

Hailing Frequencies

Fanzine for the SFC/SFC2 Online Community

<http://hailingfrequencies.tripod.com>

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Open Hail

Well issue #5 of Hailing Frequencies is now up, and next issue we'll reach our first major "land mark" and get our 6th issue up. Hailing Frequencies is looking very strong and we should be able to make the 6th as well as many more issues without to much difficulty.

This brings up a point, folks we're getting tons of fiction and we want to encourage you to continue to do so, but isn't there anyone out there that would like to show or teach others their pet tactic or nifty keen way of winning in a fight? Please, although our standards are high, send us your tactical pieces as well!

You fans and readers are what makes it possible for us to do this and Ed and I would really like to say our customary, but ever sincere thank you once again, for your support and encouragement. Looking back it's amazing that we've grown as much as we have and that time has flown by so fast. I know you readers feel that 30 days is alot of time between issues, but I can tell you it goes by VERY fast for us.

From this issue on, Ed and I will alternate doing the Editorial to give each of us a break for it as well as giving us each a platform to speak from, that's not related to our regular articles. Unknown to the readers (until now) is that we both worked on the Editorials in the past, but now we'll try to wing it more on our own and sign our own pieces.

For my first complete editorial, I'd like to discuss something that has been a topic of discussion, as well as hotly debated in several circles within the SFC community of late. The topic: Speed of game play. What I mean is not how fast you complete a game, but the speed setting players will commonly play online or offline when they play SFC. There seems to be two major camps for SFC, those that play at speed 7 or faster and those that do not. Before I present the POV's for both camps, I'd like to review for you exactly what the speed settings mean in SFC.

The game speed slider goes from 1 to 11 (from slowest to fastest gameplay). The following chart shows the number of seconds per "turn" for each setting. Game speed slider

Game Speed Slider										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
120	90	60	40	30	27	25	20	16	14	12

This is important to know, because many feel that speed 6 is a huge difference when compared to speed 7, but really speed 5 and speed 8 have the same "ratio" of difference, meaning 5 seconds +/- compared to speed 7. Now that we know how the weapon arming cycles translates in regards to the game speed slider, I'll outline the two camps point of view:

Camp 1 - The "Purists"

The primary argument for this camp is that the game has a default setting and therefore this is the speed for

which the game was designed for. To change it from this default setting somehow is "Cheating" and against the design intent of the game. Also they feel that for them the game is quite fine at this speed and to play it at anything other then speed 7 (or faster) will slow the game down to intolerable levels and make it last to long, boring them to death. They feel that only newbies and the "other" camp change the speed of the game because they can't cope with the default game settings and therefore are lame. Alternate names for this camp (especially at speeds faster then speed 7) are: Twitch artists, joystick jockeys, Quake heads, point and fire/click and fire, reflex group, and non-thinkers.

Camp 2 - The "Blasphemers"

The primary argument for this camp is that this is a GAME, and defaults don't mean a damn thing, since the game has a speed slider, it must mean that the game can be played with varying types of speed settings in order to give the PLAYERS a wide variety for which to play the game. Oddly enough, the "Blasphemers" primarily play at a game speed slower the speed 7 and therefore are condemned by the "Purists". Contrary to the "Purists" thinking though, a growing number of veteran players and experts alike are swelling the ranks of this camp, especially those that experience the game beyond the 1vs1 games so common in the early months of SFC (ie campaign play, team play etc). Alternate names for this camp are: The Wargamers, SFB addicts, the Impaired, Newbies, Thinkers, or Over thinkers, and I've even heard them referred to as the "Grandpa's" or old folks.

Well I will tell you that the game, the same game played at one game speed vs another will give you an entirely different game, and if you give it an honest shot regardless of game speed you'll find this to be true. One of the early concerns during the design stage and testing of SFC1 was the complexity vs the duration of the game. It was honestly felt by both 14° East/Interplay and some of the testers that if the game was to slow, that players would become bored with the game especially with its complexity, they felt that many would really wanted it to go a little faster. The problem with that was when they sped the game up, games completed TO fast, so doubled shields and internals were incorporated to "extend" the game out, but still keep it FAST and FURIOUS. This is a really quick summary, even at slower speeds without the doubling it was felt it was to fast, but at a quicker pace this was even more so.

Well we all know how that turned out don't we? We no longer have doubled shielding and the game was improved because of it. There are still those calling for the removal of doubled internals despite the early fears of the design team and testers and IMHO I like the doubled internals, as it gives the feeling of secondary systems coming online. You'll remember how upset a few people were when they heard that the last patch would remove the doubled shields right? There were all those players claiming it was going to ruin the game, and that battles wouldn't last longer then 3-4 minutes etc. This didn't turn out to be true did it? Of course not, everyone

Open Hail

Continued...

that stuck with it (and that is a pretty sizable online presence) pretty much agrees that the non-doubled shields improved gameplay tremendously. So much so that SFCv2 coming soon, will also sport standard / non-doubled shields for gameplay.

What is the point I'm trying to make? Its just that people for the most part don't like change and once they've accepted something as "normal" and become accustomed to that "normalcy" any deviation from that is considered bad and to be avoided. Although as a whole wargamers or gamers in general are typically more willing to risk changes, some among them don't want or like change. This is also true of computer gamers, especially with the complexity now available to the ultra computer gamers out there. Players who like to feel that they've "conquered" a game and have it pegged to be or do a certain thing, really don't like to see the "rules" as they see it change, as it challenges them to make changes themselves.

Now you'll notice that in my articles on tactics and improved game play I have encouraged you the readers and players of SFC to slow the game down for practice and even game play. I was originally of the first camp, but I am now firmly rooted in the second camp. I was the big tough 'he-man' gamer who had mastered and played the game as the designers intended or so I thought. I was able to think faster, and react faster then most of the players I met online and I dominated them.

My background in gaming, and SFB gave me a huge advantage and my desire for a game that was full of complexity, of great depth and subtleties and allowed me to stretch myself as a gamer while under a pretty intense 'time limit' was answered by SFC. You see, I'm an adrenaline junky. I'm one of those people that gets off on pushing the edge of the envelope and coming out okay. I have in both my private life and my gaming life always liked activities that pushes myself to its near breaking point limitations and exceed them, and because of that, having to push that envelope even farther once I've mastered it at levels that were once "impossible". I'm also a thinker and enjoy things that do for my brain what adrenaline did for my sense of "living", and anything where I could engage as much of myself both in thought and reaction at once drew me like flame does to the moth. My favorite kind of games were flight simulators (especially WWI and WWII -- to many to list), RTT games like Sid Meier's Gettysburg, and Shogun War: Total War, and SFC, and tactics and strategy games like chess, wargames (to many to list) and SFB. Then I liked other things not related to games or computers at all like flying or martial arts, but which again indulged my pushing the envelope and seeing how far I could push myself.

Then the unfortunate happened, my failing health got worse and I had some pretty serious heart issues which had been developing over the years come to a head and two years ago my heart decided it needed an overhaul. Since then all the things I liked and enjoyed become impossible for me if I wanted to enjoy the myriad of other things I enjoyed but hadn't given much thought to, like breathing and waking up and the more mundane and simple acts. This of course didn't damp much of my desire of what I used to like. I had to give up flying and flight simulators (boy that hurt), martial arts, and slowly those things that I used to be able to do in comfort were now coming with huge price tags I wasn't willing to pay (there is a point where if you push past the envelope to far, it breaks). So I was forced to quit or relearn what I enjoyed.

Well SFC is a gem in that I was able to still enjoy the game and capture that feeling of pushing the envelope all I had to do was adjust the game speed. First I tried speed 5 (since it was only a little slower then speed 7 -- 5 second difference) and for a while this was good, but my heart got worse and even that was to fast. So I tried speed 4 (only 15 seconds different) and I discovered something, which in my articles I've tried to pass on to you the reader. The game instead of getting worse or boring became much richer and more exciting to me and I probably would never have discovered this, although I would still have shared and did share what I learned freely with any willing to listen.

Now you don't need the reasons I have to learn this lesson, you can open your mind to change and see for yourself. You'll find that instead of the games becoming longer, they average the same length or are even shorter then they were at speed 7, but an amazing thing begins to become apparent, this game has SO much more to give if you give it a chance. At speed 7 or with 25 second weapon cycles (or turns), you really only have time as an average player for doing 2-3 "tactics" and for the exceptional player they

might get to utilize 4-5 or more tactics. But when you slow it down, even the most average player has time to utilize more tactics. You'll also notice at slower game speeds (and I'm not talking drastic speed 1 weapon cycles, but at speeds 3 or 4), that players have time to do things and risk more and try things they NEVER would risk at the fast game because they just didn't the reflexes (either physically or mentally) to accomplish it. You'll find that you'll risk getting in closer, time weapon strikes better and that at slower speeds weapons like missiles and plasma's no longer have the fear associated with them because you have time to react that you didn't have at those faster speeds. You'll see that tactics will develop that are far from the 2D run in, shoot, run out tactics many use at the faster speeds. You'll also find probably to your amazement that game play doesn't really last longer, but stay about the same although you'll be able to do more or it don't last as long! Oh sure there will still be those occasional gamers who will turn their noses up at what I'm saying and say "blasphemer", but for them the world must be a pretty small place indeed. But for the rest of you, give it a try (and I don't mean just one game), it will take a little bit of time, but of all the advice and suggestions I've given you, have I EVER steered you wrong? One more thing in regards to playing at speed 4, online, this makes game play MUCH better, many of the issues players complain about now at the faster speeds are very rare at this speed.

Okay enough of that, boy I wrote a book, sorry, hazards of being a writer. LOL

This issue we have another interview with Joshua Morris on the developments in SFCv2, notably we get a little more information on the specifics of the two new races. Also you'll see the completion of our Weapon series with part III of the heavy weapons written by myself. Ed steps up with his views on the Gorn early CA in our feature ship section.

The fiction this issue comes in four flavors. The first is entitled USS Revenge, which is not your typical fan fiction, this piece sounds almost like a real Trek Episode, so tune into it and step into the story by Jake "Kirk_Jr-SFC" Deschaine. Then we have a piece written by Scott Hunter titled Another Dinner with a decidedly Gorn "flavor". Next from one of our own, Jay "NTDN" Jeffery continues with his story begun last issue called The Crossing (pt2) and last but certainly not least is an excellent Klingon fiction about a Frigate Commander and his squadron in a quick paced and heart thumping story appropriately titled The Wolf pack by Michael "Korag" Wikan.

Also this issue we give special tribute to one of SFC's notables who sadly has passed from this reality and has gone on and scouted ahead for us who follow. I'm talking about Christopher J. Lewis, anyone who has tried to write any scripts for SFC knows of Chris or has in one way or another benefited from his teachings. Myself, I knew of Chris and spoke with him only rarely. We both were aware of each others presence and I felt we both had great respect for each other. He was a contracted scripter for Taldren on the SFCv2 project and I was hoping to work with Chris very shortly on my SFCC material with a few others who knew him also and who work with me. When Josh let me know about Chris's illness and passing I must say I was in Shock. When I talked with the few who knew him, all of us were hit pretty hard. So, this issue we'd like to dedicate to Chris and hope to share with our readers who Chris was and what he did for the community to the benefit of all who enjoy it. Taldren will be naming a Ship class after Chris in SFCv2. Chris, where ever you are Sir, you are missed, salute!

I give my customary reports on how SFCC is progressing and I've added a new link covering a new project started at SFCC, the "Fleet" campaign starting up in just the last couple of weeks. In addition to this Dennis "SGTalon_BCC" Schamalzel comes forward and tells us about his new campaign system and will be reporting to you about his progress each month! Welcome Dennis! (psst....cool name by the way "Dennis".)

With that I declare:

Hailing Frequencies Open

Dennis J. Greene

Executive Editor

SFC2 Interview: New Races

Interview with Josh "Jinx" 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 Races in SFCv2! This issue we have no new screenshots available, but the

interplay site has a new set of shots featuring the fighters and PF's in action, go check them out!

HF: Josh we know the name of the two races, the Mirak Star League and the Inter-Stellar Concordium (ISC), but know little about them, can you give us a brief overview of each race?

Joshua Morris: ISC is many ways is the story focus of the game. They are a multi-race empire that borders the Romulan and Gorn empires. They have had poor relations with their neighbors and have determined that the galaxy is a hostile place that should be pacified. They have very powerful ships that work very well in fleet engagements. The ISC is definitely a threat the universe.

Joshua Morris: The Mirak Star League is the other new addition to the game. They are the hated neighbors of the Lyran empire and occupy some of the space given to the Lyran in the first game. In SFC the Mirak are a dark and vicious race. They appear more human looking than there Lyran neighbors and it is hard to tell whether they are related to the Lyran or not as they possess both feline and canine features. The Federation has a very difficult time remaining at peace with the Mirak as they find many of their habits disgusting and morally corrupt. Eating captured prisoners after interrogations is one of many these traits.



HF: In SFC1 when you got a missile ship and a scatterpack, the SP always used slow type 1 missiles, no matter what your ship had. In SFC2 we are told that we have to actually load the SP, does this mean the SP will have the same type missiles the ship has?

Joshua Morris: Yes this is correct and should make scatterpacks something to fear.

HF: Will different racks be able to have different types of missiles loaded in them, or are ships still uni-missile type armed?

Joshua Morris: All missiles will be of the same type per ship.

HF: On fighter load out, will the fighters have specific missile loadouts for each type or will they load the type the ship possesses?

Joshua Morris: Load out will be determined by the fighter type and era.

HF: In SFC1 missile control was based on sensor limits. However the Mirak depend on missiles for their main weapons, will they have better missile control on all their ships?

Joshua Morris: Yes. Some Mirak will have better control limits. This however applies to other races as well. Control limits are generally 6 per ship but some ships gain 12-missile control limit.

HF: Will missile limits be different for all races, based on total "group" limits? Or will this still be ship by ship?

Joshua Morris: The fleet will now share control limits. So if your fleet had 3 ships with each being able to control 6 drones, then whole fleet could have 18 missiles in the air at once. It wouldn't matter if they all came from the same ship or not.

HF: With the coming of the Mirak we all know that missile use is about to spike. The Lyrans have a natural built in defense for missiles with their ESG. Will other weapons specifically designed for missile defense be introduced, ie the Anti-Defense Drone (ADD)?

