

Hailing Frequencies

Fanzine for the SFC/SFC2 Online Community

<http://hailingfrequencies.tripod.com>

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Open Hail

As I go to Mplayer and many of the message boards, I have noticed a disturbing trend in the SFC community. More and more I see players trash other players, for the gaming format they use, or the race they play. Now I am not talking about the normal trash talking that we all enjoy, this form of trash talking is not a playful thing.

There is disturbing trend toward competition among SFC groups right now, a trend that will ultimately hurt SFC. I regularly see players trash campaign or ladder systems that they have probably never seen. Or talk down to a player that happens to like those systems. I see ladder players refuse to play a game for fun with a newbie because he is not part of the ladder. Or an even worse trend, a veteran player will take a newbie into a ladder match to trash the player and then not take any time to teach him, leaving the new player with a bad overall impression of the game. The worst one I have heard yet, a player was driven out of an open room because his Mplayer pic was of the wrong race. It seems there was an open forum posted on Mplayer to discuss the tactics of one particular race. This player, seeking to play all races better, entered the room to learn. The other players instantly mauled him forcing him to leave the room.

The sad part is that it is not just limited to players. I have had groups claim that Hailing Frequencies is biased to just a single campaign system. I have been told stories of posts concerning HF being deleted or talk of other campaigns being met with flames. Let me state here and now Hailing Frequencies is open to any SFC group that wish to post their news and events. It has been from day one, despite some misunderstandings. I had it pointed out that only two campaigns are ever represented in Hailing Frequencies, this is because only two campaigns have ever sent in material for posting. Oh sure we hear the occasional: "I'd like to get my "insert system here" on Hailing Frequencies.", but then we receive nothing. If you want it reported, you have to provide the information folks.

This series of trends disturbs me a great deal. SFC is an awesome game, but it is also a complex game. I remember when I first started play SFB. If an experienced SFB player had not taken me under his wing, I would have been lost and quit before I got started. The same is true with SFC. The attitude in SFB was to help the new players, then you had someone to play and challenge yourself against later. We, experienced players, need to have this same kind of attitude in the SFC community. We need to help the new players learn the fun of the game. We need to open our forums to all players that wish to learn and help them learn, even if they play the enemy race more often than not. Doing this only enhances the overall experience for all involved in our favorite past time. I'm not suggesting you reveal everything your "particular group" does, but I am suggesting that players help players learn and get better, in the long run this is a GOOD thing.

As for SFC groups, the petty in fighting and bickering needs to stop. We are here to support SFC, not our own ideas of what it should be. Sure we have our own direc-

tion and style, our efforts will reflect that, but that does not make the other persons ideas wrong, or less right than our own.

Lets try to remember why we are all here, we love to play SFC. Lets take this passion and spread it to others, helping our community grow. Find a newbie each day, if you can, and set aside some time with him (or her), teach them something. At least once per day play a match where you are outgunned and really push your skills. Lets spend less time worrying about if we can get the match at 200-220 late era and more time worrying about if we can have some fun.

For a blast match grab a few players, say 3 or up to 6, and play 100 late era FFA on a medium Black Hole or Asteroid Field map. WOW, what a rush!

Okay I will climb off my soap box now. The views expressed are entirely my own and in no way reflect any opinions of the rest of the Hailing Frequencies staff.

This issue we have some awesome stuff lined up for you. We have again stalked the halls of Taldren and cornered Josh Morris about SFC2, taking an in-depth look at the new Fleet Control System. Rumor has is Taldren might get a restraining order for all our stalking, this is totally unsubstantiated, and false. Plus we have the completely edited and formatted log, of the Hailing Frequencies/Taldren Mplayer Chat. Hope this is enough SFC2 news for you, okay I know it's not, but it will hold you over till next month.

Dennis Greene, brings in his second, of a three part series on weapons. As well as a look at Federation basic tactics. Plus Salvatore "0Scotty0" Grasso and Dennis Greene team up to show you how to fly the Federation Heavy Cruiser. Last but not least, Russ "Spikeas" Rifenberg has given a look into the mysterious world of Electronic Warfare and how it applies in SFC.

Great tactical material requires some great fiction and we have a ton of it. Our Romulan race editor, Dale Schofield, makes his debut with the first of a multipart story, the Wraith of Taprek. If you think one multipart fiction is great, how about two? Jay Jeffery has a nice Klingon series for us, part one of The Crossing is on tap. Finally, the Gorn step up to take out an Orion raider in this battle report style piece by Martin Schaffer, called Bloody Claws.

WOW, that a lot of material, but not all of it yet! The Gorn are a race that can be fun to play, but are very weak on background info. Well not anymore. Yours truly steps up with a piece that tries to bring the Gorn to life, Race Profile: the Gorn.

All of this great material along with our regular campaign reports from SFCC and SFCC PBEM, this should keep you all busy for another month :-)

Until next month remember, if the game is not fun, why play?

Edward Crisler
Managing Editor

SFC2 Interview: Fleet Control

Interview with Josh "Jinxx" Morris



Again this month we at Hailing Frequencies contacted Taldren for some questions about everyone's favorite subject, SFCv2, and this time we were able to get them to explain about the new fleet control!

HF: Josh, thanks for doing this again for us. Lets start with what changes to the fleet control most stands out in your eyes over those in SFC?

Joshua Morris: Formations and Fire control are the main features that stand out. As you know I play the federation a lot and being able to tell your AI buddies when to fire is very valuable. Formation also helps maximize fire.

HF: How many ships will be under direct player control in SFC2?

Joshua Morris: 3 plus however many you capture in battle.

HF: Will fleet formation commands be available?

Joshua Morris: Yes. There are 6 different formations each with 3 variations of your ship being on the left, center, or right of the formation.

HF: A feature that has been suggested has been the ability to have your ships mimic your actions. Such as cloaking together or firing together, will this option be in SFC2?

Joshua Morris: You can tell any of your ships to cloak with a click of the "special weapons" button.

HF: Will more control options be available for the aggression level of the AI?

Joshua Morris: You will be able to tell the AI to freely target and fire. Fire at only your target at will, or fire only when you tell him to, at your target. You can also press your AI ships fire button at anytime to make him launch all weapons.

HF: As long as we are talking about fleet control we also need to look at the ability to control the fighters in fleet actions. What kind of changes can we expect to see in the fighter control panels?

Joshua Morris: Well I don't want to get into too many details until the panels are fully functional. You will have 2 panels, 1 controls shuttles/fighters and the other loads/refits them.

HF: What kinds of changes will be made in the AI for fleet controlled ships?

Joshua Morris: Locking ships into formation is a powerful tool for control. General AI improvements will make the AI more aware of his surroundings. Overall I think we made a decent improvement.

HF: While we are looking at the AI, will there be any major AI tweaks for totally AI controlled vessels as well?

Joshua Morris: Nothing too major but it will be improved. We still want new players to have a chance.

HF: With the new options for formations and some fire control, will the player be able to setup macros so that many of these commands can be mixed into a single hotkey combination?

Joshua Morris: I personally think hot keys can become degenerative if left out of control. I would prefer that players have to show some skill in pushing the right buttons at the right time.

HF: What kind of specialty fleet action ships will we see intro-

duced with SFC2?

Joshua Morris: Escorts of course. => Maybe other types in the future but not for release.

HF: We had talked about the fleet control panel being an actual "popup" window, will this always be on, or can you turn it off?

Joshua Morris: It toggles on and off. It is part of your screen not a "popup".

HF: Will some races have specific fleet options for them that others would not? (FREX: ISC echelon).

Joshua Morris: WE haven't decided whether or not to restrict the ISC to be in formation. I think most people will WANT to be in formation so it might not be an issue. Beta test will determine what is right.

HF: Will there be a possibility for configurable formations, or are they all predetermined and you must pick from a set number/type?

Joshua Morris: We have 18 formations. You can only arrange 3 ships in so many different ways so we think that should be enough.

HF: In multiplayer combat, will it be possible to mix and match or trade fleet assets to other players for them to control?

Joshua Morris: No

HF: With fleet control now getting added attention, in a Multiplayer battle, will it be possible to indicate which option/choice you'll be making that will be easily understood by your teammates, to better help in coordination? Has this been considered?

Joshua Morris: Possible if we find a large need for in the feature.

We would like to thank Josh for taking the time to answer our questions with this interview. He has been a joy to work with on this project. Next month we try to quiz Josh again our topic will be the ISC.

Now lets take a look at the fleet control panel and see what taldren has in store for us. Below you will see a screen shot of the fleet control panel in it's full glory. On the next page we will explore different parts of this interface.



SFC2 Interview: Fleet Control

Interview with Josh "Jinx" Morris

The fleet control panel is an all-new section. This panel is vital for players that wish to get the most of AI controlled allies. I will walk you through the various panels and their meaning.

First you must have multiple ships to make use of this panel. The best way to try this is to play a multi-player game and set the BPV level to higher than 300 BPV. Select multiple ships.

When you are in the game click on the fleet control icon. It will look like a symbol with 2 ships.

Like this: 

First thing you will notice is that you get a lot more info on your screen. I will describe them in turn.

This panel shows 3 things:

1. What ship you are on (man icon)
2. What class of ships (name of ship in final release also)
3. Whether that ship is in formation or not.



This is the first panel that lines the bottom of your screen; It shows the name of the ship and its health remaining. There are also 4 icons that mean the following (read right to left)

1. Destroy target
2. Capture target
3. Defend target
4. Tractor target

The next panel to the left shows what each ship's target is and the relative health of the target.



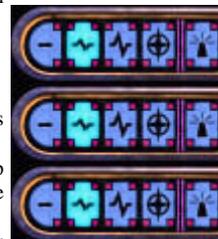
These buttons control each ship's fire control. These 4 buttons do the following. This panel is mostly functional.

1. Loose formation. Ships will attempt to stay in formation but will pick their own target and fire when they feel they have the best shot.
2. Medium formation. Ships will attempt to stay in formation and will fire only at your target. They will fire when they feel they have the best hit chance.
3. Tight formation. Ships will stay in formation and only fire at your target with you tell them too.
4. This is the fire button for the ship. The ship will fire when you click on the button regardless of formation. You must fire for your other ships if you have them in tight formation.



This panel controls the settings of the weapons on the ships in your fleet. There are 5 buttons:

1. Offline – This takes weapons offline
2. Normal setting.
3. Overload setting. This makes your ships overload weapons
4. Special weapons. This makes your ship use special weapons or systems like Cloak.
5. ECM levels. This makes ships raise their ECM levels.



This is the panel on the right side of the screen. It controls the formation that your ships are in. From top to bottom they are:

1. Abreast
2. Line
3. Wedge
4. V
5. Echelon left
6. Echelon right



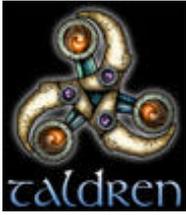
Clicking on the formation button again sets the Placement of your ship in the formation. Your ship can be placed on the right, left, or center of any formation

We owe a big thanks to Josh for this information. For an interactive look at the Fleet Control panel be sure to see our online version of this article.

Email us and let us know what you think of Hailing Frequencies;
openhail@startrekmail.com

Taldren/HF Open Chat

Round Table forum with Taldren held on Mplayer



Key Personalities:

SFCErik - Erik Bethke, Taldren, Producer
 Jinxx - Joshua Morris, Taldren, Senior Designer
 SFCShadow - Dennis Greene, Hailing Frequencies,
 Executive Editor (Moderator)
 GE-Sfaret - E.L. Crisler, Hailing Frequencies, Manag-
 ing Editor (Moderator)

Other Notables Present:

SFCZach - Zachary Drummond, Taldren, Programmer
 Scott Bennie - Writer, Contracted to Taldren for SFCv2 project
 David A. Ferrell - Taldren, Scripter
 Captain Krumb - Scott Bruno, Taldren, Scripter

SFCShadow:

WELCOME TO THE FIRST TALDREN/HAILING FREQUENCIES
 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT STARFLEET COMMAND VOL-
 UME II: EMPIRES AT WAR! This will be a moderated session. No one, but
 those with chat bubbles will be able to talk. Please TYPE your question; verbal
 questions will NOT be answered. If you have a question to ask Taldren or
 Hailing Frequencies, please Page GE-Sfaret. Do NOT ask him your question
 in pager; just send him a page to request to ask a question. You will only be
 allowed one question each time you talk, to enable everyone a chance to ask
 his or her questions. Please be patient and we will get around to you. The last
 five minutes or so of the chat we will open the room to general chaos. The
 chat will last approximately 1 hour. So sit back and enjoy yourselves!

Jinxx: we are ready to start

SFCErik: Hello all!

Jinxx: have your questions pre-typed it will speed things along

SFCShadow: Yes, please.

Kirk_jr: We know that SFC 2 will look better do to some changes in the
 graphics engine, but will there be 32 bit color?

SFCErik: I will get that one

SFCErik: We have added a luminance map

Jinxx: Kirk wants "overkill" colors =)

SFCErik: to each of the textures of the ships and I believe we have 8bits of
 luminance data

SFCErik: But we are using a different pallet for each ship

SFCErik: so our bit depth is not true 32 nor is it 16 or 24...

SFCErik: that is my answer

Rudyman: Hello! I was wondering what Taldren's plan is for the support after
 the product is released? SFC had what I considered a real commitment after
 release to ensure that the product was tweaked close to perfection, over a
 period of time. Thank you!

SFCErik: Thank you Rudyman!

SFCErik: We really did work hard and long on SFC after release...

SFCErik: often had to stretch the internal resources of Interplay to get the
 additional work done

SFCErik: but we are all happy with the results

SFCErik: As our first full title with the Taldren logo on it

SFCErik: we feel that it is our most important job

SFCErik: to support the game with a strong release and the strongest post-
 release we can deliver

SFCErik: SO, yes quite a lot I would expect, we consider the Taldren reputa-
 tion hangs on the quality of the game.

KHZ_Arizhel: Are there going to be any special missiles/drones?...ie: ECM
 drones & ATG drones

SFCErik: Arizhel, new missiles... we think so...

SFCErik: Thanks

SFCErik: I especially like the ECM drones

SFCErik: Okay good idea

Jinxx: I'm working on a couple missile designs...remember all ships will be
 armed with the same missile type so ECM missiles would be impractical

SFCErik: ah.

Crimnick: OK THEN

Crimnick: well can we expect the meta to be supervised like by a sage or a
 wizard?

Jinxx: good question...

SFCErik: Crimnick excellent question.

Crimnick: thank you

Jinxx: looking at Erik for a good answer

SFCErik: We are doing all we can to have meta easy to admin from afar, as
 well as self-robust

SFCErik: But we fully expect that the Metaverse will take up a bunch of our
 attention post-release

SFCErik: And yes we will look for clever ways of getting trusted folks in the
 community

SFCErik: to help us with the game

SFCErik: However, we haven't yet formalized such plans

Jinxx: like we always do

Capt.BobIII: Will the AI be more responsive, ie. giving fleet commands, will
 they actually disable instead of destroy a target ?

SFCErik: Capt BobIII we are already on that particular issue

Jinxx: yes. I've been playing with the new fleet control system...

Jinxx: you will get very good control on your fleet mates...

SFCErik: We have made the AI not overkill, and be stronger at defending
 itself

SFCErik: and we have a few more improvements planned

Jinxx: this makes the Feds especially nasty

Amazing-DOA: I heard that hit and runs are not in SFC 2 how will this effect
 the klingons

Jinxx: this is an untrue rumor

Jinxx: rumor even

SFCErik: Wow, where did you hear that?

SFCShadow: lol

SFCErik: I am curious, I get to ask a question!

Jinxx: hit and run raid will have a better defense mechanism however

Amazing-DOA: have heard this from multi guys in the mplayer and SFC
 lobbies

Jinxx: Allowing people that don't set up for a H&R to get a defense bonus

SFCShadow: Patently untrue, Amazing.

Jinxx: also another rumor ill kill right now is the fact that SFC2 will be on 10
 CDs and cost \$100

SFCShadow: lol

Jinxx: you think that is a joke but I have been asked it a couple times

SFCErik: Also it will NOT be free!

SFCErik: Lame joke. I know.

Jinxx: if you buy 2 copies it might cost \$100....and we recommend this pur-
 chasing habit

MoK_Bauk: when will demo come out and who will carry on line service

SFCErik: Mok_Bauk I would anticipate a demo between September and De-
 cember

Jinxx: "when its ready" is a popular answer

SFCErik: Mplayer and WON.net

Jinxx: mplayer and Won.net

SF-Bash: I was wondering when its due out

Taldren/HF Open Chat

Round Table Fourm with Taldren held on Mplayer

SFC Erik: This coming winter.

[Editors Note: It was at this time that I asked the fans to try to ask questions that were not already readily and easily found out at other sources, as we only had a limited time to speak with the folks at Taldren.]

Jinxx: here come the tough questions

RIG-Morpheus: I was wondering if the game interface is similar to Starfleet command 1 or more like Klingon Academy.....

SFC Erik: Morpheus very similar to SFC1... we like our interface...

SFC Erik: We are improving, and tweaking things like energy, shuttles, tractors

SFC Erik: And modifying our navigation menus, but it will look like "SFC"

cam_78: hey Taldren! I'm curious about the new AI. Will it have a better understanding of the different weapons? For example, will we see AI ships use different tactics depending on their weapons load outs -- hellbore ships stand-off, fusion ships rush-in, klingons sabre dance? That kind of thing. Or am I asking for an AI miracle here...

SFC Erik: cam_78 the Ai WILL be stronger

SFC Erik: but I do not think they AI will ever fully appreciate the weapons like a human would

Jinxx: humans will always be the ultimate foe...that why you log on here right?

SFC Erik: depending on time we will increase their complexity in the use of the weapons.

Jinxx: that's

SFC Erik: But as Josh said, we feel the multiplayer arena is for the player who is bored with the AI.

Cdr.Var Kloog: will we have more than 3 ships in the meyaverse

SFC Erik: Var Kloog we have thought about that one alot

SFC Erik: Got it

Jinxx: very possible, but generally for a limited amount of missions

SFC Erik: Played owned ships

Jinxx: players will only "own" 3

SFC Erik: We even considered setting it to 1... but we dismissed that idea

SFC Erik: We are back to 3.

Jinxx: but may, if time allows, be assigned additional ships for a mission

SFC Erik: slots 4,5,6 allow us to let the player capture ships during the missions...

Jinxx: that is true..

SolonXXIV: Will cloak be tweaked at all in sfc2?

SFC Erik: I have not yet read the cloak thread in full detail

SFC Erik: I have seen some things in there that are subtle changes that I would think about

Jinxx: I'm considering tweaking the fade time...but the way it generally works...we are happy with it

SFC Erik: but no dramatic changes to the way cloak is now.

Jinxx: also there might be a few cloak bugs that we can resolve before release

7th_RJHJ: Hello!! Will we be able to see shield strength in numbers on the ship display of our ship and the enemy ship and not a line of dots? I like to know exactly who's got what. Makes going after or protecting a shield easier. Thanks and keep up the good work....

SFC Erik: Yes,

SFC Erik: We are planning on putting in F11 view

SFC Erik: numbers outside of the shield display on the 3D view

Jinxx: it will show a numeral value

Jinxx: like Erik said.

SFC Erik: There is simply no room on the left hand side tactical panels.

Overon0: according to my SFB research I have found an ISC pol, ff, dd, cl, and ca all available in y160 with another pol, ff, dd, cl, and ca available in y165, yet in the last irc chat it was mentioned that Taldren would be adding more ships to "supplement" the ISC lineup..My question is this really necessary and if so where will these ships come from and what will be done to insure that any Taldren created ships are balanced

Jinxx: o no...

Overon0: rofl

SFC Erik: What you don't trust us to make an SSD, but will trust us to make a game

Jinxx: It looks like we wont HAVE to add any early era ships for the ISC

SFC Erik: If we don't have to we will not, but if it is sparse we will fill it out...

Jinxx: since our early area should include these ships

KHZ_Arizhel: Is there going to be the ability to have faster missiles/drones in Scatter Packs?...ie: in middle and late era when we can have faster drones

Jinxx: they will match your missile types you have on board

SFC Erik: They will now match the type of the ship rather than always being slow.

Jinxx: and take from your supplies

xenophon10k: Hello, will you be adding any of the "historical" SFB scenarios to sfc2 and if so can you tell us some? Thank you

Jinxx: I have to check the list...

Jinxx: I think you will recognize some SFB scenarios in the META

Jinxx: real historical missions can be done by our loyal fans

RazalYllib: My query concerns meta---. Will races benefit from alliances (historical in terms of SFB or non-historical)...in terms of prestige gained from successes of the ally...and can allies lend or give prestige (SFC's economic points since the F&E model is not being used) to allied races or players???

SFC Erik: BillyLazar.

SFC Erik: There will be no prestige transfers at SFC2 release

SFC Erik: We want to watch the economics of the Metaverse carefully post release.

Jinxx: but a good idea none the less

SFC Erik: Yes!

Jinxx: true we need to monitor a controlled environment before adding in such complexities

5TH-Krom316: Is the quake 3 engine for elite force going to...just kidding... will the federation get the special attention it deserves in this next installment? Also will you be bringing the alpha strike back? The shift Z control? thank you and keep up the good work!!!!

SFC Erik: Allies will be there... and many missions call for allies... but they will not be able to help buy you stuff...

SFC Erik: Thanks 5th...

Jinxx: Alpha strike works that way because of a interface issue...

Jinxx: I'm trying to remember the bug we fixed that changed the way Shift Z worked..

Jinxx: Shadow do you remember?

SFCShadow: Firing during HET

SFCShadow: And WW

Jinxx: ahhh yes...

SFC Erik: With the new Metaverse we will be able to track a great number of stats, and perhaps we will be able to do a much better job of objectively determining the balance between the races...

Jinxx: we felt the slight reduction of the alpha benefited the game overall

SFCShadow: You can still Alpha now, you just need to be more specific then before.

[Editor's Note: At this point I let everyone know that time was running out and that we would be able to only take 3-5 more questions then I would open

Taldren/HF Open Chat

Round Table Forum with Taldren held on Mplayer

the room for a short time as an open chat]Jinxx: (jeopardy music)
SFCShadow: lol
Fade IV: Will I be able to set up my own Metaverse and play against just 1 other person via TCP/IP. In other words, just have my own campaign game going with just 1 other person in it...sort of like Federation and empire, even though I understand its not FE. Sorry such a long question...great game!!!

SFC Erik: Fade very good idea...
SFC Erik: But no.
SFC Erik: You will be able to play single player meta and fully multiplayer meta
SFC Erik: And perhaps later we will support a LAN-meta
Jinxx: they game will play more like an adventure game....recreating F&E was not our goal
Jinxx: there are strategy elements to it....and fleets will be a factor
SFC Erik: but we want to get this release right, so we cut that so we could concentrate more on the wide open meta...

7th_Dep.Mike: Since you have worked long and hard to balance heavy weapons in SFC will esgs be changed in sfc2 specifically will they do damage to all ships in field friend or foe.....and please make a skin for old fed cl that resembles...the SFB ssd.....its a grand old ship

Jinxx: ESG should be worked on before release...
Jinxx: The CL will make it into the game
Jinxx:
SFC Erik: We have a well articulated list of ESG issues and we will work on them...
SFCShadow: But not the model correct Josh?
Jinxx: no model....
Jinxx: that where you guys come in =>
SFCShadow:

TOC-Bearslayer: Thank you for being here, my question is how will the pirate fleets be represented in the Metaverse? (by Pirate I mean LDR and Orions)

SFC Erik: Very good question Bearslayer.
SFC Erik: LDR first:
Jinxx: nod
SFC Erik: I don't know yet.
SFC Erik: Orion second:
SFC Erik: I don't know yet
SFC Erik: I am very sorry I can't be specific one this one. But we are having a general blanket no comment on additional races.
Jinxx: I will answer a question that someone asked me today...
Jinxx: will the metaverse be free...
SFC Erik: You can assume Orions will be in the Metaverse as NPCs for now.
Jinxx: yes it will
Jinxx: thank you

Ssazzix-GE: How will the PPD work compared to SFB version as for ranges and such load time etc ??

