

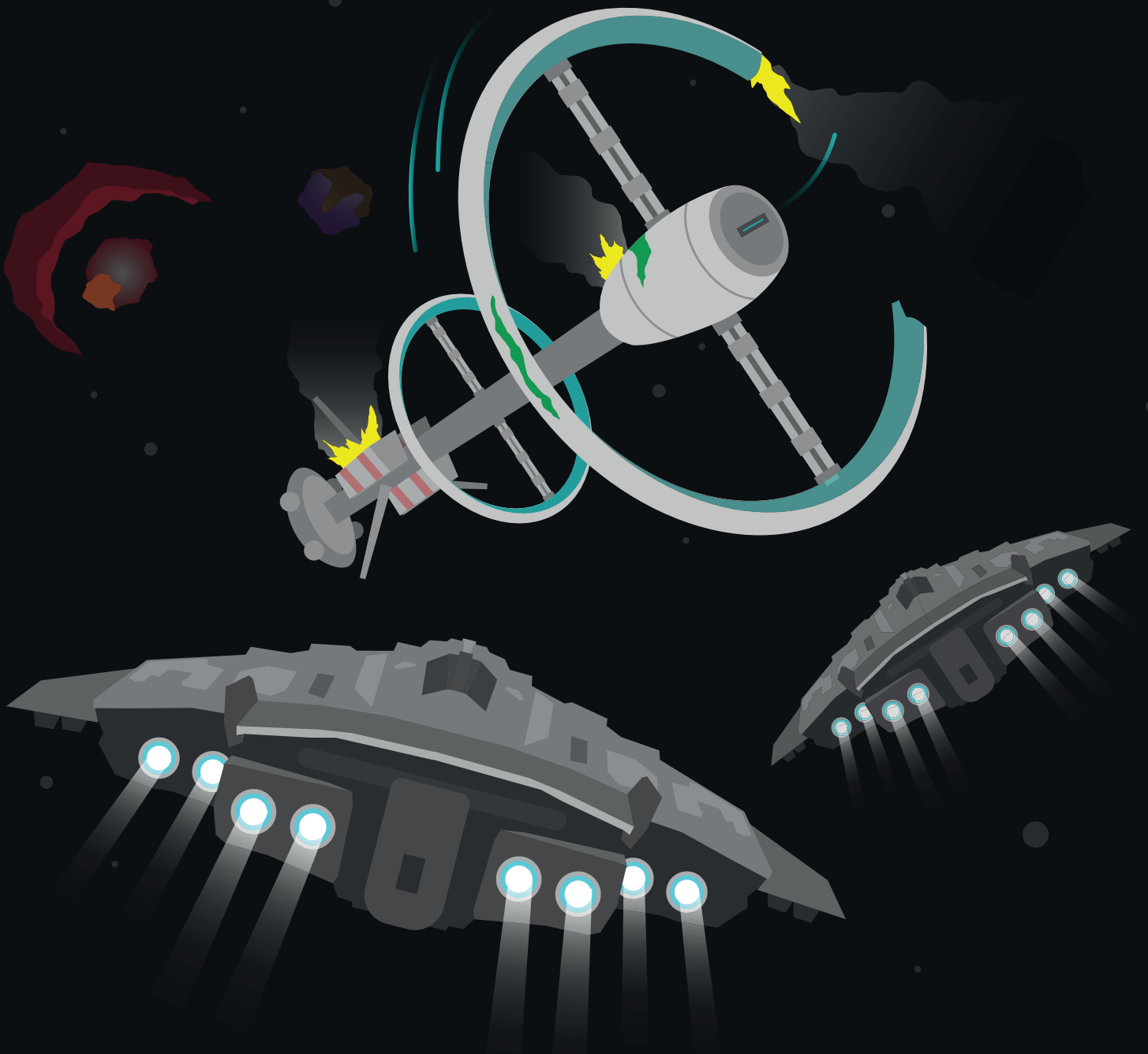


SAGITTARIUS

JAN 3304

ISSUE 5

EYE



THE THARGOID WAR
STATE OF EMERGENCY





SAGITTARIUS
EYE

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EDITORIAL FOCUS



It has long perplexed this reporter that in January—a month in which nobody has any money, there are no more parties in the diary, and the weather is bleak—many people choose to embrace puritanical ‘resolutions’, arbitrarily denying themselves fun things like alcohol and taking themselves off jogging in droves.

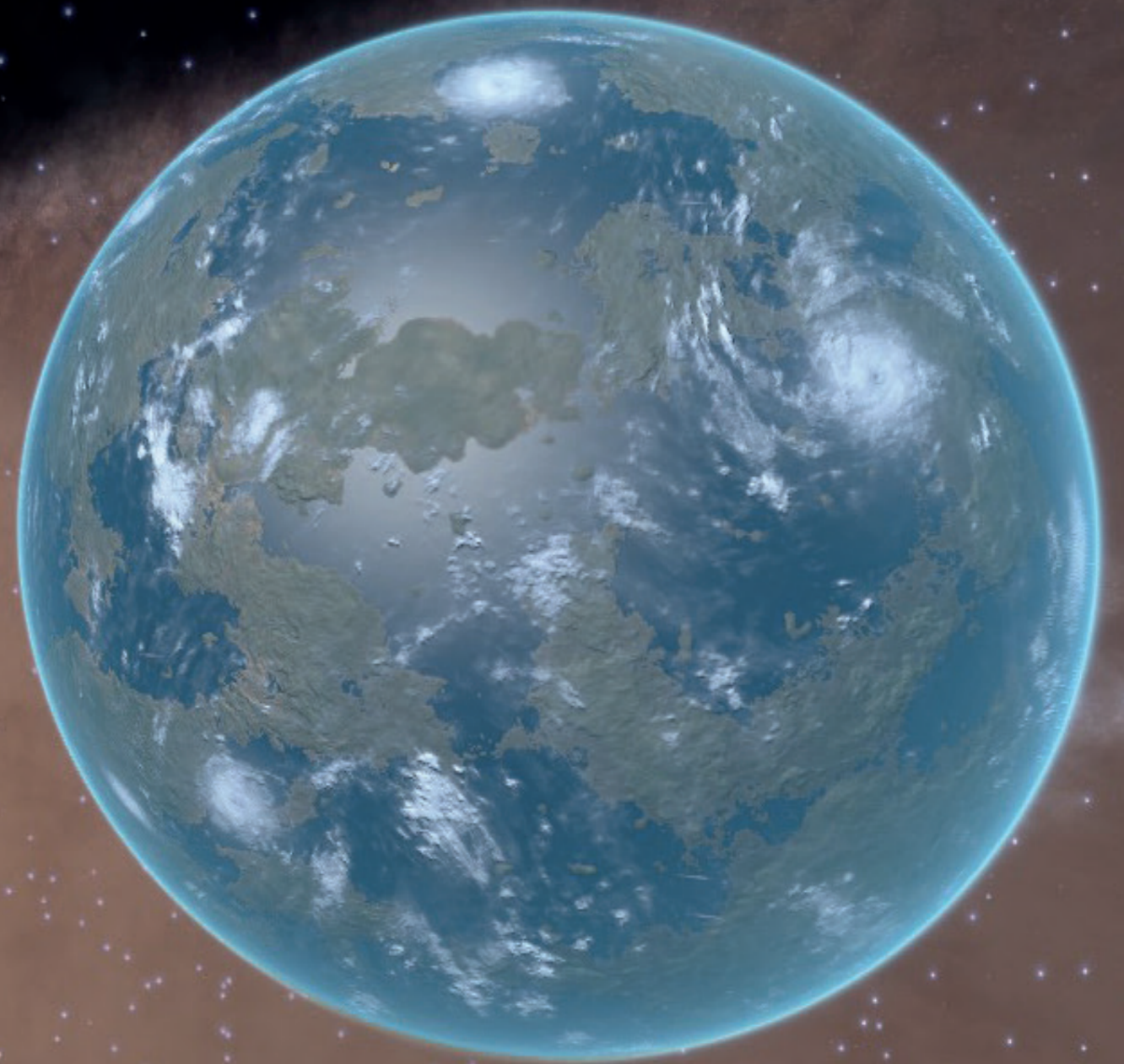
Surely this time of year needs no help being awful?

Not so the Sagittarius Eye team who, on the first day of 3304, hung up their typewriters to see in the new year with a high-octane canyon race. You can find out which of us hacks is the defftest with a flight stick within.

It is in this spirit that we bring you our January issue. Not one, but two greasy-elbowed starship reviews await you, as well as more Thargoid content than a Scavenger can spit green goop at. We have breaking news from a guest contributor of the ‘murder flowers’ latest incursions into our space, some thoughtful commentary as to their nature and purpose, as well as searching investigations into Project Equinox and the enigmatic Jasmina Halsey.

So stick that in your Remloks, readers. Bon 3304!

Souvarine
Editor



ENIGMA EXPEDITION

Humans have encountered many puzzles in the galaxy: some that exist within ourselves, some that call to us from the far black, and then the ones that spring seemingly from nowhere, reaching out to touch humanity from the very darkness between the stars.

The newly formed Enigma Expedition aims to address the greatest of those dark puzzles: the Thargoids.

Ever since the Thargoids attacked our stations in the Pleiades, our hospitals have been filling up with the victims of their alien weaponry. The casualties bear unfamiliar caustic injuries that are challenging our finest medical minds. But if history has taught us one thing, it is that humanity never backs away from a challenge.

Commander DoveEnigma13 has risen to that challenge and is spearheading an expedition to Colonia to help humanity's newest colony prepare to face the Thargoid threat. His 'Enigma Expedition' plans to take medical and tactical data to a specialist facility in Colonia, to help the colony prepare itself for the anticipated waves of refugees.

The Expedition's legacy will be the science megaship Dove Enigma, which will remain in Colonia to continue its work as a memorial for humanity's determination in the face of adversity.



WAYPOINT GUIDE

WP1: Helix Nebula (CSI-21-22270)

WP2: Mammon 1 A (65.33°//15.546°) (IC 1287 Nebula)

WP3: 46 Upsilon Sagittarii (Stray Bird's Nest impact crater, High g warning!)

WP4: Heaven's Lathe (HD 175876)

WP5: Red Spider Nebula (Red Spider Sector UJ-Q b5-0)

WP6: Thor's Eye (Lagoon Nebula)

WP7: Omega Nebula (Omega Sector PD-S b4-0 2 A Camp Baatuta (18.44°// -139.30°) 0.15g)

WP8: Eudaemon Anchorage (Rohini)

WP9: Dynasty Expedition Conflux Rally Point and abandoned settlements (Pru Aescs HW-S b31-2 CD 1 (-7.3°// -35.92°))

WP10: Skaudai Guardian Sites (Skaudai AM-B d14-138 AB 7 A (-37.81°//10.43°))

WP11: The Crux (Nuekuae AA-A h52)

WP12: Death Spiral (Blaa Phoe NC-D d12-230)

WP13: The Venetian Nebula (Boewnst KS-S c20-959 A 2 A, Polo Harbour)

WP14: Kashyapa (Vihara Gate)

WP15: Dove Enigma Megaship (Colonia)

THE BARNACLE MYSTERY

LIFE OR MACHINE?

We explore what exactly the Thargoids are,
and what this might mean for humanity.



Inside a Thargoid "ground base"

For a long time their observed characteristics didn't change: they seemed to encourage the growth of mineral spikes around them, which bore strange fruits known as 'meta alloys'. The sounds of geological activity underneath them hinted at subterranean mining or extraction. Then in 3303 reports hit describing the alien spacecraft visiting the Barnacles and interacting with them. Their beam of green light could be a tool for extracting something from the Barnacles, or imparting something to them.