Joshua Morris: Yes the ADD rack system has been renamed AMD (anti-missile defense) and works quite well against missiles. Klingons and Mirak ships have the most of these systems.

HF: After looking at the fleet control panel last interview, it is obvious that small squadrons will make an impact on SFC2. Will special escort ships be introduced for some races to protect the heavy capital ships from the waves of missiles the Mirak will introduce?

Joshua Morris: Yes escorts will be available in SFC2. Players that choose not to use escort for their carriers will often find that their fighters will have lost their home by the time they return.

HF: Last question on the Mirak, Will fighters have control of their own

drones or will the drones be controlled by the mothership? Or will this be controlled by the group (fleet) as a whole now?

Joshua Morris: Fighters will each add a point or two to the fleets overall missile capacity.

Now lets move to the ISC. Since SFC2's data is based on SFB we have a fair idea of what an ISC ship will possess. However in the fiction of the game the ISC did not come into the war until later and so most of the races where heavy into their advanced designs.

HF: Since that will probably not be the case in this game, what steps have been taken to balance the ISC ships against the early era designs of other races?

Joshua Morris: The ISC's PDD is not seen until later designs. ISC ships tend to play much like Gorn ships until the later eras. The one exception is their BPV, ISC ships normally cost more than their counterparts in the galaxy, so an ISC CA may have the power of a traditional BC.

HF: ISC ships where designed for fleet tactics, does this mean that a single ISC ship is not a serious threat in one on one combat?

Joshua Morris: Not at all. I feel sorry for a captain that underestimates the power of a lone ISC ship. Some of the ISC ship designs work much better in small fleets but overall they are dangerous opponents.

HF: The rear firing plasma of many of the ISC ships had a number of limitations placed on them. Will these be accurately represented in SFC2?

Joshua Morris: Yes, these are called plasma I's in SFC.

HF: In the fiction of the ISC they eventually where present in most parts of the known galaxy. Will this be simulated in the Metaverse?

Joshua Morris: As you know we are working on several Meta game scenarios, some of which will have the ISC starting in many parts of the galaxy. We are looking into ways of capturing the flavor of the ISC in the Meta game. Some methods will be ready at launch and others may be post release. I want to reiterate that we will have post support for our tactical game and the Metaverse so that we can continually balance and freshen as the need arose.

HF: The ISC had a new weapon available to them, the Plasmatic pulsar device (PPD). The movie trailer seemed to show this in use, will the PPD be in SFC2 and what will it do?

Joshua Morris: It acts just like in SFB. A plasma pulse is sent from the ISC to the targets ship. Damage is to the facing shield and the two adjacent shields. The weapon can do up to 4 pulses worth of damage on normal settings and 6 pulses in overload. The damage per pulse varies depending on range.

HF: The ISC until late in SFB's history, were rather xenophobic, will this be modeled in the Meta?

Joshua Morris: I'm sure players will role-play these tendencies perfectly. The Meta would model this by placing the ISC at war with all the other powers and generally keep it that way.

HF: Due to the power of the ISC, they were typically more expensive point for point then their opponents, will this be a factor of the ISC in SFC2 as well?

Joshua Morris: This is correct. But then they have huge ambitions to live up to also. =)

HF: Due to the power of the PPD, there were limitations placed on it's use in SFB. Primarily in the number of PPD's that could be used in a single fleet battle. Will there be any limitations on this in SFC?

Joshua Morris: We don't have that restriction currently and would like to avoid it if possible.

HF: The ISC relied heavily on a specialized form of fleet coordination, the echelon formation. Which was basically a multilayered fleet formation which took advantage of both their plasma torpedoes and PPD's. Will this be modeled for the ISC in SFC?

Joshua Morris: This was one of the major reason we developed the new fleet control system. We won't force ISC players to use the function but they are a race that will greatly benefit by doing so.

HF: Will the ISC have any added benefit in Fleet battles over the other races?

Joshua Morris: Nothing other then their weapons were designed to operate very effectively in this environment. That should be plenty of advantage.



Weapons Breakdown (Pt 3)

By Dennis "SFCShadow" Greene

In the first part of this series we covered phasers, their use, their power and their true function. In part II we covered some of the Heavy weapons, notably the Photon, Disruptor and the Fusion Beam. In part III we will cover the rest of Heavy Weapon Systems, primarily the Hellbore Cannon, Plasma torpedo, and the ESG. We can use these weapon systems to augment the phasers and get the most out of these sometimes mysterious and often misunderstood weapons. Many feel that the heavy weapon is the killing weapon, after the last issue #3 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, where it can weaken a shield or two before closing the range into phaser territory, and 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, but here is the last part of that series.

The purpose of this document (series) is to give you the players 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!

Hellbore Cannon

The Hellbore unlike any other heavy weapon (or any weapon system for that matter) ALWAYS has a small chance to miss, even at ranges 0 and 1. Now it was intended that the Hellbore wouldn't be as affected by ECM than other weapons, (because of it's hit chances, it would be effected half as much as regular weapons in regards to ECM), but it appears after alot of testing that the opposite is true, that ECM can have a PROFOUND effect in SFC. What this means is that at ranges greater than 8, and your opponent is using unblocked ECM, your Hellbores will be reduced by 2x's the stated ECM. FREX: If your opponent has a 2 ECM shift, at ranges 16-30 you'd normally hit 50% of the time, and a 2 ECM shift should reduce that to 33%, but in SFC it really will reduce your chances to hit to 16%. Now this sounds really bad (and for those used to SFB Hellbores, rather irksome), but what it really means is that ECM has FULL effect on Hellbores, and not half (It was half due to the increased numbers needed compared to what the other weapons needed to hit). At closer ranges this impact isn't as devastating, but at longer range for a weapon that is supposed to excel at distance (and compliment the fusions somewhat limited range), this means that in SFC1 it loses this ability only if ECM is not countered. In a naked ECM environment or if your opponents ECM can be countered, the Hellbore still has a mighty reach. So be prepared to stay on top of ECM at all times, even more so then the photon and disruptor using races.

Now the Hellbore as many may know is a unique weapon that will impact ALL shields at the same time with a special twist. The damage listed for the Hellbore is typically divided in two, with half of the damage applied to the weakest shield regardless of where it's facing is, and the remaining half divided evenly to the remaining shields. Actually, there is a formula to figure this out, because sometimes there is more then one "weak" shield. If there is more then one weaker shield, then you calculate the damage on the weakest shields and divide it by 1+X, where X is the number of equally weaker shields. Let me give you some examples to chew on:

Lets say that your firing on a standard Klingon D7, it's shields are 30-22-16-14-16-22, if it were hit by a Hellbore it has one weaker shield, so 1+1=2, so the damage is divided by two and applied to that weaker shield, and the rest applied to the other 5 shields divided equally.

But what if it's the D7C? With shields that are 30-22-22-22-22-22, it has five weaker shields (they are all equally "weaker" then the #1 shield), now the formula is 1+5=6, so the damage is divided by six and applied to them all "equally".

What does this mean? Well it's a good idea to "stack" the deck, weaken a shield first with phasers or fusions (even if only by a single point) and then the Hellbore will apply most of the damage to that shield, even if that shield is later NOT facing you. If an opponent can balance his shields against you though, he can spread the damage out, and this can dilute what a Hellbore can do. So ALWAYS try to weaken a shield first then fire the Hellbore at them.

As can be seen in the tables below, the Hellbores at closer ranges have excellent chances to hit. Something veterans of SFB may note is that Hellbores can hit at range 0, but not perfectly. So be aware that in SFC, there is

Hellbore, normal (HB)								
Range	0	1	2	3	4-8	9-15	16-30	31-40
8%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	4
16%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	4
24%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	4
33%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	4
42%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	4
50%	20	20	17	15	13	10	8	0
58%	20	20	17	15	13	10	0	0
67%	20	20	17	15	13	0	0	0
75%	20	20	17	0	0	0	0	0
83%	20	20	17	0	0	0	0	0
92%	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
97%	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average	19.4	18.3	14.2	11.3	8.7	5.8	4	1.7

NO myopic zone for the standard or normal HB. I've created full tables for both the normal HB and the Overloaded HB so that you'll be able to apply ECM shifts quickly and easily (as I have with all my weapon tables). As can be seen, although the Hellbore has a good reach, beyond range 15, both it's damage and to hit chances are reduced. Also, remember that the damage listed here is divided (see above) against the shields. The HB is an excellent (for use) weapon for a new player, because he doesn't need to face the weak shield to hit it, and for the veteran player, he has reach vs his opponent

that his opponent cannot prevent with the standard methods of evasion (turning away damaged or down shields).

One of the largest drawbacks though is HB's are expensive to arm, costing three energy for two weapon arming cycles, and to hold it it costs 1.5 energy each cycle till fired.

The overloaded Hellbore (HB-o), is expensive to arm, costing 4.5 energy for two arming cycles, and can be held by expending an additional 2.25 power for each cycle. Unlike other heavy weapons though, it does not deliver double the damage, but only gains a 50% increase to it's payload. (For odd damage, this is actually less then a 50% boost). Unless you know your going to be on top of an opponent, I would recommend using standard HB's over the overloaded one, but if you can manage to use HB-o's, it can be a very NASTY package for your opponent to receive.

Hellbore, overload (HB-o)				
Range	0-1	2	3-4	5-8
8%	30	25	22	19
16%	30	25	22	19
24%	30	25	22	19
33%	30	25	22	19
42%	30	25	22	19
50%	30	25	22	19
58%	30	25	22	19
67%	30	25	22	19
75%	30	25	22	0
83%	30	25	0	0
92%	30	0	0	0
100%	0	0	0	0
Average	27.5	20.8	16.5	12.7

Plasma Torpedoes

Of all the heavy weapons in SFC, the Plasma Torpedo is probably the most loved and despised weapon in the game, depending on who you talk to. It is the easiest weapon for a newbie to use with seeming skill then any other due to its fire and forget ability and massive damage potential at relatively moderate ranges. If a plasma can reach it's target it NEVER misses, hence my terming it a fire and forget weapon. Paradoxically, it is also the hardest weapon for a newbie to face due to its travel speed, and ability to do massive damage at moderate ranges, and if it reaches you, never missing. Both of these reasons have lead to its split "personality" or love/hate relationship many have with this weapon. It has though several weaknesses that many fail to realize and once they do, the plasma, although a respectable weapon, is not as great as it appears to the newbie or casual player. Also in SFC1 there are several things that make this weapon more frightening then it needs to be to the unenlightened due to the

Weapons Breakdown (Pt 3)

Continued...

way players commonly seem to play (at least online). I'll try and list the most obnoxious of them for you:

- The fastload ability.
- Playing specialized ships or only Late era ships that in SFC1 are misbalanced due to some mistakes in translation from SFB to SFC due to some weapons systems not being included in SFC1.
- The way energy is managed in SFC vs how it was done in SFB, notably the real-time aspect vs the turn based system.
- The arming sequence in SFC vs how it was done in SFB.

I'll attempt to quickly review each, and their implications:

- Fastloading takes advantage of the ability to go from an overloaded state, to a normal state, for most weapons this lets you arm in half the time. For plasma torpedoes this means that instead of arming in three arming cycles, you can arm in 1.8 arming cycles. So plasma torpedoes can be fired much quicker than one might expect.

Basically for other heavy weapons, it lets you arm a weapon in a shorter period of time for twice the energy requirement in the short term, but for plasma's the energy requirement isn't twice the cost but only a point or a point and a fraction more than normal.

- Online, players tend to gravitate to ships that have excesses where energy is concerned. Of the two plasma using races, and although both races are guilty of "excesses", it is commonly known that the Romulans are the worse offenders in this area, with ships like the SPZ, KRC, KCR, and a few others of the late era ships, people tend to overplay these ships and then blame all of the rest of the "Race" for them.
- Energy managed in SFC is real-time and because of this, fractional energy is easily dealt with, so movement, weapons arming and miscellaneous other systems can use left over energy to accomplish things over time, also due to the fast-loading feature, it's possible to hold any type of plasma for free, by switching to the EPT after the torpedo is fully armed and move at maximum speeds. This causes the EPT to not charge, since all energy is in movement, in essence holding any heavy weapon that can overload for free. Then switching to the normal charge, fire and move off.
- The Plasma torpedo was designed to arm in the following ways

SFB Plasma Arming Cost					
Type	Turn 1	Turn 2	Turn 3	EPT/SG	Holding Cost
R	2	2	5	10	4**
S	2	2	4	8	2
G	2	2	3	6	1
F	1	1	3	NA	0*

In SFC, they arm as follows:

SFB Plasma Arming Cost					
Type	Turn 1	Turn 2	Turn 3	EPT/SG	Holding Cost
R	3	3	3	4.6/turn	3/4
S	2.6	2.6	2.6	4/turn	2/3
G	2.3	2.3	2.3	3.3/turn	1/2
F	1.6	1.6	1.6	NA	0*

As can be seen here, the way the plasma torpedo arms is profoundly different than how it was done in SFB. You'll note that the last turn of arming has been leveled out between all the turns of arming in SFC vs the large "last" turn of arming from SFB, especially when it related to the EPT (Enveloping Plasma Torpedo)/SG (Shotgun). Also you'll notice that EPT/SG is supposed to cost double the last turn of arming but unlike SFB, in SFC it's just a little over 1 extra energy to do (although the charging is spread over the three turns).

The arming method when combined with all the above really is what makes the plasma torpedo a MUCH simpler weapon to use in SFC than it was in SFB, due to the advance planning needed in SFB's Plasma is pretty much gone. Another difference between the two systems is that EPT's can be held in SFC and could not be held in SFB, although the last turn of arming in SFB could be delayed, by continuously arming the second turn of arming, and when ready to fire the EPT, pay it's enormous cost on the turn it was to fire.

The end result, plasma armed ships can travel at much higher speeds than what one might expect especially if experienced in SFB. To make matters worse for most players, this also enabled SFC's plasma armed races to also use secondary systems like ECM and EM with greater ease and consistency than you might be expecting since the arming costs are leveled out and it's much easier to gain those extra points needed for those extra systems.

