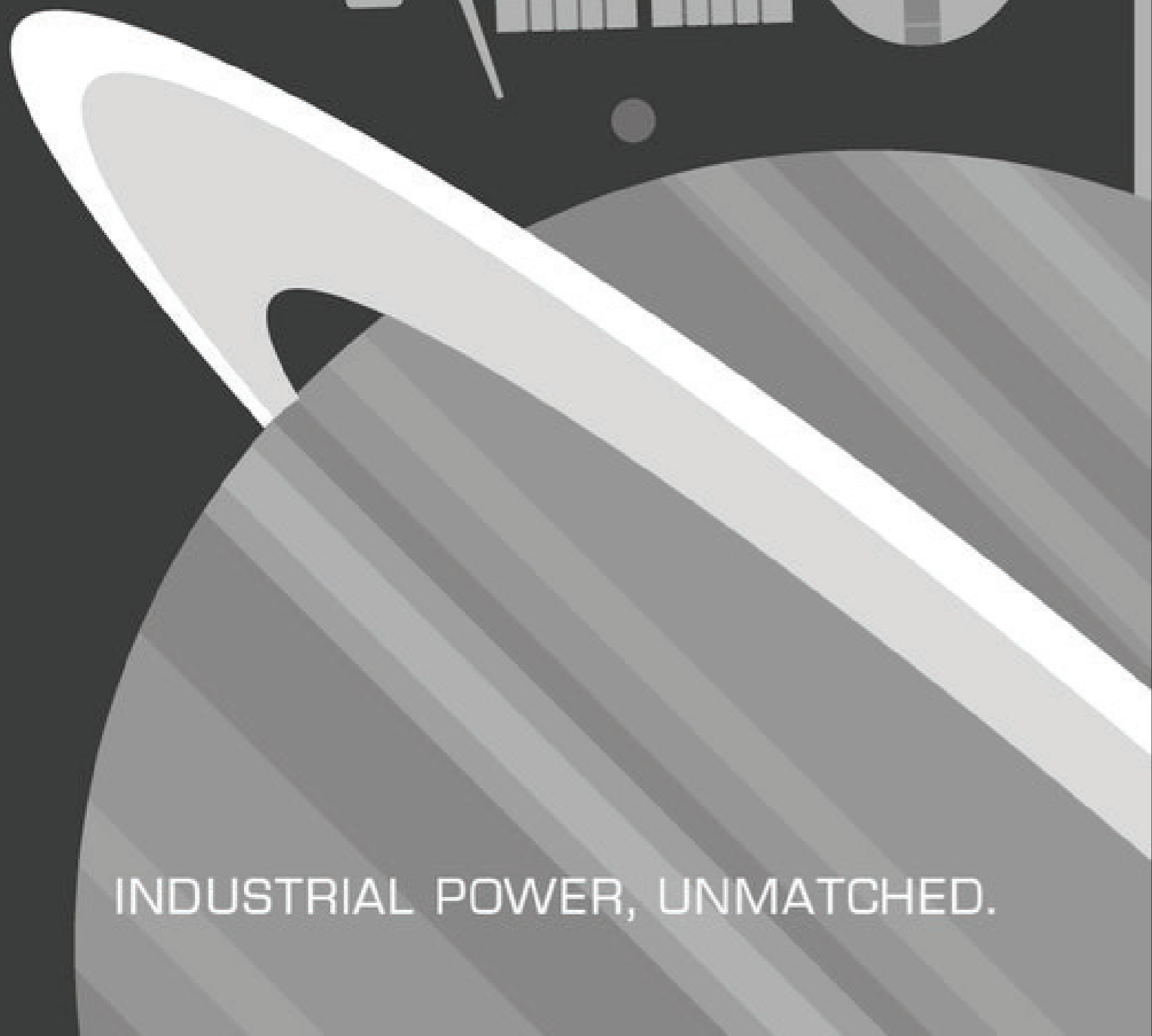
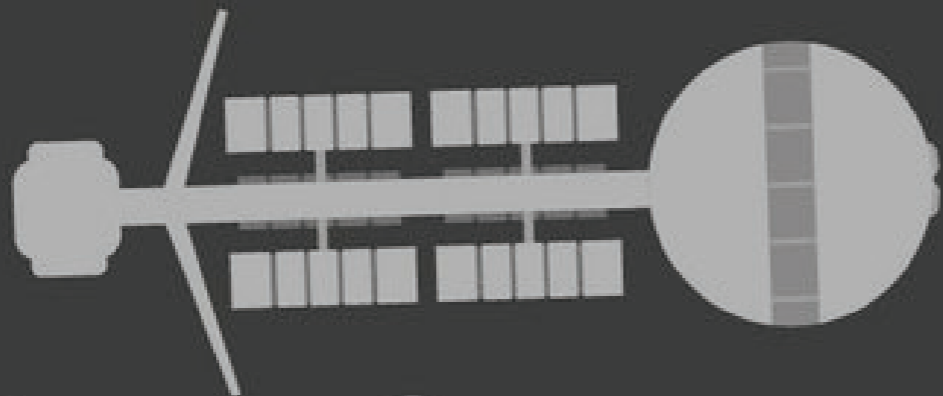
Having been described as "a great bunch of guys", Whitmann likes random encounters in dangerous places and hiding poetic turns of phrase in supposedly-seriously journalism. For him, picking a favourite ship would be as impossible as picking a favourite way to get drunk, but he's most often seen in his concrete Viper IV, Zopherus, looking for new stories and new friends, in that order. As an explorer and impractical dreamer he's desperate for someone to invent a way to jump to a whole new galaxy. In the meantime he will be writing - and flying - in this one.