Jinxx: lightning round
Jinxx: rules will be as similar as possible
Jinxx: as is the case for most SFC issues
SFC Erik: I will stay till 6:45 then I have to get back to coding... (thanks alot for coming everyone!)

[Editor's note: I announced this was the last question from the fans, then HF

would ask a question each, then the room would be opened to everyone]
Jinxx: good turn out

GDTR-Dracolich: I was wondering if there are any plans to include a match target speed option in the game...

Jinxx: this is a great community...I am proud to have you guys as fans...
SFC Erik: Dracolich interesting question
SFC Erik: But we discussed it at length on SFC1
Jinxx: we will do our best to make you happy with SFC2
SFC Erik: And we didn't feel that it benefited the *game*
SFC Erik: while it made it easy on the player
SFC Erik: it took away playing the game from them

[Editor's note: About to open the room]

Jinxx: <braces self>

GE-Sfaret: Will some tweaking be done to the turn mode or energy of the ships. For ships to race at speed 31, around the map, and turn so quickly, makes plasma almost ineffective. Will something be done to restore the balance to plasma?

SFC Erik: In general,
Jinxx: You are kidding right?
SFC Erik: We have several betas coming up
SFC Erik: And you can see from SFC1
SFC Erik: We are open to changes in rules post - release
SFC Erik: and I like numbers
SFC Erik: so I am looking forward to tracking stats and seeing what we learn from it...
Jinxx: plasma is one of the best weapons in the game...
Jinxx: ok
Jinxx: we can discuss that in forum

SFCShadow: Will macros be a part of SFCv2? Will we be able to do this again (Chat) closer to time of release (say just prior to beta testing, or soon after Beta starts?)

Jinxx: it will take a lot of convincing..
Jinxx: I don't like macros much...
Jinxx: I feel it take some of the skill out of the game
Jinxx: as for another chat...I would love to if we have time...we really want to spend as much time on the game in these next critical months as possible
Jinxx: I would suggest HF continue to compile questions

SFC Erik: Okay I have to go...
SFCShadow: I understand! I want to thank Taldren for taking the time from their busy day to be here and answer questions from their loyal fans. Thank you very much!
SFC Erik: Thankyou everyone...

We are very pleased here at Hailing Frequencies with the outcome of this chat. Everyone was orderly and no real problems occurred. We would like to thank everyone for showing us why SFC players can be best gaming fans on the net.



<http://www.starfleetuniverse.com>

Understanding Electronic Warfare

By Russ "Spikeas" Rifenberg

The use of Electronic Warfare (EW) is an attempt to reduce or negate the effectiveness of your opponent's weapons. At times, and depending on which weapons and players are involved, EW can make or break the battle. Other times may see great efforts toward an EW advantage with minimal effect. The more you know about the subject, the greater chance you can use it to your advantage. Thus the importance.

The basic principles of EW aren't difficult. However, they are new to most and not covered in any great detail in the SFC manual. Additionally, the 'guts' of EW as known by experienced Starfleet Battles (SFB) players aren't easily translated into a real-time computer game. There are more similarities than differences when comparing EW between the two games, however. I'll present my SFB knowledge as best as I can. Terms:

- ◆ **EW:** Electronic Warfare
- ◆ **ECM:** Electronic Counter Measures, Defensive EW
- ◆ **ECCM:** Electronic Counter-Counter Measures, offensive EW (offsets ECM)
- ◆ **Natural ECM:** ECM provided by terrain and other special conditions. This form of ECM is usually granted to all ships.
- ◆ **EM:** Erratic Maneuvering
- ◆ **EW Shift:** The end result of an ECM advantage, when a firing solution is made. Also displayed as an "Attack Shift"

Sensors

Your ships sensors provide you the option of powering up your ECM/ECCM panels. Normally, you may designate up to 6 points of power, total, into either/or slot. Be aware that damage to your sensors will reduce the maximum allowed to spend in this manner, as well as reducing your 'lock-on' probabilities.

Not every ship's sensors are the same. They all have the same max (6) and min (0) values, but in general the larger the ship the more redundant the sensors are. Smaller ships may require as few as 4 sensor hits to make helpless, larger ships may require up to 10 sensor hits. Many ships have extra redundancy...two or even three hits can be taken before the sensor value decreases below 6. Reference SFB's ship data charts for more information on specific ships.

Your sensor display will show the status of energy spent in this manner toward either ECM or ECCM. If a target is selected, it will also show their ECM/ECCM expenditures (if within tactical analysis range). Note that this may not give you the complete story. You also have displayed on your main screen an "Attack Shift" which portrays your EW shift much more accurately. EM and terrain are updated with the "Attack Shift" reference.

ECM

Electronic Counter Measures. This is a quantitative accounting of energy applied toward your defenses. Your ship may spend up to 6 energy for this purpose. Other forms of ECM may be gained, as explained below.

Natural ECM: This is ECM gained from sources other than power directly applied. Natural ECM has the distinction of providing ECM to all ships involved, whether you're firing at them or they're firing at you. Its also gained in addition to ECM points spent.

Erratic Maneuvering (EM): You may toggle this effect on/off by selecting the "/" key from your number pad. EM provides 4 points of Natural ECM, and it costs 6 movement power for you to initiate. Also note that EM will reduce your chance to perform a HET by a significant margin. A bonus to this type of ECM is the fact that it is instantaneous, and can be toggled on and off at will. However, transporters, shuttles, and some weapons are affected by its use, so some thought is best applied.

Terrain Nebulae: This provides ALL ships with 9 points of Natural ECM, in addition to the other known restrictions.

Wild Weasils (WW): Otherwise known as sensor decoy shuttles. Not only do these shuttles provide a defense against plasma torpedoes and drones, but they provide 6 points of Natural ECM as well. There are conflicting reports if this ECM is applied directly to all ships in range, however it is for a fact applied to the launching ship.

WW benefits are mutually exclusive with EM or Terrain. EM movement points will immediately void a WW, and the shuttles cannot be launched in a

Nebula.

Attrition Units: These include drones (missiles), shuttles, and fighters. In SFB, there was some natural ECM applied toward these units when ship's heavy weapons were targeted upon them. The application of this data may be conjectural within the confines of SFC.

Nimble Ships: Certain starships (usually Orion Pirate vessels) had a "built-in" ECM factor of 2 points, in addition to normal EW use. This may be why you may require 2 points of ECCM to hit them in the single player scenarios without an Attack Shift. [Editor's Note: Pirates have between 1 and 2 full ECM factors built into their hulls, so this is very true, this means you'll need between 1-3 ECM points to counter 1 factor or 4-6 ECM points to counter the 2 factors.]

ECCM

Electronic Counter-Counter Measures, a glorified term to signify your offensive EW. The sole function of ECCM is to negate your opponent's ECM, no matter what the source. ECCM generated by your ship has no effect on your own defenses (your ECM) and will not make your weapons hit any better than they would normally...as if there were no EW being used at all. Having an advantage in ECCM points provides you with absolutely no benefit whatsoever. *Editor's Note:*

ECM Effect on Seeking Weapons	
Chance to Effect	Result/Strength
1% - 16%	Warhead 0%
17% - 33%	Warhead 25%
34% - 50%	Warhead 50%
51% - 100%	Warhead 100%

Other then giving you some buffer for your opponent using future ECM. Can also help reduce effects of EM. Consider carefully though before giving yourself such a buffer.

Your sensors have the same effect on ECCM as they do with ECM. They limit you to 6 energy spent max, and damaged sensors may also limit this further.

There are no "Natural" forms of ECCM. Points generated from your ship are the only points of ECCM you'll ever get.

Plasma Torpedoes have built-in ECCM. 3 points were intended to be applied to each Plasma torpedo, in order to secure a 100% chance of detonation at full strength. The use and effect of this ECCM is somewhat conjectural with SFC, but I will provide the chart for reference: *Editor's Note: I've included the correct chances for each. [ECM Effect on seeking weapons]*

Needless to say, the net EW shift is added to this die roll, and 1d6 is rolled. Drones, Plasma Torpedoes, Suicide shuttles, and any other 'seeking' weapon used this chart to modify explosion strength. Explosion strength of mines or ships are not modified by this chart.

ECM Table	
Net ECM Strength	Net EW Factor (Attack Shift)
1-3	1
4-8	2
9-15	3
16-24	4
25-35	5
36+	6

EW Shift

So, now that most of the specifics are covered what does it all mean? EW shift is the end-result of your hard-earned ECM points whatever the source. First, calculate your EW shift:

Your ECM (ship generated plus any Natural sources that apply) minus your opponents generated ECCM.

If you still have ECM points in your favor, apply them to the following chart to determine the EW Shift.

Will you ever gain more than a 4-shift using this method? No...the complete chart beyond a 4-shift is intended for advanced (scout, shuttle, etc) use within SFB. The highest attained amount of ECM points within SFC is 19...full 6 points of ECM+EM+Nebula terrain.

Normally, if you can attain a 2-shift during regular battles you have a significant advantage. Note that the act of engaging EM automatically gains 4 ECM (natural) thus a 2-shift if not countered.

Applying EW Shift

In general, each EW shift you have decreases your opponent's heavy weapons chance to hit by 16.67%. For example, a heavy weapon that hits (for its current range etc) at 50% will, under a 1-shift, hit only at 33.3%. This same weapon under a 2-shift hits at 16.67%. Its quite possible that at medium-long

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ranges, any EW shift will eliminate the chance for a heavy weapon to hit.

Note that while the chance to hit is modified, the damage done is still constant with range if it hits.

The principles for applying EW shift are the same for all heavy weapons not including ESG's (ESG's are not affected by ECM in any way). Phasers also have different vectors to apply the EW shift, and will be explained below.

Note that some heavy weapons are more prone to EW than others. In general, Hellbores are less affected. Photon's, disruptors and Fusion Beams are severely hampered by an EW shift, unless extremely close. *Editor's Note: Not sure I agree with this, but they are affected, range can help, but it's not as much an issue, REF: Weapons Breakdown: Part II, for more info*

Brief History of SFB Firing Solutions

Just about every weapon in SFB was resolved using 1d6 or 2d6. EW shifts are specifically designed to affect that roll. For example, you would roll 1d6 to determine if your Photon hit...if its chance to hit was 50%, then rolling a 1, 2, or a 3 would result in a hit. Rolling a 4, 5, or 6 would miss.

EW shift applied toward this was simple. Merely add the shift to the die roll. A 1-shift would effectively allow that same Photon to hit on a 1 or a 2, with 3,4,5, or 6 resulting in a miss. 2-shift meant the Photon hit only by rolling a 1.

Every direct-fire, heavy weapon used this same concept. Hellbore's "twisted" the rules a bit by requiring 2d6 to be rolled...basically halving the effect of an EW shift. Depending upon the version of SFC used, this particular "twist" may not be in effect. Sorry, Hydrans.

SFC game mechanics have adapted the principles here. Instead of modifying a "die roll", they subtracted a 16.67% chance to hit per EW shift. An apt equivalent and much better suited for the math used.

Effect on Phasers

Historically, phasers are slighted a different way than your usual heavy weapon. Overall, an EW shift wouldn't cause a phaser to miss so much as it would reduce the damage it does...unless the weapon was fired at effective maximum range or longer. *Editor's Note: This is also true for Fusion beams.*

Again, the EW shift was added to the "die roll". 1d6 was required to resolve damage done by any phaser, and you cross-referenced your die roll with the range to determine its damage.

Note, EW shift applied that resulted in a "7" shifted the range bracket by one worse, as if you still rolled a "6". Applied again if a modified roll resulted in an "8" etc. Please refer to the following charts.

This chart actually extends to the range 51-75 bracket, which results in 1 point of damage if you roll a "1" at that range. From looking at the overall chart, EW shift will probably reduce the damage of a Phaser-1 but not cause it to miss within range 4 or 5.

Phaser, Type-1 (Ph-1)												
Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6-8	9-15	16-25	26-50	51-75	
16%	9	8	7	6	5	5	4	3	2	1	1	
33%	8	7	6	5	5	4	3	2	1	1	0	
50%	7	5	5	4	4	4	3	1	0	0	0	
67%	6	4	4	4	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	
83%	5	4	4	4	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	
100%	4	4	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	
Avg.	6.5	5.3	4.8	4.3	3.8	3.5	2.2	1	.5	.3	.2	

Phaser, Type-2 (Ph-2)								
Range	0	1	2	3	4-8	9-15	16-30	31-50
16%	6	5	5	4	3	2	1	1
33%	6	5	4	4	2	1	1	0
50%	6	4	4	4	1	1	0	0
67%	5	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
83%	5	4	3	3	0	0	0	0
100%	5	3	3	3	0	0	0	0
Avg.	5.5	4.2	3.8	3.5	1.2	.7	.3	.2

While Phaser-2's are much shorter-ranged than Phaser-1's, they also have a more consistent damage spread within range 3. An EW shift against these phasers is less likely to be effective until at range 4 or greater. Phaser-3's, of course, are the shortest-ranged phaser avail-

able. Damage spread at ranges 0 and 1 is excellent, damage at range 2 highly variable, and range 3 or greater almost non-existent. EW shift is most effective at range 2 or greater.

There is an abbreviated accounting for phaser damage supplied with the other basic weapons systems in your SFC manual.

Cloaking

The cloaking device operates independently from ECM. Basically, use of a cloak is desired to break lock-on by opponents. Breaking lock-on in this manner does not mean that you cannot hit, but it does mean that the effective range is increased.

Effective range without a lock-on is actual range x2, then add 5. This means firing at a cloaked ship at range 2, effective range is 2x2+5 or 9. Range 4 is 4x2+5 or 13. Again, this effective range affects your chance to hit with heavy weapons, not the damage done if they do hit.

Phasers use their respective charts, at effective range, to determine damage dealt.

While a ship is 'fading' either into or out of a cloaking operation, the actual range is NOT doubled but effective range is still modified up to +5. The full explanation is rather complicated and mostly irrelevant.

Ships may still use ECM while cloaked. The EW shift is calculated normally, and applied against the chance to hit at effective range. Needless to say, this can be VERY effective. Never fire at a cloaked ship unless you've eliminated the EW shift it may have. *Editor's Note: Also be aware that while the ship is cloaked that the chances of causing damage can be 1/4, 1/2 or full damage applied if you do get a hit on a cloaked ship.*

Phaser, Type-3 (Ph-3) / Type-G (Ph-G)						
Range	0	1	2	3	4-8	9-15
16%	4	4	4	3	1	1
33%	4	4	4	2	1	0
50%	4	4	4	1	0	0
67%	4	4	3	0	0	0
83%	4	3	2	0	0	0
100%	3	3	1	0	0	0
Avg.	3.8	3.7	3	1	.3	.2

Summary

It is certainly hoped that the materials provided here can help in your overall tactics. I've included as many specifics as I could, while attempting not to be overly complicated. As a general rule, most starships rarely have more than a few points of power to apply toward defenses. If you calculate the effect of a few points of ECM as compared to the same amount into shield reinforcement, you may realize that you'll save resources and gain an effective defense.

Causing weapons to miss (or to hit at reduced capacity) is much more effective than trying to block each point of damage as it strikes your shields. Keeping track of your opponents ECCM may also save you power...if he's max on his ECCM, consider dropping your ECM to give yourself more power for other things (since straight ECM is effectively useless, anyway). Or consider instead max ECM but add EM to still give you that 2-shift (expensive, but worth it if needed). Or merely tweak your ECM accordingly, if a 1-shift can be attained.

It all depends, of course, on the situation and your ability to make quick, effective decisions. Power management is a vital part of winning a battle, and EW should be a part of that decision.

It may save your ship.

System Breakdown: Heavy Weapons (pt 1)

By Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

In the first part of this series we covered phasers, their use, power and true function. In parts II and III we will cover the Heavy Weapon Systems and how we can use these systems to augment the phasers, getting the most out of these sometimes mysterious, often misunderstood weapons. Many feel that heavy weapons are the killing weapon, after the last issue of HF, I hope I have shown you that this myth is not entirely true.

With the exception of the plasma torpedo, the fusion beam and the Expanding Sphere Generator, most heavy weapons are really your long range weapon. It gives you the player the ability to reach out and "touch" someone, at greater ranges than the typical killing weapon, the phaser.

The heavy weapon is really your weakening weapon. It can weaken a shield or two before closing the range into phaser territory, and/or up close it is an excellent addition to the killing power of your phasers. This article turned out to be a bit larger than I originally anticipated so there will be a third article to finish out this series. Part II will cover the Photon Torpedo, the Disruptor, and the Fusion beam, this issue. Part III will cover the Hellbore Cannon, the Plasma Torpedoes, Expanding Sphere Generator, and Missiles (Drones).

The purpose of this document (series) is to give you the most comprehensive guideline available on exactly what the weapons can do in SFC. It is hoped that with greater understanding and a reliable reference source, that your gaming experience in SFC will be richer and allow for you to gain greater tactical insight as to why some tactics work and others get you killed. How the relation and power of your weapons interrelate with your other systems like Electronic Warfare, Erratic Maneuvers, High Energy Turns, Power Management and practically everything related to playing SFC and winning!

Standard Photon (pho-n)						
Range	0-1*	2	3-4	5-8	9-12	13-30
16%	8*	8	8	8	8	8
33%	8*	8	8	8	8	0
50%	8*	8	8	8	0	0
67%	8*	8	8	0	0	0
83%	8*	8	0	0	0	0
100%	8*	0	0	0	0	0
Avg.	8*	6.7	5.3	4	2.7	1.3

Photons

We'll begin with the most archetypal heavy weapon of any race in SFC, the Federation Photon. Below are the tables for photons and how they are really used in SFC. You'll notice that the Photon comes in three basic varieties. The Standard photon (pho-n), the Overloaded photon (pho-o) and the Proximity photon (pho-x), we will cover each photon and it's uses separately.

You'll notice that I am showing the heavy weapons in the same format as used for the phasers, for a couple of reasons. Players seem to have a hard time relating how Electronic Warfare (EW) interacts with weapon systems. The general tables in the

SFC manual, tend to allow players to gloss over what these systems can really do. Now at a glance, you'll be able to see just how much an EW shift will have on the chances for you to hit with any weapon. I've also placed an average here, because a lot of the heavy weapons on the HUD will list an "average", though it is listed there as a whole number. The average isn't to be thought of as a true average, since at specific ranges the photon (and later the disruptor) does consistent damage if it hits, think of the average more of a quick way to gauge your success in using the weapon at a particular range.

The arming period for the photon torpedo is two weapon arming cycles. The pho-n requires two units of power for two arming cycles before it is ready to fire, and to hold the pho-n requires 1 unit of power. This means that between firings, you can for a short period of time be vulnerable to your opponent, but if you applied what we discussed in part I of this series, this really shouldn't be a problem for you. Since the Federation is the only playable race to use photons, and the standard phaser for Federation ships is the ph-1, this "pause" between firings really isn't as big an issue as some make it out to be.

As can be seen, the pho-n torpedo really begins to drop off in effectiveness beyond range 4. Being only 50% effective at ranges 5-8 and much worse after that. If your going to fire your photon torpedo beyond range 8, it is better to fire it as a proximity torpedo then a full strength torpedo. Something I want to make you aware of, is that for the Federation, there is

what is called the "Glory" zone. This is typically where the Federation reigns supreme on its ability to score damage against its opponent and typically not take any return fire in response, of if it does, it won't be an even exchange (favoring the Federation). This zone is range 4k. At this range your phaser I's (ref: phaser article last issue) combined with your photons can score significant damage on your opponent and you will typically be outside the range at which he can respond as effectively to you. Remember, even if you strike and "shock" a weapon system, it won't be able to fire back at you until you can extend the range even farther, reducing his response fire even more, by spreading it out over several range zones. Plus you'll be able to maneuver more than one shield on the opponent farther spreading the damage out. This is because the typical opponent faced by the Federation is the Klingon, Lyran and Romulan. These races (especially in the early years) rely on shorter ranged systems like the Ph-2, the ESG and Ph-3's. All of these weapon systems do less damage than their Federation equivalent inside the "glory" zone.

Overload Photon (pho-o)				
Range	0-1*	2	3-4	5-8
16%	16*	16	16	16
33%	16*	16	16	16
50%	16*	16	16	16
67%	16*	16	16	0
83%	16*	16	0	0
100%	16*	0	0	0
Avg.	16*	13.3	10.7	8

The Overloaded photon torpedo has the same weakness as the pho-n when it comes to it's ability to hit. It has a reasonable chance to hit out to range 4, but from 5-8 it only has a 50% chance to hit. Something to make note of, if you fire a photon torpedo at ranges 0-1, whether it is the standard or the overloaded one, it will cause feedback damage equal to 1/4 of the damage delivered. This means that a pho-n will deliver 2 points for each photon that hits and the pho-o will inflict 4 points for each photon that hits to the firing ship. This damage will be applied to the front shield.

Like its regular powered version, it to requires two arming cycles to arm, but the cost is much

higher. You need to spend four units of power for each of those arming cycles, before the pho-o is ready to fire and if you want to hold it until you're ready to fire, it will cost two additional units of power.

As can be seen, any form of EW applied against you will have very pronounced impact on your ability to hit with photons. Lets look at range 3-4, you typically have a 67% chance to hit, but a single EW shift reduces this to 50% and an EW shift of two would reduce it to 33%, and if your opponent managed to get an EW shift of 3, you're down to 16% chance to hit. So careful monitoring of the EW of your opponent is VERY important to make the photon work for you. The Glory zone is just as effective for the pho-o as it is for the standard photon, but if you want an excellent chance to hit with no chance of receiving feedback damage, then 2k is the killing zone for the pho-o.

A look at the proximity photon might at first glance seem like it's not worth it, since the damage it delivers to your opponent is half that of the standard photon torpedo. Consider though, if you compare that to the standard photons ability to hit, you'll see that in overall damage potential the pho-x is the superior weapon from range 9-30 and has the added benefit of being able to hit out as far as 55k with a 50% chance to hit. Just like the other photon types, EW will have an impact on the ability of the proximity photon to land on target. If you're getting the idea that EW is a big deal with photons your absolutely correct and I can't emphasize enough it's importance and impact on successful use of the photon torpedo. Currently in SFC, there is NO other long range weapon (read heavy weapon) that has the range or hitting power of the proximity photon torpedo, use that to your advantage!

Proximity Photon (pho-x)				
Range	0-8	9-12	13-30	31-55
16%	0	4	4	4
33%	0	4	4	4
50%	0	4	4	4
67%	0	4	4	0
83%	0	4	0	0
100%	0	0	0	0
Avg.	N/A	3.3	2.7	2

Something very possible that is done by the most experienced players of the Federation is what I like to call the Photon dance. This is a technique not unlike the Klingon "saber dance". Basically you stand off at range and engage your opponent from range 9-30 and use your pho-x to whittle away your opponents shields (typically their front shield) before closing the

System Breakdown: Heavy Weapons (pt 1)

By Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

range and destroying your opponent. If you are in one of the more nimble Federation ships, the 9-12k range is extremely potent due to the proximities ability to hit. If your in a less nimble ship or your opponent is maintaining a higher speed, then the 13-30k range is a better choice. Even out to range 55k is acceptable if your feeling adventurous since you have a 50% chance to hit at this range.