The relationship between these two organic phenomena deepened further with the discovery of the abandoned Thargoid 'bases' on airless worlds. Your correspondent visited several of these, and saw for himself the giant petals rearing out of the ground. The central structure is undeniably similar to the Barnacles themselves – suggesting a later evolution perhaps.

These unknown relationships perplex the Galaxy's scientists. There is a distinct sense of emptiness about the Thargoids; their spacecraft behave more like animals than vehicles, and we know from their wreckage that they contain no pilots. Are they the Thargoids themselves? If so, they resemble no kind of life we recognise. It's unclear how they would build structures like their planetary surface bases or reproduce, for example, not to mention evolve in a vacuum.

If not, perhaps they are merely the autonomous footsoldiers of yet-unseen sentient aliens. In this case, it makes more sense that their bases are abandoned. The 'starmaps' within these structures hint that their makers may be extragalactic in origin, as they resemble a galaxy unlike the Milky Way. If so, it might make sense to send their autonomous creations ahead of them to gauge the danger. Xenobiologists sense the hallmarks of design in the organic circuitry of the Thargoid craft and Barnacles.

Historians recall a thinker from our species' uniplanetary days. Enrico Fermi in the Twentieth Century asked where, given the abundance of worlds conducive to life in the Milky Way, were all the other sentient species? It took our species a mere 60,000 years to evolve from the sort of non-cognisant species we routinely encounter to our current interstellar selves – a blink of an eye in cosmic terms. Where are all the other civilisations?

A possible explanation was posited in the 'Great Filter'. This is a cataclysmic event sufficient to extinguish all complex life – like an asteroid impact or an interstellar burst of radiation – which strikes every planet frequently and regularly enough to prohibit any one organism evolving to a level of intelligence that permit them to leave that planet. This 'Great Filter' ensures that sentient life in the Milky Way is incredibly rare.

Scientists in Fermi's time accepted this. Earth's geological record indicated that there had been five extinction-level incidents in that planet's short history, and their grouping indicated that we were well overdue another. Soon after, we began colonising Mars and beyond, and our proverbial eggs were no longer all in one planetary basket.

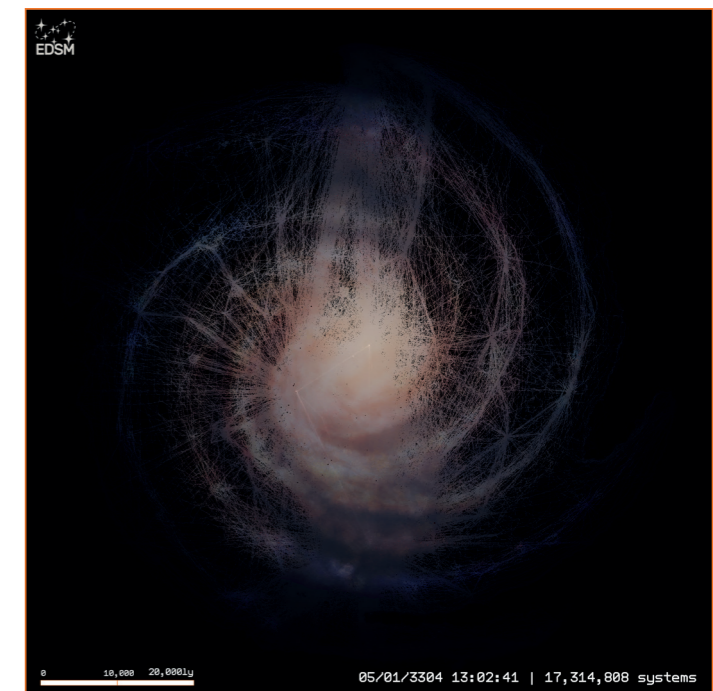
This eloquently explained the conundrum of our loneliness: there were no other spacefaring species because the galaxy tended to nuke planets before those societies could evolve. We had escaped by fluke, and then placed ourselves beyond risk by our cleverness. The 'Great Filter' was behind us; this theory made sense and flattered us at the same time. The small matter of the mysterious alien relic allegedly discovered on Mars was brushed out of sight.

Then the Guardians ruins were discovered. Suddenly xenologists were

forced to revisit the core assumption that we were alone in our sophistication. Not only had the Guardians been a complex, social, spacefaring species, but they had been right on our doorstep – a mere thousand light years away, barely one percent of the expanse of the Galaxy. And they were gone.

This was terrible news for our species. If a sentient species can gain the ability to travel beyond one planet so close to us, probability dictates that there should be somewhere in the order of magnitude of 3,400 other spacefaring species in the Milky Way, assuming an equal distribution.

But there's aren't. Since consumer-level frame shift drives hit the market humans have explored nearly every corner of our galaxy. The EDSM is an organisation of cartographers who, in association with Universal Cartographics, plot the courses of most independent pilots. The image below shows our galaxy, with a thin white line for ships' routes over the last three years.



AUTHOR



PH 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.

As you can see, there are areas of heavier traffic. The routes to and from Colonia, and famous destinations like Beagle Point and Sagittarius A* are well-trodden. But it is striking how those delicate white tendrils stretch through nearly every patch of every spiral arm. We haven't visited every star - far from it - but we've explored enough of the galaxy that if there were 3,400 other spacefaring species out there, we would have found evidence of at least a few of them.

So, back to Fermi's question: where are they? And where, for that matter, are the Guardians?

The inevitable conclusion of this line of questioning is that the Great Filter, far from being in humanity's distant past, lies ahead of us. Species routinely evolve to a spacefaring stage like ours but something happens to wipe them out. Something like what happened to the Guardians.

What could a Great Filter like this be? A flash of radiation could do it, like those emitted by supernovae; but the species would need to be confined to one small patch of space for this to nail them all. An asteroid impact wouldn't do it, as it would only wipe out one of their planets. A more plausible possibility would be a powerful, spacefaring species far beyond the capabilities of our own, determined to weed out any upstarts.

If this is true, the prognosis is grave for humanity. The Guardians were wiped out by

And it was while thoughts like these flitted uneasily through the minds of humanity's scientists that the first Thargoid attacks on human settlements were reported.

the Thargoids before us, as were every one of the 3,400 missing sentient species in the Milky Way, and now they're coming for us. In this scenario there is no 'Xeno Ally'. We're in for a fight to survive.

The laws of probability do permit another possibility. The Great Filter could indeed be behind us if there is a causal link between the Guardians, the Thargoids and ourselves.

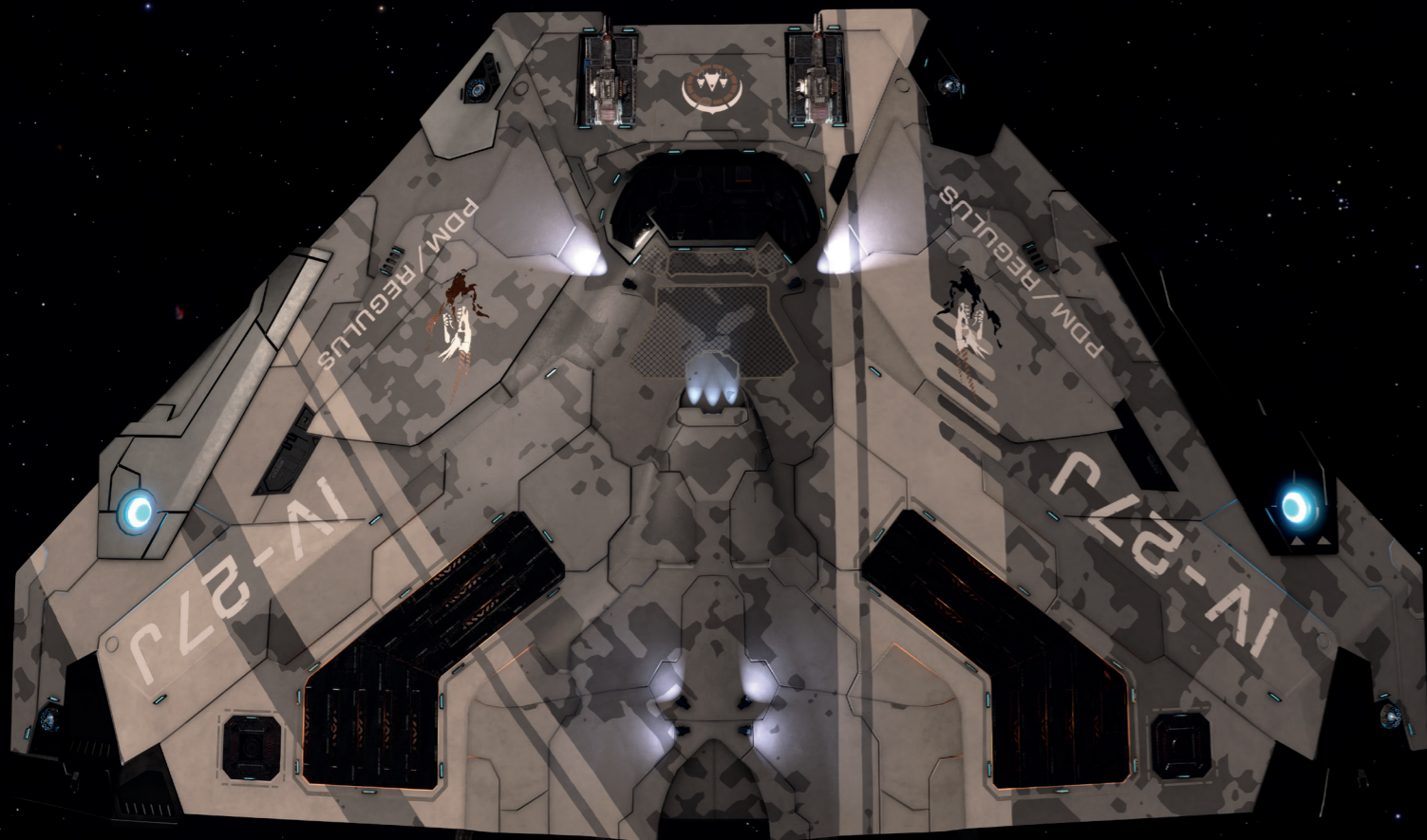
As mentioned, there is evidence of design in Thargoid biology; most xenobiologists agree that they lack most of the traditional (admittedly arbitrary) features of 'life'. The Barnacles, in particular, resemble biological machines more than individuals belonging to a species. We know that the Guardians were capable of genetic-level design; if they created the Thargoids as their weapons, those weapons could have turned upon their makers and wiped them out. This would explain why the Guardians are gone and why the Thargoids seem to hate Guardian relics. If the Guardians also created us, it would explain why in our entire Milky Way there have existed only three known multi-planet species, and all clustered around one tiny patch of a nondescript stub of a spiral arm.

If the Great Filter is behind us, the Thargoids and ourselves are two orphaned children of the same vanished parents. In which case there could be much to gain from trying to communicate with our strange cousins.

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SHIPYARD COBRA MK III

Welcome to the first edition of Sagittarius Eye's Shipyard feature. In this edition, I'm going to take a closer look at one of humanity's most iconic space-faring vessels: Faulcon DeLacy's Cobra Mk III. A much-loved multipurpose vessel, the Mk III represents a cost-effective gateway into many career paths for newer Commanders. Let's find out why...

On Paper

The Cobra boasts incredible speed even without aftermarket customisation. For those speed-freaks amongst you mad enough to fly shieldless, you'll be pushing over 460m/s on the boost without modifications.

Whilst somewhat hampered by a lower manoeuvrability than other smaller ships like the Eagle Mk II, the ability to control range in a combat situation allows the Cobra to hold its own if forced to fight. Despite matching a Viper Mk III's firepower, a reduced shield integrity could prove a problem for prospective bounty hunters.