Plasma Torpedoes (Type listed by line)														
Range	0-5	6-10	11-12	13-14	15	16-18	19	20	21-23	24	25	26-28	29	30
Type R	50	50	35	35	35	25	25	25	20	20	20	10	5	1
Type S	30	30	22	22	22	15	15	15	10	5	1	0	0	0
Type G	20	20	15	15	15	10	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Type F	20	15	10	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Type D***	10	8	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

As can be seen in the above table, the most dangerous torpedo is obviously the R torpedo, as it can still deliver 25 damage out to range 20, and 20 damage out to range 25. The S torpedo can do 22 damage out to range 15 and 15 damage out to range 20. Many discount what the G torpedo can do, but as the table shows, it can still deliver 15 damage at range 15, which is the max range of a F type which does only 1. Also at moderate ranges, the G torpedo still does it's full 20 damage out to range 10. The F torpedo is really only good at VERY close ranges, but still can do respectable damage out to range 12, so don't discount it.

Plasma torpedoes also travel with a natural form of ECCM (3 points), making it more difficult to use ECM to reduce the damage a Plasma may do when it hits. In addition to that although phasers can be used against them, the amount of damage done to a plasma is half the phaser damage delivered. I.E. if I hit a plasma torpedo with 10 points of phaser damage, its only going reduce the strength of the torpedo 5 points.

Although many swear by it, be aware that the WW can "Spoof" a plasma torpedo, by causing it to be hit while the WW is active instead of the ship the torpedo is targeted to. The disadvantage of the WW though is that it will reduce your ship to speed 4 or less, and you cannot use any weapons (including point defense). This is really the only way you can make a plasma torpedo miss you, but it's purely a temporary method and limited to the number of WW's you may have on your ship, once they are gone, you'd best not be where the plasma is.

Now some weaknesses of the Plasma, although it travels faster than anything in the game, speed 36. Due to the real-time nature of the game and the smoother turning radii of starships, it's really not all that difficult to maintain your distance from a plasma armed ship (except for the above listed misbalanced ships and even then it's not impossible). Even Type-R torpedo armed ships can be safely approached to 12-15k, if your quick and break off and

* The hold cost for an F torpedo is 1 if downgraded from a larger launcher.
 ** The hold cost listed here for SFB is for Starbases only, the R torpedo could not be held on ships, although what was called a rolling delay could be done, which is continuously rearm the 2nd turn cycle until ready to arm and fire on turn of firing (still costing 5 or 10 depending on type).
 *** The type D is included in this table since it will be out in SFC2, and many ask what it does. So it's here as reference until SFC2 comes out

Weapons Breakdown (Pt 3)

Continued...

move away as soon as the torpedo is fired. Many think that you need to do a complete 180° arc turn, and that is one reason many think the plasma is too tough, because if they turn completely around, the torpedo has caught up with them, and the arc could actually close the distance before they get turned around.

The trick is to engage a plasma armed opponent at an angle and break off your run also at an angle. Imagine how you make a rock skim or bounce on water, you throw it at a sharp angle and it bounced off at a sharp angle, the same "process" is effective vs plasma.

Try this to observe how a plasma will track on you. Run parallel with someone, and have them fire a plasma, you will actually see it will arc away and round to your rear shield. So if you use this to your advantage, you can cause a torpedo to actually travel a bit longer while it tries to track your rear shield.

This does not work if your are at or near 0° to the firing plasma. Since it will track your rear shield "through" your ship. But by angling in, and angling away, it will "arc" around your ship till it gets to your rear shield, and if you increase your speed at the same time, plasma's can be realatively easy to avoid. The saying "speed is life" really came from engaging plasma armed ships. Speed is your best defense vs plasma, not WW's as many think. Star-casting (the art of moving slowly and reinforcing shields) is NOT the best method to use against plasma, as you give your opponent all the advantages and limit your own. The lesser torpedoes can actually be engaged at much closer ranges safely if you move a minimum of 20, arc away and increase speed to avoid.

I haven't listed all the issues with plasma, but I hope I've touched on the major issues and with your greater understanding of them, these will no longer be the weapon to fear and despise out of proportion that many seem to think. For those of you who enjoy plasma, you now have all the facts available to you and can better plan and execute your attacks when facing veterans and try to use the weaknesses of the plasma against you.

Expanding Sphere Generator (ESG)

The last of the heavy weapon systems we'll cover is the ESG. Many consider this to be a heavy weapon, when in reality it's really a special weapon system. Also many use it in a way it wasn't primarily ment for, and that is the offensive "Ram". Of all the weapon systems in SFC, this one is probably the most obnoxious of them all. Its translation from SFB to SFC is the most poorly done, and will be much better implemented in SFC2. Its primary purpose was defensive in nature, able to sweep missiles, shuttles and mines away from the generating ship. Due to its nature and strengths, the weaknesses inherent to the system from SFB did not make it in to SFC except for really one, its lack of range.

Lets begin by listing its strengths:

- It's a global/globular sphere, not a shell as designed.
- It never misses when its in range
- It is never effected by ECM
- It is never effected if the firing unit using EM
- It isn't bothered if a target uses EM
- It doesn't void the WW if the firing ship uses a WW.
- Its not affected by WW (since its not affected by ECM).
- It has a 360° firing arc
- It can be fired from multiple arming settings, using from 1-5 units of power when fired
- With missile only having 2 or 3 damage to destroy, a single fully charged, range 0 ESG can destroy 10 type 1 missiles and 6.67 type 4 missiles always.
- Weapon hits have very little chance to hit it when ship is damaged.
- Not affected by cloaking devices.

Its weaknesses are:

- Limited range (3.99k maximum)
- Fully charging an ESG can be time consuming if you mismanage your energy management.
- Vulnerable to Hit and Run teams.
- It doesn't hit shuttles or mines, but does hit fighters and missiles.

As can be seen here, there are lots of advantages and very little in the way of disadvantages, especially if you know how ESG's worked in SFB (from where they were supposed to have been modeled). The one primary weakness of limited range isn't all that bad when you consider the real-time nature of the game, and the ease at which ships can "overrun" someone, especially at range 3.99k (Might as well call it range 4k). Also with the net issues many players experience, its not uncommon to get nailed by an ESG out to range 7k, 8k, or even 9k. This weapon of all the weapops in SFC is the easiest to abuse due to it's many advantages and the speed at which most players play.

Something most captains fail to take notice of is that the ESG capacitor holds 7 units of power per generator, but can only use 5 units within one "firing". A wise captain knows to reduce the capacitor by 50-60% to bring his capacitor charge rate down to a level where it doesn't

Expanding Sphere Generator (ESG)					
Radius	Energy Applied				
	1	2	3	4	5
0	4	8	12	16	20
1	4	7	11	15	18
2	3	7	10	13	17
3	3	6	9	12	15

rape his energy pool. This can free up 7-8 points of power during arming cycle which can be used for other system. Although you can fire your ESG at any time, once it's available to fire and there is energy in the capacitor, letting it charge fully to the 7 points for each generator is somewhat wasteful. In fact while your waiting for the full charge it is robbing you of power for other essential systems.

So once the capacitor is about 70% filled you have the needed 5 units needed per ESG. Once it's at that level, set the recharge rate to 0, it will stop charging and no longer drain power from your ship. That's what it is there for! Also I hear many players complain that they only want one ESG to be powered up and they come in pairs so they both get charged. The power bar makes this possible. After you've charged the power bar up to about 35%, set it to 0 for charge rate. Then fire

(double tap) both ESG's at once. Presto, you now did the same damage and only powered up the equivalent of one ESG. Once the ESG is powered up fully, or you set the slider to 0 once it reaches the level you want it to be, it no longer pulls power from you ship, as it's free to hold that energy till you are ready to use it.

This completes this series of articles on the weapons systems in SFC, we now have a VERY solid basis for future articles and tactics which we can build on and gain ever greater insights and understanding of the game (and some would say obsession) we all enjoy, Starfleet Command.

Email us and let us know what you think of Hailing Frequencies;
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Feature Ship: Gorn CA

By E.L. "SFCsfaret" Crisler

The Gorn CA is one of the least talked about of the early era CA ships. Every knows the CA's for the other races and they are discussed on a regular basis but the Gorn ship plods steadily along without the lime-light or complaints that the other early era CA's suffer from. Now why is that? Is it the most powerful ship in the era? No that would stir some discussion. It also is not the weakest ship. In fact in raw weapon stats it is middle of the road for early era CA ships. It is this middle of the road attitude that makes it so easy to overlook. However in versatility it is not middle of the road, in fact it is the most versatile ship in the game for early era play.

This seems like a bold statement, and it is. But the Gorn CA has the most tactical options of any ship in the game for its era. And as the passage of time occurs and upgrades are offered this versatility is improved upon, keeping it the best CA built. Let's begin with the early era version of the Gorn CA and look at what it brings to the table.

The first place we will look, and perhaps the most important, is the ships power. The Gorn CA has a total power of 38, this does not include batteries. The reason power is the most important is that it is the basis for everything else on the ship. The Gorn CA has the second highest power availability in the game for a Cruiser class ship. At 38 power (the D7 has 39) the Gorn ship can perform most tasks and maintain a decent speed. The Gorn CA can hold a speed of 20 and still charge all weapons at full capacity. Various factors such as ECM and Phaser Capacitor settings can affect this to various degrees. But at the default setting speed 20 will charge everything.

What this means to the Gorn player is that he has power to play with. Once the Phaser capacitors are charged more power is available. Also by making some tweaks a speed of 25 can easily be maintained and a good weapon recharge rate held. This adds to the versatility of the Gorn CA.

Okay, now that we have an idea of the power we have lets look at how we can use it. The first major use is movement. The Gorn CA is renowned for it's poor turn mode and it does not disappoint in this matter. With a D turn mode, the Gorn CA is one of the most sluggish ships in this class. However, while many see this as a weakness, in truth the weapons arcs on the Gorn CA make this an advantage if played right. I will explain on this a bit further down. The key here to remember is that the CA does not turn well, so don't get into a dogfight, you will usually lose. After movement lets look at ECM. This is an often-overlooked area of any ship tactic and with the Gorn CA it is an area that can make a nice difference in a fight. The nature of Plasma is such that ECM does not have a profound effect on how it works. In fact only a major ECM shift can cause any effect. With this in mind the Gorn CA has a unique advantage, early in the fight the Gorn Commander can safely use all his extra power to up his ECM levels and thus make him harder to hit.

This advantage cannot be overlooked. The Gorn CA is one of the toughest ships in the game, easily as tough as the federation CA and almost as tough as the Hydran Ranger. This means it can take an incredible pounding and still be a decent fighting ship. When you take into account it's good shielding, the use of ECM can make a Gorn ship VERY tough to hurt. Another factor that plays into this is the ability of the Gorn ship to fight a VERY effective battle at range 15. With the ECM shift and the low yield of most races weapons at this range the effectiveness of using the extra power to ECM becomes obvious. The next area and the one everyone has been waiting for, weapons. The Gorn CA comes armed to the hilt with 8 Phaser 1's and 2 Type G Plasma Torpedoes. Lets begin with the Phasers. The Phasers on the Gorn CA are its primary armament. Now I know most people feel that the Plasma is the primary weapon but this is just not true. The Gorn CA possesses the best weapons arcs on plasma of any ship in the game. From all angles at least 4 Phasers can fire and on the front and rear arcs 6 Phasers can be brought to bear. This means that the Gorn CA can deliver the same Phaser firepower to the rear that the federation CA can deliver to the front.

This incredible firing arc system is the major strength of the Gorn CA and a counter to its slower turn modes. By making it impossible to find a weak spot on the CA the turn mode is no longer a problem. In fact it is an advantage because now the Gorn commander has an edge. Most people forget about the weapons and make the mistake of coming at the Gorn CA from the rear. They usually only do this once.

Since all the Phasers are type 1 the Gorn vessel does decent damage even at medium range with JUST its Phasers. As far out as range 15 the Gorn CA can average 4 points of damage on an opponent from ANY angle. This is more than any other ship can average except in their front arc.

Besides Phasers the Gorn CA also packs 2 Type G plasma Torpedoes.

Most people consider the G basically a heavy F torp and downgrade instantly. This is a mistake, the G torp has a good range. At range 15 the Type G torp can deliver 15 points of damage. This is better than any other heavy weapon in the game at this era except the plasma R.

The G's are set in offset arcs. This provides a narrow area of fire where both can hit the same target at once. However this is not what they are designed to do. Each plasma has a huge arc covering their respective sides of the ship. As such it is possible for the CA to deliver at least 1 plasma torp and 4 Phaser ones in a typical broadside volley. Now that we see what the Gorn CA has, lets figure out how to use it. First we will begin with the plasma. Plasma is one of the easiest weapons to start learning SFC with. It is also one of the most misused weapons in the game.

Plasma packs an incredible punch; in the case of the Gorn CA it can deliver 20 points of damage at close range with a single weapon. This is the key to using plasma. A plasma weapon can typically deliver the same damage in one shot, that an entire volley of heavy weapons from other races can do. As such plasma should ALWAYS be fired in single shot volleys.

In the case of the Gorn CA, the plasma is placed to perform the function of crushing a shield. Basically the Gorn ship positions to fire plasma and then dances out. The plasma will crush or damage a shield, then the other plasma is brought to bear and the same task performed. In this way the plasma is used to drop or damage as many shields as possible. The Phasers should be held early in the fight to provide good close defense as well as waiting for an open shield.

By firing the plasma in single volleys you keep one plasma armed at most times. At the very least one is always on the verge of arming. This is an excellent deterrent to make sure an opponent keeps his ranged. When mixed with Phasers, the plasma makes an ugly surprise for those silly enough to get close. Now this seems like a simple tactics set but in truth this is the basis for most Gorn tactics. Lets take a more direct look and see how these basic premises can be applied. Below I will describe some specific tactics for using the Gorn CA.

Gorn Anchor: Lets start with the most well known of the Gorn tactics. Basically the way this tactic works is to close with the enemy and grab him with your tractor beam. Drop your speed and reinforce your shields. Then pound the enemy until they are dead. This works well for the Gorn CA due to its tough nature. When in a one on one slugfest few ships can stand up to the CA. This tactic will leave the CA bloodied and damaged but in most cases victorious. A more practical approach to the Anchor is to first knock down a shield or two and do some internals to hurt the opponent. Then close and finish.