Minerva-Centaurus Expedition pilots preparing for mass launch



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**"DRINK AND BASK
WITH THE EMPIRE!"**



GUTAMAYA

THE ARONNAX EXPEDITION

There are mysterious places in the galaxy, where route plotting fails and attempts to jump to systems yields only the message: Unable to hyperspace to this system. Regor Sector, Col 70 Sector and the Horsehead Nebula are all examples close to Sol of these enigmatic 'permit-locked' regions.

- Edelgard von Rhein

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It is thought that these might be areas with significant Thargoid activity, or perhaps secret operations by the superpowers, remnants of the Guardians, or all three. The only reports from within these sectors have been of industrial mishaps in Col 70 Sector, from Galnet, and a brief mention in relation to the exploits of Senator Kahina Loren—also known as Salomé—shortly before her death. She was, after all, racing back from the vicinity of Col 70 Sector to Tionisla when she was destroyed, in April 3303. Yet further out in the galaxy many more regions produce the same failures in navigation systems when attempting to reach them. What might be found there? Could one of these be the home of the Thargoid civilisation, or are there other spacefaring races waiting to be discovered, or in hiding?

The first recorded expedition to attempt entry to one of these regions was the Daedalus Wing expedition of 3301, with the DSS Iapix and DSS Icarus setting out for Hyponia but diverting to Bovomit, on the far side of the Formidine Rift. After the DSS Iapix was lost in mysterious circumstances, the DSS Icarus continued the mission alone, but access to the region proved impossible. This was one of the key sources of inspiration for the Aronnax Expedition: to find signs of spacefaring activity and civilisations in other parts of the galaxy. With the re-appearance of the Thargoids close to the bubble, the expedition's goal is of strategic importance. It is very important to find out where the Thargoids are from, or at least where they are not, in order to know best how to respond to them.

Another source of inspiration lies in the name: Pierre Aronnax was the marine biologist in the ancient novel 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, by Jules Verne, who was sent to locate a sea monster reported to be sinking ships in the Pacific Ocean, on Earth. Hence, Pierre Aronnax is the name of the Federal Corvette carrying out this survey of the ten most distant permit-locked regions that are currently known.

