

And the Sky Full of Stars: A Babylon 5 VBAM Campaign

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Introduction

Welcome to the "*And the Sky Full of Stars: A Babylon 5 VBAM Campaign*" campaign diary. I started this campaign after the rush of trying to get *The Wars of the Boltians and Kuissians* VBAM supplement ready for release. My Third Age campaign had started to run out of steam (though it is far from dead!) and Charlie Lewis' own Babylon 5 campaign had give me a hankering to play my own Babylon 5-based solo campaign. Like Charlie, too, I wanted to sit down and start getting the Babylon 5 units converted over to VBAM so that I would have stats for them later on down the road, if I ever wanted to use them.

Another impetus for starting this campaign was to test out some of the new special rules that I had created for my own *Empire Rising* source book. In particular, I wanted to do some testing for the jump gate rules. Now, this campaign does use the simplified jump gate rules just because I determined that, for me personally, they were more fun than the full-on, high-detail jump gate rules.

So, after a little bit of cobbling and converting, I decided that I would begin each of the "Big Four" powers out in this campaign at 2220 level technology and see where things went from there.

The Events So Far

This campaign diary begins about three years into the campaign. Each of the powers have performed significant exploration of the territories around them and colonized quite a few additional systems.

This section is here to hopefully fill you, the reader, in on some of the things that have happened prior to the keeping of these more detailed, far more flowery descriptions of the history of the A Sky Full of Stars campaign.

The Narn Expansion

Of all of the races in play, the Narn have fared the best to date. Their early expansions brought them into contact with two "lost tribes," located in the systems of Tross and Promith, respectively. These isolated Narn colonies rejoined the Narn Regime, giving them an immediate and invaluable boost in available resources. The Regime has not always been able to exploit the systems they have found, but this hasn't hurt them much.

The Narn/Centauri War

It wouldn't be a Babylon 5 campaign with a bit of good old Narn-on-Centauri hate to spread around, would it? Fate played a cruel joke on the Centauri when it decided to place the Centauri Republic in a relative pocket of space with the Narn encircling them from almost every single possible entry and exit point.

The situation came to a head when the Centauri Republic attempted to seize a resource rich Narn border territory, Dar'kar. Dar'kar had been earmarked for colonization prior to the Centauri invasion, and being the closest point of contact between the Regime and the Republic, the Narn had spared no expense fortifying the system with a full starbase and orbital satellite defense grid. The Narn successfully repulsed the Centauri attack and, after a second failed strike, the Centaurum lost its resolve and sued for peace, a peace which cost them greatly.

Since that time both powers have been licking their wounds and trying to recover economically. The Centauri Republic has nearly rebounded, but at the beginning of the diary's reporting the Narn Regime remained crippled by high maintenance costs.

Earth Alliance: Alien Hunters

Perhaps the power with the worst possible exploration luck has been the Earth Alliance. EA explorers, though prolific in their exploits, encountered the Grome within the first year of play and have since activated both the Alacan and Tuchanq. Of all of the powers, the EA has the most neighbors on their borders. This has forced the EA to maintain above-

average numbers of system defenders, relying on Shepherd Starfury Transports and Porcupine Light Carriers for cheap fighter delivery systems in systems not deserving of stronger warships like the Hyperion, Olympus, or Orestes.

The Sleeping Giant

The Minbari Federation, under the nominal control of the Wookiee player from the Third Age campaign, is the sleeping giant of this campaign. The Minbari were started with a stronger economy, and their luck has only continued. Excellent scouts coupled with a better starting economy have given the Minbari a constant flow of economic points into their treasury. Their fleet, though small compared to their territory, is point-per-point bigger than that fielded by any of the other powers.

The Narn attempted to draw the Minbari Federation into their conflict with the Centauri, but the Minbari declined. Plans were underway to connect Tross to Du'lan, but the plan fell apart after the war due to a lack of funding within the Narn Regime on the project.

Instead, the Minbari have found an unwitting money pit in the Mitoc. The Mitoc homeworld generated rich in Quantum 40, making it a valuable trade hub (since the system's output is counted on every single trade route that passes through the system!). The Minbari instead devoted their resources to opening up the MINBARI->SOLTA GAN->VOLANTHA->MITOC hyperspace route, allowing for swift and efficient trade between their two worlds.

The Campaign Diary

The campaign diary picks up at the end of the year 2222, just as things are starting to heat up and get interesting for our players.

Being a solo campaign, and given that I virtually control the actions of every empire in the campaign, I cover the highlights of the campaign equally. Sorry, no narrow EA or Rigellian views here.

2222.12

The Pan-Orion/Alaca Treaty

The Alacan Republic's leaders authorize the transmission of a signal to the Earth Alliance. A passing Earth Alliance freighter, registered as the *S.S. Calypso*, intercepts the communication and forwards it on to Earth Force channels. After receiving the signal, the Earth Alliance Senate agrees to dispatch a peace envoy to Alaca space to resume negotiations.

The Alacans selected a small, deserted mining post on the edge of their star system as the neutral location for the talks. The Alacans, they explain, are suffering terribly from their lack of contact with the outside world. Now that they are over the shock of Contact, they realize that there is much to gain from association with other worlds. To this end, they desire the assistance of the Earth Force Exploration Command to upgrade the jump lane connecting Alaca to the nearest Alliance held system, Orion. The Alacan Republic is not financially solvent enough to pay for this upgrade on their own and require the assistance of the Earth Alliance. The EA agrees to pay half of the fees involved in the creation of the jump gate in exchange for favored nation status and reduced use fees for all EA registered freighters that use the gate. The Alacans cautiously accept the offer.

A break in the conferences is taken allowing both parties to confer with their respective governments. Earth Force Exploration Command reports that it could be some time before ships can be dispatched to Alaca, but that the operation should be able to be completed within a six-month period. The EA diplomats are dismayed, as they know their Alacan counterparts will be, but agree that there is nothing else that can be done about it.

The two sides resume talks and finalize their treaty. The new Pan-Orion/Alaca Treaty is signed by both delegations, and is quickly ratified by the Alacan parliament. The EA Senate takes longer to enter into the treaty, but it is favored by a marked majority of EA nation states, with the exception of the Russian Federation and the Indonesian Bloc.

Admiral Vernon's Exploration Command is ordered to dispatch the fleet's two newest Oracle-Gamma Scout Cruisers, *EAS Dodana* and *EAS Akonadi*, to Alacan space to perform the necessary jump lane upgrade. They will be

accompanies by *EAS Zephyr*, a Cotton Long-Range Tender also under construction at the Sol shipyards. The lane upgrades will cost the EA 1.2 billion credits to perform. The Alacans will be providing the other 1.3 billion in funding.

The Ipsha Invasion of Kacheses

Ipsha Lord Admiral Tarkalean launches his attack on the Narn colony world of Kacheses, bordering the Ipsha home system. The Ipsha desire to control Kacheses is born from their deep, almost natural, hatred of the Narn people. The Ipsha military leadership has long believed that the Narn were plotting against them, and this preemptive strike is seen as the only way to ensure the mutual sovereignty of the Baronies.

The Ipsha fleet transits into Kacheses to find only a meager defensive force patrolling the outer star system. The Ipsha engage this force before they can retreat to the privileged defense of a Ja'Dan starbase orbiting the second planet in the star system. The Ipsha fleet, commanded by Tarkalean onboard the Essan Battleglobe flagship, *Spinning Fury*, easily neutralizes the main component of the Narn fleet. A second Narn exploration squadron manages to flee into hyperspace without incident. Once within hyperspace, the squadron set a return course back to Quadrant 14 with the intent to inform the sector command of the Ipsha transgressions in Kacheses.

A single Narn heavy cruiser, T'Narn class, is captured by the Ipsha, but they watch in dismay as scuttling charges destroy the ship following the evacuation of the last of the Narn survivors from the ship. Tarkalean has two hundred of the survivors spaced to show his unhappiness over the crew's sabotage of a perfectly good trophy ship.

With the Narn fleet forces in Kacheses neutralized, the Ipsha move on to the planet. A single Ja'Dan Early Warbase stands between the Ipsha advance and the Narn colony on Kacheses II. Both the Ipsha and Narn are at full battle readiness and ready for a fight, but the sheer number of Ipsha vessels overwhelms the starbase's defenses. A single Ipsha Battlehex is crippled in the exchange. In return, the Tarkalean's armada destroys the warbase and it is lost with all hands.

With orbital control now in the hands of the Essan Barony, Lord Admiral Tarkalean orders his fleet to settle into patrol stations and begin the process of suppressing the colony's



industrial infrastructure. Within a day, all production on the colony grinds to a halt beneath the lances of fire from the heavens.

The Narn response to the Ipsha invasion of one of their most important upspin systems is not unexpected. The Ipsha incursion into Kacheses is the second time foreign ships have entered the system. The first came prior to the Narn/Centauri conflict, when a Centauri scout force arrived in the system from Vansa.

In an emergency meeting of the Kha'ri, a unanimous declaration of war is signed against the Ipsha and the Narn economy is ordered to be gearing up for another major offensive. Unlike with brief war against the Centauri, the Narn have no intentions of giving their enemy any quarter. This conflict will be to the death.

2223.1

The Blockade of Kacheses Continues

Lord Admiral Tarkalean is forced to glare discontentedly at the Narn-controlled world of Kacheses II as the blockade of that system continues into its second month. An Early Scout Wheel and its escorts were dispatched back to Ipsha last month and arrived this month. The fleet's movements were necessary in order for the jump lane connecting Ipsha to Kacheses to undergo an upgrade, from restricted status to unimportant. This will allow unfettered access to Kacheses from Ipsha, allowing Ipsha reinforcements and ground troops to begin rolling into the Kacheses system.

Meanwhile, the first batch of Narn warships are demothballed at the Wings of

G'Jan Shipyard in orbit of the Narn Homeworld. Three T'Narr Heavy Cruisers and eight T'Rakk Destroyers are dispatched to Quadrant 14, en route to Kacheses, in hopes of lifting the blockade of the system before the system can be taken by Ipsha ground forces. The planet is currently undefended. Only civilian militia are ready to stand against the Ipsha marines sure to begin arriving in the months to come.

Dalphan's Discovery

Grome Captain Dalphan, favorite of the Margus and head of His Margus' Exploratory Arm, discovers the Tagrii system off of the already inhabited Grome system of Merkeht. The system, named Tagrii after the reigning Margus' great-grandfather, proves to be a very interesting find for Dalphan and his crew. The system contains a lush forest world, Tagrii Prime, which upon closer inspection is littered with overgrown ruins of some ancient civilization. Several artifacts are collected by the expedition for later analysis. They should prove a boon to the degenerate and unimaginative scientists back home.

Alacan/Earth Peace Treaty

In a stunning turn of events on the heels of the previous month's summit at the deserted mining post of Calyss, the Alacans once more entreat Earth Alliance representatives to join them in deliberations on the future of Alacan/Human relations.

The Alacan parliament is beginning to feel that the EA has been extremely kind and conscious towards the Alacan Republic and its people thus far. The more that they learn of the Alliance, the more they realize that, should they have wanted to, the EA could have easily shattered Alaca's defenses and swiftly conquered the whole of the Republic in a matter of a few short months. The fact that the EA chose not to do this, coupled with the lack of diplomatic pressure applied by the EA to date, has warmed relations considerably, though the Alacans still remain officially standoffish towards the outsiders.

From the EA's point of view, the Alacan mindset is somewhat perplexing. The Alacans, for whatever reason, believe that their world is of some special strategic or tangible value, which it isn't, or else the EA would have been quite a bit more aggressive in their diplomatic exchanges prior to the previous Calyss conference.

The Alacans offer of a formal and official peace treaty to the EA, which is accepted by the EA delegates and, as with the previous treaty, approved by the EA Senate. This time, however, only the Indonesian Bloc continue to rally against the treaty, but only because they feel that the Alacans will put an unnecessary drain on Earth Force military resources should the EA inevitably be called on to assist the Alacan Republic. Other senators point out that this is a peace treaty, not a mutual defense pact, but the Indonesian representatives refuse this pat answer, saying that it isn't looking at the situation from a realistic perspective.

Following the ratification of the treaty, the Alacan Republic and Earth Alliance agreed to establish a mutual border that would give the Alacans first right of refusal on all future systems with jump connections to Alaca. At present, only one unexplored route exists in Alacan space. The Alacans currently lack the infrastructure to even consider launching exploration missions, so this point is mostly moot.

Mineral Boon on Solta Gan

Minbari Worker Caste prospectors discover a previously unknown vein of rare heavy elements on their colony of Solta Gan, increasing the mineral index of the system by 50%. This rare find is heralded by the Religious Caste as a good omen for the coming years, while the Warrior Caste believe that the increased revenue will only help to fuel the growing Minbari war machine. For their part, the Worker Caste still feel that it is just a pile of valuable rocks that will cause them much more grief in the future.

Heightened Raider Activity

Just as raider activity in Mitoc begins to decline, the Earth Alliance anti-piracy patrol report a dramatic increase in the number of hostile contacts throughout Alliance space. Despite the surge in raider activity, General Jonathan Gage, Chairman of the Earth Force Joint Chiefs of Staff, believes that the current defensive infrastructure should be sufficient to combat raider incursions.

Erica Kane Elected EA President

In a close election, challenger and North American Senator Erica Kane defeats incumbent President Hstu Nbuoto by a slim margin. President-elect Kane ran on a broad

platform of economic and territorial expansion, favoring a pro-alien stance during the election. Nbouto, meanwhile, maintained that the needs of Earth and the colonies took precedence and that more needed to be done to concentrate on problems closer to home, including the growing unrest on the Mars colony. Nbuoto's strongest support came from the Russian, Chinese, and Indonesian states, while Kane carried the Americas and Europe.

2223.2

Narn, Humans Make First Contact

The EA and Narn Regime made first contact this month in the Epsilon Eridani star system. An EA observation post, located on the third planet in the system, was the first ship to detect the identified signatures at the edge of the EA sensor grid.

At first the crews believed that the data was erroneous, the result of 'ghost' readings that often occur in and around Sector 14. To their astonishment, though, secondary confirmation came in from other Earth Force ships in the system several hours later.

The EA had known about the Narn via their friends, the Ipsha. Of course, what little secondhand information the EA had was heavily tainted by the Ipsha's own personal dislike of the Narn. EA official did not let this information color their perceptions of the Narn, and the two met at Epsilon 3 to enter into preliminary negotiations.

Despite the proximity of Epsilon Eridani to Narn, the Narn captain agreed that prior EA claims to the system, combined with the Narn's own undisclosed problems abroad, would likely prevent the Narn Regime from making any formal claim of ownership to the system. When EA envoys pointed out the reason for the "distraction" on their far borders, the Narn quickly excused themselves from the talks and retreated back home.

Later tachyon communications passed on from the Kotok relay stations confirmed what the Ipsha had told the EA through diplomatic channels. They were truly at war with the Narn Regime, and the enmity they felt for the spot-headed humanoids was reciprocated. Despite some reservations, the Narn agreed to enter into normal relations with the Earth Alliance, effective immediately. However, should the Earth Alliance

provide the Ipsha Baronies with any form of military or economic assistance, the Narn Regime stressed, they would be forced to take retaliatory actions against Earth interests.

The Ipsha War, Month 2

The Ipsha war effort continues to march forward in the second month of full conflicts. Tarkaleans forces remain in orbit of Kacheses. The Ipsha fleet in the system has of yet not met any Narn military resistance.

Meanwhile, the Ipsha scouting parties complete the upgrade of the IPSHA->KACHESSES jump lane. It is now an unimportant-grade route, allowing civilian contracted supply ships to travel to the system and resupply Tarkalean's forces at Kacheses.

Back in the Ipsha system, two Transport Fleets are loaded with four full marine divisions. These troops have spent a month undergoing rigorous training to prepare them for ground battle against Narn insurgents.