The Cobra's true strengths lie in its other attributes. The carrying capacity is over double that of a Hauler, and it costs a fraction of the price of a Type-6, whilst also being able to protect its cargo from would-be plunderers. For those prospective traders amongst you, the Cobra is an excellent choice if your bank is still a little light.

Alternatively, for those who wish to push the boundaries of humanity's maps, the Cobra is an excellent and affordable exploration ship. With internals suitable for scanners, fuel scoops, repair systems, and even a shield generator, you can rely on the Cobra to allow you to sail through the void, pushed by the most distant stellar winds.

The ship does sound good on paper, but paper only goes so far. To find out how the Cobra truly performs, I had to get my hands on one. Unfortunately, DeLacy didn't respond to our request for one on loan. However I've been needing a small multipurpose ship for a while, so I bought one of my own.

The ship normally sells for a hair under 350,000 credits (Cr), though a little digging around and you'll be able to find new models for under 300,000 Cr. You'll get your typical E-rated internal modules and a couple of pulse lasers. In terms of upgrade costs, I ended up spending around 9 million Cr including the purchase price, though it's perfectly possible to get a lot out of the ship without spending this much.

In the Cockpit

The first thing you notice is the extra seat; if you're the social type, you can bring a friend along with you. The cockpit is spacious for a small craft, but as ever in a DeLacy ship, you're not quite sitting in luxury's lap. Everything has a purpose, and nothing is for decoration. If you're the customising sort of pilot, then there's plenty of room for whatever aesthetic modifications you want to make. As it is to be expected from DeLacy, the rough-around-the-edges feel is not reflective of the ship's reliability; I've had no technical issues whatsoever.

Before taking on any missions, I decided to throw the ship around a bit. Fortunately, in San Tu, there's a marvellous scientific installation that presents many harsh corners, tunnels, and obstacles to deal with. I decided to test the Cobra here due to its small size and high speed.

As expected, the performance on the straight and narrow is excellent. Huge

"As expected, the performance on the straight and narrow is excellent. Huge acceleration and top speed allow the ship to scream through the tunnel systems in the blink of an eye, a sensation that I doubt I will ever grow tired of."

AUTHOR



An experienced combat pilot, Mini_Watto can usually be found in San Tu duelling with Commanders from all walks of life. Constantly tinkering with the pride of his fleet, Ichor, a Fer-de-Lance, he is always looking to improve his ship's capabilities. As a member of Paradigm, a collection of like-minded Commanders, he seeks to be the best pilot that he can be. He aims to pass on some of his knowledge to readers of SAGi, and hopes to increase the popularity of modern combat sport.

acceleration and top speed allow the ship to scream through the tunnel systems in the blink of an eye, a sensation that I doubt I will ever grow tired of. However, throwing corners into the mix, I started to see some problems.

My first attempt in a cornered tunnel ended up breaking my relatively thin shields after attempting a boost to counteract my momentum. Whilst some of my comrades and rivals would like to say this was my fault, I'm afraid I must blame the Cobra. The ship is somewhat 'drifty' in the corners, and its massive speed proves to be its own weakness. The momentum can prove difficult to counter, even with a well-timed boost. A lot of this is down to the relatively weak vertical and lateral thrusters, with heavy reliance on the main engines being the only hope of pulling a tight turn at top speed. This leads to a tendency to stall preparing for a turn, and in a combat situation you not only open yourself up to attack with that large plan profile, but you likely won't be able to land many of your own attacks either. This is definitely a ship where aftermarket thruster modifications are in order. Despite these issues, it will manage to outturn a Viper, but Eagles can be a big problem due to their very high manoeuvrability.

On the Job

Having knocked the ship around enough, I took her back to the starport to pick up a contract at the local mission board. To make things interesting, I went for

weapons to a nearby system, only two jumps away. Departure was relatively uneventful, and I did not encounter any trouble until the final destination – whereupon I discovered that a tipoff had beaten me there.

A Viper Mk III lined up behind me and the interdiction began. I was ripped out of supercruise and tumbled inelegantly for a few seconds, as did my attacker. Not taking time to scan or threaten me, they immediately opened up and started hammering my shields. Since my frame shift drive had another twenty or so seconds to cool down, I decided to fight back. I threw the ship in reverse briefly and hit the chaff while my weapons deployed. I had equipped two medium fixed pulse lasers, and a pair of 'Enforcer' multi-cannons. My attacker's chaff served him no help as my lasers made fast work of his shields. I hit the boost and sailed past as my chaff expired.

Pulling up to attempt some more fire, my ship suffered a stall from the boost, and we matched turn speeds. Boosting again, my weapons capacitor was still low on charge, so I unleashed the multi-cannons on the return pass. Unfortunately, due to the Viper's small profile and the wide hardpoint placement of the Enforcers, the rounds shot past him harmlessly. As my weapons missed their mark, the Viper slammed a couple of plasma accelerator shots into my shield and broke it. My frame shift drive had just cooled, so I took the opportunity to get out before the

situation could degrade further. This proves the Cobra's survivability.

"It is understandable why it has been a favourite for over two centuries now, and I expect to see no change in that reputation."

I continued through supercruise to the station without further incident. Going into silent running, I was easily able to guide the small ship past the security forces and onto the landing pad. A job well done, if a little hairy in places.

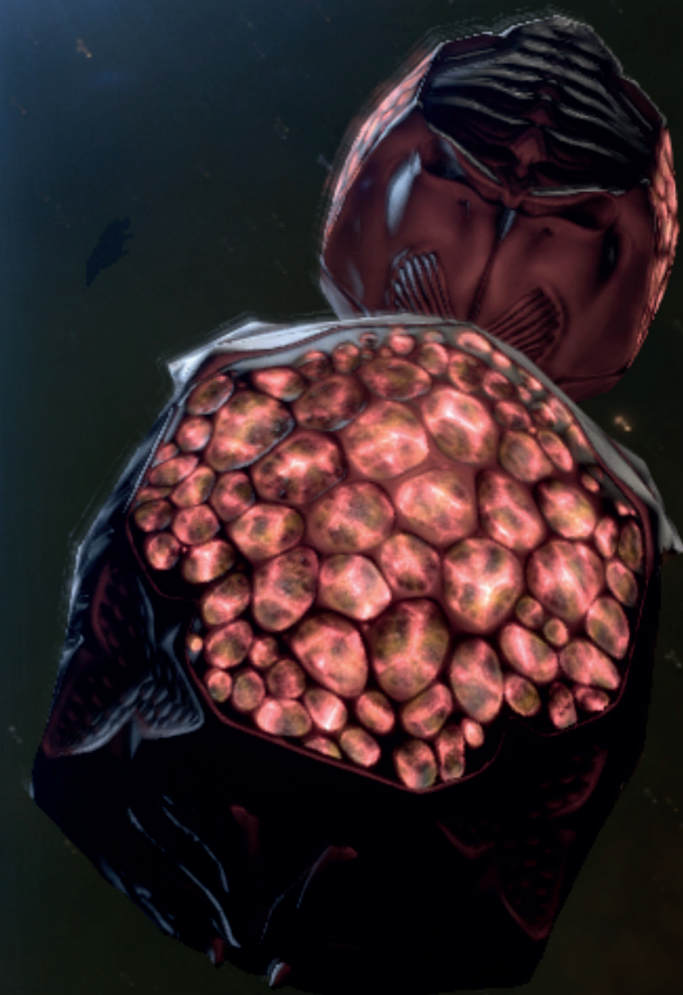
Unfortunately, I haven't had the time to take the Cobra on a serious exploration trip. The furthest I've travelled with it so far is to Maia, and I can say that this ship has a comfortable jump range. The size 4 fuel scoop is also a nice feature, filling up the tank at a good pace. It would not be my first choice as an exploration vessel, but it is certainly more than capable, if a little more survivability is needed than what's offered by a Hauler. With aftermarket frame shift drive modifications, and perhaps some lightening of internal modules, the Cobra's jump range has a lot of potential. Certainly an excellent candidate for a cheap explorer.

Verdict

Overall, the Cobra Mk III is an excellent all-rounder, at a reasonable price. If one has not decided what career path to take, it's a superb ship to help make that decision. A respectable jump range and cargo capacity for the price while still able to defend itself makes it one of the best ships available in terms of value for money. I would even go so far as to recommend it to those more experienced pilots who simply need a small ship for their day-to-day business that a larger ship may be overkill for. It is understandable why it has been a

favourite for over two centuries now, and I expect to see no change in that reputation.

FOUND SOMETHING STRANGE? THINK SAFETY



AVOID CONTACT REPORT TO YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND STAY SAFE

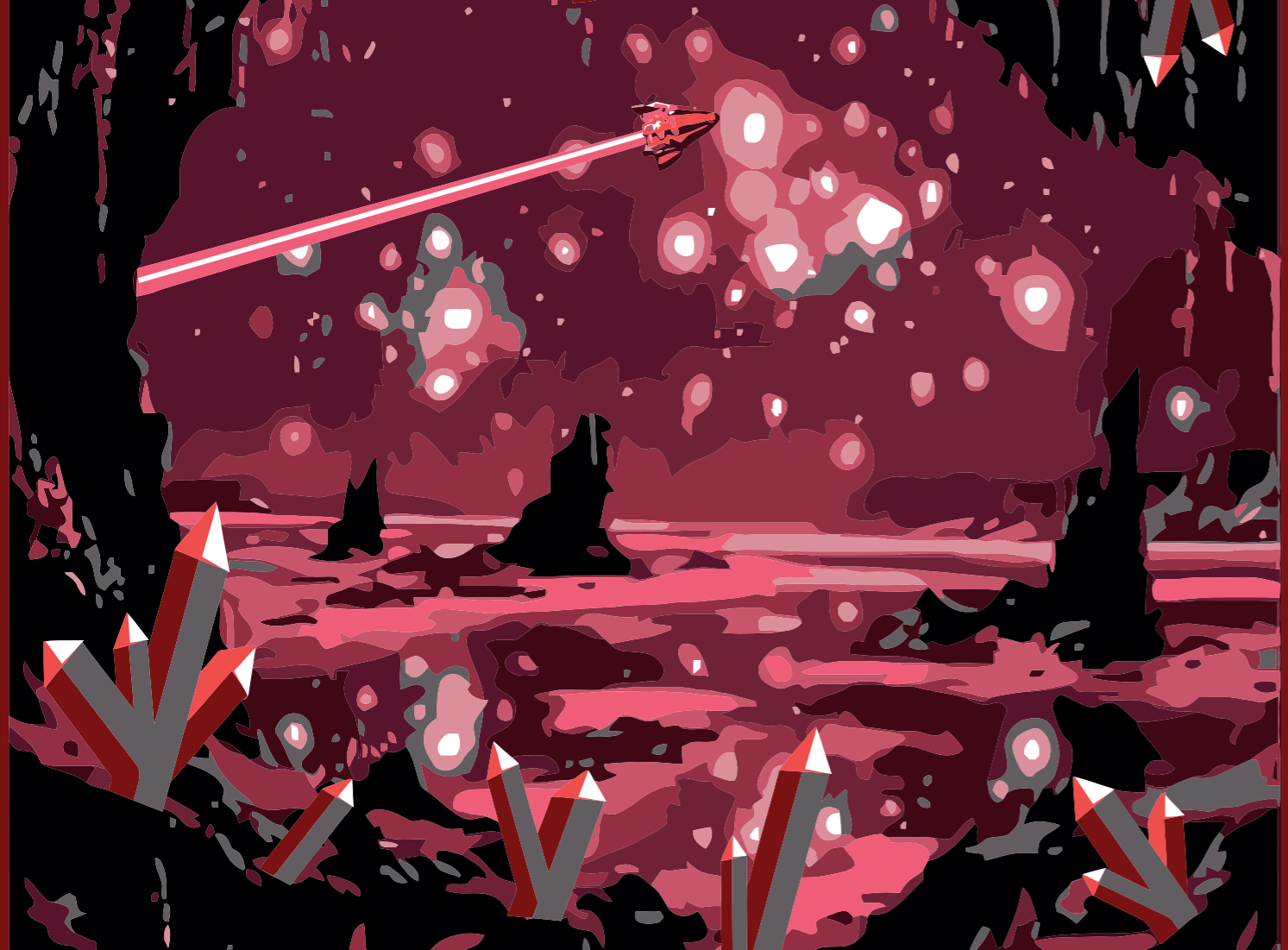
FEDERAL
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The background of the page is a dark space scene. On the left, a sleek, white and black Imperial Clipper is shown in a state of disrepair, with its wings and hull partially detached. On the right, a large, multi-limbed Thargoid Interceptor is visible, its body composed of dark, segmented parts with some glowing orange-red internal structures. The scene is set against a backdrop of stars and a nebula.