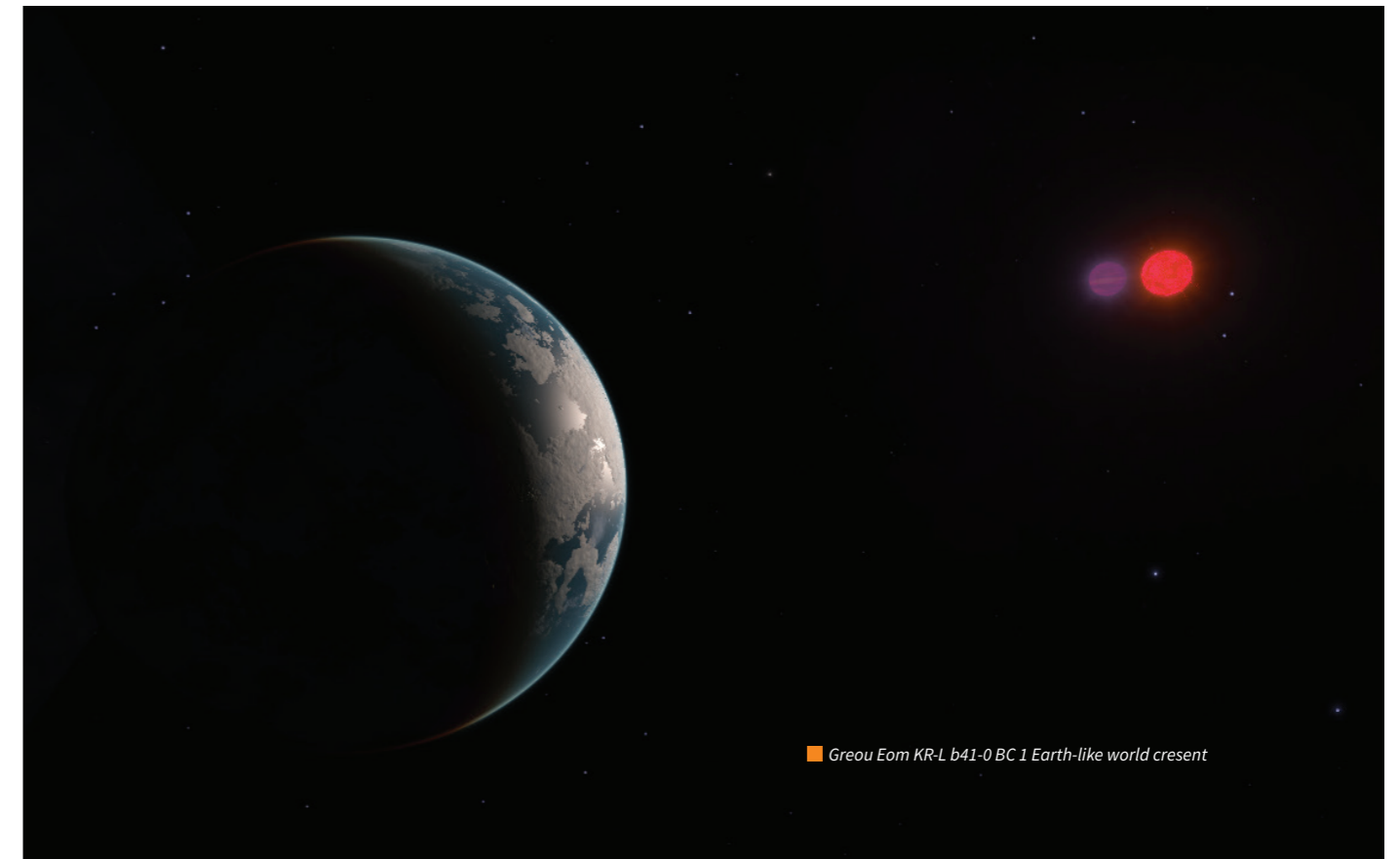
In addition to searching for signs of spacefaring activity, the secondary goal of the expedition is to provide a foundation for future expeditions to these regions. A 'Forward Base' location is being scouted a few hundred light years

away from the borders of each region, in case operations close to the border should, in the future, prove hazardous or unwelcome. The Forward Bases are systems containing an Earth-like world that either possess all the materials needed for frame shift drive (FSD) boosting or are close to such systems, sometimes known by explorers as 'green' systems. Closer to the borders, the priorities are to locate Earth-like and Ammonia worlds for future monitoring as well as green systems and any other features of interest of significance.