Plasma Ballet: This is a broad term for a very general set of tactics. Basically it involves a plasma boat making its attack run and then flying away to rearm. The Ballet part of the title came from its use against other plasma ships. They almost seem to dance as both seek the best firing position while trying to stay safe.

Gorn Broadside: This is a specific variant of the Plasma Ballet approach. The Gorn ship uses its ability to fire good volleys from a side. You get on a crossing pattern with the enemy ship. Usually presenting your #2/#3 or #5/#6 shield. You need your speed to be a bit more than the targets to make this effective. At around range 15 as the target closes to attack, fire your plasma and turn way from the target, doing a full 180. The target can either close on you and eat the plasma or turn away. If he closes you finish the 180 turn and fire the other side then turn away again to present side one.

Even if the target manages to get a fresh shield to the second plasma he will eventually lose his shields in the front to this tactic as long as he seeks to close. When you have an open shield fire Phasers as the opportunity presents itself.

Shield Shredder: This is a tactic I developed myself and have yet to see others make good use of it. The goal of this tactic is to leave the enemy with little if any shields on ANY facing. You begin with standard plasma volleys. Firing one at a time. However you do not wait for optimum shots on a down or weakened shield, you take any shot that will do damage to a shield. Do the same with Phasers on undamaged shields. After one or two volleys like this, switch one of the type G torps over to enveloping. When it hits, the enemy shields will slowly be stripped away. When two or more shields are down or nearly so set the second to enveloping as well. Another volley and you have your opponent. Suddenly he has no shields and is facing a Phaser boat that can fire from any angle plus double strength plasma.

Feature Ship: *Gorn CA*

Continued...

Gorn Shuttle Swarm: This tactic works best against cloaked vessels. Gorn ships carry more shuttles than the average CA. The key here is to arm your ship or group of ships with as many admin shuttles as possible. The all shuttles are launched and told to attack the enemy. Shuttles will soon swarm any cloaked ship. Another use of this tactic is to provide a nearly impenetrable missile defense shield. All those shuttles suddenly become the ultimate point defense system.

Phaser Enema: This tactic was developed almost exclusively for SFC. Basically opponents facing a Gorn ship tend to stay at medium ranges and high speed. When they suspect plasma fire they turn and run, presenting the weaker rear shield. The Gorn vessel will forgo the use of plasma for a while and use Phasers to down the rear shield and slowly gut the enemy. Use your Psuedo's to force the opponent to turn away. When he presents his rear shield fire all Phasers. Keep repeating as needed, occasionally use real torps to keep him honest. Sooner or later the rear shield will fall and the opponent will begin to be hurt. Now is your chance. If he breaks off you gut him slowly. If he closes you pound him with plasma.

With these basic tactics in hand lets look at each of your possible foes and see how to best employ the Gorn CA.

Romulans: The traditional enemy of the Gorn, fights with Romulans tend to be long and drawn out affairs. Neither side can get to close due to the power of the other side's plasma. These fights typically are a bloodbath in the end but this is the kind of fight the Gorn can win. Use the Broadside tactic and mix it with the shuttle swarm. This will keep him honest with the cloak. Use T-Bombs for flashcube effect to get some plasma shots in. Try to keep range 5 or better at all time and keep your speed near 20. This way if he uncloaks you can scoot out to a distance that neutralizes the heavier plasma he possesses. Once he is damaged and you are sure he has no plasma go for the anchor to keep him from cloaking and fleeing.

Federation: While technically an ally, some border skirmishes still occur. Use your ECM advantage to provide as much defense against photons as possible. Try to keep the range at about 15. Employ the broadside tactic and

try to get to his rear arc. Once there, stick like glue on him in this position. The Federation ship is very weak in the rear as far as weapons. You are just as maneuverable and can easily stay on his tail. Use the plasma in single shot volleys and knock down a shield or two. If two shields are down and at least two more are damaged shift to the shredder tactic. Otherwise use opportunity fire with the Phasers on a down shield.

Klingons: This is not a historical enemy but is probably one of your toughest foes. Use an ECM shift in your favor to neutralize his disruptors. He will typically fly fast and way from you so use the Phaser Enema to effect. Hold back the plasma for sure shots. Use the Shuttle Swarm to counter drones as well as keeping near speed 20. The Klingon ships are tough but that glass rear shield is their weakness. The Phaser Enema is most effective on Klingons.

Lyrans: Against the typical Lyran player this is an easy fight. They will seek to close to use the ESG as a ram plate. Just go to the broadside tactic and nail them as they come. Against the advanced players the Phaser Enema will be the only tactic for a while and it will take a while since they have better shields than their Klingon allies. If they do keep closing fire plasma so it hits BEFORE the ESG gets to you. When you have a down shield fire all Phasers. You are hoping to disrupt their weapons on their pass.

Hyrdans: The first problem you will have are their fighters. Begin by loading your plasma as shotgun. This will knock the fighters out early. Without the fighters, in a BPV match the Hydran ship is much weaker than yours. Against the Ranger just move to the Broadside and keep him at range.

General Tactic: The Gorn posses a fair number of transporters and boarding parties. The Gorn CA has 3 transporters. Set your hit and run raids to hit the enemy transporters first. This will neutralize their ability to use H&R on you to take out your plasma.

These are just some of the basics that come into play when using the Gorn CA. The next time you face or fly one maybe this article will help you take it less casually.

SFCC Fleet Status

By Dennis "SFCSshadow" Greene

Fleet Status Report

The progress of the Fleet game has proceeded much slower then I initially thought it would, primarily because I've been extremely busy and haven't sat on everyone's shoulders and poked and prodded them into taking action on their own. It's taken a little time to get the principles to talk among themselves and get moving. In the last few days, they have been moving along though once I had a strong talk with a few of the more principle and slow moving members of the new game. I'll take some of the responsibility though, since I really expected to be able to be more readily available then I have been and with it being new to 99% of the people involved, I know it requires a bit of hand holding to get them past their initial shyness. But there were a few of the principles that sort of fell apart right when we were to start up, hopefully this was a transient thing and won't be a continuing trend.

We should be getting back on track with it though, and with my time issues starting to clear up (at least for a little bit), I should be able to ride shotgun and keep it moving till it starts to travel on its own momentum. I've been spending some time training some of the staff in SFCC to also take on some of the responsibilities to help it move along as well and this should also help with the speed and progress of the game.

1.4c War Report

The War started off with a somewhat slow beginning, especially considering the rather lackadaisical attitude shown from some of the fleets. I'll have more to report next month though, since currently only the Lyrans have moved assets and their isn't anything else to report. I knew getting this off the ground cold turkey would be a little slow and it has not disappointed me, though I had hoped it would go a "little" faster.

SFCC Fleet Command Breakdown

- **Alliance:**
 - Federation: Starfleet Command - SFC
 - Primary: Kirk_Jr-SFC
 - Secondary: Unknown
 - Gorn: Guardians Errant and Gorn Armada - GE/GA
 - Primary: Ssazzix-GE
 - Secondary: Unknown
 - Hydran: Ra Imperial Guard - RIG
 - Primary: ArchDuke-RIG
 - Secondary: Unknown
- **Coalition:**
 - Klingon: House of Chang - HoC
 - HoC-DethOkay
 - HoC-Rogiet
 - Lyran - 32nd Fleet Lyran division - 32nd L
 - Primary: s32nd-2AD-Marduk
 - Secondary: Unknown
 - Romulan - Nexus Travelers - NT
 - Primary: Corbin_Dallas_NT
 - Secondary: Destroyer_NT

SFCC Status

By Dennis "SFCSHADOW" Greene



Game Status Report 1.4c

The beta progresses well and a new set of rules have been posted clarifying or updating the rules to a more useable format. Everyone seems to be getting along,

although I placed the beta on pause for about 10 or so days due to my schedule becoming VERY busy. Some exciting things going on in the SFCC community which will become known soon, but it has eaten up what little free time I had available. The Fleet game also started (slowly) and took up alot more of my time then I hoped it would, in addition with Hailing Frequencies becoming due, I thought it best for me to slow some other things down, and everyone in the beta was very understanding.

For the most part, the Gorn, Hydran and Federation players have taken whatever opportunities are available to them and trained and practiced as often as possible. Oddly enough the Coalition hasn't been as active practice wise, perhaps their successes in previous cycles have lulled them into thinking they didn't need to. Although a few of the Coalition players warned this was a bad thing and that they should be practicing as well, they were not listened to, and the Coalition was about to learn that their fellow players were correct and that they had made a mistake!

1.4c War Report

The War started off with a somewhat slow beginning, but quickly developed a bang and the coalition has gotten a small taste of what the Federation can do with proper incentive.

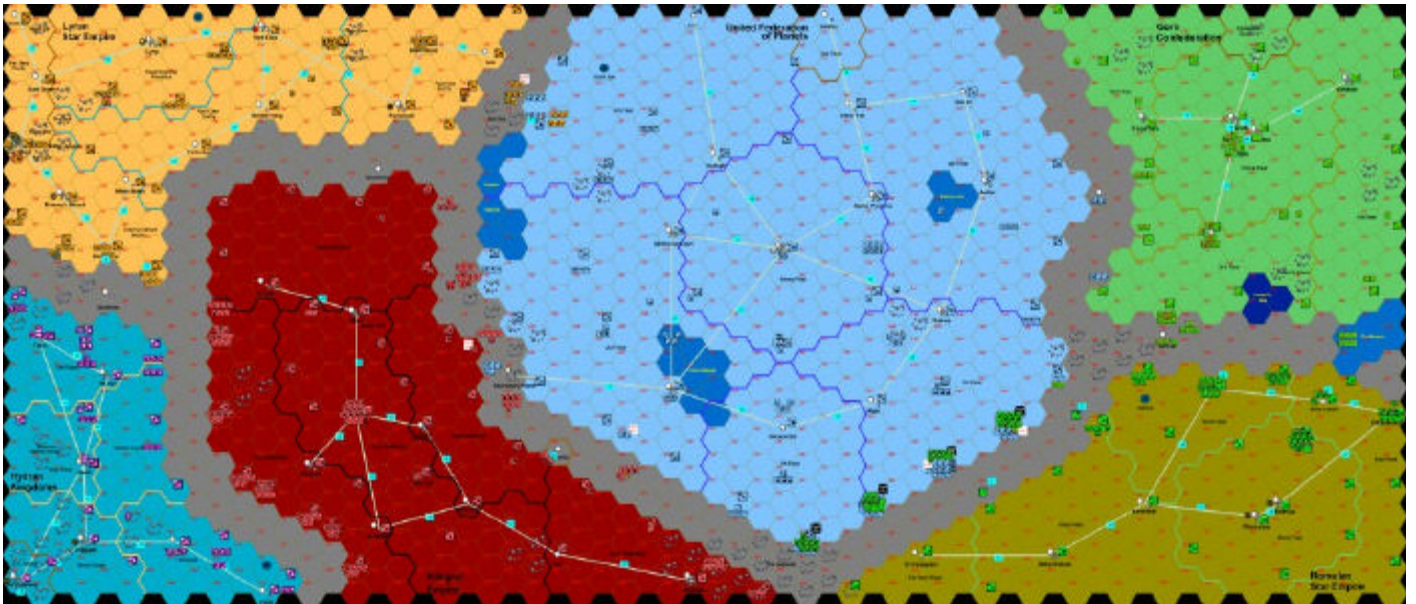
Initially only the Lyran and Romulans crossed their borders and oddly the Klingons remained behind their borders creating battle fleets. The Alliance responded with alacrity, taking the opportunity to shuffle assets as

quickly as possible to their battle fronts.

In the next few months, the Lyrans entered Federation territory, as did the Romulans. The Klingons finally entered the neutral zone, but primarily in the northern side of the border, with few assets in the center and none along the southern border. The Federation responded well, attacking the Lyran and Klingons, killing 1 Drone bombardment Cruiser, 2 Destroyer leaders, and one frigate, also damaging one Destroyer. Forcing retreats for both the Lyran and Klingons. Their losses were only a single destroyer and a few frigates. The war was on and the Coalition began to see they had a fight on their hands.

The Romulans attacked massively, with their entire border fleet all 42 ships, but due to what some feel to be a poor management move, they can only use 34 of their ships due to command and control limitations. Also, they were surprised by the ability of the Federation to respond to them and of the 4 battles they initiated, they are out numbered in 1 of them, on equal terms for 2 of them and have only a slight advantage in the last battle. Analysts feel that this will be an VERY costly and expensive move for the Romulan empire, especially when you take into consideration that the Federation has responded only with slightly more then 50% of its forces. Any survivors for the Romulan empire are going to have to fight the rest of the Federation forces and those forces are stronger then what they currently face. The Coalition is indeed learning the folly of attacking what appeared on paper as a weak Alliance, already they begin to reasses their belief that the Alliance cannot fight or bring adiquate forces to bear to stand up to their might.

As soon as I can get some time, (I'm expecting that to be sometime during this week, no later then this weekend), we'll continue the testing but it's looking very exciting and a much different game when the players play the system, instead of trying to find ways around the system.



<http://sfccampaign.tripod.com>

SG Campaign Report

By Dennis "SGTalon_BCC" Schamalzel

It has long been my opinion that SFC is the best game ever created. Back in the days when all we had was Starfleet Battles the board game I kept saying how great it would be if it was a computer game. And here it is 7 or 8 years later and I was correct. It is the best game ever. I have been in the Starlance League since November of 1999 and every minute of it has been sheer joy. It has brought me many, many, many hours of excitement and activity. When they said there would be a campaign!!!! I was really excited. When we played SFB campaigns they were always a lot of fun but 1 turn of battle seemed to take forever. So when I heard that SL was going to have a campaign I thought it would be the best thing since the warp engine. Alas, it was not. The system that is being used for the SL campaign make for a VERY LONG campaign. We are already at turn 70 and BCC, heck all of the Lyran Fleets, still have not seen a single battle. People can lose interest fast when there is no action. We have all seen a huge loss of players to SL and Mplayer because of it. Well I still think that the campaign will be great when it really gets moving but it is on hold. I unlike many people am very happy with SL they do a great job of making SFC an adventure instead of just a game. It really bothers me when I hear people ragging SL and saying it is no more fun. I disagree and anytime I hear someone badmouthing SL I give them a piece of my mind. The SL campaign is HUGE! The scope of it necessitates the slow pace so I am not concerned when it takes a while. But.....