Normal Disruptors (disp[1-4])								
Range	0*	1	2	3-4	5-15	16-22	23-30	31-40
16%	5*	5	4	4	3	2	2	1
33%	5*	5	4	4	3	2	2	1
50%	5*	5	4	4	3	2	2	1
67%	5*	5	4	4	3	2	0	0
83%	5*	5	4	0	0	0	0	0
100%	5*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avg.	5*	4.2	3.3	2.7	2.0	1.3	1	.5

Disruptors

The next most known heavy weapon and the typical opposite member to the photon is the disruptor. Disruptors are also the most commonly used heavy weapon in SFC, being the primary heavy weapon for the Klingons and Lyrans (and in SFCv2 the Mirak). Disruptors come in 4 types. I've

color coded the table below so you can easily see the limits of each type of disruptor. The colors correlate as follows:

- ◆ Disruptor type 1 (dis1)
- ◆ Disruptor type 2 (dis2)
- ◆ Disruptor type 3 (dis3)
- ◆ Disruptor type 4 (dis4)

The dis1 is a smaller disruptor and is typically on smaller class ships like the Klingon E4 or Lyran Frigate. As can be seen it has a maximum range of 15k. The dis2 is for slightly larger ships, or lesser ships of the line, like the Klingon F5 and early model D6's, as well as the Lyran DD's and early CL's. The dis3 is considered the standard disruptor and the most commonly used disruptor on cruisers of the races. Klingon D7's and Lyran CA's typically carry this type. Dis4's are for the massive Dreadnoughts and Battleships, and later when the Heavy BattleCruiser class was developed it was also used on them.

The standard armed disruptor arms in half the time the photon torpedo does, taking only a single arming cycle for a cost of two power. It does however (dependant on range) half or less damage as the photon torpedo (except at very close range). Out to range four, if it can fire every arming cycle it can do equivalent damage to the photon torpedo. Beyond this range it typically does much less damage at a greater chance to hit by comparison. As can be seen by comparing the tables, the disruptor has a better chance to hit against all but the proximity torpedo. What isn't commonly known is that the disruptor like the photon is susceptible EW just as easily as the photon torpedo.

Lets look at the 3-4 range just like we did with the photon torpedo. Without any EW shift, the disruptor hits 67% of the time, a single EW shift will reduce this to 50%, an EW shift of two will reduce it to 33% and if they manage to gain a 3 shift, your down to 16%. So like the photon, pay attention to the EW of your opponent as it will have a profound effect on how successful the disruptor will be in combat.

A common tactic performed by the users of disruptors (especially among Klingon players) is the Saber dance. If you'll examine the damage table for the disruptor you can see that it has a pretty good chance to hit from range 5-22. The saber dance is typically from range 9-22, since this lets you engage an opponent outside of their overloaded weapons range, while delivering a fair amount of damage. This allows you to typically use your superior chances to hit your opponent and cause his shields to weaken before you close and destroy him. A difference veterans of SFB will notice now though is that the disruptor (which used to excel at the "distance" fighting, is now inferior to the photon torpedo, most notably the proximity photon. So some caution will need to be exercised when engaging a photon armed opponent.

Overload Disruptor (disp-o)				
Range	0*	1	2-4	5-8
16%	10*	10	8	6
33%	10*	10	8	6
50%	10*	10	8	6
67%	10*	10	8	6
83%	10*	10	8	6
100%	10*	0	0	0
Avg.	10*	8.3	6.7	5

The Overloaded disruptor does not have a type distinction since all types of disruptors can be overloaded and have the same range limitations. One thing I want to bring up is that, at point blank ranges (range 0), the disruptor will cause feedback damage like the photon torpedo equal to 1/4 the damage it can deliver. One thing you should notice right away is that although the overloaded disruptor cannot match the power of the photon, it has a MUCH better chance of hitting. At range 8k, where the pho-o and pho-n only have a 50% chance to hit, the disruptor has an 83% chance to hit. Something to keep in mind. If your a master of the saber dance right at the 9k barrier, and you occasionally dip into the 8k range, and you can plant a pretty solid hit with your disruptors. So we may find that the saber dance becomes a much "Finer blade edge dance" then what many are used to in SFB. Don't be fooled by your increased chances to hit overloaded though, EW still plays a LARGE role in the success of your disruptor use.

Normal Fusion Beam						
Range	0*	1	2	3-10	11-15	16-24
16%	13	8	6	4	3	2
33%	11	8	5	3	2	1
50%	10	7	4	2	1	0
67%	9	6	3	1	1	0
83%	8	5	3	1	0	0
100%	8	4	2	0	0	0
Avg.	9.8	6.3	3.8	1.8	1.2	0.2

Fusion Beams

A rather unique heavy weapon is the Hydran Fusion beam. Many consider it to be the Gatlin phaser of heavy weapons in that to many people's perception it is an extremely potent short ranged heavy weapon. Although this is true when compared to the Photon, Disruptor and Hellbore, it has a reach much longer then many fail to recognize.

The standard or normally armed fusion beam can be thought of as a expensive phaser 1, let me explain what I mean by that. If you compare the damage done by the ph-1 vs the damage done by the Fus, you'll see that the fusion really matches or excels what the ph-1 can do except for a very narrow range corridor. From the range of 3-5 the fusion doesn't match what a ph-1 can do, but from 6-10 it matches what the ph-1 can do at range 6-8, and as you can see even does better out to range 10. This weapon though takes more power to charge then the ph-1 requiring two energy points in a single arming cycle before it's capable of firing, costing two points to hold.

At point blank ranges, it is far superior to the ph-1, falling between the power of the ph-1 and the ph-4. Many consider firing the Fus beyond range 2k to be foolish, and the truth is, firing at a target (unless you just can't pass up the shot) in that narrow corridor of 3-5 isn't really as useful as the ph-1 but still superior to the ph-2. But firing beyond that range (if you treat it like a phaser) has potentially the same ability for causing damage as the ph-1 would do.

So don't be afraid to use those fusion beams beyond range 2, as you really prevent yourself from using this weapons system to it's full potential. Even at ranges out to 15k it is valuable, especially if you have an opponent showing you a down shield.

Overloading the Fusion comes in two varieties. If the player considers this to be an expensive way to overload a phaser-1 they then have the ability to do some extra damage from 6-8k vs the ph-1 and inside of range 2k can deliver some very potent damage. Be aware that EW has an effect on your Fus use, but it does not have the effect that it does on the photon or disruptor. Keep it monitored, and counter if you can, but if your firing the fusion at close range it's not as much of a deterrent as you would think.

Overload Fusion Beam				
Range	0*	1	2	3-8
16%	19	12	9	6
33%	16	12	7	4
50%	15	10	6	3
67%	13	9	4	1
83%	12	7	4	1
100%	12	6	3	0
Avg.	14.5	9.3	5.5	2.5

System Breakdown: Heavy Weapons (pt 1)

By Dennis "SFCSHADOW" Greene

Suicide Overload Fusion				
Range	0*	1	2	3-8
16%	26	16	12	8
33%	22	16	10	6
50%	20	14	8	4
67%	18	12	6	2
83%	16	10	6	2
100%	16	8	4	0
Avg.	19.7	12.7	7.7	3.7

This is the ultimate in overloading your fusion beam, it does however come with a very stiff penalty or price, in that it will destroy the weapon system and cause additional damage to one other internal system. The suicide overloaded fusion is aptly named, as to use it in this way is kill the weapon. Use this option to guarantee a kill or at the very least, crippling your opponent. This is not my favorite use for this weapon system as I treat it like a different kind of ph-1 and I want as many weapons to fire at my opponents as possible.

Next issue we'll continue this series with the rest of the heavy weapons and I'll give some weapon drill exercises to help you learn the true power of what a heavy weapon is capable of doing.

SFCC Status Report

By Dennis "SFCSHADOW" Greene

Game Status Report 1.4b

The 1.4b beta game cycle has ended. The experiment to see if the players themselves could control the game failed. Shortly afterwards, due to alot of bickering among themselves and the "leaders", many players walked out of the game, including 83% of the leaders themselves. Unfortunately, this stress test proved that unless the players are already their own pre-established group (fleet) they do not work well together at least on a scale good enough for such a large game. Beta cycle 1.4b had 72 players but they were from all manner of fleets and there was very little cooperation within their own "group" let alone with other groups (races).

Since the stress test failed and the beta had been no longer giving useful data the cycle was discontinued and the staff at SFCC decided what they would do. It was determined that a smaller group of player numbers, no more then 18 or so, would probably work well. Tests in parallel cycles (like the PBEM game and a local test on a LAN), showed that smaller groups got along much better and had a much better time. They tended to play the game and worked out any differences quickly and without prejudice. Also considered was the thought of approaching already established groups (fleets) who already worked well together and with others and test the system that way. This would truly be a stress test as the campaign could in essence support 200-300 players, managed through a few leaders they themselves voted for and trusted. It followed that if SFCC approached select groups and had their leader and executive leader manage the campaign, scheduled the battles and got them resolved that the game would go more smoothly.

So with a brand new look for SFCC on the web, a new beta cycle was started to test a more limited group of 18 players (3 players for each race) and work begun on the selection for a "fleet" campaign to be tested in a few more weeks.

Game Status Report 1.4c

The players were selected for the closed testing of 1.4c and the new website was put up to replace the old site. This new look will allow for greater expandability in preparation for managing several ongoing campaigns at once. Plenty of time was given to all the testers to review and suggest changes to the rules and game play has now started. Turn one is almost complete as of this writing and everyone involved is very excited and look-

ing forward to having a good time. Already with lesser players involved it is much easier to schedule and encourage practice.

A new script which will enhance game play many, many fold was also launched for testing for this cycle. This script will allow for ships to fight as themselves in a damaged state. Below is a summary of what the Battle Damage script will allow:

The damage ranges from None, Light, Moderate, Heavy, and Severe.

None - Obvious, this ship isn't damaged (this is important if you are commanding several ships and 1 or more of them are not damaged).

Light (6%-10%) - This is between rounds combat only! Meaning if your ship is lightly damaged and will fight again that turn, this choice is made. Light damage does not carry over into a campaign turn. Your crew is expected to be able to make minor repairs to itself on it's own during a campaign turn. This choice will only be used within a single turn.

Moderate (11%-20%) - This is when your ship is damaged well, but not to excessively. This damage carries over into a campaign turn as damaged (counter flipped over).

Heavy (21-40%) - This is a damage state worse then Moderate, but not crippled. This is like the Light damage. Used only within a combat turn. If your ship is Heavily damaged, it is treated as damaged in the campaign (counter flipped over). Over time, your crew can repair it's ship from Heavy to Moderate damage on it's own within a Campaign turn.

Severe (41%-65%) - This is a crippled state. Your ship will be severely damaged and unless given time to repair, not very combat worthy. It will be treated as crippled and carried over in a campaign turn.

The interviews for select fleets participating in a larger beta cycle has started and by next issue of HF, it is hoped that, that beta cycle will be the last and final test. We honestly feel that that cycle will turn into a full game and serve as a model for future "large" games beginning sometime in August/September. We're getting very close to being able to release this game system supported by SFCC! Already many "impatient" groups (we don't blame any of them), have approached SFCC and asked to host their own private games, using our systems core and gone on played their own games, modifying the system as they felt it would be beneficial for them. The best of these will be invited by SFCC to be a member of SFCC and have their games posted, reported on and updated on SFCC's site!



<http://sfcccampaign.tripod.com>

Federation Basic Tactics

Dennis "SFShadow" Greene

Many feel that Federation ships are the best and/or the worse ships in the game. The key is energy management, electronic warfare, proper use of phasers and photon torpedo tactics. If you don't pay attention to just one of these, proud non-federation warriors will celebrate victory over your radiated ashes.

I will attempt to shed some light on the power of the Federation ships and some tactics that may provide the player for Federation ships some focus for when they engage others while piloting these fearsome ships. I've decided to break down this thesis series into two parts, the basics outlined in this piece and a more advanced article for next issue. The advanced part will deal with team play, and some fearsome tactics to put the fear of the Federation into the hearts of your opponents. Until then, this article and those written before it, should give you a very good solid grounding in performing your duties as a Federation Captain.

Photon Torpedo Range Considerations:

Photons are sensitive to range. Always fire standard and overload photons inside of range 4. Range 5-8 is an even shot (given no EW shift). Beyond range 8, only fire proxies. For me personally I find range 2 shots to be best because they have an 83% hit, and no feedback damage. But if you want to have an excellent chance to fire and not receive counter fire, then range 4 is best.

Firing at range 4 is known as firing in the Glory Zone, where photons and phasers typically can fire and damage an opponent with less chance of receiving equal damage and they get to start rearming sooner for the next "round".

The no man's land range for photons is range 9-15. This is because standard torpedoes have horrible to hit, and the range is too close for proxies to be practical (the enemy will be able to overrun you while you reload). Unless you are very skilled, and can manage your speed with skill, then this range can be extremely effective to fight in. It used to be that disruptors dominated this middle range over all other direct-fire weapons, because of their damage potential and to hit chances. But now with the increased chances to hit given to the proximity photon, this is really no longer true. Either fight close up or far away with photons is the standard rule, skilled players though will see that the middle range can now be a potent place for them to fight in.

Electronic warfare is the bane of the photon. More than any other weapon besides the Disruptor, it is susceptible to an ECM negative shift. Does it appear that the enemy disruptors always hit, and your photons always miss? Chances are, the opponent has at least single point of ECM charged, making your 50% shot (range 5-8) a 33% shot. ALWAYS check the ECM/ECCM shift before firing photons.

Unless desperate (or you have a shot into a down shield), don't fire against an ECM shift. Check the ECM panel a little bit before you fire, and make adjustments to your ECCM ahead of time. Having a point of ECCM advantage over your opponent is one way to counter a case where the enemy tries to sneak some battery power into ECM before your shot. Running the game at a lower speed (1-3) is helpful because ECM power changes are slow enough to react to. This is extremely useful while playing solo so that you can get used to the patterns and methods of useful Photon control. When playing online, try playing at speed 4.

Phasers are there for a reason, use them:

One of the very nice Federation advantages is their advantage in phasers. Typically the Federation player enjoys the employment of Phaser-1's. Outside of Bases type 4 Phaser, these are the most powerful weapons available to a player and Federation ships carries the Phaser-1's as their primary phaser. For power to damage ratio there are no other weapons a starship captain has at his disposal more powerful.

Within range 5, with no EM considerations, they never miss and out to range 8 you stand an excellent chance of doing some damage. Even out to range 15 you have a 50-50 chance to do some damage to your opponent.

Typically Federation ships carry phaser bank pairings. These weapon arcs are setup so that directly forward and directly to the rear most if not all of these phasers can fire. To the either side, you can expect 67% of your phasers to be available to you.

Take advantage of your phasers, you can fire them every turn, so do so.

I'm not suggesting you just fire willy nilly, but I am suggesting you fire them as often as possible, especially on already damaged shields.

As a matter of fact, you should be fighting your Federation ships with phasers topmost in your mind and not photons. They have the greatest flexibility and will cause more damage on average then your photons anyway. If you base your movements and tactics on maximizing your phaser advantage, you'll find you'll win more often then if you base your tactics on photon use. Use those photons as a supplemental weapon for your phasers. On average your only going to get a photon shot off every 3-4 turns anyway, unless you do some pretty radical moves (like HET's) which are only good for a very finite period of time or uses.

Opening Moves

One method is to overload for your first shot. When a battle begins, keep your speed low, maybe even turn away from the enemy until your photons are ready.

Another method is to start off with proximity photons and try to maintain the distance between you and your opponent. This requires that you have a higher speed and perform what is termed the Photon Dance.

Proxies are against bases or at extreme long range against a fleeing target, of which they are the best in the game.

After your first alpha strike, it is usually best to load for standard torpedoes because of the energy requirements. Try to make this first shot count. If you can get internal damage on your enemy on the first shot, then you gain the tactical advantage.

There are two thoughts here

- ◆ Fire your photons down his throat and nail that front shield of his, or
- ◆ Save them for a side or even a rear shield. Which you choose is based on your own personal tastes.

The problem with overloading is you're usually starving for energy and aren't moving to terribly fast. If the opponent gets behind you, he'll have an easy time of staying with you. If they stay fast, you'll have an easier time of facing them.

Another method is to arm proxies for your first shot, fire them, then load normal photons and fire them as you "overrun". When I say overrun, I'm talking within 2-4 for range, that first initial pass that 90% of the people online try to go for.

Still another method is to arm standard photons and use the extra energy in ECCM to ensure your photons have at least the non-ECM modified to hit. Holding overloaded photons costs 2 energy per torpedo. By keeping it to standard torpedo's you free up to 4 energy (standard photons only cost 1 unit of energy per torpedo to hold). Any of these methods are acceptable for your opening moves, which you use is based on your personal preferences or style.

Scotty More Power!

Watching your power management in any ship is important, but for the Federation player it is critical. Federation ships require more energy management than any other race, except perhaps the Lyrans, the Earlier Romulans or Hydrans, for which I'd say there are nearly equal. For example: you are at speed 5 and want to go speed 20 in you shiny Heavy Cruiser, and arm your photons. Don't just hit 20 on the movement slider! That sucks up 20 points of energy immediately but you don't get up to speed 20 for quite a while. Instead, choose speed 10, wait until you reach it, then speed 15, then speed 20. All the while, the extra energy is being applied to your photons.

This is of course if you have the luxury, and you don't need that "emergency" speed, then by all mean, put the pedal to the metal.

Consider turning things off, or not using some equipment not needed any longer. For example: you have two photon hard points, each with two photon torpedo launchers. Turn one off! Let all available energy go towards one then when it's finished, turn the other one on. ECCM does not do you any good for your photons while they are being charged, dump it. Not near the enemy, but you have your tractor beam charged then turn it off. Remember to prioritize your energy usage.

Federation Basic Tactics

Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

Scotty More Speed!

A key weakness that many see in the Federation ships is lack of speed (while arming photons, especially) and horrible turn rate. Most enemy ships will typically try to close, exchange alpha strikes, then use their superior turn mode to keep the range close (0-3) to pound with the weapons at their disposal. As Federation, you must not get into a turning game with a Klingon, Lyran and Orion. Instead, after exchanging shots, speed up and head directly away from the enemy. After you get outside overload range, then slow down to apply more power to the photons. Begin your turn when your photons are about 75% loaded. This turning point is also a great time to get ready any special items you may have, like scatterpacks, or lay a mine behind you. A scatterpack will keep your enemy busy and suck up phaser fire (if the enemy is AI controlled, you have an excellent chance of causing serious damage). A mine will force your opponent to turn or take the damage.

Scotty, I need shields, NOW!

Federation ships must protect their front shield. Photons are generally FA weapons only, and because the Federation player does not usually have the speed advantage, he usually has to make a direct approach. The result is that the front shield of the Fed takes a pounding. When the Fed loses his front shield, he had better look for the exit because he will be easier to deal with.

A good practice if you have the energy, is to bolster the front shield with

specific shield reinforcement. Even a few points here may be the difference between being totally vulnerable and being able to deflect incoming damage. Try to preserve your front shield whenever possible.

Managing your ECM so you can reduce the amount of incoming damage is also a good idea if you have the power to spare, and surprisingly if you manage your ship well, this isn't hard to come by. It just takes practice and patience.

The Oblique approach is also a good method of saving that front shield, remember FA doesn't mean directly in front of you, it's a 60° arc in front of your ship. Imagine an invisible line drawn from the center of your ship to the middle of your #6 and #2 shield, you can fire photons here too and use those other shields to take hits on.

Summary

A Federation ship in the hands of a good captain is one of the most fearsome weapons in the galaxy. It is capable of taking on any other race in the game. In the hands of someone who doesn't know how to use them, then the Federation ship makes good space dust and its crew will spend a long time in enemy prisons. In our next issue, we'll provide an "Advanced" thesis on how to make players fear the Federation! Be sure to read and apply the other articles dealing with tactics that we provide as this can only help your game as well. Look at last issues article on weapon systems and practice those phaser drills, and learn the real power of the Federation!

Feature Ship: Federation Heavy Cruiser

Salvatore "OScotty0" Grasso & Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

Of all the races and all the ships we've done and will do in the future in our feature ship section, the Federation and especially their Heavy Cruisers (and all their variants) are probably the most maligned of any. The Federation is often the most talked about, made fun of and complained about race of any within SFC. Many like to point out what they perceive as the Federation Heavy Cruisers faults and hardly make an effort to see its strengths. Hopefully this article and others presented in Hailing Frequencies will help set the record straight and give the Federation and their stable of ships the prominence and credit they deserve. Lets begin by examining the Heavy Cruiser.



Overview of the F-CA

BPV: 128

Weapons: 4 Photons launchers, 6 Phaser 1's

Total Power: 34

Shuttles: 4 Admin, 2 suicide, 2 sensor decoys (costing additional bpv)

Before we get into the nitty gritty of the Heavy Cruiser, one thing I would like to recommend right from the beginning if you want to get the most out of playing the

Federation, play at a game speed of 4 or 5 (though I highly recommend speed 4). The reason for this is that the Federation more than any other race has to manage their energy resources exceedingly well to do well.

Lets examine that for a moment. Some races do better in a quicker game and other races do well when you slow the game down (despite all the groaning heard in the background). Why is that?

How Game Speed Can Make the Difference

The reason is actually very simple. Races like Plasma users for example, get their weapons systems online faster (faster charging of weapon) and can therefore place and fire with much greater ease. Those races are also what the veteran players refer to as shoot and forget races. They don't have

much depth (when compared to more complex races like the Federation, Lyran and Hydran). So at faster speeds these races excel because there is really so little to manage for them. You basically only need to worry about 2-4 main systems and in quicker games this is easier to keep on top of. For this reason, average players do much better and the learning curve is easier.

But a complex race like the Federation, where careful management of ship speed, vs EW, vs weapon status, vs, range/distance, vs turn radius, vs shield management and other essential systems need to be orchestrated to such a degree, as to approach the one man band doing it all. If you don't believe me, try this simple scenario (and I think many will agree):

Play the game at speed 4 for the Klingons or Romulan or Gorn. You might feel that the game is some what "dull" and slow, you tend to get impatient. The reason? Your not doing much but moving around and "WAITING" for your weapons to cycle or "hit" etc, you're also not using these races to their full potential because of the habit of letting speed of the game get you through to the end. Now play the same game as Federation, using what we describe here and the other articles we've been doing in Hailing Frequencies and you'll find that that same game at speed 4 is FULL of activity and you're not bored at all, but still frantically manipulating something on your ship. You hardly notice the difference in game speed, you're just able to do more in it.

Part of the problem for Federation players, besides the rather daunting learning curve is that they try to play and master the game at speeds that are really just to fast for them. The difference between speed 4 and speed 7 is just 15 seconds, but that 15 seconds can make a big difference in the way you play the Federation. Once you've built up your skills, then try playing it at the faster speeds. Just going from Speed 4 to Speed 5 is a 10 second difference. The difference between speed 5 and 7 has only 5 seconds separating them. So, consider "slowing" it down to give you the appreciation of what the Federation can do, it will make a BIG impact on how you do playing them.