The Treaty of Merkeht

In a historic telepresence meeting, Grome Margus Rathur met with representatives of the Minbari Federation and signed a Non-Aggression Pact. The Margus' agreement, outlined in painstakingly boring detail, acknowledges the Minbari claim to systems on the Grome border while also stressing Grome territorial rights in the area. In return for a mutual agreement not to begin hostilities, the Grome will leave the Minbari Federation alone, so long as the Minbari do the same.

The Grome Autocracy's growing wealth in the downspin sectors has given them the resources necessary to expand into these newly claimed territories. Grome explorers are redirected from their exploration duties back home to prepare for a lane upgrade so that the newly explored system of Ashregan will be able to be colonized by the Autocracy in the immediate future. The Margus has also indicated that several tens of thousands of lucky Gromahk citizens will join the initial colonists soon after the colony's foundation is laid.

EA Suffers Economic Crisis

Spurred by uncertainty at home and abroad, the Terran planetary stock exchanges plummet. Black Wednesday, February 9, 2223 marks the day that the stock market momentarily

collapsed. Over \$300 billion credits worth of valuation is lost in a single day of trading, affecting multiple industries.

2223.3

The Second Battle of Kacheses: The Ipsha War, Month 3

The Narn 7th Fleet arrives in Kacheses from Quadrant 14. The Narn fleet, commanded by Warcaptain Durog, is intercepted by the Essan Barony's own fleet, under the continued command of Lord Admiral Tarkalean. The Narn fleet consists of three T'Narn Heavy Cruisers, eight T'Rakk Frigates, and a rotating group of twelve Gorith Medium Fighter flights. The Ipsha fleet meanwhile is comprised of a mix of Battleglobes, Battlehexes, Resohexes, and a single Early Scout Wheel. Unfortunately for the Ipsha, one of their inbound transport fleets, carrying two divisions of marines, is drawn into the battle. Fearing the loss of his ground forces, Tarkalean's flag fleet is forced to integrate the transport fleet, allowing it to benefit from his fleet's improved formation and defensive capabilities.

While the main Narn force drives hard into Tarkalean's own flag formation, Narn fighter pilots begin their runs. The bulk of the Narn Goriths, under the command of Warcaptain Tu'Kar's second cruiser squadron, are committed to attacking the lead Ipsha fleet with the intent of destroying the Ipsha troop transports at all costs. Meanwhile, the remaining fighters from Durog's squadron begin harrying the already damaged Ipsha flanking squadron. The squadron, composed largely of craft damaged during the First Battle of Kacheses, is quickly picked apart by Goriths.

After seeing his transports nearly crippled by the Narn fleet, Lord Admiral Tarkalean risks his fleet's survival on a dangerous gambit. He orders the fleet to fall back to the orbit of Kacheses III, a barren Martian world orbiting .85 AU from Kacheses II. As the Narn fleet moved to follow, the Ipsha fleet separated like a starburst, encircling the Narn fleet. Taken completely off-guard by the maneuver, Warcaptain Durog's fleet is almost completely destroyed. Only Durog's command ship, a T'Narn Heavy Cruiser, remains in the expanding dust cloud that was his fleet.

With Durog's fleet folded, it fell on Tu'Kar to adjudicate the remainder of the battle. Seeing the situation for what it is, the Tu'Kar ordered his fighters to complete a final run against the transport fleet and then return to base. With the assistance of the Ipsha Scout Wheel and its escorts, over 20 Gorith fighters die before they can reach the target. However, enough fighters remained to ensure the destruction of several ships in the convoy, more than crippling the capacity of the transport fleet in the process and effectively neutralizing one Ipsha ground unit before they could ever be committed to the fight.

With one final strike committed, Tu'Kar orders the fleet to retreat from the system. The Ipsha press the advantage, but are unable to do meaningful damage to the Narn survivors. The Second Battle of Kacheses was over, and once again the Narn mission had failed.

Following the end of the battle, Ipsha commander Tarkalean gathered up the surviving ships in his transport fleet, along with the survivors from the scattered remains of his own battle fleet, and proceed on to Kacheses II. Upon arrival, the three surviving marine divisions land on the planet. Within a week, all major resistance on the planet is quelled and the world falls completely into Ipsha hands.

For Durog, the 7th Fleet's mission into Kacheses is a complete blunder. The destruction of his squadron leaves him disgraced. A victory in Kacheses could have assured his promotion to full Warleader and command of the war's strategic prosecution. Instead, he now finds himself hoping to retain his current command.

On the other hand, Warcaptain Tu'Kar demonstrated exemplary resolve after taking control of the fleet. Although Tu'Kar did not commit his forces as aggressively as he could have, he also did not squander his fleet needlessly. In post-combat debriefing and inquiry following the fleet's return to Narn space, the Narn military command agreed with Tu'Kar's assessment of the situation. In Second Kacheses, a Narn victory was not possible following Tarkalean's Gambit. The "starburst" attack maneuver took everyone off surprise, not just Durog, and set into motion the events that led to the 7th Fleet's retreat from the system.

In the inquiry panel's final report, Tu'kar was commended for his decision to stay in combat long enough to at least cripple one of

the Ipsha's troop convoys. This loss, more than any other suffered by the Ipsha in the battle, will have significant economic and strategic consequences in the immediate future, perhaps buying the Regime time to launch a full-fledged armada into the system to retake it.

The Situation at Promith

With Kacheses falling to Ipsha forces, the Promith system becomes even more isolated from the rest of the Regime. One of two long-lost, shirttail colonies "rediscovered" by the Narn Regime in the past three years, Promith is forced to evaluate their options. Widespread rioting in the capitol forces the governor to declare martial law in order to keep the government from collapsing around her ears.

Seeing the situation for what it is, the governor orders that an emergency meeting of the Promith planetary council be convened to discuss the planet's options.

As outlined by the councilors, Promith's options are limited. First, they could assume a defensive position and attempt to repel any and all Ipsha attacks long enough for the Regime to retake Kacheses. Second, Promith could attempt to negotiate directly with the Ipsha in order to prevent a confrontation. Third and finally, the system could declare independence and make incredibly clear to both parties their neutrality in the conflict.

The first option meets with the most open heckling and derision. The local government had received a small ground force for defense and a planetary fighter reserve of eighteen Gorith flights for their defense, half of Promith's maximum flight basing capacity. This fighter force, though formidable, would be wholly inadequate for dealing with a determined Ipsha threat. Even worse, the cost of maintaining the colony's current military forces would be nearly impossible, if not truly impossible, given the colony's increased security needs.

The second option is no better, as far as the councilors are concerned. The chances of such a mission succeeding are incredibly small, and even if they could manage to negotiate a cease-fire, the political ramifications would likely cost most of those present their careers – if not their lives.

This left the third and final option, and it wasn't much of one at that. Independence held little benefit over the second option, but it did have the added benefit of possibly drying attention to the plight of Promith. In particular,

the hated Centauri could potentially be drawn in to assist Promith, if for no other reason than to spite the Regime.

Politicians are nothing if not politically expedient so, with only poor options on the table, the planetary council agreed that option three, the renewed independence of Promith, was their only real option.

On March 20, 2223, the representative of the districts of Promith publicly and officially renounced their association with the Narn Regime and reaffirmed the sovereignty of Promith. In their declaration, Promith's leadership cited the Regime's inability to defend the colony as the major reason for the schism. A new, independent political body, the Promith Free Association, would be formed to oversee the dominion of Promith, and the previous Narn territorial claims at Banir and Lha'zek.

The Emperor's New Palace

In a move that angered many of the ministers in his court, Centauri Emperor Kurghan ordered the spending of 30 economic points from the imperial treasury on a new summer palace for him, his seven wives, and their thirty-eight children on the beautiful, warm island of Selini.

When confronted by the (former) ministers of war and intelligence about this haphazard spending and the current Narn crisis, the Emperor replied, "What Narn crisis?"

2223.4

Ipsha War, Month 4

In last month's hostilities, Lord Admiral Tarkalean's flagship, *Spinning Fury*, received crippling damage. Despite the best efforts of his many-tentacled engineers, the *Fury* will require extensive repairs at the shipyards back home before it will be back to full combat efficiency. With a heavy heart, Tarkalean orders the *Spinning Fury* and several other damaged cruisers to return to Ipsha to undergo repairs. In the meantime, Tarkalean will command the Kacheses fleet from the Battleglobe *Gyroscopic Destruction*.

In order to fortify Kacheses against future Narn attacks, the Essan Barony's war command orders Lord Admiral Canomele and

her major fleet to the Kacheses system to supplement Tarkalean's own forces.

The Unknown Fate of Scout Fleet Two

The Second Exploration Fleet of the Regime, under the command of Warcaptain G'Nar, was lost this month. The fate of the ship and its crew is unknown. The fleet was last reported sighted in the vicinity of the Kotok jump beacon, but all contact has been lost with the fleet. The Kha'rhi does not believe that the loss of this scout fleet is anyway connected to the Ipsha, but there is no way of knowing for sure.

Unexpected Homecoming

Narn Scout Fleet Five made the unexpected discovery of a new route into Quadrant 14 this month. Scouting from the Nareel system, located along the Narn/Markab border, the fleet found a faint beacon trail that led to the outskirts of Quadrant 14.

This new jump lane is both a boon and bane for the Regime. The links does give the Narn military an alternative route to move from Quadrant 14 to Dar'kar, but should the system fall into Ipsha hands it would confer upon them the same benefit.

For the moment, the Narn have no plans to upgrade the route between the two systems.

The Alacan Rescue

Not long after making transit into the Alaca star system, Captain Adrienna Palmer, commander of the *EAS Dodana*, was awakened with news that they were not alone. A band of raider ships, led by a jump-capable Galleon, had made the jump with them into Alaca. Palmer sprung to action, contacting the local Alacan authorities and appraising them of the situation. She assured the Alacan leaders that the two combat units her fleet, both Oracle-Gamma Scout Cruisers, would fight alongside the Alacan's own units in an attempt to disperse the raiders.

The Alacan government dispatched a flotilla of three Ithacas System Defenders, small corvette craft barely armed for raider operations, to assist the *Dodana* and her sister ship, the *EAS Akonadi*. Meanwhile, the *EAS Zephyr*, a Cotton Long-Range Tender, powered up its drives to retreat to Alaca, using intelligence gathered by the *Dodana* to plot of course that would take it as far from the raider's position as possible.

Once the Alacan and EA forces had met up in open space, they changed course to intercept and destroy the raider forces. The raider fleet, composed of the aforementioned Galleon, Wolf Raider, Schooner, and eight flights of upgraded Delta-V light fighters, was an even match for the joint EA/Alacan fleet. Luckily for Captain Palmer, her Alacan counterpart, Colonel Altoph, knew the geography of the Alaca system like the back of his hand, and they used it to their advantage. For three hours, the two fleets performed flyby assaults on each other with no real damage to either forces. Only the raider fighters suffered major casualties during this time, though they were successful in destroying one of Altoph's three Ithacas corvettes.

The moment of truth came when the joint fleet pulled out of the shadow of Alaca VI, a massive gas giant, only to find the raider fleet waiting for them. It seemed their trajectory had been detected by an advance fighter patrol. What followed was a bloody exchange of fire that left no one unscathed. The raiders lost all but their Galleon in the exchange, but the EA and Alacans faired no better. Colonel Altoph was killed by the Wolf Raider, particle cannons ripping through his ship's hull like it was tissue paper. The *EAS Akonadi*, too, suffered crippling damage at the hands of the Galleon and fighters.

At the battle's end, with all forces reeling from battle, the Galleon made good its getaway, jumping into hyperspace with its eleven remaining fighters, the remnants of two surviving Delta-V flights.

The *EAS Dodana* survived the battle with insignificant damage, but the *Akonadi* was crippled. The sole remaining Alacan ship was likewise crippled and barely able to maneuver under its own power. Thankfully for both sides the battle was now over, and they would have the time to dress their wounds.

The EA intervention against the raider attack had a massive impact on the hearts and minds of the Alacan leadership. None were more impressed than those of the Alacan Space Command. Where before they had eyed EA wearily they now greeted them as brothers in arms. That an EA captain, a commander of an exploration squadron no less, would risk sacrificing her fleet, her crew, and herself to ensure the safety of their world meant much to them. This was especially true when, in post-battle combat analysis, the Alacan Space

Command determined that, without the successful intervention of Earth Force, the raider force would have likely wiped out the majority of Alaca's military, dealing a single, lethal blow to their morale.

In a special ceremony held several weeks later on Alaca, Captain Palmer received the Silver Leaf of Valor, the highest military honor in the Space Command, for her personal initiative in defending Alaca from foreign threats. Colonel Altoph likewise received a Silver Leaf, albeit posthumously.

Following the "Rescue at Alaca" as the ISN broadcasts billed it, the Alacan Republic reported that they wished to work closer with the Earth Alliance, particularly towards making Alaca capable of defending itself more fully against outside threats. On April 19, in the mess deck onboard the *EAS Dodana*, Alacan Premier Tmar Loss and EA Captain Adrienna Palmer met to sign a mutual defense pact affirming the friendship between Alaca and Earth.

(CM's Note: The whole affair at Alaca, and the subsequent treaty, is a CM intervention and not tied to the NPE rules. In fact, the chance of a Mutual Defense Pact was very remote – but the fact that the EA captain chose to stand and fight with the Alacans had to stand for something, especially considering the strength of the raider force. Given everything that has been going on lately for the Alacans, aligning themselves with the Earth Alliance really isn't that bad of an idea. They need someone that they can turn to for help, especially for purposes of defense.)

2223.5

The Ipsha War, Month 5

With a second shipyard coming online two months ago, the Ipsha Baronies have been utilizing their ship building capacities to the maximum. Each and every dock space is filled with a ship under construction. This month, the Ipshas begin construction on six Cargo Haulers, small corvette-sized military supply vessels that will be used to supply and repair ships in the field. The Ipsha Oer Barony is assigned jurisdiction over the repair fleet. As such, they also plan on building several Early Carrier Cubes to send to the front in preparation for

asserting territorial claims on captured Narn worlds.

While workers toil in the shipyards back home, Lord Admiral Tarkalean sees to the continued defense of Kacheses. Under his guidance, several patterns of Cyst Captor Mines are laid at locations throughout the system. These captor mines should catch the Narn off guard, slowing any attempt to retake the system. Tarkalean is also happy to see another two divisions of troops arrive in the system. This will give him the resources he needs to drive deeper into Narn space.

As the de facto architect of the war against the Narn Regime, Lord Admiral Tarkalean's spent much of the month deliberating on what strategy to adopt following the successful capture of Kacheses. On one hand, Tarkalean believes that the only logical choice is to push hard into Quadrant 14, destroying and any all Narn resistance in the system. However, there is still the threat of Promith. Independent or not, Promith is an easy conquest that Tarkalean is loath to ignore, even if it means delaying the offensive into the Narn core territories.

After discussing the issue with his fellow, Lord Admiral Canomele, Tarkalean decides that a drive into Quadrant 14 is the only logical course of action. He would love to wait for a full intelligence gathering mission to inform him on the Narn forces in the system, but that is a luxury he cannot afford. Waiting for Ipsha agents to return with data from Quadrant 14 would delay an offensive by one or two months, enough time for the Narns to reach a full war footing. As far as the Ipsha Baronies can tell, the Narn Regime is economically stronger and fields a larger fleet. At this point, the only advantages the Ipsha hold are their military initiative and the fact that their economy has already transitioned into full wartime production.

With a resolve to go forward with an attack on Quadrant 14, Lord Admiral Tarkalean begins fleet preparation for an attack next month.