The expedition launched from Abraham Lincoln station in Sol on 31st July 3303. The station was chosen in recognition of the ship used by Pierre Aronnax in his quest for the 'sea monster': the frigate Abraham Lincoln. Field trials on the border of NGC 2264 Sector, surrounding the Cone Nebula, had confirmed that she was suitable for a long-dura-



tion mission and established familiarisation with her operations. The Federal Corvette was preferred to the Anaconda due to her advantage in manoeuvrability. More time will be spent in supercruise surveying systems than jumping between systems, even with a 25 light year (LY) jump range, so handling was more important than jump range. She carries a pair of Surface Recon Vehicles (SRVs) and two fighters to assist in surface exploration, and also a mining lance to gather materials without being dependent upon surface mining. A lightweight plasma slug railgun functions mainly as a 'jettison fuel' mechanism but packs a respectable punch for a small hardpoint. The Pierre Aronnax is



Greou Eom KR-L b41-0 BC 1 Earth-like world crescent



Preou Thoe HJ-K c8-4 3 rings and 3b moon

well-armed and defended, as it was unknown what dangers she might face - except for the known risk of being interdicted close to home. So far on the expedition she has used her weapons only once: assisting the Colonia Council in its recent conflict with the Nameless, during a brief stop-over in Colonia.

At the time of writing, the expedition has completed its surveys of the borders of NGC 2286 Sector, Bovomit, Sidgoir, Froadik, Hyponia and Bleia. The survey of the borders of Praei, the largest and most distant permit-locked region, is in progress. Previous expeditions have established the size and morphology of these regions, most of which appear to be spheres 1,000 LY across; however Sidgoir is only 200 LY across and Bleia and Praei are composed of multiple 1,000 LY spheres. Bleia is composed of five such spheres and Praei six. Consider that in relation to the human 'Bubble', which is roughly 500 LY across.

Submissions have been made to The Galactic Mapping Project with the expedition's findings and these have in most cases been added to those regions' existing descriptions, or are pending. Several other points of interest (POIs) have been reported, including an undiscovered planetary nebula in the Festival Grounds (The Wishing Well Nebula) and a remarkable close-orbiting pair of ringed worlds near Bleia. Some exploration data has been sold at asteroid bases during the expedition, during visits to the Jellyfish Nebula and the Soul Nebula, and also in Colonia, with over twenty Earth-like worlds being reported from the first four regions surveyed or found between them.

So far no spacefaring activity has been observed, nor any signs of surface outposts or organic structures. Surface conditions suitable for organic life include temperature between 200 Kelvin (K) and 500K in combination with active volcanism and 'ejecta' craters (these having flat bottoms and being surrounded by 'rays' of ejecta material from the impact). Some regions seem to have plentiful worlds with these conditions but in others they are scarce. The Bovomit Forward Base is close to a number of systems containing worlds like this, in particular Phae Phlai XJ-R d4-35, which