Tactical Considerations

The tactics for a Federation heavy cruiser involve using all systems on the ship, from the weapons to tractors and transporters. Knowing when to run, stand or fight is essential with this ship because your resources are limited and you cannot perform all functions simultaneously. First lets go over energy allocation for the F-CA. Note the values below do not repre-

Feature Ship: Federation Heavy Cruiser

Salvatore "OScotty0" Grasso & Dennis "SFCSHadow" Greene

sent all the systems that can be used on a F-CA.

- Total Power:** 34
- Charged Photons (standard):** 8
- Hold Cost (Standard):** 4
- Charged Photons (overload):** 16
- Hold Cost (overload):** 8
- Charge Phasers:** 6
- Movement Cost:** 1/unit of movement
- Def Tractors charged: 2
- Main Tractor Beam charged:** 1-16 (dependent on strength)
- ECM/ECCM:** 1-6
- Misc Ship Consumption:** 4.5

From the above values it can be seen that the F-CA cannot move at speed

Standard Photon (pho-n)						
Range	0-1*	2	3-4	5-8	9-12	13-30
16%	8*	8	8	8	8	8
33%	8*	8	8	8	8	0
50%	8*	8	8	8	0	0
67%	8*	8	8	0	0	0
83%	8*	8	0	0	0	0
100%	8*	0	0	0	0	0
Avg.	8*	6.7	5.3	4	2.7	1.3

31 with its defensive tractors charged and holding overloaded photons. So one must keep in mind the ships limitations when devising strategies for this ship.

Now lets talk about the Federation heavy weapon, the Photon Torpedo. At close range it is a devastating weapon since 4 overloaded photons can cause 64 point of damage (assuming they all hit). But knowing when and at what distance to fire these weapons is critical to using them. Let us look at the Weapon Damage Table for Photons.

As you can see from the tables you have the same chance to hit between ranges 0-8 however, using the overloads gets you twice the damage as the standard load costing you twice the power.

Overload Photon (pho-o)				
Range	0-1*	2	3-4	5-8
16%	16*	16	16	16
33%	16*	16	16	16
50%	16*	16	16	16
67%	16*	16	16	0
83%	16*	16	0	0
100%	16*	0	0	0
Avg.	16*	13.3	10.7	8

So how do you decide, well you have to adjust your speed in response to your opponent. If the opposing ship is moving at slow to moderate speeds go with the overloads, and if the opposing ship is moving at higher speeds use the standard loads. Whatever you do decide on it before hand, don't wait until your opponent eliminates your options to decide.

When chasing your opponent at a slow speed then set your photons to proximity so you can fire at a safe distance and still have a good chance to hit as seen from the table below.

This can be especially useful when more than one Federation ship is in play on the same team. Seeing 16 proximity photons coming your way is an impressive, if not frightful sight.

Proximity Photon (pho-x)				
Range	0-8	9-12	13-30	31-55
16%	0	4	4	4
33%	0	4	4	4
50%	0	4	4	4
67%	0	4	4	0
83%	0	4	0	0
100%	0	0	0	0
Avg.	N/A	3.3	2.7	2

With careful manipulation of your speed and EW, you can keep your speed up to reasonable levels and use the excellent hitting properties of the Proximity Photon to perform the "Photon Dance". (See *Article on Weapons Breakdown: Part II*).

Now let us continue with the real primary weapon on Federation ships, especially the Heavy Cruiser, the Phaser 1.

Phaser 1's are one of the most powerful phasers in the game, and you have six of them on the F-CA. They do the greatest damage, have better range, and fire every turn. Although you can only fire all its phasers to the forward arcs, they can be quiet versatile with four of the six phasers able to fire directly behind the rear of the ship. With the ability to fire every turn this

weapon gives you the most bang for your buck. Use them after your photons knock down or heavily damage a shield since even at range 4 they can do a great deal of damage. Especially for the F-CA, range four is the "Glory" zone

Phaser, Type-1 (Ph-1)												
Range	0	1	2	3	4	5	6-8	9-15	16-25	26-50	51-75	
16%	9	8	7	6	5	5	4	3	2	1	1	
33%	8	7	6	5	5	4	3	2	1	1	0	
50%	7	5	5	4	4	4	3	1	0	0	0	
67%	6	4	4	4	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	
83%	5	4	4	4	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	
100%	4	4	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	
Avg.	6.5	5.3	4.8	4.3	3.8	3.5	2.2	1	.5	.3	.2	

for it. If you look at the above tables for the photons and Phaser 1, you'll see that at range 4, you can deliver a truly impressive amount of damage and for most opponents be outside of their ability to

return the favor.

Also consider turning off your photons to chase your opponent down using your phasers to do damage. Since your opponent can't charge his weapons and move at top speed the 8 power you use to charge the standard photons can go into recharging phasers, ECM, or additional power speed.

Playing the F-CA

Vs Klingon players try too keep your speed around 10-14 with overloaded photons, ECM, and reinforcement of the front shield. This forces the Klingon player to get in close where your photons can do their damage. Use your tractors to catch the incoming missiles so that your phasers can be used on your opponent. Be aware however that it will be one turn before you can fire your phasers to destroy the missiles. One method to remove slower missiles after tractoring them is to turn away from the missiles, then increase your speed such that it is greater than the tractorred missiles. Then turn off the tractors, get some distance and drop a mine or simply out run the missiles until they run out of fuel. So at a speed of 14 you can arm standard photons charge phasers and still have 1 point of power for ECM. Once the missiles are dealt and phasers charged you could use the power to overload the photons, or increase ECM/ECCM.

If the Klingon attacks from med range and does not close, then use proximity photons to damage his shields. Keep the phasers handy for when he gets into close range. If you have a wingman, using a combination where one of you has overloaded photons and the other has proximity photons, and just swap roles so you can keep a constant barrage of photons on them and if they close, you always have a "gift" waiting for them. This combination works well regardless of any race you may be fighting against.

Vs a Gorn/ Rom player you must keep your speed up! You have a limited number of sensor decoys available to you so you must pick your moments to use them, and not waste them indiscriminately. Do not let your opponent get into tractor range loaded with plasma or else your opponent will tractor then fire their plasma and you will not be able to launch your sensor decoys. If you have the energy to spare, a good counter to this is to have counter-tractor powered up. Firing your overloaded photons at range 4 will give you a good chance to hit and still give you time to react to return plasma fire. One tactic I sometimes use is moving my ship at speed 3 and launching the sensor decoy early on. Your opponent will not see it (due to being launched around range 12 or so) and will be in shock when their plasma goes sailing off after the decoy. This is a tricky move though, so be careful about using it. It's better to just avoid the plasma if you can arrange for it, and faster speed is usually a better choice.

Vs a Hydran player keep a tractor beam ready to keep him out of point blank range, save your phasers for the fighters and keep your ECM up. If you break off from the mothership but are being chased by it or chasing fighters, tractor a fighter group and use a mine to destroy it by forcing it into the mine. The most important thing is to keep out of range 1 or range 0 this reduces the damage from fusion considerably. Try to maintain a range of 4-5 to keep the damage you do to a maximum while keeping the damage done by your opponent to a minimum. If you have the opportunity to fire at the fighters from long range use the photons on proximity this may take out 1 or 2 fighters. Once the fighters are gone their launching ship should be easily dispatched.

Feature Ship: Federation Heavy Cruiser

Salvatore "OScotty0" Grasso & Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

Vs a Lyran I try to stay at range 4.99k, staying out of range of the ESG's and fire overloaded photons at range 4-4.99 since maximum ESG range is 3.99. If you manage to stun his ESG's then use your hit and runs to take them out. Otherwise do not attempt it or else you may get caught with your shield down when your opponent fires his ESG. Once you get his ESG it will be easier to destroy the ship.

Vs another Fed player, fire at range 4 instead of trying to close in to point blank range. This will give you a good chance to hit and firing first lets you recharge first. This will let you get into a better position for your second shot since you will be able to fire before your opponent. If you have a sensor decoy available you can use its 6 ECM to help you out. If you fire first launch the sensor decoy, this will give you some protection against his weapons but be sure to keep your speed at or below 3 so as not to invoke an Emergency Deceleration. This will keep you mobile while giving you protection. You could also launch the sensor decoy first and wait for your opponent to attack but this is a bit more risky. However you will be able to use your hit and run without worrying about getting hit through an open shield. Remember the weakest point on a F-CA is the rear sides, it has the fewest number of weapons that can bear to those positions so learn to protect them and exploit them.

Bloody Claws

Martin "ASC-Saurian" Shaffer



Junior Commander Massalik, of the Gorn Confederation Navy, gave his full attention to the GCS Raptor's tactical display. The fleet destroyer and her crew had been waiting just inside the edge of a thick asteroid belt for two hours at battle stations, while a crippled freighter at the edge of the belt broadcast a distress call. Two Orion raiders had been operating in this area for a month now and were taking a heavy toll on ship-

ping. Unfortunately, due to the tension along the Romulan border, the only ships available for escort were old police frigates... until now. Fresh out of dry dock, the Fleet Destroyer Raptor had just finished her shake down cruise when the Fleet Commander dispatched GCS Raptor and her new Commander, Junior Commander Massalik, to bloody their claws on the Orion carrion eaters. The plan was simple; a Q-ship would fake a massive engine failure and broadcast a distress call in the vicinity of the latest pirate operations. Meanwhile the Raptor would wait in the asteroid belt for the Pirates to take the bait. It was the oldest trick in the book, but then, there was a reason it was still in the book.

"Commander, I have two unidentified ships closing fast on the Clan Provider at maximum sensor range," reported Junior Lieutenant Rakalth, the sensor operator. Massalik's eyes didn't leave the tactical display as he replied, "Very well Rakalth, maintain passive scan only. Let the carrion eaters come closer, we will stalk them and pounce once they are preoccupied with the Clan Provider." The bridge crew grew more excited, their jaws opening and closing, displaying wicked serrated teeth, like the ancient Terran dinosaurs they were often compared with. As the two unidentified ships closed the range, the scanners positively identified them as the Orion pirate vessels which had been hunting in this area for the past month.

Junior Commander Massalik's low growl rumbled with satisfaction deep in his chest. One way or another the waiting would soon be over. "Weapons officer, bring all weapons online and set the Plasma G in enveloping mode and put the type three phasers on point defense. Science officer, bring the ECM up to maximum on my command and reinforce all shields. Helm, standby to accelerate out of the asteroid field, once clear bring speed up to 20." The crew prepared their consoles rapidly and soon reported ready as Massalik watched the two pirates line up for their attack on the Q-Ship.

"Commander they have begun their attack on the Clan Provider and she has dropped the pretense of damage and is attempting to combat the pirates now sir," reported Rakalth. "Ensign Krakan, bring us out now, close on the Clan

General Tactics

One interesting tactic I use is to arm the probe as a weapon at the beginning of the game and use it to destroy enemy sensor decoys, scatterpacks, or suicide shuttle. You have to be quick with the targeting key and remember that your hit and run selections will be erased when switching targets. Another use you can get from a sensor decoy is after laying a mine or two on your opponent but his speed precludes setting the mines off. Just point your tail at him at speed 3 and launch your sensor decoy. It will set off the mine your opponent is sitting on, you can also use a suicide shuttle for this but it's not worth it unless the mine happens to be a NSM.

In conclusion, the Federation Heavy Cruiser is the good all round ship with its one two punch and good shielding. You can pepper your opponent from a distance or pummel your opponent at close range with overloads. It takes patience to play the federation but with determination, some luck and skill you will give your opponent a good battle.

Provider. Science officer Rakalth fire probes at both ships. Engineer, bring defensive tractor beams online." Massalik's plan was working, the carrion eating Orions were too involved trying to capture what they thought was a simple freighter to see the Raptor approaching from her hiding place in the asteroid belt, until now. "Commander, they have just scanned us. One enemy ship has fired a probe at us sir. Our own probe data has returned. The Orions are both PR class frigates. Designating the closest as target Alpha. It is equipped with a drone launcher and phasers. Designating the second target Bravo. Bravo has a photon torpedo launcher in addition to its phaser array."

Very well Junior Lieutenant Rakalth. Senior Lieutenant Slathat, target Alpha first, it is the greater threat. Rakalth bring the ECM up now, that will negate the photons unless we get too close." Massalik depressed an intercom button on his command chair, "Master Sergeant Grakon, prepare your marines for a hit and run raid. I want you to take out that drone launcher."

"As you command!" Grakon hissed. Massalik knew that Grakon would give the Orions something to worry about. Grakon was the best Gorn Marine to come out of the academy for generations, she was also a member of the Shadow Guardians. The Raptor closed quickly, soon coming into close torpedo range. Raptor's point defense phasers easily swatted away the Orion's first drone launch. Massalik leaned forward staring intently at the view screen, like the ancient predators his race evolved from, gauging his timing perfectly. "Fire one pseudo torpedo at the drone ship for his point defense followed by a full torpedo strike, first the type G enveloping then both type F torpedoes...NOW!"

The Orion fired uselessly into the decoy, her computer controlled defenses responding automatically before the ship's weapon operators could override them. The Raptor's type one phasers then fired, slicing through the drone ship's shields, leaving her defenseless as the Raptor's torpedoes smashed into her hull. Atmosphere could be seen streaming from the stricken ship, while she reeled away, slowing rapidly as her engines lost most of their power. "Sir, the drone launcher is destroyed and the boarding party has returned safely", came the voice of Sergeant Grakon. "Now for your hunting mate" thought Massalik, as he bared his huge ripping teeth in a feral grin. "Helm slow to speed 5 while rearming torpedoes, take us in next to the Clan Provider so the carrion eater will think twice about coming in close to her. "Commander, we are receiving a communication from the Clan Provider", stated Ensign Ssslatak, the ship's communications officer. "They report Orion boarding parties on the ship in force sir and don't know how long they can hold out," she continued. "Grakon, beam over to the Clan Provider and reinforce them. Ensign Krakan, take us past the Clan Provider's down shield. No sense in having them lower a fresh shield for the Orions." the Helmsman

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nodded affirmative as his clawed fingers danced over his console.

Massalik watched as the second Orion vessel turned to make another attack run while his torpedoes were still arming. "Weapons, download the type G enveloping to a regular torpedo halfway through the arming cycle and target the Orion at range 5. We will at least have one torpedo waiting for him." The Orion closed fast, firing his photon torpedo which whipped past the Raptor, fooled by her Electronic Countermeasures. The Orion's phasers were another matter as they punched a hole through the forward shield and destroyed the shuttle bay and damaged one phaser bank. The Raptor shrugged off the damage and responded with her own bite, "Torpedo away sir. It has taken down the pirates number two shield, firing phasers now!"

Massalik noted that weapons officer Slathat acted quickly, and appropriately, taking advantage of the opportunity without wasting time waiting for his orders to fire phasers through the down shield. "Commander, the Clan Provider has just fired a torpedo at the pirate's rear shield", reported science officer Rakalth. The Orion ship shuddered under the impact of the close range torpedo, taking massive internal damage as the torpedo's energy expended itself into the pirate's exposed hull. "The Orion is turning away sir and attempting to escape". Massalik turned to his Engineering officer and nodded to him as Junior Lieutenant Glenthart activated the ship's tractor beam. "After him Krakan, I want to sink our claws in him so he won't squirm away while we rip out the throat of this wounded prey."

"Damage Control reports the phaser bank is back online and the shuttle bay will be repaired soon sir", came the voice of Engineer Glenthart. Meanwhile the Raptor's tractor beam reached out and gripped the pirate ship in its vice as the range closed. "Now he cannot squirm away, all weapons fire as you bear," but the pirate vessel exploded in a blinding flash of antimatter, rocking the raptor and destroying her regenerated forward shield. "She must have feared capture and self destructed, Commander", reported Lt. Slathat. "No doubt they feared we would eat them," joked Massalik.

"Junior Lieutenant Rakalth, where is target Alpha?", barked Massalik. The science officer's head was bent over peering into his console as he replied, "Cloaked sir and limping into the asteroid belt. Contact is off our starboard quarter at range 30, moving slowly at speed three Commander."

"Helm, bring us around at speed 15. I want you to close rapidly before he

uncloaks and put him on our port bow facing number six shield. Engineering, standby to tractor contact Bravo, turn off the defensive tractors there are no more drones to worry about. Slathat, set phasers to disable, fire when he is at range three or less, target his engines and weapons. Master Sergeant Grakon, you will capture that carrion eater and we will have their ship as a trophy!"

The Raptor quickly closed the distance and swung around putting the ship off her port bow, her phasers lashing out into the space surrounding the pirate vessel. Normally this would have no effect on a cloaked vessel, but damaged as she was there was no protective shield, so even the reduced damage penetrated the pirate's hull and ripped into vital engineering and weapons compartments. "Commander, he is losing power and uncloaking now," reported Rakalth. The Raptor's tractor beam reached out and gripped the pirate with invisible claws of energy as the transporters whined and Gorn marines materialized in the control spaces of the Orion ship. The Orion Commander looked up, startled at the sight, Sergeant Grakon towered over him. Her 8'+ body shimmered slightly making it difficult to make out her features, until she smiled. Her teeth gleamed as she relaxed and dropped her chameleon effects, her pulse rifle pointed at the Orion. Still, the Orion Commander was brave and reached out for a covered blue button on his command chair. The Orion was brave, but not fast enough. Grakon's arm swept up and slammed the Orion from the command chair, throwing him half way across the bridge. He lay on the ground barely moving, Grakon thought him dead until he rolled over and fired, a Federation phaser set on stun. The beam hit Grakon, but the standard stun setting was not strong enough to slow the Gorn down. Reacting on instinct she fired, the pulse rifle spat out a stream of destructive energy engulfing the Orion, leaving only a pile of smoking ash. "Commander, Sergeant Grakon reports the Orion ship is in her control, the self destruct is disabled, and the crew is either dead or captured sir." reported Ensign Ssslatak. Massalik's command voice cut through the bridge crew's roars of celebration, "Contact the Clan Provider and see if they need assistance, stand down from battle stations. Lieutenant Slathat, you have the bridge. I will be in my quarters drafting our victory message to Naval Command. Well done pack mates, well done!"

The Crossing

Jay "NTDT" Jeffery

The Encounter

IKV Urartu, a class E4Y cloaking escort under the command of Captain Kor'pec, was 6 days out of Klingon space and into her mission to deliver General Dor'du'Kan and his team of engineers to Romulus. Kor'pec sat in his command chair contemplating his current situation. Urartu was running cloaked at a relatively slow warp two in order to avoid detection as they skirted the Tholian/Federation Neutral Zone. Another two weeks to reach Romulus at this rate. Kor'pec found himself wondering if the mysterious Tholians would make an appearance and offer him challenge in battle. It was an old wish of his; he had heard many accounts of the Tholians' ferocity in battle. Ah, I'm dreaming again, he thought. The Tholians have not been seen since my grandfather's time. Why would they appear now?

"Sir, unknown vessel appearing on Long Range sensors", shouted Kol'raH from the Navigation/Helm position, breaking Kor'pec from his reverie.

"What? Course heading, Kol'raH," responded Kor'pec.

"Sir, it seems they're heading directly for us, coming from the Federation border."

"Range and speed?"

"Just barely in sensor range, sir. Speed is approximately Warp 3. Unknown ship class."

Kor'pec had to ponder this development for a short time, and it seemed there was only one way to find out if it was worth the battle.

"Helm, slow to one-half impulse. Rig for silent running. Sound battle stations", he bellowed out.

"Aye sir, rigging for silent and slowing to half impulse", responded

Kol'raH from the helm station. Kvorash, the weapons officer shouted, "Battle stations sounded sir!"

"Good. Now we'll see what our friend is and where she's going", Kor'pec said with a slight grin.

The other three officers of his crew rushed in and took their positions, followed by General Dor'du'Kan, who asked, "What's going on, Captain?"

"We seem to have company coming from the Federation border. We're taking a look", responded Kor'pec.

"Sir, warp engines are offline. Phasers are charged and ready, disruptors are offline. We are on passive sensors, shields are still down and power has been stopped in non-critical areas. We are rigged for silent", responded his Executive Officer, Kragus.

Kor'pec just nodded his approval. "Range to target?" he asked.

"Range is now 500 and closing fast," responded Kvorash, who was now only operating Navigation.

500, he thought. Just a few minutes before he's close enough to be identified.

"Plot intercept course. Stay at half impulse; I want to stay as quiet as I can."

"Aye sir. Course plotted; we'll close in 12 minutes," responded Kragus, who was now operating the helm.

6 Minutes later, Kol'raH spoke again.

"I have a classification on the target, sir. Federation cruiser, Constitution class."

"Damn", muttered Kor'pec. "Has he sighted us?"

"I doubt it, sir. She's maintaining his original course. Sir, she seems to be headed for Tholian space."

The Crossing

Jay "NTDT" Jeffery

"Hmm, odd place for a Federation ship of the Line to be heading. Steer us behind him, I want to give him a nice present."

"Aye sir, steering behind him. Shall we engage warp engines and increase speed?" asked Kragus.

"Yes, engage the warp engines and increase speed to match. Bring the disruptors online, but keep the shields down unless he detects us."

"Aye sir, warp engines are coming back on line and engaging to follow at warp 3."

"Enemy ship status?" asked Kor'pec.

"Enemy ship is running yellow, shields up, weapons unarmed."

"Getting computer information now sir. Target is identified as the USS Constellation."

"Captain, I understand your desire to kill our enemy, but our orders are to get my engineers to Romulus", stated Dor'du'Kan.

"General, we'll get your men to Romulus, don't worry. This is an easy kill, and won't take long", Kor'pec stated with a slight grin. If that overweight general really wanted to he could pull rank, but Kor'pec knew he wouldn't.

"Disruptors online. Range is now 2, and we're right on his tail. Optimal conditions, Captain", sounded Kvorash.

"Has she spotted us yet?" Asked Kor'pec.

"No sir, she's still running yellow, weapons unpowered", Kol'raH responded.

"Good, good. Kragus, bring us out of cloak. Kvorash, raise shields, fire when ready", he barked, and all responded with a simple grunt of battle language.

"We are uncloaked... sir, they are going Red."

"Firing all weapons now. Direct hit on aft shield... it's down, sir!"

"Follow up! Helm; keep us on that aft shield. Weapons, overload the disruptors. Navigation, full counter measures, switch to offensive counter measures on Weapons command. Communication, make sure he's well jammed. I don't want any messages getting out." Kor'pec bellowed the orders out with ease and all responded with trained skill. These were his best officers.

"Sir, he's attempting to come 'round and bring his main weapons to bear. His Phasers are charged, and photons are arming."

"Weapons, fire when that aft shield enters your arc. Helm, increase speed to keep our edge."

There was a sudden surge as four Phasers struck the forward shield.

"Damage?" shouted Kor'pec.

"Front shield down 25 percent, but holding."

"Firing all weapons. Direct hit on his aft again, she's bleeding inside. It's only a matter of time now."

Yes, Just a matter of time, Thought Kor'pec, But why are they being so easy? And what are they doing out here?

"Status report on the Constellation", Kor'pec ordered.

"Sir, she's down to 60 percent hull integrity, 2 Photon tubes out, 3 Phaser banks gone, aft shield destroyed, left aft shield down about 40 percent." Responded Kol'raH.

"Prepare the Missile rack, time to send a gift to them."

Another sudden surge as the remaining 3 banks of the Constellation hit the front shield."

"Sir, fore shield holding at 50 percent", stated Kvorash.

"Sir, Power surge on the Constellation! She's turning to bear Photons!" Shouted Kol'raH.