Tu'Kar Assumes Command of 9th Fleet

The Fourth Circle of the Kha'rhi authorizes the transfer of Warcaptain Tu'Kar from the 7th Fleet, where he served under Warcaptain Durog, to command of the 9th Fleet. The 9th Fleet will lead the next offensive into Kacheses, along with whatever military forces can be spared. This includes the seasoned 8th

Fleet, whose crews saw combat in the short Narn/Centauri War.

Some members of the Fourth Circle felt that it would have shown greater wisdom to assign a more senior leader to the task, such as Warleader Na'Kal, who held the defenses at Dar'kar against two successive waves of Centauri ships. But the general consensus was that Na'Kal was needed to guard the rear flank while the younger and more cautious Tu'Kar prosecuted the war against the Ipsha.

Meanwhile, Warcaptain Durog returns to Narn in disgrace so that the 7th Fleet can undergo repairs at the Wings of G'Land shipyards in orbit of Homeworld. The Fourth Circle's decision on Durog's fate is currently uncertain. Durog has fallen out of favor with the Kha'rhi and it is likely that he will be rotated to patrol duties along the Narn/Minbari or Narn/Human borders as punishment for his failure to remove the Ipsha presence from Kacheses.

Minbari Assistance

A Narn scout fleet, the First Exploration Fleet of the Regime, is forced to request assistance from passing Minbari Federation freighters in the Tuzar system when their ships' stores face imminent depletion. The scout fleet had been exploring worlds on the extreme edge of the Regime's downspin border, near the Minbari border. After seven months of exploration, the fleet had ended up in the Venice system, far from Narn space and one jump from the now Minbari-controlled system of Tuzar.

In return for a complete resupply, the Narns agree to hand over astronomic data on the Venice system and promise to cease exploration and expansion in the region. The Minbari report that multiple colonization

expeditions will be headed into the region within the next six months, bringing with them thousands of Minbari colonists.

The Earth Alliance Refuses an Ipsha Mutual Defense Pact

In a move that stunned EA officials, the Ipsha Baronies approached the EA with the intent of signing a mutual defense pact. Under other circumstances, the offer of a mutual defense pact by a foreign government would have been a means for celebration, but the Ipsha offer was certainly not welcomed with open arms. Few political parties represented in the EA Senate endorsed the treaty. What little support the treaty did garner came from the fringe "chickenhawk" parties that had previously advocated EA intervention in the Ipsha/Narn War, preferably on the Ipsha's behalf.

The mutual defense pact treaty failed to achieve a majority vote in the Senate, guaranteeing its rejection by the Earth Alliance.

Despite the rejection, the Ipsha remained upbeat about their relationship with Earth. Their representative did advise, however, that the offer of mutual defense may not be offered again for some time to come.

Anti-Alien Rioting on Alaca

Alaca was rocked by a series of anti-alien demonstrations following the signing of the Alaca/Earth mutual defense pact. Protests against the treaty were held in many major Alacan cities, and in some cases these protests turned into full scale rioting. Several historic city blocks of Atherzien were burned to the ground as a result of the civil turmoil. Some of the structures destroyed in Atherzien were over three hundred years old, dating back to the city's founding.

In a press release, Premier Loss addressed the Alacan people calling for an end to the rioting and promised that the Alacan state's continuing relationship with the Earthers would not subvert the Alacan's naturally ordained rights of sovereignty and self-rule.

(CM's Note: The worst possible NPE relationship roll following what was otherwise the beginning of a good relationship. The Alacans just can't ever have anything nice.)



2223.6

The Ipsha War, Month 6

The sixth month of the war, saw several important engagements, one of which came as a complete shock to both combatants.

The Battle of the Five Knives

The fleets under the command of Lord Admiral Tarkalean and Warcaptain Tu'Kar met in hyperspace, about halfway along the jump land connecting Kacheses to Quadrant 14. Both sides were completely surprised by the chance encounter and were thrown into chaos.

Not unsurprisingly, Admiral Tarkalean quickly decided to press his advantage, attempting to throw the Narn fleet off balance by picking a fight in the deadly expanse that is hyperspace. His five-squadron fleet, anchored on by Battleglobe flanking squadrons at each edge of the formation, put itself into position to make a mad dash towards the Narn fleet.

Meanwhile, Warcaptain Tu'Kar was left to decide what course of action to take. Would he stand and fight in hyperspace, a foolish decision even under the best of circumstances, or would he turn and flee back to the known security of Quadrant 14? His fleet was smaller than that fielded by the attacking Ipsha and any fight he committed to would likely be in his opponents' favor.

After much deliberation, Tu'Kar, being ever the cautious commander, decided that a hyperspace confrontation was too risky. He much preferred forcing his adversary to fight him on his own terms on a less hostile battlefield. Warcaptain Tu'Kar ordered his communications officer to pass word on to the rest of the fleet: retreat back to Quadrant 14 at full burn, as fast as their engines could propel them.

As the Narn fleet turned to flee, the Ipsha dove in upon them. Surge cannon fire shot through space, more often than not missing its intended target. In the fiery maelstrom two squadrons became separated from the fray, one Narn and one Ipsha. The two had been swept off the beacons by a sudden gravitational inversion in local hyperspace. Luckily for both, they each managed to regain a lock on the local hyperspace beacons.

In the end, the Narn were able to retreat at the loss of two Thentus Frigates and the damage of a third. The Ipsha had received no

telling damage, given that the Narn were in retreat and unable to concentrate their fire on their somewhat suicidal opponents.

With the battle concluded and his fleet giving chase to the cowardly Narns, Lord Admiral Tarkalean could only curl his arms in satisfaction. True, he had almost lost an entire squadron of Battleglobes in the confrontation because they drifted too far from the beacons, but it would have been more than worth it to see his enemy shattered and in despair. Emboldened by another victory, Lord Admiral Tarkalean knew that defeat was no longer even a possibility. The defeat of the Narn Regime would be at hand, and he would be the architect of its destruction!

Tu'Kar's thoughts on the subject were far more somber. His attack on Kacheses had been cut short, his fleet forced into a dangerous retreat that had left hundreds dead already. He knew the fate of Durog and had no plans to have it be his own. Yet, Tu'Kar would not put his crew's lives in jeopardy if there existed no chance for survival. For this night, he would wrestle with his own inner demons and prepare for the imminent rematch with his faceless Ipsha rival.

(CM's Note: After this battle, I gave Lord Admiral Tarkalean extra two Fleet Officer levels as a reward for what can only be considered an outrageous display of luck. Even with a -4 surprise modifier on the first turn of the scenario, ALL of Tarkalean's squadrons rolled 6's on their damage rolls. It was because of these rolls that the Ipsha were able to do the kind of damage they did. Of course, had there not have been a surprise modifier, the Ipsha would probably have just roasted the Narn fleet alive.)

With the fact that no squadrons were lost in hyperspace also factoring into the decision, Lord Admiral Tarkalean is now a Level 4 Fleet Officer, providing a +3 AS bonus to his command ship and a +1 surprise modifier to his fleet. This guy is so competent and lucky it is scary. He will almost assuredly be killed in the months to come as his ego begins to overpower his judgement, but until that day comes he is going to be a force to be reckoned with.)

Failure at Quadrant 14

Riding high on the victory in the Battle of Five Knives, it was perhaps unavoidable that Tarkalean's next engagement would end in disaster.

Upon making the transition from hyperspace back to normal space, the Ipsha fleet began scanning the heavens in search of their foe. After several minutes they found them, orbiting the Narn colony in the system. Around the planet they also discovered an array of 27 T'Dirk Orbital Satellites. This was the moment of truth, and Tarkalean was sure that he would be able to repeat his previous victory.

The initial assault on the Narn defenses at Quadrant 14 went well, with one squadron after another crumbling under concentrated Ipsha bombardment. Unfortunately for Tarkalean, the reverse was also true. Tu'Kar's forces brutalized the approaching Ipsha war fleet. The first squadron forced to retire from battle was Tarkalean's own. Where before four ships had flown, only the crippled Gyroscopic Destruction remained.

Shortly after the retreat of the Ipsha flagship, a second Ipsha squadron was forced to flee the field lest the Narn's Gorith fighters pick it apart. By the end of the battle, the Ipsha fleet was in tatters and forced to retreat back to Kacheses.

Unfortunately for the Ipsha, Warcaptain Tu'Kar was not happy to leave well enough alone. His forces, though damaged, remained combat capable. Leaving Quadrant 14's satellite network behind, his fleet began the pursuit of Tarkalean's and the surviving Ipsha fleet.

The Narn fleet intercepted the fleeing enemies just short of the local jump gate. With their sole jump capable cruiser crippled and its jump engine damaged, the Ipsha were forced to make a mad dash to the local gate instead of simply escaping directly into hyperspace. The Early Scout Wheel was the first Ipsha ship to detect the pursuing fleet, and did so with enough forewarning to allow the *Gyroscopic Destruction* to reach the jump gate and activate it before the Narns arrived. However, in ensuring the escape of their admiral, the remaining Ipsha vessels put themselves in a position where their own chance of escape was slim. The first wave of Narn frigates succeeded in destroying several crippled Battlehexes as they made a fighting retreat, breaking them apart in awesome displays of pyrotechnic fury.

The Early Scout Wheel, its hull heavily scarred by weapons fire, nearly made good an escape, making it as far as the jump gate before Gorith fighters completed the job Narn capital ships had started. Just as the gate was activated the Scout Wheel exploded, the shockwave from

the ship's collapsing singularity forcing debris in all directions.

In the aftermath of the month's conflicts, the Ipsha saw the destruction of nearly the entire offensive fleet. For the first time, the initiative was now firmly in the Narn's favor. With the Ipsha offensive dealt a dire blow, the Regime's hopes of retaking Kacheses – and maybe even Ipsha itself – finally seemed to be a real possibility. Tu'Kar was relieved that his strategy had succeeded. However the victory, while not hollow, certainly did not come without a heavy price. Only one, or possibly two, functional squadrons could now be formed from Tu'Kar's original four squadron fleet.

For Lord Admiral Tarkalean, having any fleet at all would be preferable to his current situation. Ego and arrogance had taken an immediate toll on the admiral, and now his entire force was gone. Onboard the Gyroscopic Destruction, nearly one-third of the ship's crew lay dead. Several sections of the outer hull had lost structural cohesion and been depressurized, expelling its liquid environment and the occupants therein into space. But it was not the death of his crew that bothered Tarkalean. No, the few-armed crew were inferior, expendable; his ships were not.

Mitoc Purchase Minbari Military Surplus

Continuing their history of close association, the Minbari Federation granted the Mitoc Democracy rights to purchase and operate additional classes of Minbari craft. This is in addition to the three Tigara Attack Cruisers already purchased by the Mitoc for use as fleet command units in their small but efficient navy.

Included in this new technology exchange are the plans for an export model of the aging Tishat Medium Fighter. The new Mitoc model, the Tishac, lacks the jammer and heavy firepower of the Minbari original but is otherwise a competent fighter and far better than any native solutions.

The two governments have also entered into long-term talks to discuss the possibility of the Democracy purchasing several other classes of second-line Minbari craft, including the Letann Scout and Torothe Assault Ship.

The Mitoc ability to pay handsomely for Minbari military hardware is a byproduct of their homeworld's extremely rich concentrations of Quantum 40. Sale of Quantum 40 to concerns

in the Minbari Federation net the Mitoc nearly as much income per turn as from all other domestic sources.

Alaca Jump Lane Upgraded

Two months after attacks on the EA exploration fleet dispatched to Alaca by raiders, upgrades to the Alaca/Orion jump lane have been completed. Captain Palmer reports that the new jump gate built in orbit of Alaca is working perfectly and should allow civilian commercial traffic to begin visiting Alaca.

EA President Andre Maleux assures the Alacan Premier that the Earth Alliance is dedicated to bringing mutual economic benefit to their worlds. Following a press conference, the portly politician happily signs an executive order authorizing the allocation of \$15 billion credits worth of economic incentives to stimulate trade in the region. Pro-alien doves in the EA Senate quickly ratify the order.

Not unsurprisingly, many factions within the Earth Alliance are particularly upset by these actions. Senior Indonesian statesman Sita Budianta finds an unlikely ally in Martian-born Senator Matthew Erikson in her failed crusade against the measure. Both agree that the funds being “thrown at the aliens” would be better spent on domestic matters.

2223.7

The Ipsha War, Month 7

Within the Ipsha Baronies, Tarkalean's defeat at Quadrant 14 in June of 2223 was a clear-cut sign of weakness within the Essan Barony. Recognizing a chance to take advantage of the situation, several baronies began moving their forces into position to seize greater power. While the tattered remainders of the Essan war fleet sat idle in Kacheses, their rivals were busy capturing several Essan territories back home. This civil strife's worst effect though was the heavy blow it dealt to the already faltering Essan war machine.

In the midst of this crisis, the Eethan Barony made their presence known. The Eethan Barony had enjoyed some spoils of war to date, but now they, too, had dispatched a fleet to combat the Narn Regime. However, they were not interested in a fair fight. Far from it, their goal

was to annex and exploit the Narn populations on Promith.

At Ipsha, the Oer, Shann, and Ihsha Baronies had all begun their own military gear ups. They had been forced to do so, lest the Essan's military build permanently skew the balance of power. Construction of a new shipyard complex was initiated, though it would be a long while before the shipyard would be completed (*CM's Note: After talking to Jay, I have decided to adopt an additional optional rule regarding base construction under the CG 4.10 Extended Construction Times rule. Jay thought that a simple 4 divisor (rather than 2) option would be best, but I am setting the rate of base construction at the construction cost divided by the system's Productivity. If the system where the base is being built does not have any local Productivity, or if other systems are aiding in the construction of the base, then the construction rate is equal to the sum of those systems' Productivity. This makes having multiple systems involvement more important, but hopefully it will not unbalance anything*).

Meanwhile, onboard the wrecked Battleglobe *Gyroscopic Destruction*, Lord Admiral Tarkalean was all but abandoned by his crew, left to his own devices. They were demoralized, all of them. The loss of the entire remainder of the fleet had crushed their spirits, even more than Tarkalean had thought such weak-minded curs could stoop. Some had even taken to cutting off their arms out of depression and sorrow! Their arms!

Tarkalean was appalled. It only made matters worse that Lord Admiral Canomele, commanding the Essan fleet in Kacheses, refused to surrender command of her fleet to Tarkalean. Canomele likewise refused to launch another attack on Quadrant 14 without the full support of another barony! *The gall of that woman-captain*, Tarkalean bellowed in the empty chambers of his stateroom. *I will have my revenge on them all.*

Several light years distant, Warcaptain Tu'Kar was greeted by some interesting fellows...

Warcaptain Tu'Kar escorted two guests into his office. Transparencies covered his desk, their sheen gleaming under the ship's red lighting. Tu'Kar shuffled several and put them on a stack at the corner of his desk near a screen and crystal port, the edges of the sheets

distorting the view of the screen. He gestured for his guests to sit down as he rounded the desk and took his own seat opposite them.

The visiting dignitary stared back at him from across the desk. Warleader Ka'Tak's stare was unwavering. His black pupils seemed to be as if carved out of stone. Never did Tu'Kar see him blink or break his hardened gaze.

"As you are well aware, Warcaptain," Ka'Tak began without invitation, "the Kha'Rhi has dispatched us to oversee the preparations of the fleet. After the business last month..."

Ka'Tak trailed off, turned his head to look at his aide, and then looked back at Tu'Kar. "I didn't introduce my aide, did I, Warcaptain?"

"No, Warle..." Tu'Kar began.

"No, of course not," Ka'Tak interrupted. "This is Warhunter G'sten. He was assigned to me out of Gold Fleet. He has some wonderful ideas about how we can fight this war. He has been invaluable as of late. You, too, will be invaluable to the Kha'Rhi, Tu'Kar. That is why I am here."