I believe I have come up with a solution to answer everyone's complaints. The SG_Campaign. I have heard many people talking about starting other campaigns and it made me start thinking about it. I recalled all the SFB campaigns we played and the rules we made to increase the action and excitement. I just transferred them to SFC. The results should be enough to satisfy anyone's desire for action.

The idea is basically this. It will be an e-mail based system. Moves will be turned into the Moderator (me) and there will be a maximum of 3 days between turns. However they will go faster if they are turned in sooner. This also allows for Combat Resolution all battles will be fought on Mplayer unless they can not get a good connection then it can be done by IP connection. If no turn is in by the 3 days, that units ships will remain where they were. If a battle is not resolved the ships will be assumed not to fight yet. If after 3 turns the battle has not been fought the Moderator (me again) will decide who wins. The most active member will be the one to win. We will call it an ambush and the non participant will be utterly destroyed. Hehehehe.

First off, what I consider the biggest detraction to the SL campaign is the slow pace. It takes most fleets 30 turns to get to their nearest enemy because they have to fly through all that space to get there. My solution: Warp Speed between quadrants. When flying between quadrants you move at Warp Speed, 1 quadrant per turn. However, while traveling at warp speed you just skim over the quadrants in between. You cannot see what is in the quadrant without stopping in the quadrant and requesting a scan. At Warp Speed you can take your fleets all the way across the map in 10 turns not 100!!!! When you enter a quadrant you must fly at impulse speed: 1 sector per turn. When entering a quadrant you will always end up in sector 5,5 of that quadrant. And you must remain there for 1 turn before Warping out.

Second, I have created disruption zones around Planets and Bases. As an enemy gets closer to you, your production will be decreased incrementally until you only have 25% production from your Planets and Facilities.

This will encourage battles. If someone is stepping on your livelihood you allow it for long and you will go out and chase them away or destroy them.

Third, Battle Group Limits. By limiting Battle groups to 9 ships total it makes multiplayer simpler and there is more. We will have realistic battle groups. No more fleets with 15 CC's. It will be similar to a Navy Battle Group. A typical Fleet would consist of: A BB or DN, 2 or 3 Heavy Battle Cruisers, and several smaller ships to fill it out. There will be no need for freighters because we will not worry about endurance. And Ship Build's will follow a progression. You can't just go out and build 10 BCH's you have to build according to year the ships were released. And every day we refine the rules more. Turn 1 Started on Tuesday August 8,2000 and it was a bit hairy!!! Lots to do and many e-mails sent out. But it went fairly smoothly with a little assistance from me for a few people. Then came Surprise #1 This e-mail was sent out to all Fleets:

You have recieved a strange distress signal from an unidentified source.

It seems to be coming from Quadrant 3,7

It is in all known languages and all know frequencies. the Message is as follows:

Mayday mayday mayday

We are trapped in a quantum singularity and our engines and sheilds are failing. We do not know what is inside this event but any ships in the area please respond.

Then it repeats

Intel reports show that this ship is floating dead in space.

This ends the communication.

There is a ship in this quadrant that is very valuable. It is from the future and came through a wormhole. The first person that can capture this ship and tow it back to one of their facilities gets it. Of course everyone else is getting this message too so you may have to fight over it!! hahahahahahaha-hahahahahahaha

SGTalon

There were 4 of these e-mails sent out for 4 different ships in 4 different sectors each is equidistant from at least 3 Fleets. This should create a few Huge Battles right at the beginning and I don't think any of the Fleets are going to hold back. And this is just 1 of many events I plan to spring on the campaign! There are many other details that are too much to talk about but you can see them all on the SG_Campaign Site.

http://www.barrybryant.net/sg_campaign

Check it out and if you see anything you could add post it on our forum. I expect to have Battle films, Reports, Standings on the team with the best activity, kills, fleets, Planets, everything. There may even be a Prize for the champions!!!!

I am also working on making the SG_Campaign a Package. Once I have all the bugs worked out I will make the entire package available to anyone who would like to start and run their own SG_Campaign. The idea I put behind it's creation was simplicity so pretty much anyone can run one. Stay tuned to the SG_Campaign. And if you would like to contact me to talk about the campaign I am on every Tuesday and Thursday Night very late.

In the words of our forefather " It's going to be BIG, Really BIG!!"



<http://www.starfleetuniverse.com>

Tribute to a Fallen Comrade

A tribute in memory of Christopher J. Lewis

I have said more than once, what makes SFC a great game are the fans. We have all worked together to build a true gaming community. Even when two players are duking it out, there is still that love of SFC that draws them together. Each of you help to make our community and SFC a better place.

That is why we are all saddened by the lose of one of our community leaders. At 10:26 on the 27th of July Chris Lewis passed away. This loss caught our community completely by suprise. While we all know that death is a daily thing, it only strikes home on rare occasions, and for the SFC community, it has struck home.

For those who do not know, Chris was a scripter for Taldren. He was writing scripts for SFC 2 and was perhaps best known for his tutorial on using the SFC API. This can be found at the link below.

<http://www.usit.com/longshot/sfctipsntricks.html>

His lose has driven home the fact that any one of us could be gone, at any time. It has also made me stop and look at the people I have encountered through our common love of SFC. In fact many of my friendships now revolve around this game. However I hope they are not limited to it. I would like to take this moment to honor Chris by making sure my friends do not pass without knowing how I feel.

Dennis, a man I have only met online but who has become my best friend. Jay and Jake, who keep me on my toes and always find a way to make me laugh, your friendship is priceless to me. Toby, Darrell, Scott and Annie, people that I am just getting to know, but who have touched me in various ways :-). All of you are valued parts of my life, I feel richer for knowing you all.

Below we have a few words from some people that had the pleasure of working with Chris and got to know him.

E.L. Crisler
Managing Editor

GreyHawke

Hi my name is Wil, most of you know me as Greyhawke. I've only know Chris for a little over a year, and only through the internet at that. But I have learned that friendship does not require a physical presence. I cannot say that I knew him well, but I am grateful for having known him at all. I did not realize how much of a friend he had become until I heard of his passing. Now that I am not able to click on his name in my address book and seek his opinion on whatever was troubling me at the moment. I must say that it surprises me in a way, I did not realize that it was possible to lose a friend on the net. This loss has awakened in me a desire to let everyone know that their friendship means a lot to me, whether online or in the real world. Craig, Gwen, Tony, Jad, TCallahan, Geoff, Chris Taylor,

Mr. Boldman, Cromwell, Predator VI, Lothar, Talon Claw and the many others who have made my life richer just for knowing you, I thank you all. Please keep in touch.

Chris's contributions to the SFC community were many. He was a Beta Tester for SFC, which is where I first met him. When I began seriously working on the Operation: Phoenix Campaign, Chris signed on as the Romulan leader. He became a very prominent core member helping us to iron out many of the rules. We talked about how the mission script could be manipulated to output data that could be used in a campaign, and I learned that he was not only good at scripting, but a very good teacher as well. This is when I encouraged him to write the Mission API Tutorials that have helped so many get a good start at mission writing. Chris also wrote the mission Quantum Factor, this is still one of my favorites. It proved to me that user created missions could be more than just a slugfest, using the API that 14 East had provided. Knowing talent when they see it, Taldren contracted Chris to be one of their mission script writers for SFC2.

I cannot claim to know Chris outside of this community, so I will not say that SFC was his greatest passion. But I do know that it was something that he enjoyed, being a part of the community, and helping others to enjoy its riches. It gives me some comfort that he was able to take it to the next level, being a part of the Taldren team. I know he was living at least one dream.

Craig "cam78" Malloy

I met Chris in the fall of 1999. In Greyhawke's Operation Phoenix meta-game, Chris had taken the role of Romulan Strategic Leader, when I, rather foolishly, assumed command of the Gorn forces. Well, someone had too... Over the time spent ironing out rules, discussing campaign format, and exchanging suitcase/lampshade barbs (though with Chris, these were always in fun), I came to know Christopher Lewis, albeit in a small way. During this time, what struck me most was not his 'dedication to the game'. Make no mistake, I do not doubt that Chris cared for SFC more than most players, including myself. What I remember most, and what makes me feel Chris' absence even more, was his dedication to people who played SFC. Tips & Tricks was by far the most obvious example, without it I would never have had the courage to start writing my first script. This was not the only example. For much of the fall, while mine was an army of one (later of two and three), the Romulan faction was somewhat more populous. This posed a serious problem how to maintain everyone's interest while we tried to hammer out the game. I don't know how exactly Chris dealt with this, being Gorn I was not privy to his plans but I do know, from discussions with Greyhawke, Chris and the others, that this was never far from his mind. Again, to me this is a commitment to people that not all have. I can go on, with instance after instance but its not the specifics that matter, rather the underlying caring.

Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

TENNYSON, "Ulysses"

USS Revenge

By Jake "Kirk_Jr-SFC" Deschaine

The Captain awoke to the sound of a scream, something normally not heard on a starship. The scream had originated from the next cabin, which he knew to be Lieutenant Commander Franklin's. For some reason he hesitated while getting up, he didn't understand why he was but shaking. He quickly got dressed and was out the door to Franklin's cabin.

The room was dark and there was apparently no movement. Upon turning on the lights the Captain saw why there wasn't any movement; Franklin had been killed! Hitting the communications panel on the desk the captain yelled "Bridge, get a security team and Medical personnel to Lieutenant Commander Franklin's quarters on the double." "Aye sir. What has happened?" asked the 3rd watch bridge officer. "Lieutenant Commander Franklin is dead." Replied the Captain. He cut communications and waited for the security and medical personnel to arrive.

It only took 10 minutes before security closed of the room for investigation. After security arrived John made sure that all was well, and made his way down to sickbay to talk to the Chief Medical Officer. "What the hell happened Doctor?" Captain Jonathan Rupert asked to the Chief Medical Officer. "Captain, it appears that he was shot with a phaser on stun at point blank range." "But that's not possible I was in that room a minute after he screamed there's no way that anyone could have gotten out the door that fast." "Well John that's what happened he was shot directly in the chest killed him almost instantly." Said the doctor looking at a pad. "All we can do is wait for the security report." "Your right doctor." Said the captain, and started back to his quarters.

That night the captain didn't get much sleep, so he decided to make a log entry his personal log. Captains personal Log star date 66085.2: "Tonight Lieutenant Commander William Franklin was killed, apparently by a phaser blast to the chest. Security is running an investigation and I don't know what to think about this. Will was always a great person and I don't know why anyone would want to kill him. I guess I will find out when the report gets to me. I think tomorrow will be a bad day. Log off." The full realization that Franklin was dead hadn't hit John until right now. He sat awake for hours thinking of what had happened, and to whom it had happened; eventually he laid back and fell asleep.

The memorial service started in the Photon Torpedo room. Everyone seemed to be in a very somber mood. After the body was laid to rest, the service moved to the recreation center to celebrate Franklin's life.

"Welcome sir." Said Lieutenant Picollete as he guided the captain to a table in the recreation center. "Would you like something to drink sir?" he asked grabbing a pad "Just some water Lieutenant." Said the captain heavily. "Yes sir coming right up." Said Picollete as he walked off to the food dispenser.

The service seemed to be going fairly well, in the corner there was a cobbled together band made up of some junior officers. They were playing some instruments the captain thought he hadn't ever seen before and some music that seemed to have been being played in 3 different times. The captain's water arrived and he slowly drank it surveying the room, there were mostly science uniforms around the room that made sense because Commander Franklin worked in the science section.

The captain spotted a crewman he had seen more and more of as of late, Yeoman Karen Sterling. He smiled to her as she walked by, not enough to say anything was up but just enough to catch her attention. He wondered inwardly if this day was going to be half bad after all, it was now 14:00 hours and all seemed well.

After staying at the service another hour the Captain headed for the bridge, and just as he was about to enter the turbolift he had that same strange hesitation he had before when he had heard Franklin scream. It soon passed and he shrugged it off as he continued his way to the bridge.

The turbolift hummed as it took him to his destination, then all of a sudden the lights flickered. "That's odd." He said aloud as he made a mental note to ask the engineer about it as the turbolift continued on its way. It stopped on deck 2 to pick up another passenger, when the doors opened all that was there was a pair of boots and a pile of ashes.

Jonathan slammed the coms panel "Bridge this is the captain. Get a security team and medical personnel to deck two section one." "Aye sir." Said the voice of a different bridge officer. The captain knelt down and examined the ashes and if he didn't know better he would have said that someone was incinerated on that very spot. Another death, this one harder

to explain than the last, as it seemed Yeoman Karen Sterling was apparently incinerated on the spot. The only way to identify her was the DNA left on her boots. The captain heard the report when the doctor stopped in to his quarters later that day

"Its not right." Said the Chief Medical Officer. "People just don't burn, it just doesn't happen."

"Tell that to Karen, Doctor." The captain said looking at his glass of scotch.

"She meant a lot to you didn't she John?" Asked the doctor sitting down, and facing the captain.

"Yes, she did." He said looking off out of the window.

"I've got more bad news captain. The security report for Lieutenant Commander Franklin's death has come in."

"What does it say?" The captain asked regaining composure.

"It says that there was no evidence of foul play and no sign of a phaser."

The captain thought about that for a while and finally said, "Well tell them to look again."

"Aye Sir."

"Thanks for talking to me doc." Said the captain as he looked at the doctor.

"Always John. Ill be in sickbay if you need someone to talk to." The doctor said as he stood up and left the captain's quarters.

It was now 22:00. Captain Jonathan Rupert looked at his komometer and decided it was time to update up his log for Starfleet. "Captain's log Stardate 66085.22 USS Tirgoviste. The unexplained deaths of two crewmembers have prompted me to start to have a larger security force on duty at any one time. I don't know who or what is causing these deaths but I will find out. And they or it will pay. End Log"

The captain decided he really needed to get some sleep. He walked to his bunk sat down and set his alarm for 06:00. He yawned and stretched out for what he hoped would be a good night's sleep.