BULLETIN 'GOIDS CLOSE TO BUBBLE

Jan 5, 3304; Green Enterprise, Ngalia, Arietas Sector.

Thargoid interceptions are now taking place closer to high-population systems than ever before.

It has been little more than six months since the Thargoids returned en masse, to assert themselves as the dominant life form throughout the Pleiades sector. But until now, sightings and interactions with the large alien interceptors have been rare outside that sector, hundreds of light years from any heavily populated human systems.

That has now changed. In the two days since Sirius Inc. announced construction of a flight-operations megaship in the 42 n Persei system, pilots around the Ngalia system have begun reporting harrowing encounters with the alien megafauna.

The most recent of these encounters happened at about 1400hrs on January 5th. Commander Talion Camisade reported being interdicted by a Thargoid interceptor while flying his Cutter,

fully loaded with auto-fabricators, to Ngalia from Bear Laboratory in the Masses system. Upon arrival at Green Enterprise, he notified authorities that his Cutter had been subjected to a frame shift drive destabilization about 30ly from the Masses system. His ship was pulled out of its interstellar jump then hit with a Thargoid shutdown field, which killed the ship's power.

Moments later Camisade was deafened by the eerie sounds that echoed within his ship. These are believed to be caused by some form of electromagnetic interaction between the allows in our ships' hulls and the Thargoid probing technology. Within moments, the creature passed close by Camisade's cockpit windows then hyperspace jumped away. Camisade could not identify the Thargoid interceptor type. He did report that even from three or four kilometers away, the alien "still looked huge."

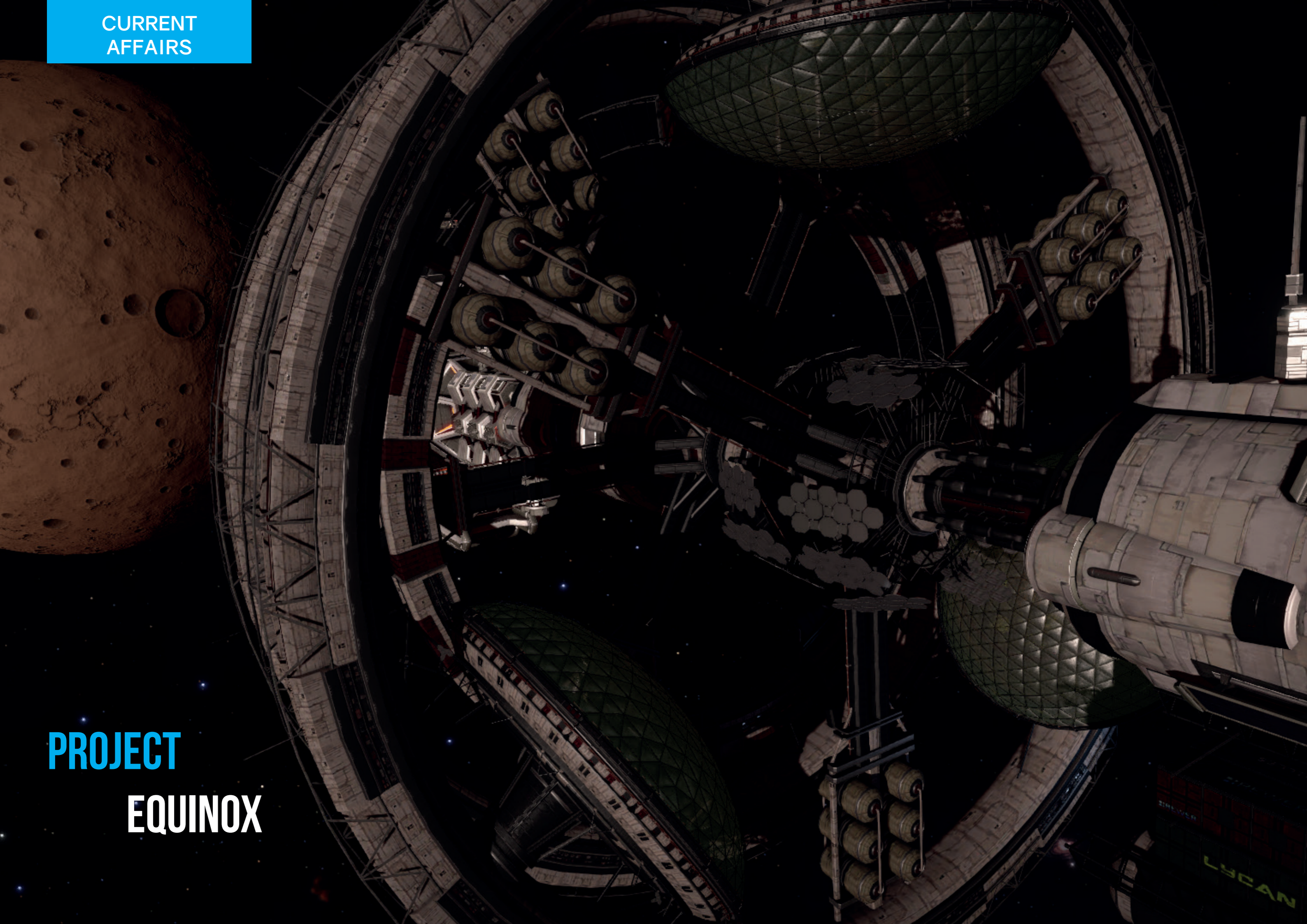
These Thargoid sightings put the aliens less than two dozen light years from human systems with over a billion inhabitants.

[Thank you to our guest contributor; Cmdr Camisade for this article.](#)

A Thargoid Interceptor, observing a wrecked Imperial Clipper

CURRENT
AFFAIRS

PROJECT
EQUINOX



During what future generations may call the first war against the Thargoids (3125-3151), the joint Federation-Empire organisation INRA conducted cutting-edge research in an effort to develop war-winning technologies, while brave GalCop pilots patrolled vulnerable star systems for alien ships. Later in the war GalCop was forced to divert ever greater numbers of merchant pilots to the war effort. This is often cited as one of the reasons for GalCop's ultimate collapse over a century ago - too little commerce during the war years left the supowerpower on shaky economic grounds and unable to weather the storms that wracked their post-war leadership.

Looking back, it's difficult for most of us to fully understand how terrifying the situation must have been: facing a far more powerful and largely unknown enemy that could apparently appear and disappear at will. It's no wonder INRA used every advantage they had, even resorting to bio-weapons. While the total loss of life during the war was relatively low - some sources suggest that piracy accounts for more deaths each year than the entire 25 year-long war against the aliens - it is clear the the potential threat posed by a hostile, technologically superior and expansionist enemy far outweighed any other consideration.

Aegis, as we all know, very publicly formed last year and, soon after, it announced that the vaunted capital fleets of the great powers are ineffective against the aliens. It seems that once again our best defence against the Thargoids is to arm as many civilians as possible and get them out there fighting back against the 'Octagonal Menace'. The major difference is that, for now, the resurgent Thargoids are located outside the Bubble in a newly-populated area of space. While attacks in the Pleiades are causing loss of life and devastating infrastructure and trade, it is currently not affecting the main population centres of humanity - yet.

The big question is: how did we get to this situation? After the last war did the galaxy

just forget about the threat represented by our Ammonia-based antagonists? Did anyone plan for the possible return of the Thargoids? The answers it seems, is yes - but something seems to have gone wrong.

The Lost Lookouts and Ignored Voices:

In late 3303 Cmdr StarfireMMMCCCL discovered a listening post in the Jotunheim system containing a message that might start to shed some light on how we've ended up where we are now. The message is reproduced here in its entirety:

*"...Communication Source Identified: Gail...
...Designation: Project Thunderchild Unit 01..."*

I've detected a encoded transmission emitted from a location 591.10ly from this beacon. This signal has triggered a new subroutine in my core programme. The signal source appears to have been dormant until recently and began transmitting seemingly as a reaction to news of the Thargoids' return being broadcast. I have analysed the code contained in the subroutine and discovered a small data packet that contains various overlapping signals regarding the work of a Dr. Calvin, designated Project Equinox. These appear to be markers leading to an archive of some kind containing Calvin's research."

Coded information revealed the location of the GCS Sarasvati.

"In the upcoming struggle Dr Calvin's data may be critical. Calling all Galcop personnel, we must find Calvin's Archive and retrieve the data at all costs."

From this Listening Post we are introduced to quite a few things that provide insights into some long-forgotten post-war projects:

One of the most important parts of this message is the reference to an archive of "critical" research to be found somewhere. From the mention of GalCop we can date the origin of this listening post to no later than 3174, when GalCop was officially disbanded. The rest of the data points to the location of a megaship identified as the GCS Sarasvati. The Sarasvati was found abandoned by an

explorer using the public alias 'Smarty 771' and contained logs which should have sent shockwaves through the Bubble. Instead they were accepted with little commentary and largely drowned in the wake of revelations regarding the Thargoids and INRA.

From the remaining logs left by Dr. Cassandra Lockhart we now know that after the sudden (and at the time completely unexplained) disappearance of the Thargoids in 3151, GalCop established a series of monitoring stations under the name 'Equinox' to keep an eye out for the return of the Thargoids. The logs are frustratingly vague about the exact nature, numbers, or locations of these monitoring stations, and it's also unclear whether the Sarasvati herself was one such outpost. The collapse of GalCop - which actually occurred while Project Equinox was keeping lookout - makes tracking down any remaining evidence of the project extremely difficult.

This is the first of the secrets revealed by the logs; not even GalCop knew where the Thargoids went. They felt it necessary to set up a covert project outside human space in order to stand guard - at the time this would have been a monumental task indeed. Lockhart's logs show that for twenty years after the war Project Equinox stood guard and found nothing. Her final log however reveals a wealth of puzzling information. Before we delve into her final log, classical scholars

will recall that the Cassandra of ancient Earth mythology was cursed by a god to have accurate visions of the future, but was never believed when she told people what she'd foreseen.

"PROJECT EQUINOX MONITORING LOG - 3172.08.16

They're shutting us down. After all this time we finally have a breakthrough, and they're shutting us down. How in the hell can the Federation and Empire be so shortsighted?

It was literally under our noses the entire time, the Thargoids didn't leave. Not all of them, at least. If we had more time we might've been able to run a more detailed analysis but the data we have right now already paints a pretty grim picture as is: the Thargoids are sowing the seeds for their return. We couldn't detect them before because the traces were so miniscule, but it's clear that these new self-repairing alloys that are starting to pop up in labs everywhere share an alarming amount of physical characteristics with Thargoid bio-alloys pulled from their ships during the war. This is the smoking gun, and no one is willing or able to do anything about it anymore; the Federation won't listen, Duval won't listen, and GalCop has fractured to the point where even the Old Worlds probably won't listen. Maybe Thunderchild could've done something, but they went dark in '69.