Tu'Kar nodded. "I am here to protect Homeworld the best I can, Warleader. But that still does not make clear your reason for traveling all the way out here to the front to confer with me directly. Is not Warcaptain Na'rar still in command of the Quadrant 14 defense fleet? To the best of my knowledge I am only in control of the mobile fleet here, a fleet which is now in a state of ill-repair I might add."

Ka'Tak shifted in his chair. "Tu'Kar, that is why I am here. I have been sent here to bestow upon you a field promotion to the rank of Warleader."

Tu'Kar leaned back in his chair, his mouth agape. "Wh- What, a field promotion, you say? Warleader?"

Ka'Tak nodded, no emotion betrayed by the tone of his voice or his stone-faced demeanor. He answered, "Yes, Tu'Kar, we feel that you are the right person, in the right place, at the right time for this mission. As of now, you will be in charge of prosecuting this war. I am putting Warhunter G'sten at your disposal. It will be difficult adjusting to his loss; he has been a great advantage at my side these last several years."

Rising the chair, Ka'Tak reached across the table and grabbed Tu'Kar's shoulder. "Make Narn proud, Warleader. Our survival depends on

your skill. And, just maybe, luck will smile on you."

Mitoc Unveils First Jump-Capable Starship

In a grand ceremony, the Mitoc Democracy unveiled the plans for their first jump-capable starship class, and only the second class of ship designed by Mitoc engineers. The new Haballa-class Multi-Purpose Exploration Cruiser, or Haballa Explorer for short, will be nearly three times the size of a Jomic Frigate.

It was difficult implement a jump engine on a ship the size of the Haballa, but Minbari technical assistance aided the Mitoc in making it possible. The new cruiser class is not intended for combat, though it is capable of holding its own in battle. Rather, the class will be used to map nearby space, hopefully locating a world viable for Mitoc colonization.

The Centauri Exploration Continues: The Mystery of Ingram Begins

The Centauri Republic continues its exploration of the expanse coreward of their empire. With the war between the Centauri and Narn fading from the public's memory and the economy mostly recovered, the Centaurum has focused much of its resources on exploring the territories past Algol.

Under the direction of Admiral Sehiro Dallo, the Centauri expansion of into the region has been quite methodical. The colony at Algol, a minor outpost during the war with barely five thousand inhabitants, has since been grown into a bustling border world of over sixty thousand Centauri. Several months ago Admiral Dallo moved his command center from Centauri Prime to new military facilities on Algol, putting himself in direct contact with the exploration forces he was in charge of overseeing.

For Dallo, the move to Algol was a welcome change. He cared little for the current infighting taking place in the chambers of the Centaurum and within the Royal Court. Dallo cared only for overseeing the explorer fleets with the least amount of external meddling from the many two-bit Centauri bureaucrats who wanted to make sure their names were attached to the expansion projects in Vansa and beyond. They thought that they could earn power and prestige by being the first to exploit the resources of new

worlds on the Rim. In so doing, they also hoped to curry favor with Emperor Kurghan and in return earn standing in noble society.

Dallo couldn't stand it. For the many long years he commanded the Imperial Exploration Arm from offices at the capital he was henpecked by politicians that mistakenly believed that they could interfere in the Imperial Navy's operations to any kind of benefit. As was his duty, Admiral Dallo thanked them for their input and then promptly ignored their unsolicited advice.

After the past two months, though, Dallo had found virtual autonomy from all of that micro-management. Despite the growing economic potential of Algol and its fortuitous location as the doorway to the frontier, very few among the nobility were willing to make the two month journey from Centauri Prime simply to provide "invaluable" input on the operation of the Exploration Arm.

On July 3, 2223, Admiral Dallo was roused from his quarters with news that the Covran explorer, *Veiled Empire*, had dispatched a high-priority message to the Algol Exploration Command. After taking time to assume proper attire, a weary Dallo met with his aides to review the data relayed by the *Veiled Empire*. For Dallo, what was initially of far more interest was why exactly his subordinates had felt it necessary to interrupt his night's rest (if you can call it a night's rest; Algol's days are only nine hours long, and for five of those the world is basked in soft darkness). The *Empire's* report would provide ample explanation shortly. What follows is an excerpt from Captain Alatani's initial report:

ATTN: Admiral Dallo, Imperial Exploration Arm
FROM: Captain Ral Alatani, commanding the Fourth Imperial Scout Force
LOCATION: Unexplored Star System

This communiqué is being sent in advance of a full post-survey report in order to inform you of our discovery in a system located near Vansa. This system has been designated Ingram by my crew. In short, we have found the remains of an extinct, technological alien civilization on the first planet of this star system.

Upon entering Ingram star system, our science personnel detected faint but still readily detectable energy signatures emanating from the first planet in the system, designated

Inshtara in honor of the goddess of mysterious signs and protector tax collectors. Upon closer examination, my science officer determined that these signals were clearly artificial in origin. They do not however correspond to any communication range currently used by any other aliens known to the Republic.

In the interests of finding out the most about this find possible, I commanded our freighter escorts to remain on the edge of the system while I ordered the *Veiled Empire* to make a closer approach towards the planet. The freighter's commander complied and we began a series of micro-jumps that took us within the orbit of Inshtara.

Once in orbit, we began a detailed planetary survey in hopes of unlocking the planet's mysteries. What we found is shocking, sir. The planet was covered in abandoned cities. Great tracts of ice, deserts, mountains and local flora dot the landscape, but great cities sprawl over entire landmasses. Our scans did not however identify any signs of current inhabitation. After successful dispatch and recovery of several geologic and sensor probes, I deemed it safe to send down a landing party to investigate the ruins. None of us knew what we were going to find down there.

Our team landed a shuttle near the outskirts of one of the abandoned cities that sat at the foot of a great mountain range. Admiral, even in their desiccated state, these ruins are still beautiful. I have seen some of the pictures of the skylines they saw down there – it would almost put Centauri Prime's great old cities to shame!

After a cursory examination of the surrounding area, our team discovered a large warehouse-like structure filled with storage crates, still sealed and undisturbed after all this time. A few of these crates were opened; they seem to contain some form of alien devices, but their function is completely unknown. Our teams are currently finding all sorts of alien relics to return home for our scientists to review. My chief science advisor, who took part in the landing party, assures me that, by the looks of things, this world was once a thriving colony world, but he believes that the infrastructure indicates a

civilization at a level of technology roughly equal to our own. We should know more after we take a look at additional sites.

Only after we had spent five days on the planet did our geological teams alert us to an extremely important fact: the core samples returned to the ship by the first probes indicate a high concentration of Quantum 40 in the planet's crust! This planet is a veritable treasure trove it seems. I am not sure I will be able to pry my crew away from it to continue our deep space exploration duties. I heartily recommend getting some additional ships and personnel out here to look over the ruins.

Still, despite all of this wonderful news, I can't help but be overcome by at least some sense of trepidation. Only the Great Maker knows what befell this colony. Was it a plague? Was it an alien attack? What bothers me even more is that we have yet to find remains that could belong to this world's former owners. We have found signs of other native fauna, but the cities seem to be completely empty, as if the planet was evacuated in a very orderly, methodical fashion.

I know that I am just worrying too much, but I feel I would be remiss if I did not make clear my concerns on this issue.

* * * Alatani Out * * *

Admiral Dallo was amazed. The Centauri Republic could definitely use this influx of new alien technologies to help jump start their lagging research and development programs back home. It really was a magnificent find. He had to agree with the captain, too: those alien vistas were breathtaking. However, he also held the same concerns that Alatani shared in his message. Who were these aliens, and what were their fate.

Dallo sighed and ordered his staff to pass the information on to the Centaurum. They would inevitably wish to send an expedition of xeno-archaeologists to the system post haste, which would mean recalling the bulk of the Imperial Exploration Arm to facilitate the construction of jump gates and deployment of jump beacons to the region.

After the meeting was over, Dallo returned to his quarters and returned to his bed.

What was left of the rest of his night's sleep was fitful. *Just great*, Dallo thought to himself, *I just got rid of those damn politicians and now they are going to be swarming me again because of this.*

(CM's Note: I am using a modified Special Traits table for this campaign, and the traits on roll '11' for uninhabited systems just happens to be Ancient Ruins. You will be amazed how many Ancient Ruins have popped up so far. I guess it shouldn't be all that surprising ($3/36 = 1/12 = 8\%$), and it might need corrected, but it has provided some interesting systems.

This write up is mostly me just having fun with a result. Whether it will have any lasting impact for the Centauri Republic or not remains to be seen...)

Markab Eye Alon

This month, a second jump route is discovered linking the Markab Theocracy territories to the provincially Narn-controlled system of Alon. With the discovery of a treacherous route connecting Troth to Alon (a route was previously known between Tiree and Alon), the Markab religious leadership decides that they must begin rallying the people to back the conquest of the Alon system.

The Markab know little of the specifics of the Narn/Ipsa conflict, but what tidbits of information independent traders have brought into Markab space they can only assume that a power play for Alon and its connecting neutral territories will illicit little response from the Narn government.

2223.8

The Ipsa War, Month 8

The eighth month of the war saw extensive activity in the Kacheses and Promith systems. The Narn's 9th Fleet, under the continued command of newly-promoted Warleader Tu'Kar, are successful in achieving space superiority in the Kacheses system, forcing Lord Admiral Canomele's forces into full retreat. The system however remains in Ipsa hands, despite a failed attempt by Narn infantrymen to retake control of the captured narn colony.

Meanwhile, Admiral Cimmicron's fleet is destroyed by Promith's fighter garrison, preserving the freedom of the Promith Free Association, at least for now.

Canomele's Retreat at Kacheses

With his strategy for the war drawn out, Warleader Tu'Kar launches his offensive into the Kacheses star system. Four squadrons of Narn warships, including six T'Narr Heavy Assault Cruisers, make the jump into the system expecting to find encounter heavy Ipsha resistance. Much to their surprise, the Ipsha fleet in the system is small and primarily made up of auxiliaries and support equipment. The Narn do not detect any damaged units in the system, indicating that the war-rattled veterans of the war have been sent back to Ipsha for repairs.

Upon approaching Kacheses II, the Narn fleet detects an outgoing fleet heading towards the local jump gate. After further analysis, sensor techs verify that the whole of the Ipsha fleet in Kacheses is abandoning their post and are in general retreat from the system.

Rather than allow the Ipsha fleet to disengage from the system without a fight, Warleader Tu'Kar orders his fleet to pursue the enemy and pick off as many of the Ipsha vessels as possible before they reach the jump gate. Of paramount importance is the destruction of the Ipsha's two Transport Fleets which have been detected among the fleeing Ipsha vessels. The destruction of these valuable assets would surely delay any further Ipsha offensives into Narn space.

As the Narn fleet accelerated to intercept the Ipsha, Lord Admiral Canomele's own crews begin for combat. They had detected Tu'Kar's jump signatures upon their entry into Kacheses. Canomele's peer, Tarkalean, had fled the system last month, ostensibly to return to the Ipsha home system for repairs. Canomele knew however that Tarkalean was little more

than a rat escaping a sinking ship. She had been left to hold the line, but she had no desire to play the part of a martyr, casting her life away needlessly just so that her barony's steadfastness could be affirmed.

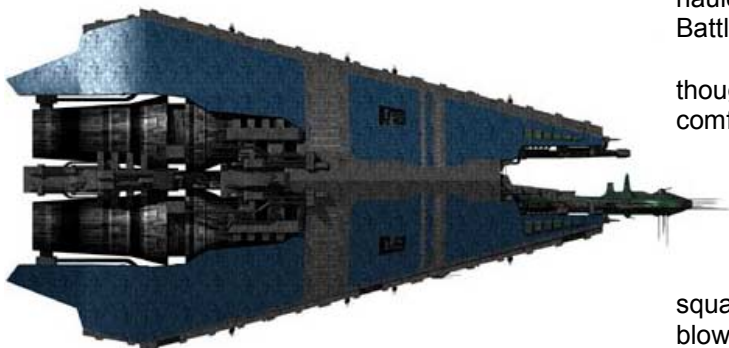
The two fleets met just twenty minutes before the Ipsha would have reached the local jump gate. As the transport fleets attempted to flee, the rest of the fleet turned on its axis to engage the incoming Narn forces. The two fleets clashed, surge cannon fire leaping across the void as firing plasma plunged into the Ipsha ranks. The hardest hit in this exchange was the Narn's Rothan Plasma Destroyers. Tu'Kar had ordered them to run ahead of the fleet, providing heavy escort to his smaller frigates and corvettes. Fully-charged surge cannons slice through the Rothan formation, destroying half of them in the opening salvo. Tu'Kar's third flanking wing, too, found itself under particularly heavy enemy fire.

As the fleets clashed, Tu'Kar's "carrier" squadron, composed of three T'Narr Assault Cruisers and their flight wings, dispatched their fighters on an attack run; it's intent: to destroy the Ipsha transports at any cost. Two flights of Goriths were picked off by Battlehex and Battleglobe fire on their way in, but the remaining flights struck hard at the Transports, destroying dozens of transports and crippling various others. Their run complete, the fighters darted back out of the Ipsha squadron and towards the Narn battle line. In their wake they left broken debris and now lifeless forms drifting through the black of space.

Canomele was outraged. She had hoped to escape Kacheses without a fight. *The Narn typically did not have the stomach for this type of combat, but evidently the attack on Quadrant 14 had stirred some resolve in their leadership*, she mused to herself as she watched her ships disappear from the tactical display. Her logistics squadron had been devastated by the Narn frigates with four cargo haulers destroyed and their watchman, a lone Battleglobe, on fire and flailing out of control.

Ten minutes, ten minutes left, Canomele thought. *Ten minutes to survival*. The thoughts comforted her, but she knew that a great many of her crew would not survive to see their salvation. The jump gate, it seemed so very close...

The Narn drove deeper into the Ipsha battle line. Their lead cruiser squadrons hit Canomele's flag squadron, blowing two of her escorts out of the sky. The



Battlehex and Resohex would be sorely missed, but Canomele knew why the Narns were pushing so hard. Those ships had represented the last barrier between the Narn fleet and her second transport fleet!

Canomele called incessantly for extra support to close the gap, but it was too late. Narn Goriths – all of them, ten flights in total – leapt through the gap and began hammering the transports. As expected, the transports exploded in balls of fire, one after another after another.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on the battlefield, other Narn ships continued their pursuit of the remaining ships from the first transport fleet to be hit. The Ipsha formations had broken on that flank and the transport fleet was eliminated in its entirety.

Five minutes... the jump gate is nearly here!

Warleader Tu'Kar watched wryly on his viewscreen. One of his squadrons had been shattered to pieces by the Ipsha's fighting retreat, but the victory still tasted sweet upon his lips as he rolled his he wet them with his tongue. The Ipsha had very nearly reached the jump gate... there! The vortex formed as he watched, the swirling yellowish orange of the anomaly signaling that at least one of the Ipsha ships had entered close enough proximity to the jump gate to activate it. Tu'Kar smirked slightly as he watched the remnants of the sole surviving Ipsha transport fleet pass through the jump gate into hyperspace. His fighters pursued as far as they dare, picking off some of the stragglers, but they were forced to fall back.

The Narn force fell back away from the jump gate, taking opportunity fire at any and all Ipsha units too sluggish to reach the jump gate in time. Then the vortex closed and the jump gate became silent once more. The Ipsha had fled Kacheses. Now the real work was about to begin.

Reviewing the post action analysis that was hot off the keystrokes of his staff, Tu'Kar noted that at least one Ipsha squadron had managed to escape the system intact. Several of his advisors urged a hyperspace pursuit, but Warleader Tu'Kar refused. He had participated in one hyperspace battle so far in his career, and even that was one too many as far as he was concerned. No, let the Ipsha fleet flee to the safe refuge of their homeworld. Tu'Kar had it on good authority that more new construction would be headed his way shortly. Once enough ships were assembled, he would be able to take Ipsha itself and put an end to the war once and for all.