Damn, a High Energy Turn, Thought Kor'pec, "Full power to front left shield, turn to bring it to bear, get us back behind her!"

"Aye sir!"

A powerful jolt struck the ship, smoke poured up from a few consoles, but not much else.

"Sir, Front left shield down, minor internals, looks like they were overloaded. Her front shield down to 75 percent, bringing us to bear on her rear again." Shouted Kragus.

Foolish captain, Thought Dor'du'Kan, he's going to get us Killed. "Captain, I must remind you our mission is of vital Importance, do not make me call off this attack."

"Sir, we will win and we will complete your Mission, now stay quiet or I'll have you removed from my Bridge!" Barked Kor'pec with a slight grin and a mind case of ego.

"Sir, repositioning on his aft, it will be a few moments", Stated Kragus.

"Good, overload the disruptors again, is the Missile ready Kvorash?"

"Aye sir, Missile is hot and ready, Type IV in the tube." Kvorash stated with a slight sense of pleasure.

"On his Aft again sir, Range is 1, Disrupters are hot and Phasers are ready."

"Good Fire all weapons and Missile on my Mark", Bellowed Kor'pec.

Kor'pec waited a few for the distance to close a bit further, point eight, point seven, point six, point five.

"Fire, Now!" Shouted Kor'pec and before he could reposition himself back in his seat, the Constellation blew up in a glorious display of colors as all weapons and a nice little missile finished it off.

"There, see general, all finished, we can now return to getting you to Romulus. Now if you will excuse us, we have some minor repairs to make. Damage reports Kol'raH?"

"Sir, minor internal damage, nothing to bad, front left shield generator will need replacement, Minor repairs on the front shield needed, otherwise we're fine", responded Kol'raH.

"Good, good. Kragus, enter another victory in our war record, when we get home, it's a bottle of Blood wine for each of you. " Kor'pec stated while leaning back in his chair. He thought to himself, Maybe this trip won't be so bad after all.

The IKV Urartu soon returned to its original course with a new entry in its war log and a better mood among the crew.

To be continued...

SFCC PBEM Status Report

E.L. "SFCSaret" Crisler

PBEM Campaign Turn 1

Lyran forces have reported that they will be conducting war games along their borders. Immediately after this report, Lyran forces moved to the federation and Hydran borders. Most of the movement was in the Hydran direction.

Hydran forces reacted to this move, stating that the amount of Lyran forces moved was more than wargames required. In response to what they consider a threatening buildup, the Hydrans have mobilized their reserves and moved forces to the Lyran Border.

The Klingons followed suit with the Lyrans and announced a series of war games along the Federation border, as a show of force. A large mobilization of Klingons ships moved to the border for these war games, with the largest concentration in the North Fleet Area.

Federation forces responded by conducting their own war games, moving ships into the 7th, 6th and 3rd Fleet areas. The 5th Fleet mobilized and sent a few ships into the Gorn Neutral Zone for joint maneuvers.

The Romulans reacted with a great deal more hostility and launched a fairly massive move into the Federation Neutral Zone as well as sending ships into the Gorn Neutral Zone. The Romulans claim the reasoning is that this is a defensive reaction against Federation aggression.

The Gorn responded to the Romulan move by calling a general mobilization of their entire fleet. The Gorn Assembly attempted to negotiate with the Romulans for a withdrawal of their forces but finally felt the Romulans were stalling. The Gorns openly declared war on the Romulans stating that the Romulans ships in the neutral zone violated the treaty of Ga'ock. Gorn forces have all gone into high warp and are heading toward the Romulan border.

Status Report

The PBEM game is now suspended. Testing has shown that the current AI in SFC does not allow for fair play at this level of campaign activity. We are researching other ways to make this type of campaign viable.

The Wraith of Tarpek

Dale Schofield

It was quiet here in the Commander's quarters. Quiet enough to think, quiet enough to remember. He was the Fifth son of a First son. A large family by Romulan standards, but his father had never been a traditional man. His father, C'hiarrael the Elder, had climbed his way through the military ranks with unusual quickness. Then he made a name for himself as a Senator with a keen sense of the people's mood, and at the end married into high blood. It was a legacy of deeds that could have made it hard for his children to distinguish themselves; that was not to be the case. His sister, Anael, was a Base Commander on the Gorn border with a reputation for ruthlessness. Then there were the twins, R'haeill and C'hiarrael. R'haeill was helmsman on the Killerhawk Fire of Heaven, along with their brother D'lhæa who was the acting Security Centurion. Both were legendary among their peers, and well liked to boot. C'hiarrael had distinguished himself as an able Science officer, but like their father decided to take the road of politics. He presently sat as the lower senator in their home district, and his star was rising. Recently he had made connections that gave him the ear of very influential people. The youngest member of the family was Vaelem; their half brother by marriage after the death of their mother. Vaelem's mother was of high blood and his life had been more privileged. Now, he had become a member of the Tal Shiar, in the Inquisitors office. How did he, Dael, fit in with this group? Even his name, which meant "wounded wing," set him apart. His mother had named him thus because he had been born with a missing leg. She had not meant it as an insult she would later tell him, but as encouragement. She had explained that when a Stormbird was injured the area where a bone broke grew back twice as strong as before. She believed in his ability to overcome this obstacle, it seemed that belief had died with her. The mechanical leg he had worn since childhood worked quite well, and in some cases better than a real one; in his mind it was never the real obstacle in his life. Rather his stubborn independence and brooding nature were the likeliest culprits. Initially all seemed well. He had begun to study psychological traits and histories of alien cultures at the academy, in hopes of working with the Tal Shiar. It had always surprised him how freely other races spoke of their people's past. Certainly, the history of the Rihannsu was interesting and full of glory, but to simply go and talk about it to just anyone seemed absurd at the least and dangerous at best. "To take pride in one's history is wise, but to boast of one's history is foolish," he remembered one of his instructors telling him. The course work was fascinating, but he could not shake the feeling that there was something malevolent about the official observers from the Tal Shiar, though he never spoke of this aloud. Then, when he decided to change his course of study, he felt his suspicions were confirmed. Called to the Provost's office he was placed under house arrest and "interviewed" for three days. Questions concerning his House, his family, and worst of all his loyalty; not to the military, but to his very race. Afterwards, it was difficult to find any departments willing to accept him, regardless of the fact that he had not been formerly charged with anything. Once the Tal Shiar touched you, they left a mark as clear as viridian ore on a moonless night. He finally completed his study in ancient military tactics; an area that few were interested in and fewer still made careers from. Since then, it had been one tedious assignment after another in various offices of the military hierarchy. All his superiors praised his work and intelligence, but were reserved in their recommendations for promotion. It seemed that he was to see his days in the Imperial Navy as wasted ones.

A few years before Dael's brother C'hiarrael had offered to bring him on as an assistant in a lab on a scout vessel, but studying gaseous anomalies and the origins of nebulae did not really interest him. Therefore, although it would have been a promotion of sorts and an opportunity to serve on a starship, he rejected the offer. Then, as he was considering an early retirement leading to considerable shame for his family, and certain obscurity for himself, there was another chance. C'hiarrael, risking a substantial loss of *mnhei'sahe*, made another offer of help. Now in the position of Lower Senator, C'hiarrael, came to him with the chance to command a ship of his own. As the meeting with his brother progressed the words of Dael's father whispered in his ear. "Remember, my son, to all things there is a price to pay, and sometimes we pay in unexpected ways." It seemed strange that they should come unbidden during a conversation with one of his own blood, but years change men. They had changed Dael such that his family hardly seemed to know him. Still, the sons of C'hiarrael the Elder had never betrayed one of their own. He was brought out of his reverie by the mention of the promised ship.

"So, you see the opportunity is hardly one that you can refuse, and when do you think you are likely to see this offer again. The command chair of your own ship," C'hiarrael finished the last few words with an emphatic raising of his hands. It was true. It was likely to be his last chance at any kind of command. Nevertheless, there had to be more to this.

"What is the price?" he said flatly, trying to show no emotion. "What ship will have me?" "How many strings did you have to pull?" "How did you get this past the commission at the Tal Shiar, or did Vaelem handle that?" "Speak plainly, because this has a fog about it that disturbs me." C'hiarrael drew up his sizable frame and leaned close. "Be careful of your words, my brother. I have lost face once before in an offer to help you and I will not let it pass so easily this time. I am here to give you the chance to succeed as we your family know you can. If the blood of our father burns in you then certainly you will not let pride take you to a place of shame." His barb bit like a Goff spider at the neck of Dael. He wanted to shout his anger or defend himself in some way, but why. He had already spoken those same words in his own soul. None could bear the responsibility of the events that had brought him here but he.

A silence passed between them. C'hiarrael sat down, breathed deeply and continued. "My patron is an individual of great influence and has need of someone who is reliable and outside the normal chain of command. Outside the influence of the Tal Shiar." He raised his eyebrow and looked across the table at Dael waiting for a reaction that did not appear. He paused then went on.

"You obviously have no love for them and are as untouchable as any officer can be and still be serving...or alive. When my patron approached me with the task of finding such an individual, I thought of you. I believe that in you lies a great officer and that the troubles early at the academy have hindered you, but this is your chance to prove the doubters wrong. You wish me to speak plainly, so be it." He slide his chair closer to Dael and motioned him to sit down. Dael lowered himself to the chair and listened.

His brother took the next two hours to lay out the story as thus. Dael will be given command of a Skyhawk class destroyer the *Fell Wing*. He will not take her out of port, but rather will meet up with ship and crew at the starbase Nestor 33, which their sister commands. Once there he will be given papers and orders, but these are to be disregarded. Instead, he will take the destroyer on a course for the Federation border. At specific coordinates, to be revealed later, he will receive his final instructions. Secrecy must be maintained, so he must fly the vessel cloaked while in Rihannsu space and remain outside standard shipping lanes; both were in direct violation of standing orders.

C'hiarrael finished and left Dael to think over the offer. Dael could say nothing of this and his brother knew it. Even if someone did believe him, he could not afford to be involved in a scandal this serious. Yet, he assumed even greater risks becoming an active member of this strange undertaking. The choice was a simple one: take a chance and live fully, if only for a moment or become a ghost among the living: insubstantial, hollow, forgotten. He would not be consigned to the grave just yet. Besides, better to live in infamy, than mediocrity. It had been a week since his meeting with C'hiarrael. Dael had been working on a plan that had struck him during this time and was working out exactly how to present it to his older brother. He was going over the last details when he spied C'hiarrael across the expanse of the abandoned amphitheater where they had agreed to meet. His brother strode purposefully up the steps and sat on a nearby bench, "Well met, young *dianvm*. I hope this old place was not too far out of the way, but as you know we cannot be too careful." He concluded by raising his eyes to the sky and squinting. "Not at all *ira'dianvm*," Dael replied honoring his brother as eldest of the household. "I concur with your choice of meeting places. Where better than the home of some of our people's most classic dramas." C'hiarrael smiled. "I see that you still have your sense of humour. Have you also brought an answer to my request?" "First, a question. How do you plan to account for a missing destroyer? After all, districts may direct the use of ships in their sectors, but the Imperial Navy still keeps close track of all commissioned vessels and their commanders." C'hiarrael seemed amused. "Very good question. I knew that your mind had not been dulled. The answer is this. My patron has arranged for the crew of the *Fell Wing* to stand down under the pretext that the ship is to be dry-docked for refitting. The ship will be piloted from her base on the line, by a select crew, to Nestor 33. There our sister will continue to issue reports on the progress of the refits in order to

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mask the temporary disappearance of the ship. Everything is in place, dianvm, except you.” He leaned back with a pleased look on his face and waited expectantly for Dael to speak.

“Well, I see that you have it all well planned out. Even so, I have a plan of my own. If you accept my plan, then I will commit myself to your cause. Otherwise, I must decline.” C’hiarrael’s face turned to stone. He seemed about to say something then let his breath out slowly. Finally, he spoke. “Go ahead then tell me. What is this plan?” It was Dael’s turn to look pleased. “I think,” He spoke quickly. “That your patron will prefer this choice. While working here in our home district, I was assigned to work in the Harbormaster’s office. While there, I came across an old King Eagle cruiser. She was a little beat up and her designations and name had all but been forgotten. It seems to me that it would be far easier to requisition the parts and equipment for her repair then to make an active ship disappear. Further, the records of the Harbormaster no longer show her on the books or in the Fleet’s registry. If anyone should ask about the refurbishment, we could easily tell them that it is being overhauled as a museum piece for display; something to show the pride of the Rihanssu fighting force. “Dael finished and waited for his brother’s reply. “I see your mind has been busy this past week, but I see some difficulties. First, we don’t even know if she is space worthy.” “She is,” Dael interjected, “I ran a hull and systems diagnostics on her last year. Her port nacelles need replacement and of course some other key operating systems, but she can fly.” “Secondly,” C’hiarrael continued, “Secondly, the King Eagle is a heavy cruiser. There is no guarantee we could muster enough personnel to man her.” Dael cut him off again.

“She requires a minimum crew of forty, same as your destroyer.” “Lastly,” C’hiarrael said looking a little annoyed, “the ship would have to be refitted at Nestor 33 in order to insure that there would be no unnecessary prying eyes. We have no way to get that ship there, as you say she needs critical operating parts.” Dael smiled.

“There is a freighter heading for that sector in 10 days. It can tow our vessel almost the whole way; then the cruiser can be towed into the base by frigate. It will lend an air of legitimacy to the whole project and when I leave with her no one will question where I’m going.” C’hiarrael looked dumbfounded. His ears pointing straight up, as they did whenever he found himself speechless. He took a few moments apparently mulling the whole thing over. After a bit he leaned back and shook his head. “I’ll present my patron with your idea and we will see what they say. I can make no promises, but I would ask you to think over your ultimatum as well. With or without your plan you would be foolish to turn this offer down. I cannot say why you would want this run down vessel, but I must assume it has something to do with your romantic ideas of the past. In the end, I guess it matters little. You haven’t any real experience commanding any vessel, so it is all the same.” “I charge you to keep your silence until you hear from me again. Till then stay out of trouble.” Two weeks later Dael was standing at the shipyard facilities of Nestor 33 overlooking the refitting of his King Eagle cruiser. He had only been here a day, but his sister, Anael, had given the shipwrights strict orders to get started right away and they did. No structural work had been done, but they had stripped her down to base and cleaned her hull stem to stern. She was a fine looking vessel and Dael had already decided what her new name would be.

As a boy, he had listened to the tales of the crossing as all young Rihanssu did. One of these stories told of a ship commander by the name of Taprek. Taprek was on recon duty in a Warbird cruiser when a Gorn scout attacked him. The Gorn ship with its warp ability outclassed the Warbird, but Taprek knew that if it returned to report its findings the Rihanssu people would be at the mercy of this terrible foe. In a sacrificial maneuver, he steered his vessel into the path of the Gorn, killing them both. Later, his log was recovered in the wreckage. His final entry related his strategy. It ended by declaring, “I have no fear of dying, because I know that I will be watching and guarding our future empire like a wraith amidst the stars striking from the dark to defeat our foes.” At the end of thirty days of hard work, arguments, frustrating delays, and meticulous tests the Wraith of Taprek was ready. Her colors were being finished today. As requested they represented the textures of the old Imperial Navy, a pewter color with red accents. It helped complete the museum piece cover story and appealed to Dael’s sense of style, but he knew it would take more than that to command a starship. Since his arrival at the starbase, he had spent numerous hours studying tactics manuals, ship specs,

and protocol. His various positions in the military came in handy, but most useful of all were the logs of his father. C’hiarrael the Elder had been commander of a War Eagle cruiser, whose layout was very similar to the King Eagle. Dael’s father had kept extensive records of his battles, tactics, and his ship’s capabilities. Dael had studied these since his youth. He hoped to draw on that experience to help him now. There were still some real uncertainties about this mission. He had met with the bridge crew: Y’nath, the helmsman; Thue the navigator; Khoal the Science officer; Halum at Weapons; and Nveid the Engineer. They had been recruited after their ship, the Falik’s Pride, had been decommissioned. None were familiar with the King Eagle design except the engineer, who was not enthusiastic about this assignment. The rest of the crew seemed to be made up of scattered remnants on assignments from which, Dael could only assume, they would not be missed. It was a sobering thought that they could put together such an expedition right under the eye of Imperial Navy and remain unseen. After the meeting with the bridge team, he surmised that they knew even less than he did. It seemed that they understood they were on a mission of importance and that secrecy must be maintained at all costs. Other than that, they were told to await orders from their new commander. Each had expressed their caution about serving with an unknown officer, as they had not heard of Dael before and found no records of his previous commands. He attempted to assuage their concerns, and though they seemed mollified by the end of the conversation, he could not be sure.

As a final precaution before the mission, Dael had the cruiser outfitted with extra repair parts, and a few other items he thought might be needed. In addition, he requested from his sister one favor. To safeguard against possible mutiny he needed to have someone not loyal to his brother’s patron, so he asked Anael for a Security Centurion and ten marines. They were to bring their gear and join the ship just prior to departure. This way there would be no time for someone to alert his brother or the faceless patron. The hour was early. The refurbished War Eagle, in her ancient colors, sat alone in the hanger. The crew had been at work for sometime making the final preparations for their departure. There was a subtle uneasiness in the air and Dael suspected that he was not the only one who felt it. In a short while, he would lead a skeleton crew on a covert mission that would require them to violate Rihanssu Imperial Naval restrictions and had no formal approval of the Tal Shiar. The crew knew only half of the story, but it must be that way he told himself.

Dael had just finished stowing his gear in the spartan Commander’s quarters, located just above the bridge and near the flag bridge, when his com signaled with a soft intermittent beep. “This is the Riov,” he answered formally. “Erei’riov, this is Y’nath.” The helmsman was senior among the officers and was the acting first officer for this mission. Dael noted the detail of being referred to as sub-commander, his formal rank, rather than as commander of the ship. “The depot officer has announced the arrival of a marine crew readying to board. I have no information on this.” The annoyance was clear in his voice. “Thank you helm. I ordered the marine detachment. I will meet them myself at the boarding ramp. Is everything ready and are all crew accounted for?” He tried to sound calm. A confrontation this early could spell doom and Dael did not want to lose his first chance at command. “All crew accounted for and all hands are at stations. We are ready to release docking anchors. Should we be expecting anyone else, erei’riov?” “The marines are the only additions helm. When they are stowed and ready I will meet you on the bridge.” Dael let his breath out slowly in relief. “Aye, aye, helm out.” The com shut off. The centurion in charge of the marines was a tall, lean man of middle age. He wore his hair short in the style popular among deep space regulars. He and his men all wore standard issue gear with one exception. Each had a curved tooth on a loop close about their necks, indicating they had seen hand to hand boarding actions against Gorn and lived. Dael felt bolstered by the presence of veterans to act as his guard, but also wary that earning the respect of such men was not easy.

“Riov,” the centurion spoke evenly as he snapped to attention and his men followed suit. “Erei’arrain Raen and the unit that you requested. May we come aboard, sir?” He spoke with the professional calm of a seasoned warrior. “Come aboard Arrain. I will show you and your men where you will be bunking. It will give me a moment to speak with you and apprise you of the mission parameters, as they are somewhat unusual.” Dael attempted to appear as controlled and casual as the marine leader had, but some nervousness

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must have showed. "Does that mean we are not to be an honor guard at a new museum dedication? No one has told us anything, but the word is that you are heading back to ch'Rihan. I gather from your demeanor that this is not the case." "Very astute, Arrain. No, we are not going to a museum, regardless of the age of this ship." They moved towards the quarters for the marines. After they arrived, Dael took Raen aside. "I think it is appropriate to inform you that this mission may be very unlike anything else you've been associated with." He was about to continue when the marine interrupted. "Riov, I can tell that you may never have been assigned to a black ops mission before, but my men and I have run over twenty-two incursions into Gorn space, off the books of course. Unless you are planning on mutiny or treason, my men and I are here to see that the mission goes smoothly. Your sister, the Base Riov, assigned us to you and we are to take orders only from you. Whatever enemy we may encounter, we will execute our orders with extreme prejudice. Does that help you at all?" He finished and stood at attention. Dael took a moment to absorb the statement and all of its components.

"Well Arrain I believe that you have made my prepared speech unnecessary. Please stow your gear and prepare for release of docking anchors. If you have any questions, I will be on the bridge. Dismissed." Dael, feeling a little like a cadet, and an inept one at that, turned to leave. "Riov," Dael stopped and looked back. "If you share any of the blood of your sister, I have full confidence that things will go very well." Dael nodded silently and left. Given the limited number of decks and the premium on energy that the older class of vessels ran the Wraith was not outfitted with crew lifts. Dael had liked the idea of no lift in theory, but as he finished the climb to the bridge from the marine quarters, he was beginning to change his mind.

"Riov on the bridge." Halum, the weapons officer fairly boomed out. The crew came to its feet and stood at attention. Riov Dael, fifth son of C'hiarrael the Elder, walked to his command chair, surveyed the bridge and spoke. "At your posts. Prepare for anchors away." The docking anchors hissed as they released their hold on the ship and dropped it into the vacuum of space. The Wraith of Taprek headed out of Nestor 33 and followed a course to a small trading post in the Unipa system. Dael established an orbit and waited. His instructions told him that he would receive the rest of his orders here, but they did not say how.

After an hour, the ship was signaled by the trading post. Dael was hesitant to respond, but it would seem terribly out of place for an Imperial ship not to answer. Realizing that he had little choice he gave the order to open a communication link with the post.

"This is Suhir, trader and el'Arrhai of this post. I am holding an item for a Riov Dael. Is he aboard your ship?" "This is Ere'riov Dael of the RIS Wraith of Taprek. What item are you holding and who is it from?" He turned to Khoal, the Science officer who was also doubling as communications. "Give me a visual, please." The image of an older Rihannsu man with white hair and slightly stooped shoulders appeared on the view screen. He held up a gold cylinder.

"This message bottle arrived here with a shipment two days ago. The traders who gave it to me gave me the instructions of what to do with it. They said a ship would be by in the next few days and I was to make sure it got to a Riov Dael. They paid quite a bit to make sure it got done and so I didn't ask any questions. Do you want it?" "I am sending one of my crew to retrieve it. Prepare for our ship to dock." Dael finished and turned back to Khoal. "End transmission." The view screen went blank. He leaned forward to his control panel and activated the com. "Arrain Raen, after we dock at the post I want you to disembark and retrieve a message bottle from the proprietor for me. Afterwards, please meet me in my quarters." "Aye, aye sir," came the quick response. "Helm, bring us in to the post and dock. This is not a social visit so let's not stay long after we have Arrain Raen back on the ship. While docked run a general diagnostic. I want to know how the ship handled on our trip here." Dael got up to leave and paused. "Also, after I have had an opportunity to review this message I will want to meet with all of you. The flag bridge conference table at 1700 hours should do. Is there anything else?" He turned to look at each of them. "Very well. I will be in my quarters." While he waited for the return of Raen, Dael had a little time to think. Whoever this patron was, they had wide stretching wings to be able to maneuver so many people both in and out of the military. At times, he suspected the whole thing could be a Tal Shiar test or trap, the difference seemed negligible. In the end, he resigned himself to the reality that he was involved in some type of in-

trigue. He could only hope at this point that he was not acting treasonously.

There was a knock at the door.

"Riov, it's Arrain Raen. I have the message bottle, as you requested." "Thank you. Please come in." The door opened to reveal the marine carrying the gold container. It shimmered in the low light. Dael reached for it slowly. As he held the cool crystal, he felt the hair on his neck rise. He opened it and removed the disk inside.