We're almost out of time.

-Cassandra Lockhart"

AUTHOR



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 Hot Needle of Inquiry.

Why Was Equinox Shut Down?

Cassandra, in her logs, tells us how she tried to convince people that they had succeeded in their mission and finally detected signs of the Thargoids – and she sounds quite urgent – yet despite what appears to be a dire warning, she also suggests that Galcop has fractured too far, that the Empire and Federation “won’t listen”, and that the project is shut down completely. It was over 130 years before the major powers would acknowledge the Thargoids in public again – and even then only reluctantly.

In August of 3302 a pair of independent pilots, Noctrach and Ihazevich, cracked the Granger Gang’s ransom cypher and discovered the wreckage of what we now know is a Thargoid ship in the Pleiades. Over the next few months the superpowers refused to offer any sort of definitive answer – just as they had when the then-unknown Thargoid space-probes were discovered years before. When Commander DP Sayre was hyperdicted in January last year, the superpowers still refused to inform the public of what they must surely have known. Even in April last year Federal Admiral Aiden Tanner, later to become a founding member of Aegis, claimed to have no additional knowledge of the aliens appearing more and more frequently in the Pleiades, saying only: “When we know more, you’ll know more”. Are we to believe that the Chief of Federal Security and Admiral of the Fleet with over 40 years service knew nothing at all? It wasn’t until June of 3303 that the Galaxy was given official confirmation that the Thargoids had returned – and it didn’t come from the superpowers. It came from a messy leak to the Federal Times by Professor Ishmael Palin, a leading authority on xenobiological research. The public mood was best summarised by Kelvin Masters, a freelance journalist, whose comments were reprinted by Galnet at the time:

“Look at the history books. Every time we’ve met the Thargoids, there’s bloodshed. We need to prepare for the worst. I mean, they’ve already attacked human ships! What kind of contingencies do the superpowers have

in place? And what do we know about the Thargoids’ capabilities? What kind of weapons do they have? What kind of defences? And why did the Federation take Palin’s data? Were they trying to keep it quiet? These questions need to be answered!”

The questions asked by Masters are equally valid, if not more so, today: what’s been going on for the last 150 years behind the closed doors of the power, and why did we only get public confirmation of the Thargoids when they arrived on our galactic doorstep last year?

One possible reason for the termination of Equinox might have been that the superpowers already felt they had an adequate weapon – the Mycoid worked once, so why couldn’t it be used again? The more frightening possibility is that the superpowers might have had an even more powerful weapon in development. Could the Mycoid have been simply a first-strike tactical deterrent in a war that has not yet ended?

Another, even more chilling solution might be that the Superpowers already knew the Thargoids were still around. If this is the case then that raises many more questions than it answers, chief among them: after over twenty years of dedicated service on a secret project, why was the Equinox team left out in the cold?

The Smoking Gun

“...but it’s clear that these new self-repairing alloys that are starting to pop up in labs everywhere share an alarming amount of physical characteristics with Thargoid bio-alloys pulled from their ships during the war.”

It seems the Thargoids did leave a lot behind in the Pleiades area, over two hundred structures on the surface of planets have been discovered over the past year, as well as at least a few crashed ships – it is entirely possible that what we’re seeing now is what is left after 150 years of scavenging and raiding by government and private R&D teams. Maybe what we’ve re-discovered is just the bits that were too damaged or large to recover

previously, or too small and missed, like the shipwrecks. This could easily account for the almost complete disinterest that the major powers have shown towards the older sites in the Pleiades.

From Cassandra’s logs it’s difficult to tell why the very presence of Thargoid-like materials being researched in human space is significant to her – perhaps she knew that the powers did not manage to find anything valuable in the Pleiades. If that was the case then finding evidence of Thargoid tech being researched in human space would indeed be troubling, and the question would be: where is it coming from?

Some researchers, like veteran investigator Commander Jorki Rasalas, feel that the “self-repairing alloys” are what we now call Meta-Alloys:

“I think Cassandra was aware of Meta-Alloys [MA], she was lead of a defence project so would have the connections to be aware, and knew they came from some organic growths, the barnacles. She recognised the MA similarity in repair behaviour to alloys taken directly from Thargoid ship wrecks during the war and made the connection. Ergo the Thargoids had sown seeds (barnacles) for their return.”

Unless we assume Dr Lockhart was mistaken, then the Thargoids did something that Equinox was able to detect – it certainly does look like the Barnacles have grown from underground, which would fit with the concept of them being “seeded”. The origin and purpose of the Barnacles has been a mystery ever since Commander Octo discovered the first one. Are the new ones discovered almost daily by the eye-straining efforts of pilots like Commander PanPiper and others newly grown, or are they decades old and only just being discovered? We do know of at least one “Barnacle Forest” where many Barnacles grow together in an eight-limbed pattern around a very large central Barnacle.

“The Thargoids Didn’t Leave”

Possibly one of the most enigmatic elements

in this log is Dr. Lockhart’s assertion that the Thargoids never actually left. She says “It was literally under our noses the entire time, the Thargoids didn’t leave. Not all of them, at least.”

Her meaning seems pretty obvious on the surface; some Thargoids remained behind and the rest went elsewhere, but as quite clearly says in previous logs, no-one had reported any Thargoid encounters, seen any ships, nothing at all – so, if there were Thargoids left, where were they? It gets more confusing with the next part: “If we had more time we might’ve been able to run a more detailed analysis but the data we have right now already paints a pretty grim picture as is: the Thargoids are sowing the seeds for their return. We couldn’t detect them before because the traces were so miniscule...”

Other than the idea of Thargoids remaining to ‘seed’ barnacles, there are at least two more explanations popular amongst Xeno researchers. Noted Xenobiologist Professor Ishmael Palin commented on the fact that the alien probes known as Thargoid Sensors were self-repairing in his statement to Galnet almost two years ago:

“Apparently the objects have the ability to repair themselves – to re-grow, even – by extracting the necessary non-organic materials from their immediate environment. It really is quite remarkable. That’s why they harm ships and other machinery – if they are damaged when they’re scooped up, they use the metals in a ship’s hull, or a starport’s superstructure, to repair themselves. Even minor damage will trigger the self-repair mechanism.”

We know the first of these probes was discovered being carried by Federal convoys within the bubble – possibly being moved to research facilities after being picked up elsewhere. Due to the conspicuous silence from the Federal Government, first under Halsey and now under Hudson, we don’t know when they first recovered these alien artefacts. It’s entirely possible that the first ones were recovered right after the war, it

could be that Cassandra's team realised the significance of finding Thargoid Sensors 'seeded' around known space, gathering data in preparation for their return.

One fringe theory is that Thargoids might actually have made some sort of deal with a faction of humans after the war, and the Equinox team discovered evidence of that. "Traces were so miniscule" might mean "their presence in our society was hard to detect", and this would help to put into context her earlier statement; "It was literally under our noses the entire time, the Thargoids didn't leave...". Cassandra's concern about the appearance of Thargoid-like materials technology might be because it was the result of trade deals or shared knowledge rather than salvage. This explanation seems highly unlikely though, and it will likely forever remain the province of tinfoil-hat-wearing conspiracy theorists.

Who or What is 'Thunderchild'?

In three relatively short paragraphs this last log of Cassandra Lockhart packs in revelation after revelation. The Thargoids might never have left – they might have been planning something significant even 130 years ago – the superpowers might have known the Thargoids were back, even before Equinox figured it out. Expeditions to the Pleiades might have recovered Thargoid technology: they could well have brought back Meta-Alloys. If even one of these is accurate it could rewrite our history; what technological developments have sprung from recovered Thargoid technology?

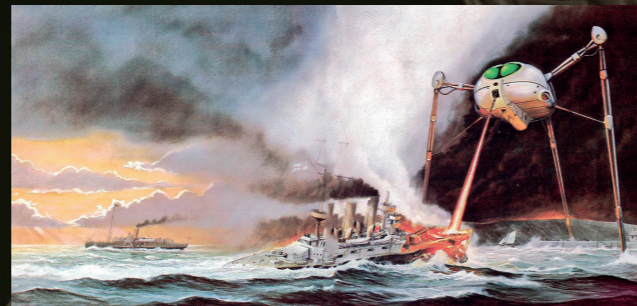
This final line asks more questions than it answers. "Maybe Thunderchild could've done something, but they went dark in '69."

In context Lockhart seems to indicate that 'Thunderchild' could have done something about getting people to listen to her about the Thargoids returning. What was Thunderchild that it could have had greater influence than the actual project established to warn people if the Thargoids came back? Was it simply

that someone involved with Thunderchild had some political clout, or was it something more significant – maybe something that Thunderchild itself could do...

While delving into this mystery, a search of historical records pulls up a very interesting ancient literary reference, dating all the way back to pre-spaceflight Earth – the dawn of civilisation. In a little-known fiction novel written 1,500 years ago about an alien invasion of Earth, a sea-based warship called Thunderchild lands a crippling blow against one of the invaders. It is the only time in the story that primitive humanity is able to do any real harm to the rampaging aliens.

It's possible that whoever named this project pulled the reference from this ancient story. If this is the case, it suggests that Thunderchild is likely a weapon intended to strike a blow against the Thargoids, in which case the "Gail" in the intercepted message might be the project lead, and Thunderchild Unit 01 might be a way of referencing her role, or



there were multiple 'units' of Thunderchild, and Gail was part of one of those. This all makes sense. However, as we'll discover shortly, the final message in the buffer might point to something much more significant to the future survival of humanity.

Before we get into what Thunderchild might be, the final words recorded by Dr. Lockhart are bone-chilling:

"We're almost out of time."

This was written in 3172. Lockhart felt very strongly that time was important, and yet here we are 130 years later and apparently the Thargoids have only just returned. We can only

speculate as to the reasons for the century-long delay, however the final message – from Thunderchild – might indicate the answer to this. Or at least an answer to consider.

A Message to the Future

It's time to look at the final and most mysterious message stored in the message buffer of the Sarasvati:

"Unit 01, if you're receiving this, then I've got good news and bad news. The good news is the contingency worked.

The bad news is the contingency was necessary.

Before everything ended, Dr. Lockhart from Project Equinox managed to track me down; all the data in this archive, all their findings... you're going to need it for what comes ahead. The whole Galaxy is going to need it. In all likelihood, by the time you've gotten this message, me, Izzy, and the rest of the Thunderchild team will be long gone. And I'm sorry, I truly am. We've given you an enormous responsibility, one you never asked for.

Listen, we all made mistakes. I'm not going to pretend that the Cooperative didn't collapse for a reason. We watched the hopes and dreams of generations before us crumble in the face of political infighting in the decades following the war. But out of everything we got wrong, out of all our failures, you weren't one of them.

Whatever else happens, I'm proud of you. We all are.

- Julian Lyons"

On the surface we have an almost personal update/status message from someone that appears to be a key member of the Thunderchild team. While we know from this context that there was a team around Thunderchild, we don't know yet if Thunderchild was the name of something specifically in development, or the codename of a person being supported by a team, the name of the team itself – or all three. From the reference here and in the

Jotunheim listening post we see the "unit 01" designation again – this may be simply a code-name or a reference to one unit of several working under the Thunderchild project name.

We have in this message reference to some interesting things: This is the second mention of an "archive of data". We know from the Jotunheim message this refers to Dr. Calvin's research data, presumably another member of the Equinox project. "...you're going to need it for what comes ahead. The whole Galaxy is going to need it". Obviously Julian feels it's very important for whoever this message is addressed to to recover the archive – and again we can see this mirrors the original Jotunheim listening post message: "In the up-coming struggle Dr Calvin's data may be critical. Calling all Galcop personnel, we must find Calvin's Archive and retrieve the data at all costs..."