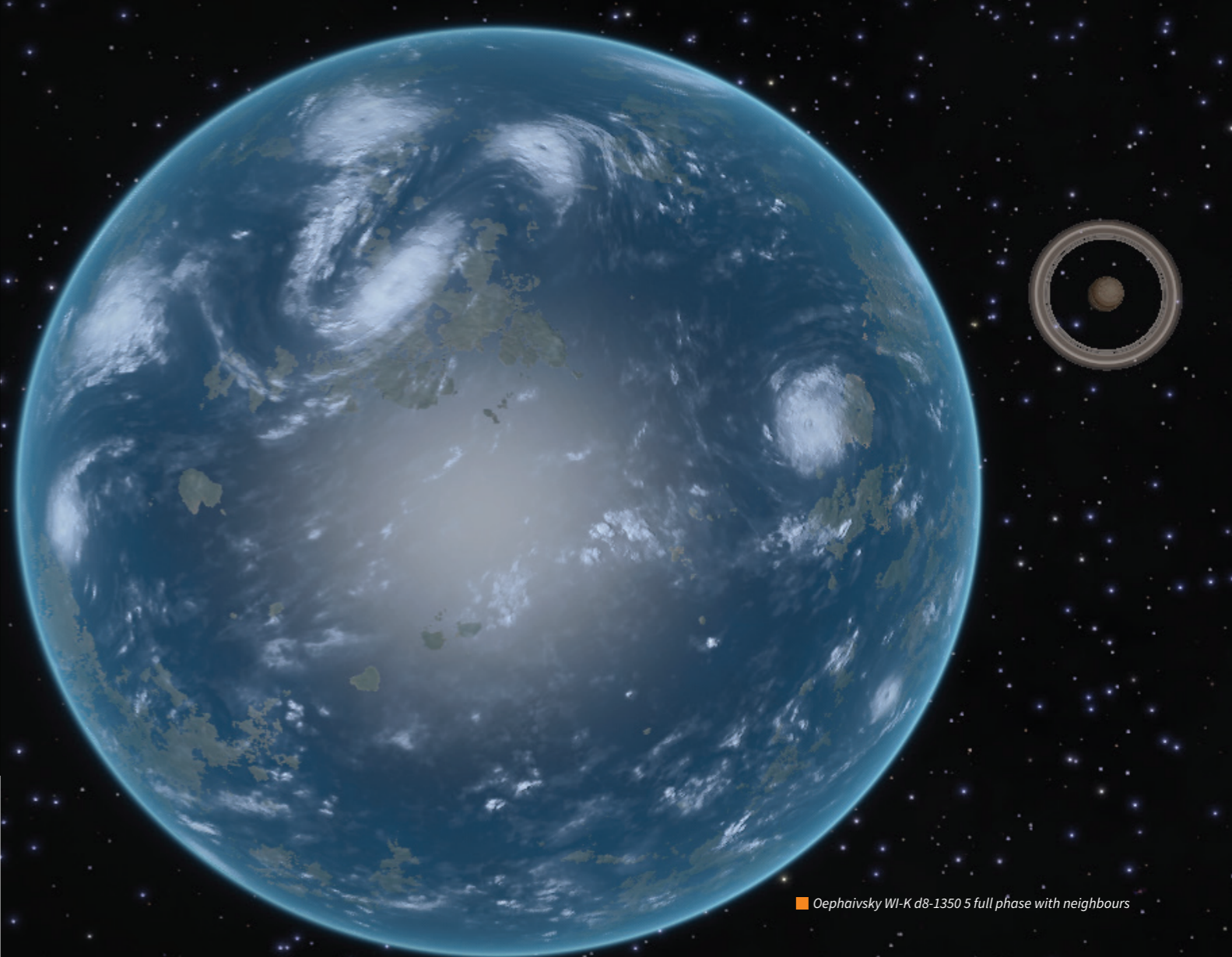
is a green system that hosts an astonishing twelve worlds with surface conditions compatible with organics - this recently inspired Cmdr ModishNouns to investigate but sadly no organic structures were discovered, which suggests that the Guardians did not establish any outposts in this region (there is an association between 'brain trees' and Guardians Ruins that has been established by the work of Cmdr Baton and others). The Bleia Forward Base region is also home to at least two dozen such worlds, whilst the region of the Bleia border surveyed had very few.

The Pierre Aronnax is flown by Cmdr Edelgard von Rhein and so far the only direct collaboration with another Cmdr has been on the Froadik border, with assistance from Cmdr Anuranium. Independent exploration has the advantage of allowing complete flexibility in terms of participation times and activities. There are no deadlines on this expedition, only goals. If a system seems appealing for any reason, then it can be surveyed in full or only the worlds of interest visited.