"If you'll please excuse me Arrain, I'll need to listen to this alone." "Certainly, sir. I'll be with my men." The soldier turned to go and as he was exiting, Dael spoke up, "Arrain," Raen turned and stood at attention. "I have a meeting with the senior officers planned for 1700 hours on the flag bridge. I would like you to attend." "Aye, aye sir. 1700 hours on the flag bridge." He shut the door. The disk slide easily into the computer. No image appeared on the screen in front of Dael, but a voice began to speak.

"Greetings Riov. My time is important, so I will be brief. You are to proceed from the trading post to the coordinates you now see on the screen. Once you look, you will note that they are located on the far side of the Neutral Zone, in Federation territory. There you will be contacted by a Federation traitor who has information vital to me and therefore vital to the Empire. You will greet him with the call sign 'Captain, Prepare the cargo for transfer.' After which he will reply, 'Prepare to receive cargo.' You will travel to your destination along the path I have programmed and will remain cloaked at all times. If you are detected or caught, you will of course be court-martialed, there is nothing I can do about that. You are operating with no formal military approval or knowledge and as such are acting without orders. At this point, you cannot turn back. If you attempt to do so I will insure that your ship and crew be targeted as spies and hunted. Your ship is not on any register, your colors are not official, and you are in violation of your charter as an officer. The choice at this time is simply to perform the mission as stated and return along the path that I have given you. If you do this, then there is hope that your command may become permanent and official. Thank you Riov and may fortune favor the bold." The message ended. Dael stood for a moment, sat on his bunk, and whispered low.

"And sometimes you pay in unexpected ways..." Just prior to 1700 hours, Riov Dael of the starship Wraith of Taprek stood alone on the flag bridge awaiting his senior officers. He had entered all the pertinent data from his orders into the main computer and now there was only the briefing. To the crew, this must all seem official. Any hint that this mission was, in effect, a freelance operation and there could be no hope of success. Theoretically, it could end at any moment if one of the crew was an operative for the Tal Shiar, so there was no direction but forward.

The bridge officers, along with the marine centurion, sat around the conference table looking at the tactical screen ahead of them. On it was the flight path to the destination on the far side of the Neutral Zone. It ended in a remote part of the Tantalus system dominated by a gas giant and its singular satellite. Wraith's commanding officer had just finished detailing the mission and was awaiting questions from those assembled. As he expected Y'nath, the helmsman, was the first to speak. "Ere'riov, I don't think I understand the order to travel cloaked and outside standard flight paths. Not only is it a violation of orders, but it places us in danger of being attacked by any scouting vessel that may come across our signature. Is this standard in such cases or do you even know. It was clearly a shot at Dael's lack of command experience and in truth it was accurate. He had no idea what protocol was in this type of situation. If it was a test by the young officer, he would not be able to bluff or impress his way out of it. He simply didn't have an answer. "You can be assured, sir," Raen, the veteran marine was speaking now to the helmsman. "That I have personally been on more than a dozen missions that were piloted outside standard military flight paths. Of course, we all know that the Tal Shiar also maintains a series of flight schedules that are completely off the books. This may very well be one of them." He finished by looking back at the Riov.

Again the centurion had succeeded in making Dael feel completely unqualified, but at least in this instance it had been in an effort to help him.

Thue, the navigator turned her head directly up at Dael.

"Is that the case Riov? Are we operating as an arm of the Tal Shiar?" She said the last in a somewhat awed tone. Perhaps, thought Dael, she aspired to become a member of the secret order.

"No, we are not operating under the wing of the Tal Shiar." If there was an

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operative among them then this was a chance for them to stop things right here. He paused a moment and looked around. No one moved. He took a deep breath and continued.

"Our mission is too important to risk any information leaks. We remain outside the normal communication channels and we remain outside the normal spy channels. We are all aware of the treacherous nature of Federation operatives and we dare not risk exposure and lose a chance to gain vital information." He attempted to sound as sure of this as he could. Certainly, he was not exaggerating the efficiency of Federation spies, or sympathizers. Still, he was stretching and the only way to remain in control was to remain sure.

"You have your orders. You have all the information that you need to carry out those orders, until such time as I give you more. I want this ship under way on our new heading within the hour. No undue conversation is to occur. Is that understood?" He held the gaze of each individual a moment in order to make his point clear.

"You must show no weakness in front of your crew," he remembered his father saying. "Discipline yourself and you will discipline those who serve the Empire." There was no turning back. Prison, disgrace, court-martial, all these were forgotten now. There was only commitment to completing the mission and he would not be stopped. Dael wanted these officers to see this in his face, hear it in his words, know it by his actions. He had taken up the sword of an hru'dhat, a man of no house. Only by performing an act of great honor could he return. He would permit no one to prevent him from succeeding, and he wanted them to see that in his eyes as well. He leaned forward with his palms down on the conference table.

"I will be on the bridge directly. I expect to have a report from engineering on the performance of the vessel, our course plotted and laid in, and as much information as we can gather on the system we will be entering. Is that clear?" In turn, each officer acknowledged the order.

"Also, Halum," the weapons officer looked attentive and sat up. "I want to know what Federation ships might be most likely to patrol this sector. Understood?" "Aye, aye Riov. I will have a brief prepared by the time you arrive on the bridge." "Then you are dismissed." Dael nodded and advanced toward the space chart at the far end of the room. The officers filed out quietly leaving the young and suddenly stern commander to his thoughts. He stood before the star map and placed his forefinger on the red dot that represented the Tantalus system.

"What will I find when I reach you." He whispered, tapping his finger on the mark. This mission had started out in the dark and now it seemed to Dael that they were passing further into the black. He had never trusted instincts in his life before, but he felt his telling him to find another way out of this situation. The danger that he and his crew faced was more serious than they knew. He now had their lives in his hands. His bargaining for a new life could mean the end of theirs. He let his breath out slowly.

"I swear this moment, with my hand on the heart of my father, that this ship will see Rihannsu space again." "Entering the Tantalus system, erei'riov." Y'nath had turned from his station at the forward portion of the bridge to face Dael. "Slow to sublight helm. Navigator, plot a course to the satellite of Tantalus. We will establish orbit there and wait. Continue to maintain subtle maneuvers." Dael did not want to take any chances this close. They had already had one scare coming out of the Neutral Zone.

In order to avoid the sensor beacons he had reduced to sublight and ran subtle maneuvers which had worked well if not quickly. It was the presence of a starship that had been the nerve-wracking surprise. Apparently, some type of research vessel, it had crossed over top of the Wraith, as its crew sat in a deafening silence for nearly four hours. Finally, the enemy vessel left and the image of that ship's hull passing above them close enough for hand disrupters would stay with everyone on that bridge for a very long time. "Riov," it was Thue at navigation. "The moon is sitting in opposition and our limited sensors will not be able to detect any ships coming into the system until they are within 40,000 kilometers." Dael turned to the left towards Science.

"Confirm, Khoal." "Confirmed, Riov. Our best position for optimal sensor use while cloaked will be on the trailing orbital of the planet." The Science officer was surrounded on three sides by the various monitors he used. Dael didn't like that. Once decloaked the Wraith would be a shining target against the dark background of the gas giant. But he could not sit blindly on the far side either. That offered even greater opportunities for trouble. Once more,

on this mission, he was left with little choice. "Alright, plot a course for those coordinates. Helm, bring us in, and establish a static position against the gravity of the planet. Once we settle in, I want the best data we can gather on the planet and its moon. Every station, check and double-check your systems. I do not want any surprises." The rendezvous was to take place in another 42 hours. No soldier likes to sit idle in enemy territory longer than he has too and Dael was no exception. He was a patient man normally, but the tension compounded by his inexperience and nervousness was taking its toll. He began to pace the bridge needlessly and ask the same questions repeatedly. When he realized the unnerving effect that it was having on the bridge crew he retired to his quarters and reviewed the report on the Tantalus system.

The planet, for which the system was named sat in an extended elliptic, circling a small yellow star that afforded little light. A very dry and active gas giant, Tantalus, by all data collected so far seemed perpetually on the verge of collapse, merely lacking the small bit of matter necessary to complete its evolution. Its moon on the other hand offered a different image. Essentially, it was a big ball of water trapped in a slow orbit. It apparently moved closer to the planet while in opposition, but once on the starward side the heavy atmospheric activity the sun created pulled the moon back away. According to Khoal, we're seeing the end of its opposition. The calm blue waters of its surface will soon be a rolling mass of chaos. The intermittent beep of the Com brought his head up with a snap. He slapped his hand down on the receiver.

"This is the Riov," he blurted a bit too quickly. "Erei'riov, are you alright?" Y'nath's voice had a visible sneer in it. Dael was going to have to do something about that, but it had to wait. "Fine, Helm. Please report." "We are detecting a signature, perhaps two on the edge of our sensor range." Dael's heart jumped to his throat and began to pump a little faster. It's time, he thought. If everything went smoothly, they could be heading back home by morning. Remain calm, he told himself, remain focused. Suddenly, the words of his helmsman repeated themselves in his head. Two ships? "Y'nath, how clear is the signal?" There was a pause.

"Khoal states that the signal is coming clearer and he believes that the reading of two signatures is correct, but there is a small margin of error. Your orders, erei'riov?" There was nothing in the briefing about two ships, but there was nothing to state it would be only one ship either.

"I am coming down to the bridge. Hold our position and do nothing to attract their attention. Tell Khoal to reduce sensor levels until I arrive." "Yes, erei'riov." The com clicked off abruptly.

The bridge of the Wraith of Taprek was alive with movement and noise when Dael arrived. He took his place in the rear above the other officers on the Commander's deck. He looked out over his crew. Y'nath and Thue were looking over the navigation charts. Khoal was scanning his monitors, and whispering something to himself. Nveid and one of his engineers were talking in the corner. Halum was the only individual who appeared calm. He stood like a statue with his arms crossed at the Weapons station staring at the main screen. Dael went down and stood next to him.

"Nothing to do Weapons?" "I am ready, Riov," Halum whispered. "On your order plasmas and phasers will be brought on line. I am tracking the two ships. When we have full sensor capacity back, I will program the optimal firing patterns. I have alerted the marines to be prepared and have requested that the shuttle bay be manned as per your original orders." A small grin came to Dael's face. He stood next to a finely tuned instrument of destruction, a Rihannsu of whom the Empire could be proud. "I see you are ready to protect this ship." Dael responded "I am ready to protect my ship, Riov," was the reply. Again Dael smiled and he felt pride. Nothing like it had ever passed through his veins before and he hoped it would not be the last time.

"Very good, our ship." He went back to the Commander's deck and scanned the data that was being fed from the various stations. It appeared that Khoal was correct, two ships. "Status of the targets, Science?" Khoal looked quickly down then up at Dael. "They appear to have slowed to a near halt, Riov. Energy levels are stabilizing and it seems they are beginning an active and intense scan of the system." "Riov, with their combined resources, it is only a matter of time before they begin to triangulate on our position once our energy signature is identified. Presently the planet helps to hide us, but soon it will act as a searchlight." The Science officer finished and went

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back to his monitors. "Erei'riov, what are your orders?" Y'nath had turned away from his station. He was tense and his manner was very aggressive. Dael did not even look up. He had no time for this petty attempt to undermine him. He would put an end to it now or have Y'nath removed. There was room for only one commander on this ship. "Khre'arrain Y'nath, man your post. I will give orders as necessary and when necessary. Do not jeopardize this mission with insubordination. Am I clear?" The threat was clear to all present. If Dael felt his officer was insubordinate then he could order him to be removed from the bridge and placed in confinement. There were few things worse on an officer's record, and fewer still that left him alive. Dael had not looked up, but from the corner of his eye he saw Y'nath chewing on his options. The helmsman turned and faced forward in silence. There could be no guarantee that the officer would not bring Dael's command into question again, but that should keep him quiet for the time being. Presently, he needed all his crew to be focused on the presence of two Federation starships. Even if they were traitors, they could not be trusted. Dael wished only to conclude these matters and be gone from here. He would have to be assertive and attempt to control the situation from the beginning. Attempt to get their attention and then their respect, so any idea of double crossing him would be second-guessed.

He turned to his science officer.

"Science, bring sensor levels up to normal and prepare a probe." Khoal began to work at his station while Dael turned towards the main screen.

"Helm, begin decloaking, and bring us around to face the two ships. Science, feed me the sensor data on the two ships and open hailing frequencies." There was a sudden quieting of all extraneous noise on the bridge as the low hum of the cloaking device went dim and all aboard knew that they were beginning to decloak. On the main screen, the two images began to grow clearer as sensors gained full strength. Now, all hands began to work quickly at their respective stations, even the stoic Halum was active at his weapons console.

The two Federation warships now seemed to be aware of the presence of the Wraith as they appeared to draw closer together and move slowly at the Romulan vessel.

"High level of coded communications activity between the two ships, Riov," this from Khoal. "The signatures are clearly Federation. One is destroyer class and the other is frigate class. They have brought up shields," echoed Halum. Y'nath adjusted the Wraith's heading and spoke up without looking back. "Shall we go to yellow alert, Riov?" "Not yet," Dael replied. There was an uneasy shifting of all present. Shields down was not the most favored status when in the presence of Federation ships. "Navigation, plot a course for the quickest route out of this system and have it ready." "Yes, Riov," Thue responded, her feminine voice dispassionate and calm. "They are responding to our hails," Khoal announced. "I am modulating for voice communications now." "This is the commander of the Wraith of Taprek to the captain of the Federation ship. Captain, prepare the cargo for transfer." Dael hoped he had sounded calm, but official. There was an extended silence.

"Captain, prepare the cargo for transfer," Dael repeated himself. The reply came a moment later.

"Romulan Commander, you are in violation of treaty and have entered Federation territory illegally, please stand down and prepare to be boarded." Dael stood up from the command chair and leaned on his console. All eyes on the bridge were turned in expectation.

"Captain, I repeat, prepare the cargo for transfer." Before the Federation captain could respond Khoal jerked his head up from his monitors.

"Riov, I am detecting subspace traffic. High energy readings are now emanating from the two targets." Halum was only a second behind. "The two ships are charging weapon systems." "Romulan Commander. I am Captain Farrell Rook of the Federation destroyer Tristan. You are in violation of the Neutral Zone treaty. According to Starfleet protocols, I order you to stand down and prepare to be boarded. We are not the Orion pirates you were waiting for. Make this easy on yourself, Commander, and surrender peacefully." Dael's mind was bludgeoned with all the sudden sensory input, as if he had been standing in a dark room and someone flooded it with a thousand lights. He felt blinded and momentarily helpless. A strange dizziness came over him and he reached forward to hold his command console to steady himself. In the distance, he heard a noise that started to pierce the veil of numbness that he thought might overwhelm him. It was the voice of Y'nath. "...then I

will be forced to take over this vessel. Am I making myself clear, Riov? Riov!" He shouted from his station. Dael stood erect quickly and stared down at the helmsman. "Keep your post Helm or I will shoot you myself." He heard the words coming from his mouth, hardly realizing what he was saying. Slowly, though, he was regaining his composure and his mind was beginning to work again.

"Bring this ship to red alert. Indicate to the Federation captain that we intend to leave, and that interference will be met with extreme force. Helm bring this ship about one eight zero and use the course plotted by Navigation. Nveid, I want best speed this ship can give." Y'nath looked around and saw the rest of the crew in action. He appeared to be thinking something over, but the realization that there were no other fellow mutineers caused him to turn back to his duties. He had little respect for Dael, but he did respect the Empire's chain of command. Perhaps, he was a good officer after all, Dael thought. "Riov," Khoal started, "The Federation captain states that surrender is our only option. If we refuse, he will be forced to engage and capture us. I have performed an intensive scan of the two vessels and have fed the data to all posts." "Inform the enemy that if they attempt to stop us, they will die. Close communications." Dael took a moment to think. The earlier subspace traffic meant that the two ships had sent word back to the nearest starbase. This had become a political incident. Secrecy was a thing of the past and now survival was all that mattered. He looked down at his console and began reviewing the information on the two vessels. Seeing it, he realized he had only one option.

"Helm, reduce speed to Warp 1.2. Khoal, I want maximum counter measures. Weapons, have mine crews prepared in the shuttle bay, and charge the main torpedo to enveloping." "With that expenditure of power we will not be able to outrun the enemy." Y'nath again interjecting his opinion. "Helm, review your data. That is a Federation drone frigate and some type of modified destroyer. We haven't the ability to outrun or out maneuver them. We have one option. We must out think them, now, enough of this senatorial debate. Navigator, give me feedback on those ships." Thue, looked down and began calculating.

"Destroyer is at 70,000 klicks, warp 1.3 and increasing. Frigate is at 41,000 klicks, warp 2, and increasing. "Updates, at standard intervals," Dael instructed. "Starting with you Science." "ECM at maximum, Riov. Also, extensive coded communications between the two targets. Very active," Khoal responded immediately. Again, Halum was right at his heels.

"Phaser capacitors at full, primary torpedo 1/3 charged, charging port and starboard torpedoes. Crews are in the shuttle bay at mine racks. The marines are readied and awaiting orders." "We are retrograde to the Federation vessels and maintaining Warp 1.4," Y'nath seemed to be focused on his duties now. "The ships batteries are at full, and we are operating at 2/3 power on impulse and warp." The voice of Nveid almost seemed foreign to Dael as he had hardly heard the engineer speak at all during the entire mission. "Riov," Thue was looking confused. "The frigate has separated by more than 15,000 klicks from the other ship and increasing. It has moved to maximum attack speed, but the other vessel has leveled out at warp 2.5." Dael looked at his own screen. What was going on here? He had studied Federation tactics, and this seemed highly unusual. What did they have in mind? Together the two ships were a formidable strike group. Alone, neither was a match for the heavy cruiser.

His thoughts were interrupted by a slight jolt that rocked the bridge.

"Phaser fire from the lead vessel," Halum boomed. "At distance and with ECM no damage sustained." "Foolish waste of phasers," Thue commented. "Just a warning shot," Halum answered. "To let us know what we can expect if we don't surrender now." "Then it was a waste of phasers," Dael interjected. "There is no such thing as surrender protocol in the Rihannsu navy." "Riov, the frigate is within 16,000 klicks. They are separated by 30,000 klicks from their allied vessel." "Weapons are fully charged," Halum responded to Dael's unasked question. "Sir," Khoal got his attention. "The target has launched drones. High grade warheads, with a warp 3.2 maximum speed." This statement was followed by the rocking of phaser fire. That had to be ignored. Somehow, this Federation Captain, with his years of Academy training had made a fatal error. It did not matter what strategy he had thought to employ, it would not be enough; not unless the Federation had developed some new weapon. If that was the case then it mattered little, otherwise the Wraith would now teach this captain the error of his ways.

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"All phasers on point defense. Helm, initiate HET maneuver of one-eight-zero now. Bring all torpedoes to bear on target. Deploy standard mine now." The Wraith's warp engines surged with the demand for instant power that the high-energy turn required. Suddenly, the ship lurched as the ship turned 180 degrees on its axis. The move brought the two combatants face to face. At six clicks, a distant roar filled their ears as the three torpedoes raced to their target. At the same time phasers lanced out from the Wraith and dispatched the warp missiles the frigate had fired earlier. A moment later the Federation ship was engulfed in the prismatic implosion of three plasma torpedoes. The forward view screen turned into a light show that was both beautiful and terrible. There was no sight of the enemy vessel for several seconds, then the image of a ship began to appear.

"The frigate is veering, but it took all three plasmas on the fore shield. Fore shield is down and remaining shields read 30% strength. Mine has detonated and damaged her aft shield. Target hull integrity down 15%." Khoal recited his litany with an almost matter of fact style. Thue was a little more excitable.

"Riov," she turned from her station to look up at Dael. "The enemy has reduced speed to impulse." "Brace for impact!" Halum's warning barely got out as the Wraith's shields absorbed multiple poundings. The Tristan was not about to be forgotten. "Two of three photon torpedoes have struck the aft port shield," Halum followed up his warning. "The destroyer is at 14,000 clicks and approaching at speed warp 2." Thue had apparently regained her composure. The ship again felt the sting of phaser fire as the Federation vessel began to pursue in earnest. Dael was calmer now. He could see the strategy forming in his mind. A confidence began to grow as the situation revealed itself and in doing so showed him that victory was in his grasp.

The shields again crackled under the Federation warship's phasers. It seemed to Dael that they had an endless supply. "Damage?" He called out. "Aft port shield at ninety-eight percent captain," Khoal's reply. "Enemy at 10,000 clicks." "Charge main torpedo to normal strength. Deploy standard mine. Helm, on my mark." Dael sent the coordinates to Y'nath. He intended to build a wall and attempt to keep the two enemy vessels separated. One on one they could not withstand the Wraith's firepower. More phaser fire from the destroyer glanced across the rear shields.

"Aft shield at ninety-eight percent." "Incoming torpedoes." Halum spoke more calmly now. "Torpedoes have missed." The forward screen showed one of the photons disappearing into the dark. Sparkling like a deadly gem as it arced out into space. "Deploy nuclear mine." Dael instructed, and now no one questioned him. "Destroyer has easily navigated the mines and is beginning to gain. Now at 11,000 clicks." "Torpedoes and phasers fully charged." Halum was seeing the plan now. "Y'nath, bring us about 180 degrees. Weapons, at 4,000 clicks or better, fire torpedoes only." The Romulan cruiser began its slow turn. Wheeling about like a hawk on the wind. As it finished the half circle, the destroyer closed the distance quickly. Dael expected to feel the jolt of an all out strike, but none came. Then the plasmas were fired. As they sped out, the destroyer moved to take the brunt on his port shields.

"Bring us about, Helm, on my mark." Dael had begun to say more, but was interrupted by Khoal. "The enemy has deployed a mine." "They are beginning to bring their ship hard around to maneuver behind us." Thue alerted. Well, done Dael thought to himself. The mine blocks our turn on him and he thinks to pin me between his two ships.

"Khoal, release the suicide shuttle. Helm, bear hard starboard and keep the mines between us and the frigate." "The destroyer is veering hard away from the shuttle, Riov." Thue paused then continued. "Enemy aft phasers have destroyed the shuttle." "Destroyer has sustained internal damage and hull integrity is at ninety-two percent." "On my mark bring us about and return to my previous heading." Dael reviewed the data. He had damaged both ships. They must see that it would be better to allow us to leave then continue this hopeless fight.

"Navigation, status of the two enemy vessels?" "The destroyer has retreated and joined the frigate. They appear to be moving into some type of formation and are synchronizing at speed point nine." More phaser fire ate into the Wraith's shields. This was followed by two photon torpedoes, which sped off harmlessly. "Halum, as we come along the mine deployed by the enemy, deploy one of our own." Halum answered with a nod, then spoke.

"Frigate has launched warp missiles." "Maintain speed and bring us into an alignment that will allow the missiles to pass between the mines." "Sir?"

Y'nath had been silent until now, but this seemed to raise his curiosity. "A mine might easily dispatch them?" "Patience, Helm. The rear phasers and a tractor will handle the missiles. I want the Federation captain to make a choice. Lose ground going around the mines, or take the damage in his zeal to take us." Dael needed these officers to know that his mind was working well and that his strategies could lead them to victory or safety, whichever might be more preferable.

"These wolves are too hungry, and that has caused them to make mistakes. I am giving them a chance to get their heads about them and leave." The Wraith maneuvered into position as the missiles passed between the mines and dove toward their destination. A moment later defensive phasers eliminated two of the three drones. As the last one began to catch up with the cruiser, the blue light of the tractor beam shimmered and held it at bay until the rear phasers rearmed and eliminated it. At the same time, the Federation ships fired phasers.