At 04:00 the Red Alert alarm went off and woke the captain up just as he heard the first officers voice. "Red Alert! Captain to the bridge!" Rushing out of bed the captain quickly dressed and ran to the turbolift. "Bridge," He said as he got inside the lift. As he got onto the bridge he heard the First Officer ordering for full power to the shields and weapons charging.

"What is it Commander, and why are you on the bridge?" asked the Captain taking his chair.

The Commander a tall thin man with dark brown hair replied " Sir I couldn't sleep so I decided to come to the bridge. Then this Klingon D7B appears off the starboard bow."

"What is it doing here?" asked the captain.

"Sir It appears to be headed on an attack run."

This didn't make sense, the captain thought, they were hundreds of light years from Klingon Space, and they weren't any match for a D7B in their DDG. "Hail them."

"Onscreen." Said the Communications officer

"What are you doing in Federation space?" asked the captain. A rather large klingon replied, "We are not in Federation space you PaTak."

"Yes you are you are, he looked at a star chart, Oh no." said the captain.

"You Federation Dog you have exactly 1 minute to leave our space or be destroyed!"

"Plot a course directly back to Federation Space Maximum Warp." The captain ordered looking around the bridge at the dazed faces.

"Course plotted." Said the Helmsman. "Engage." Said the captain. He looked at the First Officer. "Commander Meet me in the briefing room in 5 minutes."

"Yes Sir." Replied the dazed Commander.

The captain walked off the bridge and into the turbo lift. "Deck seven, section 3." Said the captain to the lift. I have to figure out what is going on with this ship, the captain thought as the lift speeded him to the briefing room.

"Sir I don't know how we got inside Klingon Space. When I arrived we were maintaining our patrol course nothing abnormal was happening." Said Commander Lewis Mathews.

"Then How the hell did we get here?" the Captain exclaimed pounding

USS Revenge

Continued...

on the briefing room table.

"I have no idea Sir."

"There are some odd things happening on this ship." said the captain, looking the commander in the eyes.

The captain headed back to the bridge just in time to see yet another unexpected thing happen. On the main view screen was a ship, this wouldn't have been anything special if it hadn't been the USS Revenge, the captain's first starship.

"Oh my god." He said aloud staggering into his command chair.

"Captain what is it?" asked the Helmsman turning to face the captain, who was now white as a ghost.

"That's ... no it can't be, but it is the USS Revenge. The first ship I was assigned to after leaving the academy, it was caught in an ion storm and the bridge crew was killed leaving me in command." The captain says tears starting to come to his eyes.

"Captain what happened?" asked the helmsman.

"I ordered them ..." He starts to lose control "I ordered them outside to repair the sensors so we could get out of the storm." The captain is holding his hands in his face "There were 3 of them Ensign Pasquale, Crewman Perry, and Crewman Dobson. They went and they fixed the sensors, but it didn't matter." The captain says trying to compose himself. "It didn't even matter, the ion storm passed right after they repaired the sensors. Do you understand! 3 lives wasted."

"You couldn't have known you had to save the rest of the crew." The Helmsman said with a very sympathetic tone.

"That's what Starfleet said, but it doesn't matter what they say it was my fault." The captain rushes to the turbolift.

"Captain wait!" Yells the helmsman.

"Transporter room 2." The captain said to the turbolift. "I know what I have to do." He arrived at the Transporter room just as security did.

"Sir, we don't want to hurt you." Said the first security officer.

"Out of my way, I have to get to the Revenge!" The captain yelled.

The two security guards were almost plowed over by the captain as he charged them, but one managed to grab the captain's leg and hold him.

"I'm sorry sir." Said the security officer as he shot the captain.

"Captain are you all right." Asked the doctor.

"You have to let me get to the Revenge, or else they will keep killing. You have to get me to that ship!" screamed the captain frantically.

"Captain you need to rest, I'm going to give you a sedative." Said the doctor grabbing a hypo spray. "No NO you can..." Said the captain as he passed out.

"I don't know what's wrong, but he is right 2 more people died today." Said the doctor to the security chief.

The Revenge always kept up with them, No matter what speed they went, No matter what direction, It was always right in front of them. As for the murders, they only increased, for every time the Captain would come around more people would die. Eventually the doctor had to let him out to test his theory.

"I wont need anything." Said the captain looking at the senior officers assembled in the Transporter room. "I have been honored to serve with you all, and will always remember you. Set transporter coordinates to the bridge." He said standing on the Transporter Pad. "Energize." A slight shimmering and he was gone.

The Bridge was exactly how it was that day except there were no people. Jonathan looked around the bridge, and then they appeared the 3 crewmen he had sent into the ion storm. "I am Sorry." He cried to them "I am truly sorry." The three spirits drew closer to him.

Then in unison they started to speak "YOU SENT US TO DIE. FOR NOTHING!" they were right next to him now, and he could see through them. Their bodies' were half transparent half opaque. "I am sorry." He said.

They were pushing him back until he finally fell down the turbo shaft.

He fell for what seemed like eternity, but then he stopped in mid air. It was then that he heard a harsh cruel laugh, almost like an evil laugh. As he looked up, he saw a glow.

"What are you?" He asked pathetically

"I am everything, and nothing. I am the beginning and the end. I am vastly superior to you in every respect." For some reason it seemed to glow brighter as it got closer to him.

"You did this to me? You killed my crew showed me the images of the past. Why have you done this?"

"You my dear captain have been a pawn in my game of chess. I was determining how much your mind could take before you completely lost it. I did not kill your crew captain I just let you believe I killed your crew."

There is an odd hum and a whirring.

"For you see captain this has all been in Your Own Mind."

The whirring intensifies and becomes unbearable.

"Now Captain time to wake up!"

There is a bright flash and a loud popping noise. Then...

The Captain awoke to the sound of a scream, something normally not heard on a starship. But what was more odd was that it was his scream...



Another Dinner

By Scott Hunter

The clack of polished boots on metal presented a brief cacophony in the tight spaces, winding as they did in symmetrical form in seemingly all directions. A light of unparalleled clarity illuminated the entire hall. Every conceivably viewable part of that hall was spotless and glimmering, except for the expressions on some of the faces of those assuming positions in the rows.

"If I jump out of my skin and run screaming down the corridor, tell them I can see the spirits of the dead..."

"... Does this look right? I think its level..."

"I really don't think they'll care too much what we look like... except for the meat on our bones."

The few commendations on display looked lonesome on their red dress tunics.

A great shadow passed slowly in front of the suns and the galaxies, eclipsing the cascade of starlight through the adjoining promenade windows. Those privy to the sight couldn't suppress a shiver as the behemoth moved across.

"Bridge to Captain: the cruiser is alongside and they are requesting permission to come aboard."

"Acknowledge. Permission granted."

Everyone settled down more rigidly into their places.

A colossal, thunderous crash jars the room; everybody looks about, and a quiet voice meant only for one utters, "Sir..."

"They don't waste time do they?" from elsewhere.

"No problem - they're just a little rough... .. I think." He gets a little nervous and queries back, "Trask is on Weapons today, isn't he?"

The familiar Vulcan nod gave him reassurance.

Everybody seemed to be holding themselves together rather well. Until the airlock doors opened, and there they were - in all their ghastly glory. Ready to step onboard across that gleaming threshold, crimson and yellow and harsh black-violet cascading forth from the monstrous interior beyond that corrupted the harmony and order and sanity of... Engineer Keith MacAlister - he lost his whistle.

Phoop!

All heads turned to MacAlister, a grizzly seeming man who was as unprepared for the event and the nature of their guests as he was for reforming his coarseness. Wide-eyed in every way he kept his cool and handled the situation.

"... Warpsucker!"

Beyond, the partially hooded figure gazed at the shooting object speeding across his view, then at the engineer.

The most hapless witness could only turn his authoritative head away, deftly retrieving and dry-swallowing in an experienced and quick jerk of the head the aspirin he kept handy at all times in his suit pocket. His expression was a deadpan of joy thereafter.

Then MacAlister impromptly placed his hands to his mouth and piped aboard the party in resoundingly unique style. He then wiped the spittle on his dress pants and put on the greatest fake smile ever known to mankind (but not to his superior...).

The figure alone stepped through, locking its shrouded gaze upon he who had stepped forward.

"On behalf of the United Federation Of Planets, I welcome you aboard the United Starship VanKeegan. I am Captain J'lel Annatan."

"And I...", the cowl, a tattered ripped black thing, fine but ragged, is pulled down to the sides - a two-piece covering, "..."

"Issz the module defective? Did you hear..."

He looks behind him, "Barelyy...", and grabs the small metallic device next to his chest, crushing it to pieces in his hand and spreading the technology's ashes to the ground before him. He reaches out for a replacement, which a leathery hand promptly offers. He resumes his address.

"... I bring greetingsz from thee mighty Gorn."

"I am Seenor Captain Heev of thee Guardians, formerly King'sz Fleet Guard. Wee are part ov thee 4th Fleet tatzk force assigned to patroll this sector, and unlessss you precipitate itt, my shipp will remain parallel and sssteady and there shall bee no bloodshedd."

The Vulcan returned a quick stare to his superior who swiftly dealt with the concern, "I assure you we shall precipitate no such action."

As the rest of the party trudged menacingly onto the floor, towering ornate blades resting at hips and backs, the cascading harshness from the dim

shuttle interior ceased: the shuttle iris interlocked once again. The room began to cool back to its normal temperature - the heat sweat abated.

"Thiss iz my Mechanisst, Seniorr Comman-der Rrraakk Kesss. Beside him is my Security officer Seniorr Comman-der Vorzazss and my second-in-command," he then pointed to his other side, "Crrodd is Juniorr Comman-der in charge of Weaponsz, and my Analysis officer reemainedd behind."

To the considerable distress of his blue-skinned counterpart the Gorn strode forward and at him, "Yourr Speak Hall - wee should go to itt now..."

"Yes... yes of course. This way."

J'lel had made sure that the decks through which they walked were as devoid of incidental crew traffic as possible. Having the 'lizards' onboard would be sure to shock the Hell out of your typical recruit. They made their way to the modest but still luxurious accommodation, as deliberately close to the airlock as he could have made it.

Slowly and inexorably they made their way into the room and into their opposing seats at the long table. Each Gorn removed the massive blade weapons on their persons and laid them to their sides by their respective chairs. Federation attentions turned towards the singular exploring Gorn, checking doorways and accessways - he was not so quick to assume a position by his superior.

"Forrgive Comman-der Vorzazss... he iss diligently para-noid, and so he iz my Ssecurrity officer and my second."

J'lel replied, "Certainly." A general easing began to materialize now that the group was at rest, eventually including Vorzazss, "So tell me Captain, why did you not transport over?"

"Huh huh hehh..." the entourage grinned chillingly, knowingly, "You are likely familiar with accidntss in the course of your own transporter developmentt - the Ravenor iz a new star-ship, and some fluctuations have been observed with that sysstem. We have avoidded its use until Commander Kesss's specialistss havve iso-lated and remedieed thee problemm."

"I could have a team go over to your ship and assist..."

"That will nott bee necessaryy."

Commander Kesss tersely adds, "I will inspect thee system on your VanKeegan and apply thee observationz to our system. Yourr team would probably bee mosst... un-comfortable in our corridors..."

"Captain, I request permission to visit sickbay - I'm seeing funny colors everywhere and my eyes hurt considerably."

The Captain concerns himself with the request, "I apologize Annatan - yourr crew may havve sustainedd damage from ourr lightss: we favouurr different frequencsiez of illuminationn... I shall havve Commander Heg on the Ravenor log it for thee future." Heev continued towards the affected, "Feemale crew-Man, the effectss will bee temporaryy, yourr ocular sensez shall returnn in mere hourz."

"Ummm... thank you Captain. Captain?"

"Yes, permission granted." Staggering slightly, she leaves the room. J'lel finally gets the opportunity to introduce his officers.

"This is Ta'let, my Science officer." The Vulcan nodded cordially, "This is my Weapons officer Roger Hannibal..."

"Hello."

"... And that is my Chief Engineer, Mr. MacAlister."

The ever-grizzly Gaelic bastard showed, despite the uniform and the shave, "Greetings..." He was rather unprepared for this prompt to speak - it showed on his apprehensive face.

Kesss spoke up again, now locked upon the nervous engineer "I am gener-al-ly unfamiliarr with yourr customs, but I gesss the device is meant to remain at yourr lipss..."

Low Gorn chuckling began to boil over and out, like a troll before it snatches the sheep or a witch before she grabbed Gretel. MacAlister immediately relaxed in the grip of his minor infuriation at the reference - bloody smartass snakes. He muttered under his breath, "Give me a good stick and I'd whack you silly, 2 ton bags a sh..." J'lel didn't have to hear MacAlister to know what it was he was muttering - his guess was invariably in the same ballpark. J'lel couldn't help but laugh some as well. This was nice....

"That was my Medical officer, Allana Honsberg."

"My Engineer iz curious az to yourr metallurgyy for thiss vessel."

Kesss takes the cue, "How iz it that you do not blow away with thee solar windz? Your sslenderr architecturre lackss thee masss to withstandd the rigourz of combatt - thee veryy plates wee walk on threaten to co-llapsse

Another Dinner

Continued...

under each of our steps; with effort I could snap some of your bulkhead in half. This ship would shatter into a thousand pieces if it was struck by one of our Plasma weapons."

Talet responds, "The hull superstructure is in actuality quite beyond your considerable personal capacity to damage. It is composed of a Molybdenum, Tri-tellurine, Titanium, and Di-tritichaic alloy molded and meshed to a supporting weave of poly-plastics and steel alloy fibers. These are joined together for the most part via molecular welds that seamlessly seal the outer shell to the vacuum of space."

The Gorn Security officer speaks, "Then why does your floor bend beneath us?"

"Hmmm. I do not know. The mean weight of a Gorn being 475 lbs...." Kesss corrects him, "503 pounds. By our lastest census..."

"Oh? Interesting. I must theorize that despite the specifications of our main structure, the corridor floor plates or their mountings are manufactured to less rigid tolerances. Perhaps when your combined mass is versus a given area... it could be an unforeseen stress. These access ways upon this Federation vessel were not meant for cargo capacities."

"He doesn't mean to refer to you lugs as cargo crates..." MacAlister chimes in. Vorsasz looks at him, J'lel just does his officer best to move on. The Gorn Captain helps that along.