But there were other things to be attended to before that could happen. That included the retaking of Kacheses.

The Narn fleet returned to the orbit of Kacheses II, only to find that the area around the planet was mined with Ipsha Cyst Captor Minefields. They did not notice the mines until the *NDF Tha'kur*, a Sho'Vok Attack Cutter, came under attack, crippling the ship and sending it spinning out of control into the planet's atmosphere, where it would burn up and be destroyed. Tu'Kar hadn't expected mines, and his fleet hadn't detected them in-system. He ordered the fleet to begin a slow but methodical check for any more mines. A total of twenty-four Cyst minefields were ultimately discovered, but not before two additional ships, another Sho'Vok and a Rothan, were further damaged.

With the minefield now cleared, the Narn fleet began taking stock of the situation planetside. Three Ipsha marines, all still in-supply despite the orbital blockade, remained defiantly in control of Kacheses II. Tu'Kar ordered his two light infantry be deployed to gain a beachhead on the colony.

Unfortunately for Tu'Kar, his light infantry was slaughtered by the Ipsha defenders, though they were successful in dispatching one Ipsha marine unit before being pinned down and butchered by enemy ground units.

Tu'kar called G'Sten into his office and advised him to contact the Fourth Circle and arrange for the training and deployment of additional ground troops to Kacheses so that the planet could be returned to Regime control.

Lord Admiral Canomele floated soundlessly as she watched hyperspace's torrential dance through one of her quarter's viewports. Her orders had been quite clear: defend Kacheses at any cost. Damn the baron, damn all of them! She was not a pawn and she would not be forced to commit suicide so that her superiors could sleep easier at night. Thousands of young Ipsha marines died in her fleet today and, unlike most of the admiralty, Canomele mourned for their families. This war was turning into a debacle, and it was her barony's fault that it had started in the first place. Representatives from the Ipsha Barony had tried to rally foreign support for the war, but the Earthers had turned down the offer of mutual defense. *Without EA or Centauri intervention, there can be no victory or peace*, Canomele thought as a starburst briefly illuminated the room. *This end we have painted for ourselves.*

The question now would be whether to go rogue – escape before her superiors found here – or else accept her punishment, which would likely be severe. Her court martial would likely be a public spectacle. She knew that Admiral Tarkalean would never be held accountable for his failure at Quadrant 14; oh no, he was above retribution! He had sixteen arms – sixteen! Canomele had only thirteen, so she was not socially protected from political vengeance over the loss of Kacheses. If convicted of gross negligence, they would probably sentence her to the loss of nine limbs and internment in a slave camp. Falling out of favor was simply not something anyone could bounce back from, genius or fool alike.

After several more hours of quiet reflection, Canomele resigned herself to a course of action. She would take her ship and her crew and abandon the Essan Barony completely. She would flee to the fringe worlds and eke out of living there among the lesser colonial barons. Perhaps they would welcome her with open tentacles? She doubted it, but it was better than certain death. And the loss of one and a half transport fleets would surely be seen as a grave misstep in command.

Promith Under Attack

The Eethan Barony is the most aggressive of the Ipsha baronies. Despite this fact, the Eethans had sat out the war with the Narn until very recently. Major movers and shakers within the barony decided that their interests were threatened by Essan victories against the lesser-limbed aliens. In order to tip the balance of power in their favor, the nobles of Eethan dispatched the bulk of their fleet, under the command of Admiral Cimmicron, to the Promith system. Formerly a Narn world with a Narn population, Promith had been spared the bloodshed of the Ipsha offensive thus far. The Eethan Barony hoped that Promith could be easily cowed and brought into their control.

The Eethan assault into Promith was launched several weeks before the Narn arrival in Kacheses, but did not arrive until only days after Tu'Kar victory there. Upon arriving in the system, Admiral Cimmicron waited cautiously at the edge of the system, giving his crews time to detect any potential hostiles in the system. The only defenses detected were what appeared to be a rudimentary fighter garrison on the fourth planet in the system. Another small refueling

base was also apparent on the fourth planet's innermost moon.

Sensing vulnerability, Cimmicron ordered his fleet of two Battleglobes and two Battlehexes in to complete the capture of Promith's space lanes.

As the fleet neared Promith IV, they were met in space by over four wings of Gorith fighters. The Promith defenders had spent the last two months preparing for just such an incursion into their air space and were more than ready for their Ipsha attackers.

It did not take long for the Promithian fighters to reduce the Ipsha fleet to cinders. The Ipsha lacked the fighter defenses to repel that many fighters. Of the 108 Gorith Medium Fighters that met the Ipsha in battle, 34 per destroyed. However, the Ipsha were destroyed to the last ship. There were no survivors.

Grome Make Discoveries

In two separate successful exploration attempts, the Grome discover systems containing alien ruins. This causes a furor among the Grome academic community as research teams began seeking funding for expeditions to the two systems, Laguna and Mekinti.

Grome Margus Orders Reclamation Effort at Neo-Margus Colony

Following a widely followed scandal, the Margus is forced to spend \$30 billion credits to fund the cleanup of several planetary landfills at the Neo-Margus Primus colony. Even the state-controlled media got in on the act, requesting that the Margus intervene at the colony.

As the story unfolded, the Grome people found out that, much to the disgust of the colonists of Neo-Margus Prime, several mountain valleys on their world had been turned into waste dumps for spent fuel rods, non-biodegradable industrial castoffs, and millions of gallons of toxic waste. The efforts had already managed to cause the breakdown of ecosystems surrounding the dump zones.

In reality, the Margus himself had been accepting payments from the wealthy industrial burgesses in order for them to be able to dump their waste at the planet as a convenience. However, as the scandal came to light, the Margus' implicit involvement was not revealed. Rather, the businessmen involved were arrested and executed at the order of the Margus.

2223.9

The Ipsha War, Month 9

As the war enters its ninth month, another lull hits the combatants. Warleader Tu'Kar consolidates his forces in Kacheses while the blockade of the Ipsha ground forces continues into a second month. New construction from Narn arrives in Kacheses and Tu'Kar begins preparing for a final assault into Promith.

Meanwhile, the Ipsha Baronies are stressed by their lack of adequate shipyard facilities. With the logistics fleet from Kacheses in shambles, there is no way to conduct repairs without using valuable dock spaces at Ipsha orbital yards, and all dock spaces are currently filled with new construction!

Many of the baronies demand retribution and that a fleet be dispatched to dislodge the Narns from Kacheses, but the majority decision is that the Baronies cannot launch an assault into the system until after the Oer Barony can dispatch carriers in support of future fleet actions. Two Early Carrier Cubes are under construction at Ipsha fleet yards and will come online soon, but whether it will be too late is a question on everyone's minds.

Peace with Promith

With the Eethan Barony's attempt to capture Promith a bust, the Ipsha Baronies conduct negotiations with the Association Council via sporadic tachyon communications resulting in an armistice, ending the war between the Ipsha and Promith. As part of the Armistice, the Ipsha agree to recognize the sovereignty of Promith and forego any and all territorial claims they might have to the territories held now and in the future by the Promith Free Association.

The Minbari Rediscover the Sanctuary at Yor Rohl

Minbari explorers exploring a spiral of stars in the heart of their empire's borders make the astonishing rediscovery of the Yor Rohl system, home to one of the most sacred sites in Minbari religious tradition. Records from the last Great War say that Valen retreated into

seclusion for a time at Yor Rohl, spending the time meditating on the course of the war. The system was cut off and the colony presumed destroyed after a Shadow attack destroyed the local jump gate 1,000 years ago.

Thus the Minbari adventurers were amazed to find that the population had survived with no loss of life. They had been stranded for years, this is true, but they had a feeling that they were not the last of their kind still among the stars.

The sanctuary remained intact and well cared for by the isolated Minbari trueseekers. Many sections have fell to ruins, but largely the structure is as it was in Valen's time.

2223.10

The Ipsha War, Month 10

In the tenth month of the war, the Narn Regime's elite marines arrive in Kacheses from Homeworld, eliminating the Ipsha's own beleaguered ground forces. Without supplies from Ipsha, and with the local population in general revolt, the Ipsha forces lost cohesion and suffered massive attrition. They were unable to hold their own against the invasion of thousands of fresh Narn shock troops.

With Kacheses back under Regime control and additional reinforcements from Dar'kar and Homeworld arriving in the system, Warleader Tu'Kar can begin looking forward to his next objective: the conquest of the Ipsha home system.

Markab Annex Alon

Where traditional diplomacy fails, often gunship diplomacy succeeds. True enough, the Markab attempts to negotiate for control of Alon from the Narn Regime had all previously failed. However, when a full Markab carrier squadron moved into the system, the Narn claims to the system became moot.

The Narn reaction to this hostile move by the Markabs was tempered but severe. The Narn advised them not to take up permanent residence in the system lest they desired war with the Regime. The Narns had already connected an unimportant jump lane to the system over a year ago with an eye to developing the system, but the war with the

Ipsha derailed this project, much like it did to the plans to colonize Dar'kar.

Centauri/Markab Begin Negotiations

The Centauri Republic formally entered into talks with the Markab Theocracy this month. The talks are the first formal diplomatic contact between the two nations. The Centauri were eager to find an alien ally on the Narn border, but instead they found a race of holier than thou proselytizers that were quick to point out the spiritual bankruptcy of the Centauri Republic.

At first it looked like the talks would go nowhere, but the Markab did finally agree to enter into normalized relations with the Republic. In a related agreement, the Tonalá Pact, the Centauri Republic place claim on the vacant Tonalá system. Bordering their own claimed system of Kagero and the major Centauri colony at Immolan, Tonalá was originally ceded to the Narn Regime in the treaty that ended the Narn/Centauri War. Now though, with the Markab having forcibly annexed the Alon system and cutting off Narn access to the system, the Centauri felt that it was time to authorize their options on the system. In return for Tonalá, the Centauri agree to stay out of the trailing zone previously claimed by the Narns.

Near Miss for Scout Force Five

Captain Adreinna Palmer and her fleet are very nearly swept off the beacons by the unexpected formation of hyperspace squalls in the region of hyperspace near Alaca they were exploring. Only the efforts of Palmer's navigator, Lieutenant John Maverickson, saved the fleet from certain disaster.

Palmer also reports that several crewmen report seeing some sort of object in hyperspace. The unidentified object appeared during the height of the hyperspace disturbance, but disappeared as suddenly as it appeared soon thereafter. Ship's scanners did not detect the object, despite it supposedly appearing within visual range. In her incident report, Palmer had this to say:

"...I would have discounted the eyewitness accounts on this matter as simply being stress induced hallucinations; they happen from time to time on long-term exploration assignments like this. However, we received independent reports from two different ships in the fleet where the enlistees saying they saw

this... this 'thing' in hyperspace described essentially the same characteristics, that it seemed to fade in and out of hyperspace and that it appeared jet black in color. I am inclined to believe that they saw something, but it is my judgment that it was simply a visual byproduct of the hyperspatial anomaly we were encountering at the time."

Raider Attack in Alaca

Raiders in the Alaca system – seemingly the same Galleon that survived the last encounter in the system – strike an EA Trade Fleet, causing heavy damage to the fleet. This interruption of the trade lanes results in the loss of \$5 billion credits in trade revenue.

Despite assurances from the Alacan premier, EA Senator Sita Budianta leads dissent within the Senate's ranks calling for answers as to why Earth Force is not guaranteeing the safety of EA civilians, especially if the EA's lesser developed trading partners could not suitably patrol their own space. Budianta's vitriolic speech to the Senate will be noted by historians as a major turning point in the direction of the Earth Alliance. Her speech will lead to a major defection of political personalities to her pro-Earth cabal.

Despite the unrest in the Senate, President Kane urged calm and consideration in its deliberations. In order to placate the constituencies of Earth and colonies, President Kane sets out to rectify the situation.

By executive order of the President of the Earth Alliance and with the approval of the Earth Force Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kane authorizes the formation of the Belt Alliance. This civilian organization will be placed in charge of civil patrol duties, especially those in which Earth Force intervention is not cost effective.

Senator Budianta and her allies unhappily accept that the formation of the Belt Alliance is a step in the right direction, at least for now, they maintain that foreign entanglements are the root cause of Earth's current troubles.

A Busy Month for the Grome Diplomatic Corps

October was a busy month for the Grome diplomatic corps. By order of the Margus, the command given to negotiators in between mud baths and facials, Grome diplomats

established permanent embassies in both the Earth Alliance and Minbari Federation. The EA embassy is located on Earth itself, while the Grome ambassador-to-Minbar takes up residence on the Volantha colony.

During the month, the Grome contact both governments wishing to broaden their respective relationships. The Grome offer the EA a Peace Treaty, while the Minbari are offered a Trade Treaty. Both of the foreign powers accept the proposals.

The decision to sign a Peace Treaty with the Earth Alliance comes as something of a surprise to EA diplomats. During the last six months, Grome negotiators had come off as being largely uninterested in future relationships. With Van Maanen firmly in their control it had seemed as if the Grome had no more “use” for the EA beyond trade relations.

For the Minbari, the offer of Trade with the Grome is largely a symbolic issue. None of the jump lanes connecting Grome territories to Minbari colony are capable of being traversed by civilian traffic. Whether the Margus will deem is acceptable to upgrade these links, with or without Minbari assistance, is still unknown.

2223.11

The Ipsha War, Month 11

Tu'Kar makes his move into Ipsha, while Lord Admiral Tarkalean is reassigned to the defense of the Ipsha home fleet.

Ipsha Blockaded

Narn Warleader Tu'Kar's fleet made transit into the Ipsha home system on November 19, 2223. His 9th Fleet took up position around Ipsha VII, a pale blue Jovian world on the outskirts of the Ipsha solar system. Tu'Kar was quite sure that the Ipsha knew that they were there, but Tu'Kar was not ready to commit his forces to a full planetary assault just yet. As always, Tu'Kar believed that discretion is the better part of valor. As such, sending his fleet – and himself with it! – to be crashed against hostile shores did not seem a prudent course of action. It was far better to wait and watch while his specialists determined the size and composition of the Ipsha fleet in the system.

Within six hours time, the first detailed sensor reports started making their way to

Tu'Kar's desk. The Ipsha had three shipyards in the system, though one of them was only now coming online. The other two were running at near full capacity. Techs could identify eight Battlehexes in docks, plus two additional cube-shaped ships of indeterminate class. The Narn had never encountered vessels of that type before.

The Ipsha mobile fleet was harder to pin down, but by all accounts it seemed that the Ipsha had about four to five full squadrons of starships in the system. One of these squadrons had been patrolling in the outer system at the time of the Narn fleet's arrival but had since retreated back to the homeworld's defenses.

After analyzing all of the data at his disposal and soliciting his advisors for their input, Tu'Kar made the decision to close towards the homeworld and begin enforcing a total blockade to or from Ipsha. Tu'Kar hoped that this action would suffocate any other Ipsha forces operating abroad while allow his heavy reinforcements time to arrive on the following month. With the added firepower, Tu'Kar was confident he could crush the Ipsha resistance.

Tarkalean Plots Revenge

The Narn arrival in Ipsha forced the Baronies to begin planning for the eventual invasion. All available units were rushed into service. The Oer Barony's Early Carrier Cubes and their Urchin Heavy Fighters were still on shakedown runs and ill prepared to take part in battle, but they were nonetheless activated to stand in defense of the homeworld.

Upon much deliberation between the baronies, it was decided that Essan commander Tarkalean would be put in charge of coordinating their fleets and defenses in the system. Although the Lord Admiral's offensive into Narn space had failed, he still maintained health political connections with the affluent members of his and other baronies.