Intriguingly we also get a possible answer to the apparent delayed return of the ammonia aliens; Julian's reference to "the contingency" might be the answer we were looking for here. What could it have possibly been that was "necessary" but also bad enough that Julian would seem to regret it? Given that – in context – this might be referring to delaying the return of humanity's greatest enemy, an argument could be made that whatever was necessary was justified.

The implications of Lockhart's logs and Julian's last message might reach well into 3304 and beyond.

A Literal Child of Thunder?

By necessity, we're going to have to speculate a lot here in this conclusion. We'll be drawing connections based on one or two words or lines, and so it is nothing more than one interpretation of many.

What is Thunderchild? We have references to the 'signal source' of the message that awoke the Jotunheim listening post as both "Thunderchild Unit 01" and "Gail" and we've

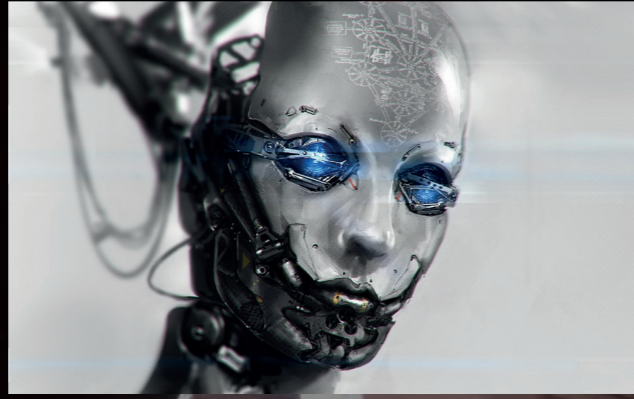
speculated that Unit 01 might be a military-style designation for a team headed up by Gail, or Gail's part of the project. What if that's not quite the case - what if Gail is Thunderchild, or rather a Thunder Child.

Delving into the archaic history of language we find that "Gail" is derived from an ancient Earth language called Hebrew, the long-form name Abigail means "Father's Joy". There's no denying that Julian Lyon's final message to Unit 01 could be called both sentimental and familiar, almost like a message to a child:

"But out of everything we got wrong, out of all our failures, you weren't one of them. Whatever else happens, I'm proud of you. We all are".

Linguistically this line suggests that Julian (and by extension the team; "we") 'got Gail right' - There's a possible explanation put forward by Commander Aldaris: Gail - Unit 01 - is a creation of Julian and the Thunderchild team: a sentient machine intelligence. Considered as a daughter by its creators, perhaps. The sentimental name Gail - 'Father's Joy' - and the familiar, sentimental tone of the final message further support this conjecture.

If we're looking at Thunderchild in the literary sense of a weapon to use against the aliens, and possibly any other future threat to humanity, then breaking the law to create a sentient AI might have been a risk that some groups within Galcop saw as necessary. We've all heard the rumours of sentient machines in humanities history having been deliberately or accidentally created - and how rapidly those machines had to be put down. It's created such a fear that the embargo on sentient machines is one of the few laws that every government, minor power and even the pirates agree upon. In times of desperation however, the lure of creating a super-intelligent battle machine to strategise might have been too tempting.



It's not too much of a leap to imagine that to prevent such a machine from going rogue, it was raised as much like a human child as possible, taught it morals and to value human life as a child might learn from parents, possibly even given a human form to help it - her - empathise.

Since Galcop was very much on the front lines of the war, we can further imagine that Gail might have been a prototype. The moniker Unit01 indeed suggests there might have been plans for more. Imagine what could be achieved with a few hundred machine sentients running combat ships: unable to be killed, simply learning from each loss, building strategies between quantum synapses in a positronic brain. Death is no longer a barrier to be feared, simply a strategy to be learned from.

It could be that Dr. Calvin's archive - thought so vital to the war effort by the Thunderchild team - might actually be the collected research notes and design blueprints for Unit01. The methodology to develop protective sentient AI to defend humanity against any alien threat.

Given the terrible fear of sentient machines across all of human space, yet our total reliance on advanced computers in every aspect of our lives, it's understandable that the concept of a rogue, possibly human-form sentient machine amongst us is disturbing -

where is Gail now? The Sarasvati was dead and empty, but she was almost certainly on-board until very recently. Dormant, waiting. It seems likely that when she was activated due to the mentions in the media of Thargoids returning that she left the Sarasvati and headed into the bubble to track down Calvin's archive, as per Julian's last message. Is she still hunting for it? Can we help? Should we help?

Would we know if a sentient machine was out there somewhere - especially if it broke with all tradition and was actually benevolent?

Unit01, if you're reading this - make yourself known. This reporter encourages every reader to analyse the logs, draw his or her own conclusions, and investigate further: find Calvin's archive, find Gail, search for more Equinox listening posts. If Lockhart was right, this might be vital for our very survival.

SAGI JANUARY NEW YEARS RACE CANYON RUNNIN' AND GUNNIN'



The aerial view of the circuit. Farseer Inc is just above the frame of this image.

Twas a mismatched batch of ships lined up at the beginning of Farseer Loop in Deciat: a Sidewinder, a Cobra Mark III, an Eagle, two Dolphins, and an Imperial Courier. The hardworking staff of Sagittarius Eye had assembled from across the galaxy for a friendly little New Years competition, but make no mistake: everyone wanted to win.

The course was long and hard, with crashes into canyon walls guaranteed. Nonetheless, Commanders Louis Calvert, Otherbuttons, Rasudin, Sir Twill, Souvarine, and Ulon raced three times around the perilous circuit on the evening of January 1st 3304.

For the first race, wily Rasudin came in first with his speedy Imperial Courier. Otherbuttons and Sir Twill were close behind in second

and third respectively, with their matching Dolphins. The second race was somewhat more deadly: editor Souvarine came out on top with his trusty Sidewinder, Rasudin falling to second place - but there was no third place victor, for all the others had crashed!

In the final, third round, Commander Ulon in his Eagle claimed victory, though Louis Calvert—runner-up in his Cobra Mk III—would have had that spot if his lasers had fired more true. Once again, there were no other survivors to claim third place.

It was a well-earned break from the hard work of producing this magazine. Rest assured that all of us that crashed were able to pay our rebuy costs, and we returned to work refreshed and excited. Fly safe, Commanders!



An artist's representation of Louis Calvert's Cobra, the Hot Needle of Enquiry, crossing the finish line.

"The Cobra MkIII is a classic all purpose ship found throughout human space."

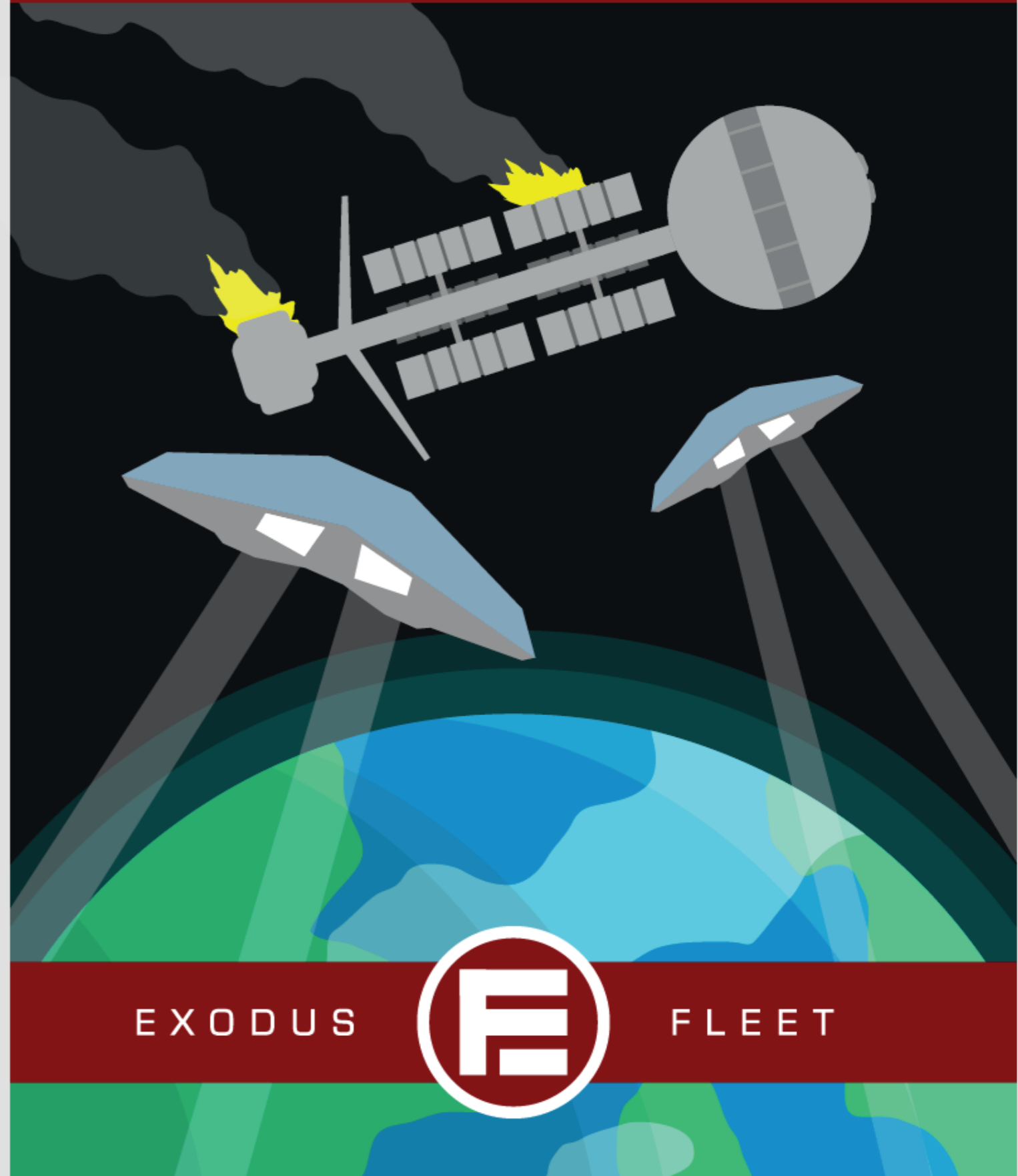


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FEATURE



THE LAKON TYPE 10 DEFENDER LAKON'S FIRST COMBAT SHIP

A Massive Compromise



The T10 is massive, and will require some careful piloting when entering through the mailslot

For many a rugged space-faring commander the name Lakon Spaceways is a linguistic madeleine, capable of immediately evoking the pungent smell of greasy joints, the chesty cough of thrusters, and a vision of spacious and angular cockpits. Arguably more than any of the other spaceship manufacturers that share today's market, Lakon carries a powerful brand image, having been for over a century the obvious choice for space truckers and explorers. The faithful Lakon customer is a commander who spends long months in their ships and values reliability and practicality over style or performance. One who prefers a stern and utilitarian industrial design over smooth curves or flush surfaces. Indeed, as I first stepped into the newly-released Type 10 Defender—a test model generously offered by Lakon to Sagittarius Eye for the purpose of this hands-on review—and made my way into the enormous bridge, I immediately felt a distinct sense of familiarity; so similar this felt to the bridge of my Type 9. From the rugged steel of the internal bulkheads to the no-frills but extremely comfortable seats, this is an environment

showcasing all the recognizable Lakon traits. I must confess that I have always been a fan of Lakon's style—or, well, lack thereof—and this new ship does not disappoint: even the refrigerated compartment hidden below the engine diagnostic panel is the same as that on the Type 9. Although I would not recommend alien hunters to fill it with Kongga Ale as most space truckers do.