"Come now Science officer Talet: were I to charge thee Ravenor into your VanKeegan vessel in a normal ramming maneuver," J'lel looks at his engineer, knowing Kieth cringes to himself at the thought of the damage such would cause, and knowing that he shares his own disbelief at how readily these beings embrace such tactics, "it would snap like the bone of a Lyran brooding! Our vessels are designed to be strong and resilient, while your UFP starships are sleek and flimsy. So they look, and so they seem to be as well. I do not understand how you can claim military successes with such things."

"Our vessels aren't THAT flimsy..." J'lel pauses for a moment and then looks away into a wall - he begins to quaff his drink with relish.

"That is quite possible given what we know of Gorn architecture and priorities. You see Captain, the Gorn are said to utilize a triple hull cast alloy frame with solid blocks of fused stone ore interlocked throughout the entirety. Very strong indeed..."

Talet continues, but on a different subject of momentary but immediate importance for him, speaking into a tricorder device he has produced from who knows where, "Computer, update status log for Species Entry - Gorn - Culture - Vital Statistics, subject: weight mean update..."

"Ta'lel... do that later, please..."

"Affirmative Captain."

"Listen, neither I nor, if you clamber over my dead blue carcass, Engineer Keith - never mind me - are going to let you and my intrepidly dedicated Science officer dash my ship to pieces in order to prove a point of resiliency!"

"Huh huh... of course not, Captain. It would be a waste of good Federation resources. Instead we shall have to acquire some of your sim-ulator program and allow for the event in wargame sometime, if our respective leaders agree to such in the near future. Let us drink to such an occasion!"

Captain Annatan recomposes himself to join in the toast, a feeling he somehow thought he would be reserving for a gathering with Klingons or Romulans rather than with Allies. Engineer MacAlister needs no invitation to do so - his quaffing almost matches the slurps of the Gorn officers. It also drowns his concerns about the Gorn and his 'feeble' ship...

"So you do drink?"

"Yes Captain, but not like you do. We have seen your selves on leave and off military duty."

"What do you mean?"

Slurp, "We possess a metabolism which enables us to ignore the effects of most 'inebriants'. It is a core part of our being that many of you will like to find intriguing."

Kesss speaks again, "There is a custom of yours we have not yet seen, Captain. The guest dinner..."

"Huh, yes, the Feast!" Captain Heev continued, "Let us proceed."

The Captain breaks himself out of the locking presence of his counterparts and turns to a nearby ensign, "Jeremy..."

The studious Ensign proceeds to retrieve many dishes from a nearby alcove, returning to place them on the table. That done he is dismissed and exits. The Gorn sit rigidly and strangely motionless for a short time as the smell of the meats hits their nostrils. The leader takes the first cautious bite, then in labored fashion so do the others. Heev accelerates his consumption to a tremendous pace, his throat expanding as half-chewed morsels rush down his leathern gullet.

All begin to accelerate their pace at the table, and J'lel begins to eat too, until one of the Gorn, silent up until now, speaks up in disgust.

"This meat is crude for a Feast! Such small morsels..."

Heev snaps his head towards him "Are enough for YOU Junior Commander Crod!" Crod settles down and resumes eating. Heev's teeth are showing quite well, "You will forget my officer's statement and continue - he will be disciplined on our return!"

Heev reaches for his chest and temporarily disables his translator to directly address his subordinate. Crod continues eating, but in a dedicated manner... Hearing the naked Gorn tongue chills even the Vulcan.

The Captain responds in the awkwardness... not that this evening has been anything but, "I... I could easily provide more if you desire. We have other..."

Heev slowly moves his head in a negative manner as he re-engages the translating device, "The Feast is ample for our requirements. There will be no unnecessary extensions."

The entirety eat, at times the two sides seemingly competing with each other, though of course the crocodilian dedication and capacities of the guests predetermine the outcome whether such was real or merely perceived. The Federation group eats a little more lightly than usual.

In between gulps and slurps Senior Captain Heev spoke again.

"I have not seen a blue-skin before in person. This is an event - your aggressive selves have been unbecomingly to me, except for the picture we obtained from an Earther during a stopover at your Starbase 31. The pamphlets were, I believe, part of your 'Tou-r-izm package'..."

"Sorry..." J'lel had to chuckle some more.

"Yes, we apologize - we have aggressive commercial elements..." Talet tried to finish but was brought to an abrupt halt at the finality of his listener.

"Most annoying."

After a few moments Kesss adds, "Some very ugly places."

Heev adds, "Your medical officer accepted our apologies for the incident."

An unconscious burst of laughter escaped from the far table end - MacAlister's belly. He could imagine what happened to the poor fellow. He probably just wound up getting the complete attention of the Gorns... that may have been enough for a heart attack.

Kesss grins.

"So tell me something about Ambassador Kerrvalz - is he arriving shortly? We..."

The Gorn Captain's mood immediately tightens.

"He has been EATEN..."

A terrible pause ensues.

Trust the Vulcan to break it, "That would certainly explain why he is not here, Captain..."

"You are surprised? Perhaps you are not familiar with our punishment for treason."

J'lel is aghast, "Eaten?!? Isn't that a little... phhh...I can't speak..." "Capital punishment for capital crime, Captain Annatan. Commemoration. It has been so for hundreds of millennia."

"That's bloody barbaric!" MacAlister bravely interjected.

"It is our WAY. We discovered his traitorous activities - he betrayed us to the Orion for personal gain. As rare as that is for the Gorn it has happened and we deal with it appropriately."

J'lel is still dumbfounded by the revelation. Heev recognizes the reaction and takes it in stride.

"We act, Captain." Heev adds shortly after, "Do not worry: we slay the meat with blades before we rip down the pieces. We are not base flesh-beasts, human."

Heev's inveighing against insult stifles further debate by the amazed Federation.

The Gorn Captain turns the tables.

Another Dinner

Continued...

"Why are you not at Warr with thee Klingon Empire?"

"WHAT?" flabbergasts J'lel. What a night.

"Why doo you not fight thee Klingonz? I waz quite clear in my meaning, Captain."

"The Federation does not look for trouble - we do not initiate wars or look for conflict! ..."

"Then you turn a blind eye to 'conflict'." The Captain pauses deliberately and then continues, "Thee Confederation haz been fighting thee Romulan fleets for many yearz now. It iz no borderr skirmishh - it iz a limitedd warr! They strike at tar-gets ov opportunity and hide, wee then huntt them downn and deestroyy them. They are accomplished hiderz, wee are accomp-lishhed hunterz. Though wee do not intentionally penetrate deep into theirr terr-rit-or-yy, wee willl purssuue themm wherever they may go."

Vorzazs grips his mammoth drink flagon and purposefully squeezes, then lets go, squeezes, then lets go. Eventually the flagon metal no longer springs back into form. He looks about in as sheepish a manner as a Gorn may look, to find that if anyone has noticed his vandalism, no one pays heed. They are listening to the Gorn Captain.

"And wee are winning! So far wee havve deestroyeydd many of their main-line fleets, while they have done little to no damage to ourz. But still they raid our outpostss and settlementss - they do so because it iz easy. Wee do not ignore them! Wee do not stand byy! Weee strike back - wee punish thee In-va-dderz. Wee divulge nothing critical by telling you thatt our intelligence beelieves thee Star Empire iz reigning itself in in prepara-tionn for another largerr seriez of maneuvrrz against uss... something more bold and ambitious. They builld their warr machine Captain, and wee shall do more than what iz nec-sessary to stop them."

He comes full circle to his original querying point, "A-gainst thee Klingonz you doo noth-thing."

"Why should we? Are you suggesting we instigate war?"

"I suggest noth-thing Captain. Reelationz between your people have settled down in recent time. Thiss provez that your idealz are worth-lesss." Heev has the undivided attention of the UFP group - even Ta'let shows some small signs of consternation at this. He explains, "Within thee Imperiall Fleet iz a veteran commanderr, much honouredd by hiz brethreenn for hiz victoriez in ac-tionn. He iz Goth Maaghe'. Do you know thee namez of thee star-shipss in hiz bat-tle fleet? Enslaverr, Conquerring Heeel, and In-flic-torr. How did they get thoz namez, Captain? For thee sake ov 'prosperity' you look away while thee Klingonz hold worldz - entire civilizationz - in thrall. Wee do nott: if a Klingon star-ship enterz our space, it shall bee destroyedd."

"We are aware of the problems in Klingon society. Personally, I hate them and their lust for violence. My people are warriors too, but there is a time for such things. We cannot forego diplomacy and move to force... then we become as they and dictate. We must give civilized approaches a chance."

"WORDZ! WORDZ! You are ridden with them. You are full ov politics. Wee do not approve!"

Ta'let interjects, "With the rare exception, the Klingons employ slaves of their criminals - said work being a form of penal servitude and punishment. At least from that perspective what their society does is comparable to our own."

Hah. To thee Klingonz, thoz who suf-fer deefeeat in battle are criminalz. So yess, what you say iz true."

He continues.

"Thee Klingonz consider bat-tle to bee natural. Thee instinct for vi-olence, thee drive to killl and dom-in-nate and ravage, iz parrt of all sentient culturez. Gorn have realized thiss, but Gorn have also realized thatt instinct

must bee tem-peredd or it de-stroyz thee Animal. Wee are a higher life-formm. This iz thee mark ov intellectt."

The Captain relinquishes the flagon he has been cradling upon the table for some time.

"Klingonz make no such diztinctionn... thee strong ruule. To them, thoz that they enslave deservve to bee." Heev points viciously at his Federation counterparts, "They fail to realize, Captain, that there iz always someone who iz stronger than youu, whether az individualz or az Empire."

MacAlister pipes up, "Except for the bleedin' Confederation, right..."

Vorzazs chuckles as Gorn do. The Captain continues.

"YOUU share a borderr with themm andd yourr governmentt does not even ob-jecktt!"

"At what cost do we object, Sir? Have you thought about the lives we would lose if we forced the issue - if we precipitated a conflict with the entire Empire? We might bring the Federation to Armageddon! You don't want to fight such wars... you want to fight the ones you can win."

"Per-haps your leaderrz should devote effortt to thee con-sidera-tionn ov thee livez ov thee enslavedd - yourr ambassadorz can deelliver theirr diplom-atick ssen-timentss to theirr Worldz az well."

An uneasy silence.

"The Federationn would mobilize itss entire military force if I were to take only one ov yourr crew-men, but for Worldz, you offerr noth-thing." He raises his voice to a tumultuous roar, "If wee shared a common borrh-derr, thee Klingonz would bee CRUSHED andd wee would put an enndd to theirr Empire! Dee-ci-ssivve ACTIONN! We DO - you talkk!"

Heev quietened down into a more reflective insistence, "... That iz why thee Empire livez: bee-cauze they can, andd bee-cauze you let themm!"

Captain Annatan pondered in the silence, then spoke up, "Captain Heev, I come from a lineage of Warriors, my great great grandfather was decorated by the old Andorian tribal councils themselves.... A scholar of old Earth once declared that you first arrange for victory before you pursue it. On a personal note, I must admit I am reviled by the oppression you speak of, but I am one cruiser, and I am bound by my chain of command - I am sure that when the chance presents itself those further up that chain will recognize the opportunity and seize it, but until then my actions in that regard would be foolhardy and wasted."

"Az iz thee initi-ativvve ov yourr warriorrz and leeaderrz."

Heev rose, and his officers followed suit, gathering their ceremonial weapons.

"That iz all, Captain Annatan. We must return to my shipp and rendez-vous with the Cruiserz Grotto and Blood-Trickle-Blade in a nearby system. Wee will now leave..."

He awaited J'lel's permission, guest to host.

"Permission accorded. Granted..."

The Gorn proceeded from the table and the room without any further utterance, heading with purpose back to the docking door from whence they came.

MacAlister shakes himself with a vigorous shiver. Finally muttering, "Leave already...." J'lel remained stunned at the table, absorbing the events. Suddenly he scrambled out of his chair to see them off, after a subtle cue from his Science Officer.

The lonely Engineer stepped up to the portal window looking out upon the Gorn hull. His throat was thick with Gaelic contempt.

"Damn flying brick..."

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The Crossing (pt2)

Jay "NTDT" Jeffery

The Hunt

Dor'du'Kan sat in his quarters thinking about the journey so far. It had been 8 days since the encounter with the Constellation and he was still worried about the message that got through before Kor'pec decided to jam them. He leaned over and pressed the button for the comms system.

"DejH'en, join me in my quarters", he said sternly.

A few minutes later, DejH'en, his personal aide, joined him. "Sir, you requested my presence?"

"Yes DejH'en, I want you to review this transmission the Constellation sent off before we destroyed her."

"Sir? I was under the impression the ship didn't get off any transmission, didn't we jam her?" asked DejH'en, with a slight sense of hesitance.

"No, Kor'pec the fool didn't review his logs. The Constellation did get one off before he ordered the jamming. It took an officer of the Internal Defense Forces to review the logs, sometimes I wonder about our counterparts in the Deep Space Fleet", He stated sounding a bit unnerved, "Now," he continued, "listen to this and tell me what you make of it."

He leaned over and pressed a button on his computer terminal, which crack and hissed for a second then it sent out its message:

"Starbase 97, this is the USS Constellation, we are under attack by a Klingon warship. Repeat; we are under attack by a Klingon warship. Advise freighter task force Gamma twelve to stand by and not to proceed to Tholian Outpost 12. We will attempt to protect Ambassador Lecaran as best as we can, request immediate support....."

"It ends there when we started jamming", Dor'du'Kan said with a slight perturbed look on his face.

"Interesting sir, first a Federation warship heading for Tholian Space. Then we find they have an Ambassador on board. A meeting perhaps? But the freighters, that confuses me. Why would they send freighters to the Tholians?"

"That is the question of the day, we'll have to report this to the IDF as soon as possible. Something is amiss here and we need to stop it", Dor'du'Kan stated. He suddenly realized he was standing.

Out of nowhere the battle stations Claxon began going off.

Bah, what now?" asked Dor'du'Kan out loud, "Alright let's go figure this out, to the bridge." Dor'du'Kan and DejH'en rushed off to the bridge, arriving about the time all the standard officers arrived.