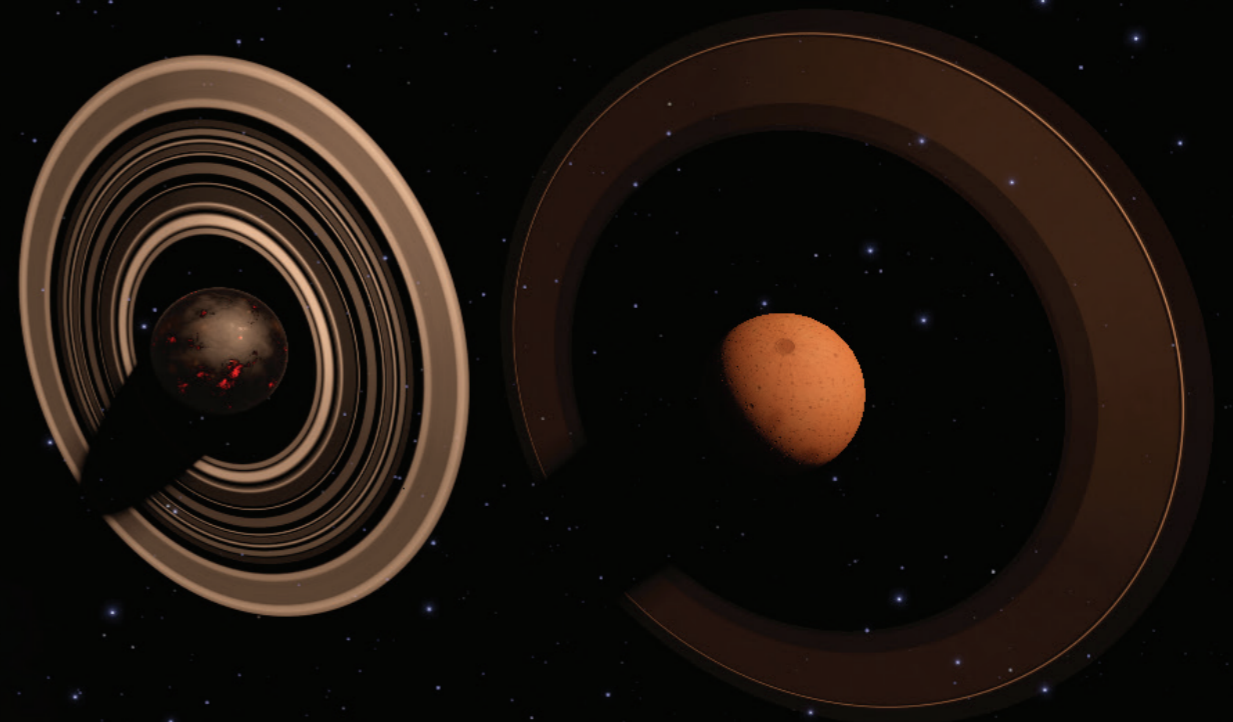
As the expedition was anticipated from the start to take many months, activities other than flying and scanning have been allowed for. The GU-97 fighter is good for canyon racing or just flying around ring systems. Having two SRVs allows for some risks to be taken when driving. Finding interesting scenery allows for a break from serious surveying. There are also days when what is needed most is a rest!

The expedition is likely to take at least another two months, with the main challenge anticipated to be the long voyage between Praei and Dryman, estimated to be about 40,000 LY. There is no knowing what will be encountered close to the remaining permit-locked regions but Dryman is located on a direct line from the bubble to the Abandoned Settlements in Hawking's Gap. Was the Zurara the only Megaship dispatched on the Dynasty Expedition, or are there others waiting to be discovered? The only way to find out is to go and look.

Edelgard von Rhein is a guest contributor.



Oephavsky WI-K d8-1350 5 full phase with neighbours



The close rings of Vegnoae BK-R d4-1105 A 1 and A 2

Dedicated Pilots Needed



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