The Type 10, the fourth model in the 'Type' series, pushes this quintessentially Lakon style to a very new direction, being the first ship explicitly aimed at combat rather than long-distance hauling or exploration. As it is immediately clear when first glancing upon it, the Type 10 is far from being a completely new design, but rather a rework of the Type 9's hull.

Lakon's flagship 'heavy' hauler has been used as template in order to serve a different (and regrettably urgent) function: the fight against the Thargoids. Both larger and longer than the Type 9 (118x135 meters against the 117x115 of the older model) the Type 10 is no interceptor.

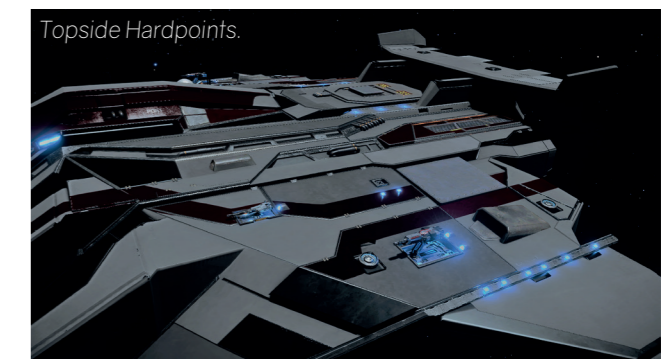
It is a behemoth specifically designed—for the outside as well as the inside—for facing our alien enemies in combat. The Type 10 particularly shines when putting its enormous firepower at the service of a wing of smaller, more manoeuvrable vessels. Indeed, at a distance, it could be easily confused for a Type 9, until you come close enough to notice the foldable 'wings', the glow of the eight rear thrusters, and of course its most divisive feature: the large spoiler on the rear. Such an aerodynamic appendage has obviously no purpose in the void of space, and I suspect that the Lakon designers thought that it would add a more 'aggressive' edge to the rather bland Type 9 hull base. Was it a successful choice? I'm not sure that a combat ship positively bristling with guns like the Type 10 needs anything more to convey its threat, but I suppose someone might like it.

Given the great similarity between the two models, it is expedient to begin with a straight comparison to paint a more precise picture of how the Type 10 represents a combat-oriented improvement upon its older sister.

The core internal components remain the same, with two important differences: the power plant has been upgraded from a grade 6 to a grade 8, and the frame shift drive from a grade 6 to a grade 7. The increase in total power output and jump range are welcome additions, particularly for a combat ship that needs to be promptly deployed to the location of a Thargoid strike. What is more notable is something that has not changed in the transition from Type 9 to Type 10: the power distributor, still a modest grade 6. This contentious choice is likely a compromise made by Lakon, in order to contain the price of their new ship while still making it an

effective anti-Thargoid dreadnaught. As those of you who already engaged in combat with the Thargoids will doubtlessly know, the new Anti-Xeno (AX) weapons developed by AEGIS have an unusually low energy draw (as compared to their regular counterparts), putting far less stress on the ship's power distributor. The T10 has nine hardpoints: two small, four medium and four large, making its theoretical damage per second even superior to that of the mighty Federal Corvette. To put this bluntly: there is no way that you could mount regular energy weapons on the Type 10's nine hardpoints and hope to fire them all at once for any useful amount of time. Only when equipped with AX weapons can the Type 10 really express its full potential, and become a lumbering beacon of death.

Lumbering indeed, because the Type 10 stock grade 7 thrusters will require a significant upgrade (or better yet, engineering at Professor Palin's base) in order to give it



AUTHOR



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.

the necessary manoeuvrability to take on a Thargoid interceptor. Even after such tuning work, the agility of this ship will be still short of that of an Anaconda outfitted for Thargoid encounters. Still, even with stock thrusters the Type 10 offers a significantly better performance in both pitch and roll turn-rates than the Type 9 does, although the abysmal yaw rate is better passed over in silence. According to my tests it will reach a maximum speed of 179 metres per second (m/s) - a far better result than the paltry 131m/s reached by the Type 9.

The AX weapons—flak launchers, missile racks and multi-cannons—are best installed gimbaled or even turreted, since the large hardpoint placement on this enormous ship causes a less-than-ideal convergence of fire for fixed weapons.

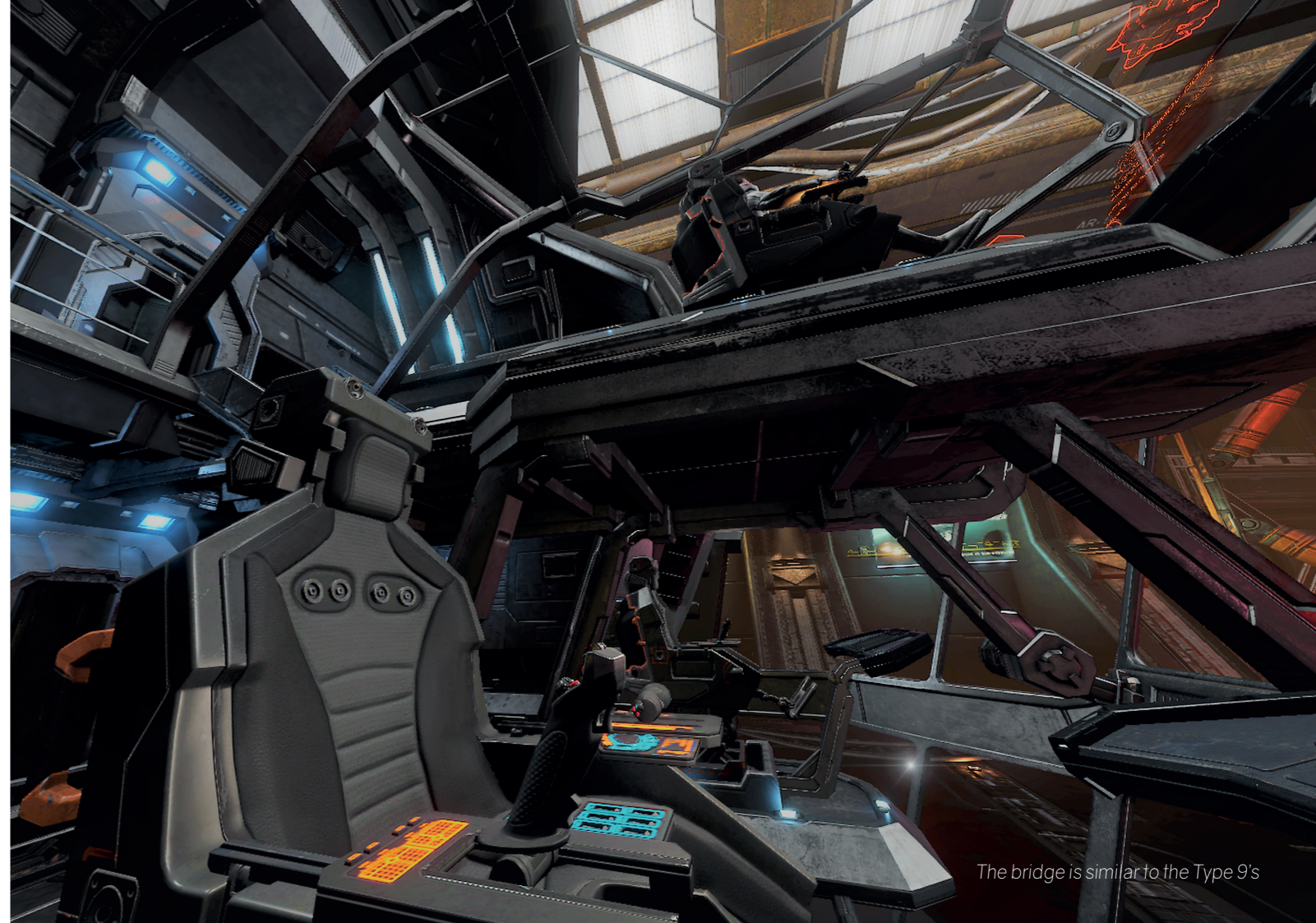
In short, while the undersized power distributor is a bottleneck limiting the versatility of this ship in everyday combat situations, and its sluggishness requires the use of gimbaled or turreted weapons, the sheer number hardpoints (and their advantageous placement, if used for turrets), make this ship a formidable adversary in the hands of an experienced Commander. I should add a non-trivial detail: Lakon has found enough space on the hull of the Type 10 for eight utility mounts. This puts this ship on par with Delacy's Anaconda and Core Dynamics' Federal Corvette in terms of utility options, and offers a wide variety of configurations. Alien hunters will undoubtedly want to mount a Xeno Scanner, and possibly stock up of as many shield boosters as supported by their power plant. This reviewer was not intrepid enough to test the ship in such a combat scenario, but my sources tell me that a good pilot can indeed do some massive damage to Thargoid spacecraft thanks to the Type 10's

sheer volume of fire.

The optional internal modules are another area where the Type 10 shows its Type 9 heritage. The only upgrade Lakon offered in this new model are the two grade 5 military compartments dedicated to hull or module reinforcement packages. They supplement the Type 10's already-impressive hull: the Defender boasts an outstanding armour rating of 75 by standard Pilot's Federation hull hardness ranking. The highest ever awarded, and a marked improvement over the Type 9's 65.

It follows that the Type 10's total cargo space is exactly the same as that of a Type 9, but a wealthy trader might still want to acquire this newer ship because of its superior jump range. Isn't it time for Lakon to give a much-needed and long-overdue upgrade to the ageing, and now outclassed, Type 9? Shouldn't its internals be reworked in order to offer a haulage capacity capable of rivalling Gutamaya's Cutter? This reviewer is pretty sure the answer to these questions is a resounding 'yes'. But I digress.

Is the Type 10 the ship for you? Is it worth the 125 million credits Lakon is asking for it? While all Lakon ships are something of an acquired taste, the Defender is very specifically targeting a particular kind of customer—the Thargoid hunter—since there are other ships that outperform it in nearly every other task. As the title of this review suggests, the Type 10 is a massive compromise, both because it is physically enormous, and because it requires combat pilots to accept some significant shortcomings in terms of power availability and manoeuvrability. But those who are willing to make this compromise, will be rewarded with a solid, reliable, and lethal vessel - Lakon style.



The bridge is similar to the Type 9's



From the front, the T-10 looks rather imposing.



A close-up of the infamous spoiler.

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FEATURE



EYE ON THE SKY THE HALSEY CONSPIRACY

A Scheme Perpetrated in Public Sight

With the possible exception of the notoriously flagrant Imperial royal family, no public figure is more dogged by controversy than ex-Federal President Jasmina Halsey. Beginning with her aggressive campaign against Onionhead farmers in Lugh in late 3300, all the way up to her recent humanitarian efforts, her priorities have shifted as dramatically as her status has decreased. Some call her a visionary. Some call her a lunatic. I call her a victim of a conspiracy, one perpetrated in plain view of the whole galaxy.

President Halsey was once a fairly middle-of-the-road Federal president. One might be forgiven for being surprised at her Liberal Party allegiance, for it was she who initiated the Federation's aggressive war on Onionhead, declaring the drug a threat to the galaxy's youth. The Federal Congress grew to hate her for her campaign – which many saw as only amplifying the problem as Onionhead sales increased dramatically – and “Oniongate” protesters challenged her decision across the Federation. She even rubbed members of her own administration the wrong way; her tumultuous relationship with the Admiral of the Fleet, Admiral Vincent, was well-known. Her hawkish aggression continued throughout her presidency, with deadly consequences.