"Rear shields now at eighty percent, Riov..." Khoal was interrupted by Thue at navigation. "The two vessels have matched our course. The destroyer has detonated one of the mines. The frigate has veered off and is now returning to previous bearing." Dael wanted to act quickly now. The small separation of the vessels might be his only chance.

"Deploy standard mine. On my mark bring us about on the port." The ship again began its cumbersome turn. On the front view screen, the Federation destroyer's twin warp nacelles, placed above and below her hull, loomed close. The sparkle of two photon torpedoes could be seen speeding at the Romulans. Thue's voice rose above the bridge noise, and the steely quality it had gained gave Dael a measure of comfort. "Enemy speed, warp 1. Distance, 6,000 clicks." The front port shield absorbed the impact of one of the photons.

"Fire port simulacrum." "Torpedo away." Halum boomed. The pseudo plasma burned toward the enemy ship, but impacted harmlessly, drawing no phaser fire.

"Bring us around and fire all weapons" At the same moment that Halum bent to engage the Wraith's arsenal, the Tristan also let loose a salvo. Phasers and photon, along with two small warp missiles struck the front shields rocking the Romulan ship. "Front shield at forty-two percent," Khoal warned loudly. "Helm, hard starboard then around on my mark." "Enemy ship at fifty percent hull integrity." A second later the front screen filled with the bulk of a Federation drone frigate. Across the top of her saucer shaped hull, the name Azrael could be seen. Dael held his breath waiting for the barrage of heavy missiles he knew would be coming. The ships passed by each other quietly, as if at some naval display. Dael let his breath out confused and relieved; then urgent.

"Deploy mine." Dael shouted. Point phasers lanced out from the frigate to splash against the rear shields. The ships began to separate and more phaser fire, followed by three drones. Phaser fire continued as the destroyer had come about. Both Federation vessels were now pursuing.

"Warp missiles incoming. Incoming torpedo." Halum's statements were punctuated by the shocking impact of an explosion. Two of the drones had been eliminated by phasers, but a third had struck the ship along with the photon. The tractor had failed to stop the third missile. "Aft shield at sixty-six percent." "Tractor malfunction." It was an absurdly calm remark from the still unfamiliar voice of Nveid. "I am working to compensate." "Science, mark the position of the nuclear space mine and feed the data to Helm. Helm, bring us around that mine in a tight arc. Bring us head on with the destroyer." Dael needed this to end soon. He knew how deadly drones were and there was no telling how close Federation reinforcements might be. "Missiles incoming." The warning was premature though. The arc around the mine was quick enough to place it between the Wraith and the powerful warheads. As they came within range the mine detonated and all three were incinerated.

"Fire starboard simulacrum. At optimal range fire forward phasers. The torpedo rushed out toward the Tristan and this time drew phaser fire before impacting harmlessly. With the threat of a lethal exchange gone, the Wraith's phasers cut through the enemy's front shield and scoured the egg-shell colored hull with dark burns. "Bring us about on starboard, Helm. Fire starboard torpedo at will." The ship bent around and as the destroyer came into view the yellow-green plasma streaked outward and downed another shield.

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"The destroyer is down below fifty percent hull integrity." "Now, Y'nath bring us to bear on the frigate. Weapons, fire torpedoes at will. Now they shall feel the talons." The Federation frigate and the Romulan heavy cruiser began to swing toward each other. As they drew up face to face, Halum launched the two plasmas on their errand of death. The great red fireball of the main torpedo followed quickly by the lesser port weapon. The frigate was still badly damaged from the earlier encounter. Now, as the implosion began, the ship tore itself apart from the inside out. Heat and flame raced along the shattered metallic bits as they flew outward and scattered like so many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

There was a sudden and strange silence on the bridge, save for the sound of equipment and alarms. It was no small thing to take the life of an enemy. You struggle and hate during battle, but when death comes there is an instant of solemnity. A recognition, that a being: sentient, vital, fighting for survival, has passed to the place beyond the stars. The reverie, which may have lasted for half a second, was broken by the voice of Khoal.

"Riov, the other Federation vessel is signaling us. They are requesting terms for surrender." Dael breathed heavily. There was only one response he could give.

"Signal the Federation captain, that there are no protocols for surrender in the Rihansu Navy. Y'nath bring us around on the downed fore shield. Halum, as plasmas are charged, fire at will." The orders were brutal in their efficiency. As each officer bent to their assigned task, they knew it must be this way. There could be no survivors to verify that the Wraith had ever been there. No enemy who might fight against them another day. They must disappear into the backdrop of space like the ghost for which their ship was named. That was their best chance of making it back through the Neutral Zone and home.

The Tristan began maneuvers trying to turn her bad shields away from the Romulan ship, but she hadn't the power. The Wraith swooped into position and two yellow-green plasmas began to burn their way toward the Federation ship. In a last futile attempt to fend off destruction, she fired her remaining phasers at the fiery missiles looking to reduce their damage. They relentlessly continued on and impacted on the destroyer. The rear section along with the nacelles disintegrated while the hull burst into three pieces and sheared outward. The battle was over. There was a feeling of relief that settled over the bridge. Each officer turning to the other and measuring out the satisfaction and joy at living. The kind of joy that only those who have faced the darkness and made it to the light can feel. Again, the moment lasted only a few seconds before it was interrupted.

"Khoal," the Riov spoke softly. "Open up communications to the rest of the ship." "Aye, Aye," he responded. "Ship's intercom is open." "We have survived. For the moment we may spread our wings and know that the T'liss, which we etch on our vessels with pride, rules the heaven's alone. Our banners shall wave with pride in the halls of the Senate, but we cannot celebrate that honor too soon. Let each of us move to our duties quickly. Deck officers shall observe post combat procedures. We are to continue to operate under hostile territory protocols. Rotation of shifts shall take place two hours ahead of schedule to allow combat personnel relief and rest time. That is all." Dael signaled quietly and Khoal turned the intercom off.

"We have done well here today. There is much to consider about the events, but that will wait. Move us to Yellow Alert. Have the marines move from deck to deck and present a report on injuries and damage, along with those of the deck officers. I want a deep scan begun of the sector, particularly on the reverse heading of the two Federation ships. I want full systems and station reports from everyone. Are there any questions?" Dael looked over the bridge and no one said a word. He then began to look over the information already pouring in from around the ship. The others began their work in earnest.

Some fifteen minutes into their work Khoal spoke.

"Riov, long range scanning is picking up a faint signal. It is growing clearer." Dael knew what was coming next.

"It is from the direction that the Federation ships approached." Curse the Federation and their level of organization. If the Wraith had seen them then the Federation vessel with its superior sensors must certainly have seen the Wraith. Once the enemy ship began to sweep this system it would be a simple matter of deduction and then a race to the Neutral Zone. That was a race he could not win. Especially, as there was likely to be a few ships waiting at

the finish line. He could not accept that there was no chance to survive, no chance to win the day. His mind began searching for something, anything that might aid his ship. Then it came to him. The information about the moon that was orbiting the gas giant.

"Science, feed me all the data you collected on the satellites of this system." He turned to look at his console anxiously. "Feeding you the data now, Riov." After Khoal's reply the bridge fell silent. Even the brash Y'nath said nothing to break Dael's concentration. He scanned the information looking for the paragraph he had remembered. He must be sure he had read it correctly. A few minutes later Dael looked up.

"Navigator, plot an orbiting course for the moon of Tantalus. We are going to initiate an aerodynamic landing." Dael finished and no one moved. Y'nath spoke up first. "An aerodynamic landing, Riov? I am afraid the ships of the line do not have that capability. I have only performed it in training on simulation." "Then I suspect you had better prepare yourself as best you can Helm," Dael responded coolly, "because in less than an hour you will land this ship on that moon." He completed his sentence by pointing at the front view screen that was now displaying the great blue orb. "Riov," from Khoal now. "The planet is completely covered with water and will shortly be engulfed by the most violent types of meteorological phenomenon." "Precisely, Khoal." Dael began to step down from the Command deck and towards the front of the bridge. "That planet, according to our data is about to become a natural counter measure, an organic cloaking device. With the storms raging on the surface, along with the high electrical activity we will be shielded from any scans the Federation ship makes in seeking to find the answers he needs. If he has seen us, of which there can be little doubt, then he will wonder where we have gone." Dael had made his way to the view screen now and was pointing to it speaking as if he were teaching some academy class.

"The planet will hide our presence and the most likely explanation for the Federation captain will be that we have cloaked and made best speed to the Neutral Zone. The moon experiences this atmospheric change in its most extreme form for the first six days. After that we will surface and make our way back into space and quietly move to the border while cloaked. We will be behind our hunters all the way and then we will look for the best opportunity to slip back across the Neutral Zone." He finished and as he reviewed the bridge all the crew was staring wide eyed in his direction. No matter, he thought, he knew the plan would work. He merely needed all his officers to do their jobs as they had done so far. He had explained and cajoled, now it was time to discipline.

"Enough of the explanation. This is what we will do. We can waste no more time. The vessel that is approaching may very well be a Dreadnought or even another strike group. Unless anyone would rather face that at the moment, there is serious work to do." An hour later the Wraith of Taprek was sitting on the choppy waters of the moon's surface, preparing to submerge. "Being underwater is very similar to being in space. The ship is equipped with everything it needs to survive in these conditions." Dael was speaking over the intercom as the crew readied themselves.

Khoal had scanned the surface as they came into the atmosphere and found a point where the water was approximately three hundred feet deep. Dael knew the ship could safely navigate that depth and be shielded from off planet.

"Begin submerging Helm." Y'nath took a deep breath. "Aye, Aye, Riov." Air was released. The ship tilted and jerked. Then the slow sensation of being dropped overtook them. Y'nath and Khoal were working at their stations making adjustments to modify the descent and to place the ship carefully on the sea floor. Nveid was also making calculations and double-checking all the ship systems alert for any danger. Shortly, there was a muffled gong that ran through the ship and they were done. Orders were issued to secure the ship as best as possible and checks made on all decks. The storms would begin in another half a day and they must be ready to weather them out. Dael retired to his quarters. There was a bottle of wine there that he had brought in hopes of celebration, but now seemed the best time to drink it. He was beginning to realize that a ship commander often had to look to another day alive as reason to celebrate. He was not going to miss the chance to do so. The vintage came from a winery that grew its grapes hydroponically on one of the many barren asteroids that floated in his home galaxy. It was a deep amber color and had a light texture that was unique. Some said the quality was the result of the low gravity they grew in. Dael wasn't sure,

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but in his mind it had no equal. He sat in the great chair in his quarters and stared out the window into the dark waters. There were few luxuries afforded on the older ships, but one that always appealed to Dael was the window in the Riov's quarters. A great clear panel that looked over the back of the vessel. Routinely it was closed during flight and combat, but presently he had it wide open. He had requested that the navigation officer on duty turn on the

landing lights. The great sea around them was illuminated and he now basked in the look of the strange aquatic life forms of this alien moon. He leaned back and drank deeply. It was quiet here in the Commander's quarters. Quiet enough to think, quiet enough to remember...

Race Profile: *The Gorn*

E.L. "SFCSfaret" Crisler



Ask a player about the Federation in Starfleet Command, not the ships or the way they play, but about the people of the Federation, the government, and their ideals. That player will be able to quickly provide an answer. As the same player about the Klingons or the Romulans, again an answer is easily forthcoming. These three races have been well defined over the years by the Star Trek fans around the world. Their cultures, ideals, even their languages have been fleshed out. Playing these races it is easy to immerse yourself into the game. To BECOME a Romulan, a Klingon or even a Starfleet officer.

Sadly the same cannot be said about the other races in SFC. The Lyrans have a bit more culture definition; a lot of stuff was done about them in SFB. The Hydrans have some but in many ways they are very background poor. Then we have the Gorn, a race that actually made the show for one episode. We know what they look like and where they are from. Tidbits of background have leaked out but while SFB provided some material, the truth is the Gorn are largely undefined. At least they seem that way to me.

When I started playing SFB all those years ago, this aspect of the Gorn bothered me. I would grab every piece of Gorn fiction that was published in the old Captains Logs. I would devour them and try to flesh out the race I loved the play. But the more I read the more it read like Federation material. Oh true they were giant lizards and some difference where seen, but their culture was left undefined and the stories felt like Federation stories with the characters having a different costume.

Well after a while I found this boring and felt cheated. However rather than run to play another race, I took it upon myself to correct this lack of information. And so about 1985 I started on what you see today. Until a few weeks ago this collection was a bunch of notes, scattered on various pieces of paper and mental notes that were buried under years of other material.

This material is based on information garnished from SFB, the original Star Trek Series and the FASA Star Trek game. These various sources were used as a base for my work here, not as definitive sources. All material here is unofficial at best. I freely release this material into the public domain. All I ask in return is proper recognition of the author.

Gorn Physiology

The Gorn reptilian ancestry is obvious. However a number of stereotypes based on this appearance began to circulate mere moments after the Gorn where first seen in the episode, the Arena. Lets take some time to look at what the Gorn truly are.

As is obvious the Gorn are of a reptilian descent. However it is more than a cosmetic ancestry. Like Reptiles on earth the Gorn are cold blooded and lay eggs for reproduction.

As can be seen in the episode in which they appeared, the Gorn are physically larger than humans. The average Gorn stands 7' 3" and weighs in about 475 pounds. This makes him about 1' 4" and almost 2 times the weight of an average human. Now on first glance the Gorn would appear to be heavier

than what the average is. This is an illusion based on outward appearance. Gorn bones are actually hollow, this means that while the structure is larger the average Gorn weighs less than he would appear. While the bones are hollow, the bones have a unique hex cell structure that makes them incredible strong. Hence an average Gorn bone weighs about half as much as a human bone but has almost 10 times the strength.

The large Gorn eyes enable the Gorn to receive a great deal of visual information. They have almost 20% better peripheral vision than a human however they also have a drawback. The Gorn home worlds are all in systems with red stars. This has resulted in the Gorn developing under more subdued lighting conditions than humans. Almost a constant state of twilight for the day, as such the Gorn eye collects a lot of light, enabling better night vision. However they find our light, with it's whites and blues, very glaring and in some instances actually painful. Imagine a bright sunny day on a fresh covered snowfield and you begin to get the idea. Gorn hearing is almost similar to human hearing, except the Gorn can hear better than humans in the lower frequencies. Basically what this means is that the Gorn hear better in the bass noise ranges and not quite as well in the higher noises.

The Gorn physical strength advantage over humans is obvious. This is largely due to the sheer size of the Gorn. However it also has to do with the amount of muscle mass the Gorn possess. An average human has around 10% body fat, while the average Gorn has less than 2% body fat. This means that most of the Gorn mass is made up of muscle tissue. However this tissue is of the slow-twitch variety and as such the Gorn have impressive strength and endurance but lack the speed of humans and most other races. The best analogy of this would be, in a fistfight a human can hit a Gorn 10 times before the Gorn would land his first punch, but he would only need one.

Speaking of fighting. The Gorn possess claws on both hands and feet. Many have assumed that these are used during combat. While they can and are used, the Gorn tend to rely more on pure physical power in a fight. If they do use a natural weapon to fight, it tends to be the immense row of teeth they possess.

A close examination of the Gorn dental work reveals a solid row of incisors. These teeth are all meant to rip and tear at food, mostly meat. However a more detailed examination reveals an interesting fact. While the Gorn have an excellent set of incisors, they lack any form of molars. Basically this means that the Gorn can rip the food apart into bite size chunks but the teeth are not designed to effectively crunch and grind the food down for easy passage and digestions. This leads to a fascinating area of Gorn physiology, the Gorn throat.

As mentioned above, when a Gorn eats, his teeth are designed to rip the food apart. Once the bite is in his mouth the Gorn swallows the bite whole. The Gorn throat is able to expand to almost 1/2 again its full size. As the food passes down the Gorn throat the muscles contract on the food, crushing it and pulverizing it before it reaches the stomach.

Another interesting aspect of the Gorn is their taste system. This also doubles as their sense of smell. It is so highly refined that Gorn can taste pheromone changes in other Gorn around them. In fact this sense of taste/smell is so accurate that in a room full of Gorn, each one can distinguish the smells of



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the others individually. This highly developed sense has had a major impact of many aspects of Gorn society and even it's language. Added to this is an extreme level of pheromone and hormone control. Gorn are actually able to elevate and lower their level of release so that their scent can be controlled to some extent. Further research has shown that the Gorn are actually three different races. While the Gorn have evolved on three separate worlds, in truth they are the same species. Gorn from each of the three home worlds can freely procreate, transfuse blood, and even provide organ donations. Most of the differences between the three races are purely cosmetic. This commonality between the three Gorn races has led to a lot of research. Genetically the Gorn are almost a perfect match, also the fossil records of all three worlds do not support the Gorn as having evolved there. As such major speculation has begun in support of the Gorn being a transplanted race.

As mentioned, the differences between the races are largely cosmetic. Such things as the size of the nose, the shape of the head, all of these vary in minor detail and even vary within each race. The most common difference seems to be seen in the coloration of the scales. The Gorn from Ghdar tend toward gray and off white edging on their scales. The Geydar tend toward shades of brown and tan. The Gorn from Gihdahr have little in the way of edge coloration, they do tend to have a wider variance in the overall scale color, ranging from a dark, almost black green to much paler shades of green.

Of interesting note with this, is the nature of the worlds that each race lives on. Ghdar is a temperate planet with a great deal of rocky terrain; most of the stone has a gray coloration. The planet Geydar is mostly a desert world, with limited pockets of vegetation. Gihdahr is largely a forested world, with temperate and tropical forests throughout. This would seem to indicate that the Gorn possess some level of chameleon ability hidden within their genetic makeup. However further evidence can be found, a small, less than 1 in 10,000,000, percentage of the Gorn population are born with the chameleon gene active. These Gorn are recruited at an early age for special duties.

There are other color variations, ranging the full spectrum of color. The most rare is the blue/yellow edged scales. Over time these have come to denote royalty and are thus greatly revered and sought after.

What is even of more interest is that the differences between the Gorn sexes are even less pronounced than those between the Gorn races. The Gorn male reproductive organs are carried inside the male and only extrude during mating. Since the female lays eggs; there are not noticeable changes in the female anatomy to provide a way to feed the young. The only differences between male and female tend to be in the size and aggression level. In this case things will seem backward to a human. Gorn females tend to be 15% larger on the average than Gorn males; they are stronger and tend to be more aggressive. This has led to a large percentage of Gorn Marines and Security Guards being female. Now that we have the basic facts on the anatomy of the Gorn lets take a look at their life cycle. Gorn females have a limited fertility period, being able to lay eggs only twice per solar year. The period that the female may become pregnant is also limited usually only for a 48 hour cycle. This results in very few Gorn females being pregnant at any one time. As an example, a poll done in the old USA during the late 20th century showed that approximately 37% of the female human population was pregnant at any one time, in the case of the Gorn this percentage is much lower, closer to 2%. When a female does lay eggs, she will typically lay 5-8 eggs per clutch.

The eggs will lay the hatchery for about 180 days before hatching. When first laid the eggs have a leathery texture and are actually quite soft to the touch. During the incubation period the eggs grow, usually to almost 3 times their birth size. The shell hardens as the egg grows and is quite brittle when it is hatched. The baby Gorn that are produced stand about 2 1/2' tall and are fully capable of walking and eating solid food. They are born with a full set of teeth, claws and a tail. Gorn childhood is very short by human standards, with a Gorn reaching puberty by the age of 10 solar years. At this age the Gorn is typically 80% of his full size and has undergone an intensive education system. At this age the Gorn is considered an adult.

At this point the Gorn aging process slows a great deal. The middle of the Gorn life (for a human this stage is from age 20 to age 40) is from age 11 to roughly age 80. During this time no signs of age appear to slow down, weaken or in any way limit the activity of the Gorn. The next stage of the Gorn life (the equivalent of Human 41-60) lasts until the age of 120. This stage is signified by the loss of the ability to reproduce as well as a gradual decline in size and strength. From 120 to the end of the Gorn's life, usually

around age 160, the Gorn will gradually grow weaker and less active. However unlike many races the Gorn mind does not deteriorate with age. All the wisdom and knowledge the Gorn has accumulated over his life remains intact.

Birth of the Confederation

The Gorn Confederation, in the form of a three-world union began almost 290 years ago, assuming a present time in SFC of year 175 SFB. At this time the Gorn world of Ghdar had progressed to the point that they were beginning to colonize their own star system and had sent out the first manned mission to the closest neighboring star, Geydar.

It should be noted here how the home worlds of the Gorn are situated. All three worlds orbit a red star; the three red stars all exist within 1-1/2 light years of each other. While not technically a triple star system, they share some of the characteristics of such a system. As all three systems orbit the galaxy, they also orbit each other. Their position between the galactic arms made them an astronomical curiosity but probes to them would not be available for many years from other races due to their remote location.

When the first Ghdar ship reached Geydar the Gorn on the ship were very surprised. Here was a race that was nearing a major step forward into its industrial phase. (About late 1890's to early 1900's human development terms.) The Ghdar were so amazed at finding, what appeared to be themselves that they threw caution to the wind and made first contact immediately. Once the away team was down and seemed to be accepted the ship made a rapid return to Ghdar to report their findings. The political climate on Ghdar at this time was a race united. The Ghdar had in fact been united under a single king for almost 1000 years at this point. The King of Ghdar immediately declared Geydar a colony of his imperial court and dispatched 4 overlords to take control of the new colony. Now due to time this meant that it was almost 3 years from the time that the first ship had arrived until the second ship was launched. However the second ship used a new propulsion system. The new propulsion system was one of the early designs of warp power. Due to high fuel consumption and large size this drive was only produced in limited numbers and it was not until a more advanced design, many years later, which the Gorn stepped out of their triple star area of space. This new ship was able to cover the 1.3 light-year journey in about 6 months.

During this time things on Geydar had progressed much quicker than anticipated. The Ghdar Gorn where received as saviors and with more awe than was expected or actually typical. It seemed that the anthropological skills of the Geydar where far superior to the Ghdar. As such the Geydar already knew they had been transplanted here. The coming of the Ghdar was seen as the parents coming home to reclaim the children. This helped a great deal in the eventually subjugation of the Geydar world, since they literally handed it over. In fact they were so eager to help the Ghdar that by the time the next ship arrived, the Geydar had pretty much united all their minor nations and had begun work to adopt the Ghdar language.

At the same time this was all occurring a second interstellar ship had landed at Gihdahr. Again the Gorn arriving where amazed to discover a race that was in essence themselves. However the Gorn of Gihdahr where not as advanced as the Geydar, having only really entered a metal age stage of development.

The meeting here was much less cordial than the one the Gorn had met on Geydar. Here the Gorn where still very tribal and warlike and the Gorn landers where met with mixed reactions. Some felt they where invaders and fought them to the bitter end. In fact one small tribe was wiped out as they attempted to assault the Gorn lander. Others took the arrival as Gods falling from heaven. To their credit, the Gorn of Ghdar did not promote this view and rather fought against it.

In the end a larger Ghdar force was sent to take control of this new colony and within 5 years of initial contact the two additional worlds where under Ghdar control. For the next 15 to 20 years the Gorn were ruled under the leadership of the King of Ghdar. The abundance of natural resources from Gihdahr where exploited and the ready labor class of the Geydar used to refine the resources. However the Gorn where in fact a benevolent master. All the while their education system worked with the two less developed worlds and the Gorn quickly moved toward being a united people.