With control over the Ipsha fleet in his warm tentacles, Tarkalean began planning his revenge against the Narn. This blockade would be a problem, yes, but it showed that the Narn lacked the courage or motivation to finish the task at hand. The Ipsha Baronies would have an additional eight Battlehex light cruisers available next month, and that would be more than enough to break the blockade of Ipsha and allow Tarkalean to lead a second glorious campaign against the Narns. However, his second ride into Narn space would not end in consolidation; no,

he would be sure to equip his ships with planeteering weapons, such as mass drivers, so that he could pluck out the very heart of the Narn Regime and feast on its warm moistness.

Narns Lose Contact with Scout Force

A Narn Regime scout fleet dispatched from the Kotok system does not return to the system. All attempts at locating the fleet, which contained 1 Sho'Kan Early Scout, 1 Rothan Plasma Destroyer, and 2 Arcismur Heavy Transports, result in failure.

A second Narn scout fleet operating out of Kotok report that they ran into heavy hyperspace disturbances on the last leg of their exploration attempts, but were able to right themselves and return to Kotok without incident.

The final fate of Scout Force Three is currently unknown. There are no plans for any further attempts to locate possible survivors.

Alon, Center of the Universe!

The final jump lane out of the Nareel system is explored by courageous Narn adventurers – only to find that it, too, links into the Alon system! The Alon system was forcefully annexed by the Markab the month before.

The Narn lodge another protest against the Markab military presence in a *Narn territorial claim* (the gall!) before retreating back to Binan.

CM's Note: This makes a total of EIGHT jump lanes running into the Alon system. For the Narn, Alon is one of the few avenues of expansion that are left to them (excepting the "Ipsha Corridor," of course). Of course having that many routes link into a single star system also makes it a "must-have" system for the Markab. If they can control Alon, they can virtually control all traffic into their space. Unless future exploration opens alternate routes into their space, the Markab could prevent any access to their worlds by fortifying Alon and Tiree! As far as pocket empires go, that setup is not entirely bad for the Markab Theocracy.

The Magnificent Mitoc

Proving their natural affinity for hyperspace navigation, the Mitoc's virgin Haballa Scout Cruiser fleet has an extremely successful first month of active duty. Two of the Mitoc's four scout forces successfully locate new star systems. One got carried off the beacons, but through sheer tenacity the fleet's commander was able to pull her fleet out of the

gravitational eddy and back to the established jump beacons.

As for the results of their exploration attempts, the most remarkable discovery is the Mitoc's first First Contact situation. Upon transiting into a yellow dwarf star system, the Mitoc began receiving distinctly artificial signals coming from the third planet in the system. The system's inhabitants, the Krish, are a species of pacifistic flightless avians native to the star. Their civilization appears to be late Industrial in technology.

After much deliberation, the Mitoc explorers decide to make contact. After wracking their brains for what message to send to the soon-to-be-contactees, the Mitoc decided upon their people's universal greeting: "Bah weep granna weep nini bon!"

The Krish were of course startled to find out they were not alone in the universe. All right, startled is not exactly the right term. The Krish were fairly certain there were other intelligent species in the universe, just they had hoped to be sufficiently far away so as not to have to deal the hassle of it all. Contact can be so unsightly, you know. The Krish were less than happy to learn that the Mitoc had decided to arm their "happy go lucky alien contact vehicles" (an approximate Krish translation of the name given to the Mitoc explorer ships). To the Krish this seemed somewhat presumptuous if not just a little bit mean. The Krish it turns out have a natural aversion to violence of any kind. They



evolved on a world filled with fluffy white clouds and delicious, squirmy grubs, but with no predatory competitors at all. All of the predators on Krish died during a particularly warm period in the planet's geological cycle some ten million years ago, and the planet is still in a state of recovery. The Krish really can't say they mind it though, as they love going outdoors to play a nice game of skerblust without worrying about being gruesomely killed. For the hopelessly uninformed, skerblust is kind of like a mix between tennis and golf, but even less interesting than either of those two.

For their part, the Krish viewed future relations with the Mitoc with cautious optimism. Well, as much cautious optimism a flightless bird can have when it is trying to hug an alien lifeform. "Sharing the love" is of course a big part of Krish society; the byproduct of this being that large group hugs are one of the leading causes of death in their society.

Luckily for the Krish, the Mitoc Captain Rikk very much enjoyed hugging aliens. It was a fetish, you see. So the Krish and Mitoc were off on the right foot.

Meanwhile, the other successful exploration attempt led from Mitoc to the uninhabited Wokac system. The minor system will make a wonderful colony for the Mitoc Democracy, allowing their one-system power to expand into a multi-system empire.

The success of these early exploration missions has emboldened the expansionists in the Mitoc planetary assembly (the Forum). It is very likely that the first Mitoc colonists will begin leaving for Wokac within the next three months.

Orion under Raider Attack

Raiders attack the Orion system, another sign of increased raider activity in the region. Raiders had formerly struck the same trade route on the Alacan leg of its journey.

After hearing of the attack, sector defense commander Rear Admiral Henri Delacroix dispatched his secondary squadron, commanded by the *EAS Kilimanjaro*, an Olympus-Alpha Corvette, to intercept and destroy the raiders. Accompanying the *Kilimanjaro* are four Porcupine-Beta Starfury Transports, basing a total of eight flights of Tiger Starfuries.

Upon arriving at the convoy's location, the commander of the *Kilimanjaro* finds his fleet pitted against two raider Schooners and a total of eight flights of Delta-V Light Fighters. With

military ships on the scene, the raiders break off their attack on the civilian shipping and turn their attention to the Earth Force police fleet. Neither the *Kilimanjaro* nor any of its escorts are destroyed in the transgression, though five Tiger Starfury flights are lost. It seems that the raider fighters were adepts and were well versed in dogfighting. This does not keep them from being eliminated, however, along with their carriers.

Several raiders stood down in the fight and were arrested, but there is a very good chance that the EA will only see increased raider activity in the region as it becomes more and more developed. President Kane's Belt Alliance proposal is looking very good right about now!

Mitoc, Krish Sign

Non-Aggression Pact

Fast on the heels of first contact, the Mitoc and Krish affirm their mutual respect for one another by signing a full Non-Aggression Pact. The Mitoc Democracy affirms that they will respect the sovereignty of the Krish star system so long as it is reciprocated.

For their part, the Krish think the entire idea of a Non-Aggression Pact is silly. Who would ever act aggressive towards another sentient life form? That would be impolite.

With the pact signed, the Mitoc leadership is contented to leave the Krish be for the moment. Eventually opening up greater relations with the Krish might be beneficial, but probably not in a major way. The Krish would benefit the most from trade, as it would accelerate their technological growth, bringing them to the stars much faster than normally possible. Uplift is on the minds of many forward thinking individuals in the Forum, but most really don't want to have to mess with shepherding a developing species while there are planets and resources to exploit elsewhere.

2223.12

The Ipsha War, Month 12

No one could have expected how the twelfth month of the Ipsha War would play out. Between Tarkalean's breakout attempt and the unexpected news that followed, this month was certainly a turning point in the war.

Tarkalean's Breakout

Having sat beneath a Narn blockade for nearly a month, Tarkalean has readied his fleet for a breakout attempt. The eight Battlehexes previously under construction during the previous month are all now completed and have been added to his fleet strength.

From the flag of his flagship, the Gyroscopic Destruction, Tarkalean watches and waits for the opening that he needs to break the blockade. The opportunity finally presents itself, coming in the form of a Narn fleet rotation that puts half of the Narn fleet temporarily out of contact with the rest of the fleet as they pass behind the shadow of the planet.

Seizing the opportunity, Tarkalean sends his fleet into action. The full of the Ipsha defense forces move to intercept the out-of-contact Narn squadrons. The targeted fleet includes the Narn 8th Fleet which moved into the system in the last two weeks to help reinforce Warleader Tu'Kar's defenses.

The two squadrons are unable to repulse the Ipsha offensive and are left in wrecks. Only two T'Narn Assault Cruisers manage to limp to safety, the entirety of their escorts and fighter wings destroyed by Tarkalean's blitzkrieg.

And then something entirely unexpected happened...

We All Have Our Orders

...Tarkalean receives a high-security, coded message from the Baron's Council. Enclose in this message are executive orders, passed to Tarkalean directly from the Council itself! He reviews the orders and initially can't believe them. If the orders had come from any other source but the collective decision of the highest nobility on Ipsha he would have surely disregarded the orders completely. But, knowing that no amount of political connections would save his life if he violated these orders, Tarkalean informed his fleet commanders and began sallying forth to meet Tu'Kar's own fleet.

Within the ranks of the Narn 9th Fleet, no one quite knew what to make of the Ipsha breakout. Warleader Tu'Kar hadn't even considered an Ipsha breakout a realistic possibility. If he had, he may have been more aggressive in his stance. He had planned to attack the Ipsha defenses in a week, maybe two, once he was sure his fleet was ready for the

challenge. Now nearly a quarter of his fleet was destroyed and the Ipsha fleet was moving on an intercept course. He ordered his fleet's flights to prep for immediate launch. Tu'Kar hoped that his carrier advantage would protect him from a great deal of harm, but the revelation that those cube-shaped Ipsha craft he detected were carriers was very disheartening. Even more disheartening were after-action reports from the survivors of the breakout that indicated that the Ipsha Urchin Heavy Fighters were superior to the Narn's own Goriths in terms of survivability.

The Fourth Circle of the Kha'Rhi had put Tu'Kar in charge of this offensive, and things looked like they were going so well before, but now he was placed in a very precarious position. He could stay and fight the Ipsha, which would likely be tantamount to suicide, or he could retreat into hyperspace and hope that the Ipsha were not crazy enough to pursue them. There were very few options left...

A Narn comm officer interrupted Tu'Kar's line of thought, "Warleader, the Ipsha fleet is hailing us... it is Lord Admiral Tarkalean, sir. I don't know if I am translating this right, but it seems he wishes to discuss terms. They are repeating it on all frequencies. Message is repeating, sir."

Tu'Kar was crushed. His face drooped in resignation. The Ipsha were now demanding his fleet's surrender? A bold move, but one they could more than likely back up by force of arms.

"Wait, Warleader!" the comm officer shouted. "Translation crews have completed a more complete translation of the enemy's message. They are asking for an armistice!"

The warleader looked on dumbstruck. One moment he was contemplating surrender, and the next the Ipsha are suing for peace? Was this some sort of sick Ipsha trick? Were they trying to lull their enemy into a false state of security before annihilating them?

Tu'Kar turned to the comm officer and shouted, "Tu'Pari, send an encrypted data stream to Homeworld. Inform them of our situation and request orders. Meanwhile, order the Ipsha fleet to cease their approach and indicate to them that we are prepared to accept their request to parlay."

A Changed Landscape

Two war fleets hung in orbit of Ipsha. One was commanded by Lord Admiral Tarkalean, master Essan military commander, the other by Narn Warleader Tu'Kar. Both

waited impatiently for something – anything – to happen. They were born of similar blood, bred to fight and die, not wait around like marionettes whose puppeteer had gone to get a hot cup of jala. Neither commander enjoyed the thoughts of sitting so close to one another with no idea how the events of the day would play out. Unbeknownst to them, the entire political landscape of the region was just about to change.

Shortly after Tu'Kar's message reached the chambers of the Kha'Rhi, a second message arrived, this one from the Earth Alliance. The EA message was short and to the point: as of 16:13 EST yesterday, December 7, 2223, the Earth Alliance had formally entered into a mutual defense pact with the Ipsha Baronies. The treaty offer was negotiated entirely via tachyon relay, despite the Narn fleet's attempts to jam all signals coming into or leaving the Ipsha home system. The EA Senate had ratified the treaty by majority vote and the Alliance was ready to intervene on behalf of the Ipsha should hostilities continue to destabilize the region.

The Narn were justifiably outraged. Some within the Kha'Rhi rallied for the Ipsha war declaration to be equally applied to the Earthers, but most could see the writing on the wall. Earth could no longer suffer the Narn invasion of the Ipsha, a marginally affable power along their outward border. Where the EA had politely opted out of a previous treaty offer, they now saw political merit in becoming involved in the Narn/Ipsha conflict.

The Fourth Circle of the Kha'Rhi went a stern, straightforward response to Tu'Kar's request for further instructions. His fleet was to power up its engines and make the jump back to Kacheses where he would oversee the

fortification of the system. The war, at least for now, was over.

Negotiations at Epsilon

With the cessation of hostilities in the Ipsha system, representatives of the three involved governments agreed to a meeting at the Earth Alliance colony at Epsilon Eridani. The Narn were reluctant to meet at Epsilon, preferring to host the talks at a venue at Kotok instead. The EA and Ipsha bluntly refused to consider holding the conference at Kotok, citing that an EA world was a far more neutral site, despite the recent EA intervention.

The first delegates began arriving in Epsilon on December 28, 2223. During the opening session of the conference, EA Foreign Relations Minister Myrtle Fargate restated its purpose: to find a peaceful end to the Ipsha War. She stressed that the EA's involvement in the conflict was an attempt to end the conflict before more worlds were affected.

The Narn diplomats began the negotiations with an unconditional requirement, one that would have to be met if the Ipsha wanted the Regime to sign any armistice. The Narn Regime would retain all rights to Kacheses, and the Ipsha would have to pay reparations to the Regime for loss of income from the system, plus compensation to the native population to repair damage to their world. Narn Ambassador Mar'doth estimates the economic loss at Kacheses at \$48 billion credits.

Ipsha representatives accept that Kacheses will never again be an Ipsha holding, but refuse to pay reparation to the Narns. The EA are eventually able to convince the Ipsha that reparations may be the only way that they can "purchase" peace, though they agree that \$48 billion credits is an exceptionally high amount to be paid in a war where both sides suffered roughly equal losses.

After much wrangling, the Regime accepts a lower reparation sum of \$32 billion credits. The Ipsha will begin making payments to the Narn immediately, and will complete payments within six months. If the Ipsha default, they will be responsible for paying the \$48 billion credit amount originally demanded by the Regime.

With matters of reparations and direct colonial control discussed, the conference (moving into its third week) picks up the topic of future claims in the



region. The Narn request that a clause be incorporated into the treaty wherein the Regime has first right of refusal on all newly explored systems discovered by the Ipsha within one jump of existing Narn holdings. For this purpose, holdings are defined as any system or outpost under current territorial claim, colonized or no. The Ipsha will be expected to turn over stellar data on any such system they find, or be found in breach of treaty. The Ipsha exploration program has been limited to begin with, so they have no problem agreeing to this.

The final Epsilon Treaty, signed by the Narn Regime, Ipsha Baronies, and Earth Alliance, went into effect in January 2224 and brought an end to the Ipsha War.

Construction of Belt Alliance Fleet Begins in Earnest

The Senate has passed President Kane's appropriations request and construction on the first Belt Alliance warships begins late this month. Six Medium Gunboats and eight Light Gunboats will be rushed into construction, likely being available for assignments at the beginning of 2224. Contracts for the ships were given to two shipyards in the Earth Alliance territories, one at Sol and one at Ross. The Belt Alliance vessels will be assigned to guard convoys running throughout the Earth Alliance.

Grome Autocracy Reaps the Benefits of Alien Artifacts

Grome scientists studying the relics from Tagrii and Mekinti make several stunning breakthroughs in electromagnetics. These advances are quickly put to practical use in a new series of military railguns. *(CM's Note: the tech bonuses from the alien ruins gave them their double tech investment, and they succeeded on their roll!).*

Progress Uncarths Mineral Wealth at Immolan

Workers on the Centauri Immolan colony discovered a rich vein of rare metals during routine construction operations at the colony. The construction crews were working for a Centauri land development firm that was working to clear from undeveloped properties to make way for an industrial park. It seems the

intended industrial park site is sitting on a veritable treasure trove of rare or exotic metals.

The land development firm has received authority from the local government to convert the site into a mining operation, despite its close proximity to existing industrial facilities, and a small orphanage. The orphans will be used as labor in the mines, of course, helping to teach them what it means to be a Centauri. That and they are cheap labor, and no Centauri has ever been against cheap labor.