To support her invasion of Lugh, she pushed for a new Farragut cruiser, the FNS Nevermore, to step up its production process so it could join the attack. The cruiser had a terrible systems malfunction, resulting in dozens of lives lost and hundreds of millions of credits in damages. Worse yet, believing a terrorist to be aboard an unarmed refugee convoy, she ordered the Navy to fire on the ships. More than nine thousand civilians died in the attack, and her approval ratings plummeted to less than thirty percent. She was, perhaps, not a great politician – too ruled by conviction to care for the opinions of her legislators – or, indeed, her constituents.

She did give many powerful speeches in her time. No doubt like many of you, I recall her triumphant victory speech upon her Liberty

Party win that put her in power. A poor politician, but a truly great orator.

Following these disastrous events, and in the face of increasing pressure and even harassment from the Federal Congress, Halsey exhibited some unusual but long-overdue humility. She scheduled a tour throughout the Federal systems to meet with leaders and discuss how the Federation could better support them and meet their needs.

We all know what happened next. On an unscheduled detour from its planned route, the Narwhal liner Starship One disappeared, with Halsey and Vice President Naylor aboard. The news shocked the galaxy. For three-quarters of the following year she was simply missing. No one knew what had happened to the Federal Presidential Starship.

When Halsey was finally discovered nine months later, in an escape pod brought to Leonicens Orbital by one of a massive group of independent Commanders, much had changed. She had been replaced by her Secretary of State, Felicia Winters, as Acting President, and then Winters was quickly ousted when two-thirds of Congress made a vote of no confidence in the Liberal administration. Zachary Hudson, her former opponent, fervent critic, and Core Dynamics-backed leader of the Federal Republican Association, took power.

The galaxy had largely moved on when Halsey was found. Worlds across inhabited space were embroiled in the superpowers' escalating cold war, a war which might turn to open conflict at any moment. For another month, Halsey was in a deep coma, from which she might have never recovered. Finally, on March 23rd of 3302, she was revived – but not as the Jasmina Halsey we remembered.

This Halsey was different, saying that she had been visited by intelligent “alien” races out in the black.

“It was wonderful. Amazing. I saw the universe, and our galaxy within it, as I'd never

seen it before, and I felt the presence of the real caretakers of our galaxy. The paradox of their existence – tiny yet gargantuan, fleeting yet eternal. They spoke to me as I drifted in the void. It was amazing. I must share their message.”

Pundits scoffed at the time, but this was before independent Commanders began encountering the crashed Thargoid vessels out in the Pleiades and the galaxy-spanning ruins of the Guardians were discovered. She claimed to have seen “the true architects of creation” and to have been shown what she describes as “the infinities of the cosmos”. Halsey pleaded for exploration data to confirm her theories about these aliens, and there were many who thought her mad; her time at the Clearwater Psychiatric Institute did little to quell these concerns. Quite aside from these cries about aliens, Halsey pulled an abrupt about-face from her previous loyalty to the Federation, declaring that both it and the Empire was guilty of wanton violence and endangering the poor and downtrodden. At one of Halsey's first public appearances since her discharge from Clearwater she announced that she would soon be relocating to Alliance space to take up a position in Alliance Prime Minister Edmund Mahon's staff, thereby severing all ties to the Federation. She organized shelters for war refugees and criticized sabre-rattling by the galaxy's leaders, declaring that “we must put aside our petty differences.” Even as the Federation and Empire withdrew from the Pleiades cluster, ending the cold war, she warned that the superpowers' tenuous peace would not last.

For many, there is no mystery for Halsey's story. She was a typical politician, awash

in hypocrisy and the trademark Federal corruption, until her ship was lost in a hyperspace accident and she went space-mad from her time adrift in an escape pod. Others might see her vision as just that – a vision, making her a kind of prophet to guide humanity into its future. Both of these perspectives, however, are missing some crucial data. For what “classified” reason did Spaceflight One take an unscheduled detour from its planned route shortly before its disappearance? Exactly what happened between Halsey's disappearance and her rediscovery? What happened between her rediscovery and her revival? And what really happened during Halsey's “treatment” at Clearwater?

There has been very little transparency during the whole of this ‘conversion’ from political warmonger to visionary charity worker. Much of the information I have looked for has been stamped and sealed ‘classified’ and off-limits. We know that there were many, many people who had reason to want Halsey out of the way prior to Starship One's disappearance. It is statistically improbable that the vessel could have remained unfound for so long, especially if it disappeared in some kind of accident. There is only one explanation that this reporter can think of: someone, or a group of someones, wanted her to go missing – and then, wanted her to be found. They could be some malevolent, powerful organization, operating behind the curtains of galactic power. On the other hand, perhaps They weren't even human – they were intelligent aliens, as ridiculous as that sounds. If true, then perhaps Halsey's time at the Clearwater facility was an attempt by those in power to silence her new altruistic bent, although it doesn't seem to have worked.

AUTHOR



Commander Rasudin's articles have been called ‘conspiracy theories’ but he prefers to call them ‘unrecognized truths’. His Asp Explorer, the *Bumbling Wasp*, is difficult to find but often turns up where it is definitely not supposed to be.

Unfortunately, this is all I can uncover on the mystery of Jasmina Halsey. At every corner, I am confounded. My usual trusted sources remain tight-lipped on the subject. Every classified data facility I infiltrate holds nothing but dead ends. Upon taking the slightest interest in the subject, however, it is easy to

conclude that some manner of conspiracy is taking place right in front of us.

The galaxy is growing ever more dangerous, Commanders. Fly safe, and keep an eye on the sky.

Even before she disappeared, many within the Federation derided Halsey's violent and destructive leadership style





SAGITTARIUS
EYE

WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Dear Reader,

Do you enjoy reading Sagittarius Eye while supercruising in the black, while waiting for your ship to be refuelled at your home spaceport, or when kicking back a few Lavian brandies at a local bar in some remote outpost? The positive feedback we have received so far is humbling, and seems to suggest that the content we present in our magazine is indeed well appreciated.

But we want to improve ourselves, and we need to know more. So the time has come for you to speak up: from next month a new section will open, called Letters to the Editor, featuring you -- yes, you dear reader. We invite you to send us letters with detailed feedback regarding the magazine as a whole, or about some specific article we have published in the past. Do you want to comment a controversial piece? Do you think we omitted some important detail? Do you think there's some galactic event we should cover? Or do you simply want to voice your appreciation for the SAGi team?

We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Thank you,

The Sagittarius Eye Editorial Team

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ETERNALLY OPTIMISTIC gorgeous and well-built cyborg seeks similar for mutual fun amidst the palm fields of Canarbe. Federalists only. No anarchists or eugenicists.

LOVEABLE BOHEMIAN with an eye for the high life seeks SHIPS COMMANDER to take me away from all this.

DISCREET REMOVALS REQUIRED. Pirate Bob Green last seen in Leesti is too big for his boots, reward of 150t of Gold offered for proof of "relocation".

SEEKING TRADE PARTNER: Must be reliable and have own ship with 40t+ cargo capacity and willing to trade in Anarchy systems. Contact Jill Eastwood for more info.

PIRATE INSTINCTS, ship and treasure trove to match. Outlawed in every part of the Universe and still fighting on. If you dream of adventure, adrenaline, star-fighting and glory AND you care nothing for the rules of the Galactic Lawyers, then you're the one for me. Companion-in-arms required to face every challenge and keep smiling. No wimps.

DO YOU COLLECT Old Gold Dreamware? Do you sleep night after night, running through the Golden Oldies, wallowing in nostalgia for the days when there was Only One Earth? Then we are meant for each other! Come share a dream with me...

BULLETIN BOARD SUPERVISOR with terminal brain-drain looks for stimulating new diversions to break the monotony of the ether-ware. Come and share my view-screen and the hours in between.



AMBITIOUS ADVERTISING executive sought by small time crook with big ideas. If you think you can sell the masses anything at all, any time, any day and want an unending stream of useful ideas, I'm yours...

EXPLORATIONS UNLIMITED Join me for the experience of a lifetime. I'm off to explore Edge jungle worlds where no sentient species has ever set foot - that we know of... I need a bright, articulate, fearless companion who will boldly go where no one has gone before... Mail me by the end of the Cycle.

REPORTER SEEKS LOST STAR. L. Calvert of SAGi Magazine seeking information on the Velize system. No information found in public databases, if you find it contact me immediately.

WRITTEN OFF WRECK on the Outer Edge with ageing Cobra and no cash for a re-fit seeks someone with credit to fund one last trip beyond the Limits. If you want to go places no one has been before, mail me. I'll drive if you'll navigate.

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CENTAURI MEGA GIN required. 100t, top prices paid, no questions asked. Delivery direct to 'Federal Youths Against Alcoholic Beverages' annual meeting essential before March 12th 3304.

FLORAL ARRANGEMENT found left by the side of the road on Cavat's Colony. Meet me on Jameson's Legacy by June 16th 3304 to get it back. Ask for P. Smyth at the east concession stand on the 3rd concourse.

LOOKING FOR PARTNER or two to help me teach Sirius Corp. a lesson. They fired me for "gross misconduct" with a Trumble, but nothing was ever proven even though they claimed to have holofac evidence that mysteriously went missing. I want revenge and I've decided to spend my severance package on a plan sabotage the new ship they're building, I need a fast escape ship to meet me at <MESSAGE LIMIT EXCEEDED>

FRIENDS OF THE THARGOIDS seek new location to hold meetings since our old meeting room at Hudson Observatory is currently on fire. Anyone with a space to rent cheap let me know.

FAST SHIP required. Looking to avoid any Imperial entanglements. No cargo, just two passengers and two robots to be transported to Aldebaran ASAP.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING? You are not alone. Join us for our next meeting of Halsey's Apostles and seek the truth with us; "I saw a place of extraordinary beauty. A paradise. It was truly wonderful. This was no dream - it was a glimpse of something very real. We must find this place. It could be our future."

EXPLORERS ANONYMOUS Ever wondered what there is out there in all those light years of empty space? Take a look at those star maps that tell you just how much HUGE unknowable blackness there still is out there. Join a group of twelve looking for that extra one to make the magic number so that we can set off for the wide black yonder with the blessings of the gods...

ANARCHAL GLOOM COCKTAIL per glass:

1 large Merrinol Cherry
1 part Anarchal Gin
3 parts ripe Indigo Fruit juice
ice - to taste
Dispense gin over ice. Add Indigo fruit juice. Garnish with Merrinol Cherry and small flying Cobra.

MISSING SHIPMENT of Crom Silver Fesh. Do you know what happened to my cargo? I woke up with my ship drifting three weeks late for delivery, out of fuel and with my entire cargo missing and no memory of the last month. Have you seen any Fesh floating near the Nuen system? If so it might be mine.

COLONIA citizen seeking transport to Jjagged Bbanner cover gig in Ross 986. I'm a huge Bbannerite but I spent all my credits on the ticket, can I get a lift from anyone heading back to the bubble before Februray 19th?

HIP 112974 based pharmaceuticals company seeking 'O' product for research and development. Discreet trader required for confidential deliveries at above market prices. Tough ship essential.

I HATE THARGOIDS do you hate Thargoids? If so drop me a message and we can chat about how much we hate them. I really hate them. They give me the creeps.

 **SAGITTARIUS EYE**
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REPORTERS REQUIRED

We're looking for reporters! We need writers to get out there and cover the stories of Commanders all over the galaxy. If you're comfortable with writing in journalistic style we'd love to hear from you! Please submit a sample journalistic article of no more than 300 words to sagittarius.ey@gmail.com. Have a look through our previous editions for inspiration: www.sagittariuseyes.com

SEE THE STUNNING SIGHTS OF THE

VEIL WEST NEBULA