The first such step came with the fall that any child would experience with a first step. It seems that an examination of the Gorn worlds by the Geydar

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Anthropologists revealed that NONE of the Gorn were native to their three worlds. In truth all three Gorn species were planted on the planets they had known as home. This caused quite a stir on Geydar, since they had allowed themselves to be easily subjugated due to a belief that the Gorn on Ghdar had a right to rule them. This level of public dissention created a lot of stirring within the Gorn Monarchy. It seems at this time the Gorn of Geydar account for almost 50% of the total Gorn population. As such an uprising by these Gorn could and would succeed.

In a move to head off this problem the King of Ghdar proposed a new government be formed. One that showed the Gorn as three people but one race. And so the Confederation was born. Some early strife did exist, especially among the nobles of Ghdar, but in the end a more representative form of government won out.

Today the Gorn have become a truly single race. When you realize that many of the Gorn that were a part of the early Confederation are still alive today this is truly miraculous. Some social classing still exists but for the most part it has been eliminated in the society. The Grays of Ghdar tend toward political roles and science pursuits. The Browns of Geydar are mostly in the industrial and middle management roles. The Greens of Gihdahr were at first the most warlike of the Gorn races and still today occupy most of the positions in Gorn Space Command.

From Birth

Now that we see how the Gorn exists as a people lets take a look at the young and how they are raised. As mentioned in the first section, Gorn are born from eggs. Various communities to raise these young Gorn use the old Gorn. Since Gorn in their old age, do not lose their mental facilities, they are considered the perfect teachers of the young.

The family structure of the Gorn is very loose. Few is any Gorn truly know who their parents were, with the exception of the royal family of Ghdar. When the eggs are laid the female moves on to other pursuits and the community raises the young Gorn.

The family units a Gorn grows to know are very broad. The Clutch, is the group of Gorn all born in the same community within about a month of each other. These are the Gorn the child spends most of its first 10 years with the closest thing to family a Gorn knows. The Clan is the community a Gorn grows up in. These are his teachers and his early role models. They shape the ideals of the Gorn child. The pack is the Gorn one works with. They can be shipmates, school chums or co-workers in a factory.

The Clan educates the Gorn child until the age of 10. In this time the young Gorn will receive the equivalent of a college education and have a good sense of what he wants to do with his life. At the age of ten the Gorn is put through the Rite of Passage. This ceremony marks the end of his childhood and the beginning of being an adult.

The first step of the Rite is the removal of the tail from the Gorn. It seems that the Ghdar decided long ago that the tail of a Gorn was a sign of their animal roots and childhood. Hence at the age of 10 the Gorn has the tail removed. Even today this practice is still performed with this being an indication of adulthood.

However recently a small trend has grown on Gihdahr, where some females have decided that the tail will be left on. This is looked down on by the Gorn as a society, seen as an attempt to keep childhood. However another aspect less spoken of is the vulgarity of the tail. It seems that in an adult female the tail is actually a part of the anatomy that a male Gorn finds most arousing, hence walking around with the tail in full growth and exposed is much like a human female running around all day in a bikini.

Once the tail has been removed the Gorn picks his adult name. Until now any name used for him was considered that of a child. His first decision as an adult is to identify himself to all others. He must do this, as the Gorn feel it is not their right to choose the path or the person another Gorn should become.

Now the young Gorn determines his path, be it more schooling to be a scientist, entering the labor force, joining space command or entering the political arena. The Gorn's life is now his own and his path is totally his choice.

Language

As mentioned in an earlier section, the Gorn have a highly developed sense of smell/taste as well as a natural ability to control the release of pheromones/Hormones. These natural traits have led to a fascinating language being de-

veloped.

The Gorn language is actually two separate languages, a spoken language and a written language. The reason for this is that in the spoken language not only is sound and body language used, like in all other languages, but also scent.

It is this element of scent that has worked to create some interesting aspects in Gorn society as well as their language and it explains early misunderstandings between the Gorn and Humans. In the case of first contact with the Gorn, the universal translator had trouble with the Gorn language and human linguists could not understand why. Words that seemed to have no meaning or a twisted meaning would pop up and throw the entire translation into a tailspin. This stemmed from a problem the Gorn had in the development of their language.

You see as the Gorn developed spoken language the use of scent was a natural thing for them, and so it was added without thought. However as progress began the Gorn sought ways to record their language for future generations. So a second language was born, new words were created to describe the scent element that was missing and this new language was used for written material. As technology marched on and transmitted information was more common the written language was further adopted to allow it to work for voice transmissions. It was the extra words that described the scent element that cause the confusion in early attempts to translate.

However as any linguist can explain, language is core than a way to communicate, it can also define many aspects of a culture, and in the case of the Gorn it did lead to some interesting social conventions. The most well know is that Gorn do not lie. This is not a social or moral decision. With a language where the body chemistry of the speaker can be easily determined the ability to lie was greatly curtailed. Even with their excellent control over the scent release, a Gorn is unable to exercise total control and as such lies would be easily detected. So over the centuries the concept of deception, in the sense we understand, disappeared. To a Gorn a lie is the withholding of information. This particular attitude has led to some interesting situations when diplomatic relations were held with the Gorn.

The lack of deception in their society also led to an attitude of handling things head on. When you do not like something you don't skirt it, you fix it. When something threatens you, you don't scare it off, you kill it. This has led to a great deal of confusion on the Gorn part, where human handling of race relations are concerned. The Gorn feel that a problem should be dealt with directly. The attitude of saber rattling or long diplomatic discussions seems a waste. Especially when they look at Human history and see that in most case the end result was not a solution at all and the problem eventually had to be dealt with anyway. So we end up with a Gorn race that is extremely straightforward and totally truthful. However the Gorn can also be tight lipped. Their use of scent in their language has led to a great deal of interest in privacy. This extends not only to their personal lives, but to their society as well. Early encounters with alien races have not gone well. To date the Gorn have encountered four different species in their space explorations, wars have been fought with all of them. One race was even destroyed due to these wars. This has left the Gorn feeling threatened, when combined with their limited resource availability for their area of space. When added to their direct approach to life, the Gorn are extremely protective of what is theirs. (A good analogy is to compare the Gorn to 1980s Israel. Threatened on all sides and willing to do whatever it took to survive.)

A final area that the Gorn language has made an interesting impact in is the area of entertainment. Most races gradually developed recorded and mass broadcast entertainment, the Gorn did not. They felt that by losing the scent element the entertainment was shallow and empty. As such the live arts thrive on Gorn worlds and starships. Every Gorn ship actually has a small amphitheatre built within it for entertainment. Gorn plays and concerts are major events, held regularly. The Gorn have nothing that equates with recorded music or movies.

Note: This has actually begun to change over the last few months. Gorn technology has developed a holographic projection system that also includes scent within it as well as using force fields to make objects solid. Early forms of this are now being used on Gorn command vessels however; private industries are researching a way to make it more accessible to the general public.

Government

The Gorn Confederation of today has a Constitutional Monarchy. What this

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means is that the King of Ghdar still holds some power but the Confederate Assembly limits this power. The actual power of the King is based on his popularity and personal power.

The Gorn government is actually one of the most complex and yet simple systems ever devised. The history of it is quite drawn-out, not in the amount of time but in the amount of things that happened to create it within a short period of time. The Government, in its current form has been in place for about 115 years as of Y175. Rather than try to cover how it came about, lets look at what it is.

The Gorn government begins at a local level. Each Gorn planet is divided into provinces. Each province has an overlord, a hold out from the old days of rule under a King. Each city (clan) within the province sends a representative to council that the overlord resides over. This planetary council then decides events for their planet but tends to try to stay out of provincial matters. In turn this planet sends reps to the Gorn Assembly and the Assembly attempts to stay out of planetary affairs.

Basically the Assemblies job is to govern over the resource abundance that each system provides and distribute it as needed within Gorn space. The Assembly also handles dealings with other races and provides control over Gorn space defense and policing.

The Gorn do not have a tax system in the normal sense of the term. Rather each province sends any abundance of resources to the planetary council. This council distributes the resources throughout the planet as needed. Any extra is sent to the Assembly and it then distributes throughout Gorn space. This simple system has worked quite effectively and done its job of making the standard of living for all Gorn nearly equal. The only taxes the governments apply are tariffs on items brought to Gorn space by other races. As well on any Gorn material sold to other races.

As was mentioned, the Gorn has a Constitutional Monarchy, but the royal family is not a traditional family. Any Gorn born with a Blue/Yellow coloration is considered a member of the royal family. The positions of overlord and the monarchy are all held by Gorn with this particular trait. Since the trait does not seem to be hereditary there is little in the way of a consistent bloodline for the throne. When a King dies or steps down the royals all hold a council to vote in a new monarch. This has actually worked quite well. The royals understand the limits to the monarchies power and tend to try to position a new King that will gain power, thus helping them gain power. Yet at the same time they do not want one so powerful as to over rule them, nor do they want a monarch that is not sympathetic toward their own planetary needs. On the whole this system of checks and balances looks to work well. This system for deciding the new king has actually been in use by the Ghdar for almost 800 years and there has NEVER been a war to dethrone a king.

The assembly is made up of two groups. The overlords of the planets of the Confederation make up the Hall of Worlds. Each province from the planets send an elected official to the Assemble to represent them, this is called the Den of the Folk. Both parts of the government them come together and elect a Lord of the Assembly to oversee the government. This has, on occasion been the King, but it can be anyone, including non-Assembly members. Members of the Den of the Folk serve 10-year terms, the royals all serve lifetime terms. The positions of planetary and provincial overlords are the same as with the King.

Military

The Gorn military follows the same structure as the government in many aspects. The overall command structure provides a general strategy or a set of specific goals. The sector commander then refines the goals as he sees fit and issues them to the fleet or ship commander. This commander then determines how to make it actually happen. There is a great deal of freedom at each level and results are in most case more important than methods.

Lets begin by taking a look at the Gorn military training methods. Most races have an Academy, to train their officers. The Gorn have 4 such academies. The training begins when the Gorn enlists. He will undergo three days of intensive testing. Then he will undergo another 2 days of physiological evaluation. Once this is done the Gorn is assigned to the particular training area best suited for his skills.

The Enlisted School is the training facility for the everyday crewmen of the Gorn space forces. These are skilled laborers that showed no special talents or skills. They will never advance high in rank but their efforts are always

included with respect for without them the Navy would not exist. Their ranks include, Recruit, Junior Crewman, Senior Crewman and Exemplary Crewman.

The Marine School is where the security forces and ground force for the Gorn are taught. As with the enlisted these Gorn will become nothing more than what they are but there are highly respected for the dangerous job they perform. Ranks include: Private, Corporal, Junior Sergeant, Senior Sergeant, and Master Sergeant.

The next school is the Support Academy. These Officers are trained to run certain departments on a starship. These include navigation, sciences, medical and engineering. These officers can obtain the following ranks: Ensign, Junior Lieutenant, Senior Lieutenant, and Exemplary Lieutenant.

The last school is Command School. These Gorn have shown excellent leadership skills and excel in the areas of command. They are trained with a base knowledge of all aspects of a ships operations but do not have the in-depth skills of the others schools. Ranks include: Junior Commander, Senior Commander, Junior Captain, and Senior Captain.

All ranks listed are Human translations and approximations.

The upper echelon of Gorn Space Command are made up of Gorn that have begun to reach older ages and so felt it was time to retire from the field. They then bring their skills to the administrative level. When a Gorn chooses this direction he is promoted to higher ranks over his area of expertise. These ranks include Commodore, Rear Admiral, and Vice Admiral. The Gorn Assembly, based on recommendations from the Gorn High Command, appoints the position of Fleet Admiral.

Basically what this means is that a Gorn knows where he is going in his career when he starts down the path. It is VERY rare that an Engineer ever receive command training. Or that an enlisted man ever advances to officer ranks.

The Gorn fleet command is divided along traditional lines. The Gorn 2nd fleet is assigned to the Federation border, it provides defense against possible federation aggression as well as watches for traders seeking to violate the trade laws of the Gorn. The 3rd fleet is charged with protecting the Romulan border and is the most active fleet in Gorn Space Command. It is considered an honor to be assigned to the 3rd fleet. The 4th fleet was assigned to help assist with Romulan defense and do exploration. However the discovery of a new race in this area have turned them more defensive. The 6th fleet currently is assigned for deep space exploration. Their task is to seek out new worlds for the Gorn to colonize.

The Gorn Home Fleet is actually made up of the 1st and 5th fleet. This large group of ships provides anti-piracy patrols as well as defense of the Gorn home worlds. It also is set to be a rapid response unit to either the federation or Romulan border as needed.

Gorn Special Units:

Guardians Errant: This is the oldest military group in Gorn service. The Guardians can trace their ancestry back to the Iron Age of the Ghdar. At that time the Guardians were formed by a group of nobles that felt the weak should be protected. So this group wandered Ghdar, defending the weak and fighting those that would hurt others. When Ghdar was eventually united under one King, the Guardians where the elite force that helped this to come about.

The Guardians continued in this capacity for most of Gorn history, serving as an elite force that protects Gorn from all enemies. However their allegiance shifted from the King during the unification. When the Ghdar began to subjugate the other two Gorn races the Guardians felt it was a crime and broke from their Royal charter. Within weeks of this happening the Gorn learned that the Ghdar where not the parent race of the Gorn, just another transplanted group. Many feel that the Guardians position was a swaying factor in the formation of the Confederate Assembly.

To this date the Guardians serve as the special forces of the Assembly. However there are secrets within the Guardians that most Gorn do not know. The Guardians are more than the special forces of the assembly; they are also their intelligence agency. The Guardians have made pacts with various Orion clans, providing weapons and personnel, in return for intelligence about their neighbors. Since it would not be possible for a Gorn spy to appear on, say a Romulan world, this was a logical choice. The Guardians apparent close tie with some Orions has led many to believe they are mercenaries. They have

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done little to dissuade this thinking since it helps provide cover for their other activities.

In truth the Guardians Errant continue their tradition as noble defenders of the Gorn. They have pledged their lives to defend the Gorn from all enemies, without or within. They fight for love of their people and pride of their heritage. Since they often have to fight alone, the Guardians tend to have larger ships than the King's Guard. However while the Kings Guard operates in small squadrons the Guardians tends to operate alone. Shadow Guardians: This organization is almost unheard of and is actually a subsection of the Guardians Errant. The Shadow Guardians are an elite force of Gorn Marines. Even more elite than the Gorn Vanguard teams. This team has a certain limitation that makes it work so well. All it's members have an active chameleon gene. Totalling about 100, this team is used on only the most vital missions. When not being deployed they are usually assigned a security chiefs on various Guardian Errant ships.

The Kings Guard: This united was formed about 50 years after the planet Ghdar was united. The Guardians Errant, while a strong a loyal unit, were not loyal to the King but rather the people. This bothers those in royalty so they formed an elite guard to protect their interest. This guard is loyal to the royals first and then the Gorn people. Members of the Kings Guard are chosen from the ranks of the Gorn Space Command and then sent to special training. They are truly elite warriors with skills that are unsurpassed.

The Kings Guard operate in small squadrons, usually with Destroyers and Light Cruisers. Due to the nature of their operations they are incredible small unit and fleet action fighters but in solo combat they are not usually as skilled.

Defenders of the Egg: This group is less a military force and more a group of religious fanatics. While they do follow the normal chain of command, they also feel they must answer to a higher power, the Mistress of Fertility. This religious order works with concert to the goals of the nobility. In fact they promote the use of various methods to produce a larger percentage of Blue-Yellow scaled Gorn. While the Assembly does not favor it, the nobility has allowed the Mistress to recruit a small fleet of Gorn ships to her cause. They provide a body guard to the Mistress as well as ferry her priest to various functions.

Race Relations

Federation: The Gorn and Federation had first contact almost 25 years ago. This first meeting was disastrous. The Gorn had discovered the planet Cestus III along their borders a number of months before. When they finally got a ship sent to the planet, they discovered that another race had inhabited the planet.

To the Gorn all humanoid races look basically alike, so they assumed that the race they had found was a Romulan outpost. Fearing it was being setup for an attack, the Gorn Commander destroyed the colony. He then radioed for reinforcements to hold the system.

A Federation starship was dispatched to discover what had happened to the colony. Seeing it had been destroyed the federation officer also acted rashly and attacked the Gorn vessel. The Gorn Commander thought he was seeing a new Romulan design and so ran for home to be sure he could report this new weapon. At this point Federation historians want you to believe that the Gorn and Federation kissed and made up, such was not the case.

The Gorn returned to Cestus III a few days later, reinforcements had already been in route. The Federation had also dispatched other vessels. A short running battle took place, with the smaller Federation fleet being forced to flee. The Gorn then occupied Cestus III and dug in for a long war.

What followed was almost 6 months of border raids and minor battles as both side prepared for war. That is until the Kraagera Incident. A Gorn Commander reasoned that this conflict might be a mistake and that proper communications was needed. In a daring raid he drew a Federation patrol into battle and managed to kidnap about 15 crew members, including the Captain of the USS Loki. For the next 10 days the Kraagera ran for Gorn space with federation ships in close pursuit. However the two Commanders where finally able to work through the language barrier and begin a meaningful dialog.

A few weeks later the Romulans succeeded where peace talks where stalling. A Gorn Ca had been caught by Romulan forces along the border. The CA turned to run and the closest available ships was a small federation patrol. The Gorn Commander ran for the Federation border, hoping the Rom would

turn off or the that Federation and Romulans would be so busy with each other he could slip away. The federation Commander however rushed to the aid of the Gorn vessel, risking destruction of his own ship. The Gorn where so impressed by this that talks began in earnest. Within a month the treaty of Cestus III is signed, officially ending many months of hostilities and forging an alliance between these two races.

To this day the Gorn/Federation alliance seems to be the only such pact based on mutual trust and respect. There are still factions that consider the federation a threat and the same holds true within the federation. Both sides keep small but capable fleets along their mutual border.

Border skirmishes are now an extremely rare thing. They do still occur but 1 every 6 months is considered a lot. On the whole peace is complete between these two powers. So complete that they have mutually settled the Cestus III system and formed a joint colony.

Romulans: The Gorn and Romulans first met almost 140 years ago. The initial contact was peaceful with the Romulans withdrawing from the area after a brief communication. However two weeks later the Romulans arrived back to the same sector in force. The result was a war that last almost 3 years. The entire war was fought in and over the Shima system.

The Romulan and Gorn settled to an uneasy peace that the Romulans again broke when they attempted to steal the Gorns first true warp powered ship. With a few warp powered vessels available the Gorn where able to out flank Romulan forces and drive them from the Shima system.

At this point the Gorn could have driven the Romulans all the way back to Remus, but for reason that will be explained in the next relations section they chose not to drive to deep into Romulan territory.

For almost 20 years the Gorn enjoyed peace along the Romulan border, however it was not to last. the Romulans, with their newly developed cloaking device attacked deep into Gorn space. The cloak effectively neutralized the advantage that warp drive had given in a strategic sense, the Gorn now had to guess where the Romulans would strike. For six years this war raged and finally the Romulan withdrew, having suffered to many loses to sustain the fight.

The Romulans continued to stage minor raids into Gorn space but no major battles took place. However after almost 25 years of this minor skirmishing the Romulans struck a nerve when they raided and destroyed a clutch of 1000 eggs being transported to Ghdar to be blessed by the Mistress of Fertility. The Gorn where outraged and launched a massive offensive. The Romulans were able to hold the Gorn offensive down with a numeric advantage but not until they had lost a great deal of territory. This particular war lasted for almost 5 years. A treaty was negotiated but was never actually signed by the Romulans.

This history shows a trend that has been a bother to the Gorn. While there have been lulls in total warfare, in truth the fighting never has stopped, only slacked off. The Romulans pose a constant threat and the Gorn 3rd Fleet is on constant military alert.

Rumors abound in the 3rd Fleet control area that Romulans capture Gorns for use in hunting sports. They treat the Gorn prisoners like animals. Federation and Gorn Intelligence Agencies deny this practice exists, however the Gorn military is actually glad the rumor abounds. this keeps the fear of the Romulans high and makes it easier for Space Command to request new ships for the 3rd Fleet.

Paravians: This piece of Gorn history is little known and most outsiders have never heard it. The Paravians where an avian based race that existed core ward of the Gorn home worlds, about 5 light years distance. The Gorn first met the Paravians about 20 years after the start of unification. First contact was peaceful and talks where opened quickly. Discussions revealed that, like the Gorn, the Paravians had been planted on their planet. Examinations revealed that the Paravians appeared to be a genetic mutation of the Gorn species.

During these discussions a number of prejudice views where exhibited by the Gihadr. Similar views where also being stated on the Paravian home world. In fact the Paravians had legends of lizard based creatures that where demons that plagued their race. Paravians religious leaders whipped the race to a frenzy and they began a jihad against the Gorn.

Luckily both races did not have much in the way of FTL ships so the war was slow starting. The Gorn fell back at first, shocked at the viciousness of the attack. However the three Gorn worlds where able to produce a more

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abundant military and soon the Paravians where being driven back.

The Gorn attempted on a number of occasions to negotiate a peaceful settlement but the Paravians would hear none of it. Finally the Gorn drove them back to their home world. They could easily be destroyed but the Gorn where determined not to be the monsters the Paravains thought they were. Rather than destroy them, the Gorn eliminated all Paravna vessels and held them captive on their planet with a small garrison. This worked for almost 20 years, during which time the Gorn constantly tried to negotiate a peace, but the Paravians would not talk of peace.

This whole affair should have been over, but a tragic ending was in store. A Sunsnake entered the Paravan system. Gorn ships tried to stop it as it drove toward the Paravan sun. The Paravians where warned but dismissed it as Gorn lies. The sun went nova as the Sunsnake dove into it. The entire Paravan race was destroyed.

This has caused a deep and permanent racial shame in the Gorn. They feel as if it was their fault that an entire species was lost. The truth is the Paravian anger and racial bigotry destroyed them. To this day the Gorn have pulled back each time they could rid the Galaxy of the Romulans. They are worried the Romulans would fight to the death rather than surrender and destroying another race is something the Gorn will not allow to happen. (The details of the Paravians can be found in SFB Captains Module 6)

Orions: As mentioned in the section about the Guardians Errant. The Gorns have a decent relation ship with most of the Orion Cartels. However one Car-

tel operates in Gorn space and openly defies the Gorns attempts at communications. As such the Gorn have a much less cordial attitude.

With the Cartels that operate in other Kingdoms, the Gorns maintain a good working relationship through the Guardians Errant. Providing weapons and manpower in return for information. Publicly the Gorn are actively against the Orions.

The one Cartel operating in Gorn space is another matter. The Gorns are at active war with this Cartel and destroy their ships on site. Gorn pleas to the other Cartels are met with resistance, however the Gorns need their intelligence network so they cannot provide too many sanctions.

Closing

In closing let me again state that this work is based off of material from SFB, the original Star Trek Series and the Fasa Star Trek game. This compilation is entirely my own work and does not in any way reflect official material for the Gorn. This work is public domain and may be distributed freely provided proper credit for the work is provided.

This article has been left with a number of open spots on purpose. This provides room for authors to step up with some Gorn fiction to fill in these openings.

SFC Cola War Results	
Other	26%
Coke	24%
Pepsi	14%
RC	11%
Mt Dew	8%
Dr Pepper	5%
Root Beer	2%
Sprite	2%
Jolt	1%
7 Up	1%

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