2224.1

Narn/Ipsha Relations Improve

Spurred by the negotiations at Epsilon Eridani, the Ipsha continue to court positive relations with the Narn. Under the oversight of the Ipsha Barony, Ipsha diplomats spend the month of January in negotiations with their Narn counterparts, this time in the Narn Kotok system. The Narn are somewhat surprised when the Ipsha offer them a full non-aggression treaty! It seems a military defeat has warmed the Ipsha towards the idea of being friendly towards their neighbors. The Narn decide to accept the non-aggression treaty, though they still plan on reinforcing Kacheses just in case the Ipsha should renege on the treaty in the future (breaking treaties is something that the Ipsha are known for!).

2224.2

Ipsha/Centauri Non-Aggression Pact

It would seem that in the post-War political climate, the Ipsha Barony has begun exerting a stronger influence over the Council of Barons. The Essan and Eethan have been disgraced, both politically and militarily, leaving the Ipsha to fill the political power vacuum (the Oer have come into their own militarily, too).

In another treaty deal struck at Ipsha tentacle, the Ipsha cajole the Centauri Republic into signing a non-aggression pact. The Centauri have little interest in the Ipsha, but they agreed to the treaty anyway. The Centauri had truly hoped to use the Ipsha as a willing instrument of vengeance against the Narn Regime, perhaps

even make allies of them, but instead the Ipsha proved to be almost as hostile towards the Republic as the Regime.

2224.3

Alacan Leaders Consider Withdrawal from EA Mutual Defense Pact

Alacan Premier Tmar Loss' government suffers a fatal blow after mass defections erode its legitimacy and mandatory emergency elections to form a new government. Loss' Prosperity Party suffers additional losses in these elections.

A group of rival political interests form a new majority voting bloc, earning the right to form the new Republican government. The defeat of Loss and the Prosperity Party at the polls gives several anti-alien interests a voice in parliament. No longer reigned in by the moderate Prosperity members, these new interests turn an eye towards distancing the Alacan Republic from relations with the Earth Alliance. Among those advocating the withdrawal of Alaca from their mutual defense pact.

EA diplomats are left aghast by the democratic regime change in Alacan space. It is only a matter of time until a new withdrawal attempt succeeds in the new Alacan parliament. These diplomats send a detailed report of their concerns to the office of the President and request immediate intervention. President Kane declines to involve herself directly in the matter. She was still busy defending her decision to involve the Alliance in the Ipsha War in the court of public opinion; she did not need another war to further complicate her re-election chances. However, President Kane did recommend the allocation of more resources to investigating the situation and hopefully resolving it to Earth's satisfaction.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in EarthDome, a small cabal of EarthForce fleet command officers begin privately meeting to discuss preliminary planning for a hypothetical invasion of Alaca. Their reasoning is that there is no reason that the Earth Alliance should suffer the presence of a potentially hostile or indignant alien neighbor on their border now that they have the Narn to deal with.

2224.4

The Fateful Upsin Encounter

Centauri explorers in Vansa make a startling discovery, changing the Republic's upspin borders forever: first contact with the Drazi Freehold!

Initial reports from the Centauri exploration fleets dispatched to the region began coming in to the regional exploration base at Algol several weeks after the encounter. Admiral Sehiro Dallo had to struggle to reconcile the reports; it seemed like his worst possible first contact scenario had just come to pass.

Scout Fleet Three was beginning the survey of a new star system near Vansa when they detected inhabitants on the planet's surface. There was no sign of any other military presence in the system. As the fleet approached the planet they began picking up drive signatures of several small ships – presumed to be customs ships – moving to intercept them. A few peaceful hails went unanswered before the small alien vessels turned and fled back towards the local jump gate. The craft abandoned the system, leaving our scout fleet to wonder what had just happened.

The Centauri scouts used the time wisely and immediately began taking detailed scans of the planetary surface. The fleet commander did not know how long he was going to be able to hold position in the system. The aliens that fled the system would undoubtedly be back in force within several days, so they had to act quickly.

The results of the first bio mass scans puzzled the Centauri until they began picking up and deciphering some of the comm chatter and video signals emanating from the planet. The system was evidently Enfil, an outpost of the Drazi Freehold, whoever they were. However, the planet had a large indigenous population. Correct that, a large, *enslaved* indigenous population. These "Drazi" were using the pre-Industrial natives as slave labor! It also seemed that the Drazi had members of another species, a raccoon-like species by all visual accounts, interred at their gulags on Enfil.

As predicted, the Drazi patrol ships returned, escorted by four warships. The Drazi did not attempt to communicate with the Centauri scouting force, nor did they reply to Centauri hails. In order to preserve his own life,

the Centauri commander of the Third Scouting Fleet retreated into hyperspace with plans to head back to Vansa at maximum burn.

By the time Dallo had the captain's report in his hands, the fleet was already four days out of the Enfil system.

It was not later, once closer to home, that Dallo learned that the captain had sent several of his house marines to the planet while he was there and "liberated" several prisoners, though at high cost to his troops. Among the prisoners rescued from the forced labor camp was a furry alien – Cascor, they call themselves – who claimed to have been a member of the Cascor Commonwealth Council of Regents, a ruling body of sorts.

Dallo would have preferred to "discuss" matters with the Cascor face-to-face, but he needed information now. He had already received frantic communiqués from the Royal Court and he knew that he had to begin delivering, soon, or his career would be over.

So, via heavily encrypted tachyon relay, Dallo interviewed the Cascor. Translation was still difficult, and the dialogue was trying for both parties, but Admiral Dallo walked away from the conversation knowing that the worst was still to come.

According to the Cascor, the Drazis had arrived in their space six years ago. The Cascor had offered the Drazis peace, but instead they found only war. The Drazis began their war with the Cascor unceremoniously, beginning a full-scale assault on the Cascor Zachai colony soon after contact. Zachai fell, unsurprisingly, and the siege of Cascan began. The siege lasted sixteen months, but the economic capacity of the world was insufficient to combat that of the Drazis (the Cascor was not specific on the size of the Drazis empire, which worried Dallo to no end!). Following the end of the war, the Drazis also conquered and enslaved the primitive Enfil, using them as a raw labor force. The Cascor people attempted to rebel against their Drazis masters, but each successive attempt was put down cruelly by the Drazis military. The Drazis began shipping troublemakers off of Cascan and to their other star systems where they would be sold as slaves or worked, often to death, in miserable conditions. The Cascor rescued by the Third Scouting Fleet was one of these.

In private after the meeting, Dallo was haunted by the Cascor's story. It could all be a lie, Dallo knew that. But too much of it rang true with what his own fleet had experienced. The

Drazis were not interested in civilized discussion; no, they were interested solely in conquest.

The problem for Dallo then became what recommendations to make to the Minister of Defense? Vansa and the entire upspin portion of the Republic were undefended. Algol even lacked the defenses to push back all but the most half-hearted assault. To Dallo, the only hope for victory would lay in a swift pre-emptive strike: hurt the Drazis first, then negotiate from a position of power.

Dallo's decision was made even harder when, two days later, Captain Alatani reported that his own scouting force operating near Vansa had discovered a previously unknown beacon route leading into the Vansa system. The lane had previously gone undetected by their fleets because its signal was faint. When queried for information, the beacons along the route returned an automated response signal. It was in *Drazis*.

The Drazis had been to Vansa before! The knowledge cut deep for everyone at the Algol base. They had been operating out of a system which had previously been mapped and catalogued by a known hostile power! Were there any hidden bases in the system? Had the Centauri been noticed before? When asked, the Cascor thought this was doubtful but admitted that he had little knowledge of the outside galaxy since his incarceration three years ago.

After a week since the first report came in, Dallo finally submitted his final report to the Royal Court and Ministers of Defense and Intelligence. In the report, Dallo outlined the information they had gathered from the prisoners from Enfil and what little independent data that was available. He advised that the Emperor and the Court take into serious advisement the possibility of military actions against the Drazis Freehold. *The security of the Republic will remain in jeopardy, Dallo wrote, until the Drazis threat is isolated and neutralized to the Emperor's preference.*

Back on Centauri Prime, some of the noble Houses saw the appearance of the barbarian Drazis on the borders of the Republic as a potentially fortuitous matter. They did not have the backing of the Emperor of course, just the ears of those close to him in the Royal Court. But their fiendish intellects began hatching a plan they believed could work to their advantage.

To these brash young Republicans, the Drazis seemed to be the perfect instrument of

vengeance against the Narn. The Narn had shamed the Centauri in war, and this was still a major point of shame among the Centauri elite. Who would care if the Republic lost control of Vansa? The system was worthless, merely a travel hub, and fortifying Algol would effectively deny the Drazi access to the rest of the Republic. However, access to Vansa would also give the Drazi access to Kacheses, access that would put them directly into conflict with the Narns, and maybe the Ipsha, too.

In the minds of these Centauri, the Drazi would inevitably become overextended and their offensives into Narn space would falter, but not before dealing a massive blow to the Narn military and economic infrastructure. After the war had run its course, the Centauri could deploy their fleets and conquer the Drazi and Drazi-captured Narn territories, doubling the size of the Republic and making it an unstoppable superpower...

Mitoc Explorers Disheartened

Despite exceptional enthusiasm and early gains, the Mitoc Exploration Command quickly realizes that Mitoc is located in a pocket between the Minbari Federation and the Earth Alliance. The last remaining unexplored route out of Wokac is found to be just another obscure link into the Epsilon Eridani star system (*CM's note: 11 frelling jump lanes now! Argh!*).

This revelation has a grave effect on the future of the Exploration Command. Excepting the fluke discovery of a jump lane into their region, future expansion of the Mitoc Democracy is extremely remote. The Wokac colony is thankfully doing very well, but there is only so much useful real estate in the star system. Even with the political or military domination of the peaceful Krish, the Mitoc are faced to admit that their empire will never be a great one. They are doomed to remain a minor power for the foreseeable future.

Palmer Returns to Alaca

Captain Adrienna Palmer and the EAS Dodana return from deep space exploration, arriving in the Alaca star system. The Alacan Republic that Palmer left last year is not the one that greets her. After a brief stopover at Alaca for supplies, Palmer receives her orders from Earth Central. The current hostile political situation in Alaca has prompted the recall of her Fifth Scout Force from the Alacan sector. The

fleet is to report back to Orion sector command to await additional orders. Her commanding officers indicate that there is a good chance that she will be reassigned to a new command and that the Dodana and the rest of the Fifth Scout Force will be mothballed as the result of major budgetary cutbacks proposed in the Senate.

2224.5

The Centauri Emperor Decides on a Course of Action

Centauri Emperor Kurghan meets with his ministers in the first official meeting to address the "Drazi problem" as Admiral Dallo so quaintly put it in his report. The Emperor cannot totally dismiss the potential threat that the Drazi represent, but until more information is gathered he refused to spend valuable resources mobilizing for war. No, Kurghan's interests lay in the Republic's nearly completed colonization fleets. Two Colony Fleets have been under construction at Centauri Prime for two months now and, to the Emperor, the expansion of the Republic's borders is more important than a trivial border war on the frontier against an unknown opponent.

In order to appease the ministers, the Emperor does recommend the building of light fixed defenses at Algol and the redeployment of fleet assets in the region to better defend from any *potential* attack. The Emperor does however accede on the topic of declaring hostilities. "Let the fleet have its license to kill, but don't let it bother my grand projects," the Emperor says with a wave of his hand.

The Drazi March to War Begins

Elsewhere in the galaxy, the Drazi war council unanimously agrees that the unknown threat along their downspin border must be neutralized quickly. The Drazi Freehold cannot and will not accept the existence of alien cultures along their borders, not so long as the current regime is in power.

Unfortunately for military leaders, the jump lane in Enfil which the aliens used to reach the system is currently unmapped. In order to discover the alien's route, several of the Drazi's mothballed Nightowl Hyperspace Probes must be reactivated and dispatched to the system.

Once there, they will begin rechecking local hyperspace beacons for a sign of the trail that the intruders used to reach the Enfil homeworld.

2224.5

Nuclear Accident on Tuchanq

An experimental sub-orbital aircraft prototype equipped with an early form of nuclear-powered engine explodes on the ground in the northern wastes of Kakmiri. The tundra environment was chosen just in case of such an accident. Nevertheless, radioactive fallout from the detonation irradiates the region and kills thousands of civilians. Kakmiri will be uninhabitable for several hundred years.

The government begins an official inquest into the cause of the malfunction but refuses to halt development of the revolutionary drive system. The appearance of aliens in the skies over Tuchanq has placed a heavy burden on the new planetary government to produce viable space technologies in hopes of protecting the Tuchanq homeworld from outside threat.

Gromahk/Minbar Peace Treaty

Representatives of the Grome Autocracy and Minbari Federation meet at Merkeht to sign a formal peace treaty. The Grome Margus it seems desires greater relations with the Minbari. The Minbari representative of the Grey Council present at the signing, a young by honored acolyte by the name of Rathenn, gets the impression from whispered chatter among the Grome delegation that they are worried about possible Earth domination of their sector of space. Their recent involvement in the Ipsha War is seen as a step towards EA imperialism, and the Grome Margus is determined not to become the Earther's puppet or plaything.

Rathenn does not fully understand the Grome motivations; they are born out of fear rather than the facts. However, that is of no concern. A peace treaty between their worlds suits the Grey Council. Not that the Grome could ever be a threat to the Federation.

Adrienna Palmer Reassigned

Upon arriving in the Epsilon Eridani star system, Captain Adrienna Palmer is greeted by

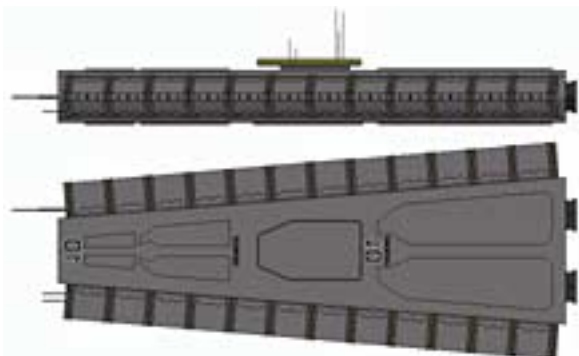
the local system defense forces who forward on to her new orders issued by Earth Force during her fleet's jump in hyperspace. Scout Fleet Five will continue on to Orion to be mothballed as per previous instructions, but Palmer will not be accompanying the fleet. Effective immediately, Palmer is reassigned to the command of the *EAS Yorktown*, an Avenger-Beta Heavy Carrier.

Along with reassignment came a promotion for the good captain. Earth Force had authorized a promotion for Palmer from the rank of Captain to Commodore. This left her the junior of only sector command flag officer Rear Admiral Delacroix.

Accompanying *EAS Yorktown* in the Alliance's First Advance Carrier Fleet is the *EAS Furious*, likewise an Avenger-Beta class carrier. Both carriers base only the most advanced Starfuries available – the Tiger model. Combined, the carriers base four full squadrons of Starfuries.

The First Advance Carrier Fleet's assigned duty is to protect the Epsilon colony against any and all military threats. The system is the most important travel node in the Alliance, but is also one of the farthest flung outposts currently in Alliance hands. The Senate's refusal to authorize additional military construction due to budgetary reasons has left the frontier under staffed and under defended, much to the chagrin of the colonists moving into the region.

Shortly after taking command of the *Yorktown*, Commodore Palmer goes on record stating that she will need additional ships in Epsilon if she is to properly defend the system from attack. Her plea for additional fleet units is of course denied; Earth Force simply doesn't have the ships to spare! In conversations with her superiors, Palmer learns that they are hoping that the mothballing of a majority of the Earth Force exploration fleets in the year to come will free up enough funds from the military's operations budget. Earth Force will then be able to push for additional



appropriations, allowing the construction of desperately needed destroyers and frigates to fill out the order of battle.