"Captain, what now?" asked Dor'du'Kan with a bit of authority.

"Nothing important General, just sit back and enjoy the ride. Seems we got more company," stated Kor'pec. He almost seemed amused to goat the old general more.

"Sir, I'm detecting six vessels, bearing 180 mark 190, approximate speed warp 7. Looks like they're hunting sir" yelled Kol'raH.

Hmm-fine time for a hunt, thought Kor'pec. Dor'du'Kan was thinking a bit differently, seems our foes have decided to hunt us.

"Captain, Unfortunately circumstances dictate that I reveal my true self. I am a member of the IDF, as is most of my personnel onboard. Those ships are hunting us, because you killed the Constellation that was carrying an Ambassador. If you had reviewed your logs, you would know this yourself. Now Bring tactical up!" ordered Dor'du'Kan, now showing his full ability to issue orders.

IDF, Kor'pec thought, must be a very important mission to include such a unit onboard. Feeling a bit weaker and less confident, Kor'pec shouted, "Tactical on main viewer!"

"Aye sir, Tactical up." stated Kol'raH.

Dor'du'Kan studied it for a moment, looked at every aspect, not much of a choice, but it's our only one.

"Captain, go silent, proceed to heading 87, mark 351." bellowed

Dor'du'Kan.

"General, that'll take us into Tholian Space!" Kor'pec shouted with surprise.

"You see any other choice captain? Kol'raH, what's the make on those ships? Kragus, steer for that asteroid field, just inside Tholian Space." barked Dor'du'Kan.

"General, I detect makes as six destroyer class, one's scanning deep, looks like a scout!" Kol'raH said almost jumping out of his chair.

"Range and time?" asked Dor'du'Kan. Kor'pec thought this would not be the time to try stepping on toes decided to sulk in his chair.

"Sir, range is 400, time to interception is approximately 6 minutes." responded Kol'raH.

"Time to that asteroid field Kragus?"

"About 4 minutes, sir" responded Kragus with a slight smirk on his face, that old dog just put Kor'pec in his place.

Hmm...that'll be cutting it close, but there was no choice, thought Dor'du'Kan, "As soon as were in that field, I want a dead stop, all power, all areas, dead and put life support on minimal. Hopefully that scout won't see us."

"Aye sir, understood"

"Kor'pec, what are you doing just sitting there? Take over the comms panel!" barked Dor'du'Kan.

Comms, thought Kor'pec, that's lower than kitchen duty! He rushed off and settled himself into the Comms station. "Comms manned sir!"

"Entering the asteroid field sir."

"Kol'raH, sensors picking up any Tholian vessels?" asked Dor'du'Kan.

"No sir, not detecting any ships in the area, except the Federation vessels."

Dor'du'Kan nodded slightly; good, that'll make things easier.

"All systems dead sir, minimal life support should I keep the cloak on?" responded Kragus. "No, kill the cloak, I don't want any power signatures." Commanded Dor'du'Kan. "Aye sir, Cloak is off", sounded Kragus.

"Sir, enemy task force is slowing to warp 3", shouted Kol'raH "Have they detected us?"

"Probably not, Kol'raH. They have most likely plotted where we should be and are scanning to make sure before heading on. Keep me informed", Dor'du'Kan said as he settled himself into the command seat.

Several intense minutes passed, giving Dor'du'Kan time to contemplate things and to think about what was so important about the mission the Constellation was on. What could to force the Federation to send a squadron of ships to destroy them.

"Sir, the enemy ships are proceeding on original course, they are maintaining warp 3", Kol'raH said with a slight sense of relief in his voice.

"Good, maintain this status for two hours, then proceed back on original course and status. Captain, the ship is yours again", Dor'du'Kan stated and then with a slight smirk added, "for now".

"DejH'en, join me in my quarters, we have much to discuss for our report to the Chancellor", he said as he left the bridge.

Kor'pec breathed a sigh of relief and stood to retake the command chair, thinking what is our real mission that would deem the IDF to be aboard? And why is there such a fuse over a destroyed Federation Cruiser? Ah well, a warriors place was not to worry about things like this, but to fight and kill honorably. And killing a Federation ambassador and the ship he was on should rank high enough to allow him a bigger ship.

Two hours later, Kor'pec ordered the IKV Urartu recloak and back into the Neutral zone on it original course. It would defiantly be a long trip, he thought.

To be continued...



<http://starfleet.thegamers.net/>

The Wolf Pack

By Mike "Korag" Wikan

Captain Tolak of the Imperial Klingon navy F5L Frigate Leader ChamaH'Taj was moving at Warp 8 into Federation Space. Strung out aft of his vessel were the rest of the attack squadron, composed of two F5Bs, (the HaChu and iBeH) and an E4 escort (the PoQveQ). These were all light vessels, ideal for the kind of combat that the Empire excelled at, quick, decisive strikes and the roiling melee of close assault. Tolak sat in his command chair and surveyed his crew at their stations, smiling savagely. Like a finely oiled machine they were tense at their consoles, waiting the moment of attack.

"Helm, prepare to drop from warp! Weapons, charge all batteries! Tactical, Raise shields! Comm, signal strike group for Action!!" He barked with precision, leaning forward slightly, his eyes fixed on the tactical screen in the front of the Bridge.

"EXECUTE!!!" he roared. As one, the group dropped out of warp.

"Sir! Three Federation vessels at Three-One-Six Mark Two! Range, Four Thousand Kalikams!!" His weapons officer, LT. MoroH shouted.

"Vessel type?" Tolak snarled.

"Sir! One Federation Heavy Cruiser, Imperial Codename HOKOT! Two Federation Frigates, Imperial Codename RAKAT!! They are turning toward us and charging weapons!!" MoroH swiveled back to his station.

"Jam their Fire control! Charge all weapons! Squadron, form on me!!" Tolak shouted.

The pack of Klingon ships coalesced into a tight shell around the Command ship and accelerated forward dramatically, their articulated wings dropping to give their forward disruptors clear lines of fire.

"Sir! Federation Vessel is hailing us!" the communication officer stated.

"No answer! Jam their communications!" Tolak clipped out.

In his forward view, Tolak watched the white disk and cylinder shapes of the Federation ships swell, the range closing swiftly. The Federation vessels were turning toward his group, the Frigates twice as swiftly as the heavier cruiser. Tolak saw his opportunity.

"All Ships! Concentrate on Frigate Designated "RAKAT 1"! Gunnery! Target weapon status?!" The gunnery officer shouted, "Target RAKAT 1 has all Phaser weapons armed! Photon tubes are charging Overloads!"

"All ships fire at 8 Kalikams, Maximum Jamming!" Tolak swiveled to the Security station and said, "Ready the troops, Commander"

The dark scarred Security officer shouted back "QAPLA!!!" The two Federation Frigates charged in as the Cruiser finally completed its turn to face the onrushing Klingons.

"Wait...wait...Yi BaH!!!" He shouted at the gunnery officer as the range hit 8 kalikams.

In a staggered volley, all four Klingon vessels unloosed a torrent of Disruptor and Medium phaser fire at the unlucky frigate. The Federation vessel lurched as its forward shield collapsed and it fired its surviving photon torpedo in reply at the Klingon E4 escort. The torpedo, its guidance thrown off by the heavy Klingon jamming missed cleanly. The crippled Federation frigate lurched to port, flaming in the coldness of space..

"ALL SHIPS BREAK! Battle Plan HoQveH!!!" Tolak signaled the Security Officer, who immediately stabbed a finger down onto a button on the console and shouted "Boarders away!!!" The Klingon command ship's #6 shield dropped for an instant as a wave of Klingon assault troops transported aboard the crippled Federation vessel.

The Klingon ships broke formation, to port and starboard, leaving the remaining Federation frigate charging into the hollow core. It turned to follow the E4, intentional bait...The Federation Frigate fired all of its weapons at the E4, the PoQveQ. Tolak saw the escort's rear shield fail as Federation heavy phasers hammered it down, and the overloaded Photon torpedoes streaked through at point blank range, striking the central hull of the light attack vessel. The PoQveQ vomited debris and flaming atmosphere.

Tolak squinted at his sensors, swiftly seeing what capabilities remained on the E4.

"Tractor! Lock onto Federation RAKAT 2!" The bridge lurched as the tractor reached out and snagged the Federation vessel.

Tolak shouted into the comm. "PoQveQ! Launch Scatter Pack at locked target!!" Ahead the stricken E4 PoQveQ's shuttle bay dutifully discharged a modified shuttlecraft, which reoriented itself to face the Federation Frigate.

"SIR!! The Federation vessel has broken our tractor!! SIR!! FEDERATION HEAVY CRUISER CLOSING ON OUR POSITION!!!" Shouted First officer Kahlok.

The modified shuttle vanished in a halo of thrust as it belched out a swarm of Antimatter Missiles at the Federation frigate.

"Helm! Maximum acceleration! Drop Antimatter mine and break to port 60 degrees!" barked Tolak. He watched in the tactical plot as the Federation frigate attempted to turn and accelerate away from the Scatter Pack salvo... too late

The Antimatter missiles streaked in, their ion engines howling as they twisted in pursuit of the Federation Frigate. The frigate's defensive phasers picked off 2 missiles as they closed to point blank range on the ship's #2 shield. Not enough. The salvo plowed through the shield as if it wasn't there. Two of the antimatter warheads struck the saucer section cleanly. A third of the disk erupted in a massive fireball as matter and antimatter met in a hurricane of immolation. Heavily damaged and trailing flaming debris and atmosphere, the Frigate turned away from its prey toward the protection of the massive Federation Heavy Cruiser, now right on top of the scattering Klingons.

Almost contemptuously, The Heavy Cruiser blew the PoQveQ to atoms in a hurricane of phaser fire. It then shifted its fire to the IbeH, (the F5B on the right flank). Firing four Overloaded Photon Torpedoes, it connected with two of them, smashing aside the Klingons ship's #3 shield and whiplashing its hull with electrical overloads from the strike.

On board the Stricken Federation Frigate RAKAT 1, Klingon Assault Commander Kovok had troubles of his own. He cursed savagely in three languages as Federation phaser fire traced complex patterns down the hallway toward his sheltered team. He had beamed onboard in a near-perfect assault pattern, half of his force in Engineering, and Half in the bridge area. The only problem was that as the Bridge team beamed in, the weakened hull had buckled, sucking half of his force and the Federation bridge crew into the cold void of space. Now, with Engineering secured, he was leading ½ the remaining force to the vessel's auxiliary bridge. With a short, complex hand signal, he motioned to his team. He counted to three and, as one, his team leaned around the various bits of cover they had taken and volleyed a Salvo of Disruptor rifle and pistol fire down the narrow hallway. He instantly jumped up, and in four loping strides assaulted the Federation Security team. Dropping his disruptor pistol, he whipped around his Bat'leth in a vicious arc. He chopped a phaser rifle in half as the Human attempted to block its unstoppable Arc. Its passage ended in the Human's torso as Kovok's leg lashed out, kicking another Human in the chest, knocking him off balance. As he twisted the Batleth free, he heard the cries of his assault team as they ran up to join the fray. He turned and saw a Vulcan pointing a phaser at him calmly. The weapon fired and Kovok felt a mild tingle wash over him. Kovok snarled "Stun setting?! You stupid Vulcan Kuve!!!" as he contemptuously hacked the Vulcan down with his Bat'leth, now spattered in Red and Green. His team finished off the other humans behind him. "Now, where's that damned Auxiliary Bridge?" Captain Tolok gripped the armrests of his command chair as the aft firing Phasers of the Federation Cruiser battered the F5L. The IbeH had joined the PoQveQ on its road to Stovokor and now there was only the ChamaH'Taj and the HaChu left to fight the Federation goliath. The HaChu danced in and out in front of the Federation ship at high speed, risking photon hits to distract the vessel so that Tolak could move in for the kill.

"Reinforce Forward shield! Overload Disruptor Cannons and lock on target!" Tolak stared at his readout intently, seeing that his extended death dance with the Federation ship had weakened her rear shields to the thinness of Thel'a paper.

"Com! IbeH! Plan GoVeH! ACTION!!!" ahead, the F5 disgorged a Scatter pack shuttle, hoarded jealously until this moment. The Federation cruiser promptly dumped a Wild Weasel, slowing viciously.

The ChamaH'Taj broke hard to Starboard, firing a massive volley of overloaded disruptors into the cruiser's rear shields. The Federation ship fired her phasers as the PoQveQ fired her disruptors. The PoQveQ staggered under the accurate energy fire, her #1 shield vanishing, holding back the fire by the thinnest of margins. The Federation cruiser's rear shield was now entirely gone, her hull exposed.

Then, Tolak ordered "Transporter Bomb! NOW!!" The ChamaH'Taj dropped her # 6 shield briefly, and she transported a matter/antimatter mine directly behind the Federation vessel. She then fired her last Antimatter missile from the internal magazine.

The wave of Scatter pack drones from the IbeH and the single drone from the ChamaH'Taj streaked in at the Wild Weasel, decoying the missiles

The Wraith of Tarpek

Dale Schofield

away from the cruiser. As they closed on its position, the Antimatter mine sensed their position and dutifully detonated.

The explosion blew the Wild Weasel to ash and buffeted the Federation cruiser through her downed rear shield.

Tolak silently counted to three “GUNNERY ACTION!! LAUNCH SCATTER PACK!!” The Federation vessel, just beginning to accelerate from its standstill (necessary to mask its signature to the waves of Drones) was in no position to run. The effects of the wild Weasel had run its course. The wave of Shipkiller missiles streaked into the chink in her defenses. Two tractors whipped online, halting two of the missiles. The rest streaked in through the downed shield and struck the Federation vessel. Massive explosions wracked the vessel as matter met antimatter in a horrific fiery dance. The federation ship tumbled out of the massive fireball, half of her dish and one engine blown away. She slowly regained heading, her impulse engines flaring. “Sir! Communication from the Federation Vessel!!” shouted his communication officer.

“Onscreen!!” barked Tolak.

“Captain, of Klingon Vessel! I am Captain Bronson of the Federation Starship Exeter. I surrender my crew and...” Tolak did not let him finish.

“Captain Bronson, Klingons TAKE no prisoners.” With a stab of his finger, he cut the transmission.

“All batteries, fire at will”

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