2224.6

Ipscha Scout Fleet Lost in Rodina

The Ipscha Ihsha Baronies have lost contact with two of their Early Scout Wheels operating near the Rodina system. Their fate is unknown.

Ipscha Make Final War Debt Payment

In a symbolic ceremony held at the battlefields on Kacheses, an Ipscha ambassador hands an oversized cardboard check for \$18 billion credits over to Warleader Tu'Kar. The Narn Regime is happy that the Ipscha Baronies have made good on their promise of reparations. They had their doubts, but it seemed the Ipscha could be trusted... a little, anyway.

Six months after the war's conclusion, the Ipscha are on a much faster road to recovery than the Narn. Ipscha trade routes into the EA-controlled Ross system have generated additional income for the Baronies and there are plans to expand the industrial infrastructure back home, as well as shutdown some of the planet's shipyard complexes.

On Narn, military spending continues to outstrip the economy by a wide margin. The Regime is banking on the establishment of a colony in the Dar'kar system and the revenue that comes with it to put them back into the black. Once the Narn have achieved greater economic stability, the Kha'Ri plan on paying to upgrade jump lanes into the Centauri Republic so that trade can finally begin between the two traditional enemies. Both the Centauri and the Narn would benefit equally from such an agreement.

Mitoc Accords Signed

The Earth Alliance agrees to a Mitoc Non-Aggression Pact, officially forming a border and entering into law an understanding not to enter one another's domain under threat of force. The Mitoc agreement comes on the heels of a dead-end in their ambitious expansion plans which were cut short when they discovered that

their territories were located in a pocket between the major powers.

Alacans Look to the Future

The Alacan Republic, knowing that it must become more competitive if it is ever to be even a minor political entity, begins a series of ambitious government and military reforms designed to realign the goals of the Alacan people.

As the first phase of this plan, the parliament authorizes the closure of the Republic's sole planetary shipyard. In place of these yards, a new orbital dry dock complex will be built at Alaca. This will allow construction of newer, more advanced non-atmospheric Alacan ship classes, including the highly experimental Tacomi Patrol Cutter (*CM's Note: the Alacans call it a Tacomi Cruiser!*). It will take five months to build the new shipyard giving Alaca's industrial infrastructure.

The second phase of the government's plans will involve the investment in local industry and construction of a fledgling star fleet. This will then be followed by aggression expansion in the Alaca home system and elsewhere.

2224.7

Ipscha/EA Relations Continue to Improve

The relationship between the Ipscha Baronies and the Earth Alliance continues to improve. The Ipscha considered Earth its friend even before the EA's intervention in the Ipscha War seven months ago. Now, the Ipscha consider the EA an invaluable friend on the interstellar political stage. Within the Baronies, there are some that believe that even closer relations may be necessary in the future if the Ipscha Baronies are to remain competitive.

In July of 2224, representatives of the Ihsha Barony arrived in Epsilon to discuss terms of a naval appropriations treaty which would allow their Barony to construct certain classes of older Earth Alliance ships for use in their own navy. The EA delegation was open to this possibility, especially since it would mean lucrative building and maintenance contracts for Earth-based military contractors.

After three weeks of negotiations, mandated by the Ipsha's desire to denote every nuance of the agreement so as not to visibly undermine the power of the Baron back home, the treaty was signed by representatives of both governments. The Ipsha will be allowed to contract the construction in Ipsha docks of any EA vessel 25 years of age or older. This means that all new-technology Earth Force hulls will still be denied to the Ipsha Baronies, but several classes of older hulls will be freely available for construction. Notably, this should help meet the dire need for small patrol ships in the Ipsha fleet. Even with an extra \$1 billion credits per month heading to foreign military contractors, utilizing Earth-based patrol frigates and corvettes over native Battlehexes will be a major cost savings for the Baronies.

CM's Note: The Ipsha rolled for a treaty attempt, but their treaty delay currently disallows them asking for a full Alliance – they don't feel that comfortable yet with the EA. So the naval appropriations treaty was the one treaty available, so I let them sign it. As mentioned in the story above, it will have some significant benefits for the Ipsha until their own small medium ships are developed later on.

Right now, the Ipsha are the EA's closest ally. The relationship value between the EA and Ipsha is hovering in the high 80s to low 90s, so it will only take a few more good relationship adjustment rolls to put them in a position to forge an Alliance, despite the natural objections of such a xenophobic species. It will be interesting to see what impact an Earth/Ipsha Alliance will have, should it ever happen. They could make a very powerful power bloc on the outward fringe of this campaign galaxy. If full Partnership and, finally, Unification occur, then they will be stronger than any of the other major powers (barring the Minbari, of course).

Drazi Declare War on the Centauri

Unbeknownst to the Centauri Republic or its leaders, the Drazi cabal leading the Freehold elect to declare full and total war on the interlopers that dared enter Enfilii. Nightowl Hyperspace Probes are now in position to begin seeking out the point of origin of the unknown aliens...

2224.8

Krish Besieged by Raiders

Raiders hailing from Earth Alliance space have moved into the Krish system and are spreading havoc among the space lanes there. Led by the infamous space pirate Harrison, the raiders have taken to launching commando raids against the planet's surface, disrupting commerce and throwing the world into a panic. Production and research has ground to a halt on Krish as a result of the raider attacks.

Being the unequivocal pacifists that they are, the Krish refuse to fight back, but implore their neighbors, the EA and Mitoc, to please come and "negotiate using strong language" with the raider threat. Until this is done, the raiders in the star system will continue to bleed the Krish economy dry.

2224.9

Grome Professor Publishes *The Tagrii Papers*

Following over a year of field research at alien digs in the Tagrii, Mekinti, and Laguna systems, Grome Professor Dr. Tarphan Mauss publishes *The Tagrii Papers*, a comprehensive analysis of the alien ruins found scattered throughout Grome space. A professor emeritus at the renowned Margus' Academy of the Gromic Technological and Scientific Arts (MAGTS), Dr. Mauss visited each of the systems and spent a great deal of time comparing the similarities between the different sites. His peers herald Mauss' report as one of the best examples of Grome scholarly superiority ever published.

In the published article, Dr. Mauss reveals that it is his opinion that the ruins on all three worlds were left by the same extinct alien civilization. The largest population of the three seems to have been on Tagrii, with lesser colonies on both Laguna and Mekinti. Writings found on artifacts on all three worlds, though showing slight differentiations, are definitely related. To Mauss, these differences represent either regional differences in writing style or else languages with a common ancestor language.

Without any “Rosetta Stone” to guide them it will be impossible for Grome scholars to translate the language. As of the publication of the article, no alien bodies had been discovered. Archaeological teams unearthed some specimens, but they were too fragmented to know whether or not they were the remains of the ruin’s former inhabitants or some large extinct domestic species.

Besides strict factual details about the particulars of relics found at each site, Dr. Mauss offers the speculation that the species was slowly moving downspin of this region. All signs point to the migration being a slow one. The colony on Tagrii, for example, began showing credible signs of decay or abandonment roughly two hundred years (at best guess) before the planet seems to have been abandoned. The same kind of clues were also discovered by the dig teams at Laguna and Mekinti. To Mauss, this slow migration meant that the “Tagriian civilization, “as he calls them throughout the report, were slowly displaced from the current region of space, likely by outside forces. Abnormally high trace element concentrations in the soil at Mekinti lend credence to the possibility that the Tagriians were destroyed by orbital asteroid bombardment. However, as Mauss himself freely admits in his conclusion, the ruins on Mekinti lack any evidence of massive orbital bombardment, especially the kind that would have been caused by mass driver or equivalent bombardment.

EA Explorers Discover Haven

Under the command of EA commander Captain Michael Jankowski, the EA’s Third Scout Fleet discovers the Haven system. A major yellow-dwarf star system containing twelve planetary bodies, the system is a veritable treasure trove. The third planet in the system, Haven, proves to be an incredible find. The planet is nearly inhabitable, with a stable climate and an atmosphere within Terran tolerances (though re-breathers will still be required for extended outings), but that is not the most interesting result of the planetary survey. Geologists discover massive concentrations of Quantum 40 running all along an oceanic ridge, running several thousand kilometers in length beneath shallow waters. The economic implications of this find are enormous. If fully developed by EA contractors and corporations,

each trade route to pass through Haven could make \$8 billion credits per month!

Also discovered in the system is an abandoned pirate’s cache. The cache’s owners are nowhere to be seen. The alien writings on the walls are indecipherable and are like nothing encountered by the EA thus far. The secluded location yields little of tangible benefit. It looks as if the cache was stripped before whomever used it moved out of the region. Dating indicates that the cache was built approximately 1,000 years ago...

Mitoc Liberate Krish

A Mitoc warfleet, commanded from the bridge of one of their three Tigara Attack Cruisers, rolls into the Krish star system and engages Harrison and his pirate fleet. The raiders foolishly decide to charge the Mitoc fleet. Nine Jomics and two Haballas, supported by the Tigara, destroy the raider force of one Galleon, one Xebec, and three Gunboats. Harrison is killed in the exchange (or what he?).

With the raider threat removed, the Krish are overjoyed and their slightly pessimistic outlook towards the Mitoc is lifted. The liberators are greeted by throngs of jubilant Krish who gather to give the Mitoc a big group hug, accidentally leading to the asphyxiation of thirty-four innocent Krish. But all’s well that ends well, right?

At the request of the Mitoc government (and the insistence of the Krish), the Mitoc fleet will remain in the system for several months while it oversees the construction of a new jump gate and beacon system to tie Krish into Mitoc. This will facilitate trade for both powers, but will also allow the Mitoc to “police” the Krish system if and when it is again necessary to kick Human pirates out of the region (annoying buggers, those Earthers!).

Wokac Attacked by Raiders

In what seems to have been a raider attack linked to Harrison’s reign of terror in Krish, pirates attack the Haballa Explorers in the Wokac system. The Mitoc ships are able to get the better of the raiders early on, but they are barely able to suppress the raider fleet. Both Haballas survive, but both will require substantial repairs before it is spaceworthy.

The raider Delta-V Light Fighters that survived the destruction of their Xebec and Schooner leaders opt to surrender to Mitoc



forces for extradition back to the Mitoc system. The alternative is to be stranded in Wokac permanently with nowhere to go.

Drazi Begin Economic Gear Up

Following their declaration of war against the unknown aliens along their downspin border (the Centauri, but they don't know that!), the Drazi have begun spinning up their infrastructure to support a massive militarization. This gear up comes in anticipation of the conquest and annexation of another Cascor-sized interstellar civilization. After all, no empire could ever be the same size (or larger) than the Drazi Freehold! "Drazi are superior to all other aliens!" the Drazi leaders tell themselves as they avoid getting stuck in the narrow thoroughfares of their homeworld's capital.

This month, ten Sunhawk Battlecruisers and six Peregrine Jump Ships (second refit, of course) are laid down in the Drazi shipyards orbiting Zhabar. They will be joined next month by additional starship construction. The Drazi expect to complete construction of 10-15 Sunhawks and other support ships every other month for the duration of the war. These vessels will be led into battle by the Drazi's only available tactical jump ship, the Peregrine. Once contact has been made and the battle joined, the mothballed Drazi invasion fleet will be

reactivated and moved into position to begin the invasion of alien worlds.

The Drazi road to war will not be an easy one. The Cascor and Enfili are still in a state of general revolt, with Morale dangerously close to the breaking point. Drazi shock troops are out in force in both systems, quelling riots and interning dissidents and rabble-rousers. If situations on the home front deteriorate during the course of the upcoming conquest downspin, the Drazi may have to evacuate their forces from both controlled alien homeworlds and resort to destroying the populations from orbit in order to get them to submit to Drazi rule. The Drazi hope that this will not come to pass, because it would be both expensive and troublesome, but it is an option that is actively being considered after the troubles Drazi occupiers have encountered in the five-year occupation of the systems.

CM's Note: On a side note, you may notice that I use different directional notation than found on any of the Agents of Gaming Babylon 5 maps. I am extremely fond of the Upspin/Downspin, Coreward/Outward system used in the classic Starflight computer game, and so use that notation in every project that I work on when needing to talk about directions on two-dimensional star maps.

If you haven't ever heard of Starflight, you might want to go do some background research on it. Better yet, scour eBay and find

*an old Sega Genesis and the Starflight game cartridge for same. The Genesis version of the game is largely the same as the PC version, just with updated graphics. Starflight is the *best* space adventure game that I have ever played, better even than Star Control 2. Both are great, but Starflight just seems to snare me more because of the "epic" nature of the story.*

2224.12

First Signs of Drafa on Markab

The first signs of the Dark Angel of Drafa's return strike the Markab homeworld. Markab physicians successfully diagnose the symptoms of the disease in the individuals, but it would be scandalous for such information to be released to the public, so the potential epidemic is ignored by the order of the Markab elite. After all, only those who have lost favor with the gods would ever catch such a vile disease. The Markab people, as a whole, are pure, so this resurgence of Drafa will not have any effect on them (obviously).

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Grome explorers surveying hyperspace near the Tagrii sector encounter the Dilgar. The Dilgar, a species of feline-like bipedal humanoids, appear extremely aggressive upon first contact and threaten the Grome exploration cruiser not long after the language barrier is broken. Grome Captain Dalphan warns the Dilgar to stay away from his large death-dealing warship (an Oracle-Alpha, purchased from the Earth Alliance several years ago!), but agrees to leave the star system.

Grome and Dilgar negotiators are ultimately able to come to something of an initial understanding. In fact, the Dilgar prove to be extremely open to Grome diplomatic advances. The Grome delegates assume that this is because the Dilgar recognize the base superiority of the Grome Autocracy. In truth, the Dilgar War Council surmises that the Grome military must be woefully inept if they have to purchase alien starships to serve as 'large death-dealing warships!' Normal relations are quickly secured.

Anti-Establishment Rebels Strike on Alaca

A group of militant, anti-government rebels on Alaca made a small but daring raid against a Republic army depot this month, killing thirteen, including five civilians. The group managed to smuggle several conventional explosives into the base onboard a transport trailer. Investigators believe that the explosives were concealed within the normal parcels and materials being delivered to the base.

The group claiming responsibility for the attack, Alacans First, is known for supporting a strict anti-establishment agenda and advocating violence, but this is their first success. It is doubtful that their group will be fool enough to attempt another. In any event, the Alacan Republic has stepped up defenses to prevent future attacks on its military installations.

The attack does have the unfortunate political consequence of giving the anti-alien faction additional publicity. Premier Kavar uses this opportunity to pass through many planetary protection bills, precipitating unease within the EA diplomatic corps.

The Drazi Tire of the Hunt?

The Drazi Freehold's leadership begin to question their decision to declare war against the nameless, faceless enemy that entered Enfil four months before. The Drazi people are still filled with an intense bloodlust and desire to crush, kill, and destroy the interlopers, but it is becoming fairly obvious that the Drazi exploration fleet does not have the resources to quickly locate them. It could take months – or it could take years, and the Drazi are certainly not up to waiting that long before the glory of combat can be savored.

It was the end of the Earth year 2224, and the universe seemed as if in transition between disasters. The Ipsha War was over, but a new war threatened to erupt along the upspin Centauri border. The embers of conflict burned bright.

2225

The wheel of fire burned bright in the Earth year 2225. The Drazi/Centauri conflict continued, broadening the scope of the war to affect even more worlds. Elsewhere, other species began plotting wars of their own.

2225.1

The Dilgar Agenda

Warmaster Jha'dur welcomed first contact with the Grome Autocracy. Some of her fellows on the council did not feel the same way, but they would come around. No, these aliens would be a perfect tool to ensure the survival of the Dilgar Imperium...

Dilgar scientists had recently discovered anomalous activity in their home star. These abnormalities were quite troubling, and it soon became clear that the star was entering a stage in its life cycle where a massive nova was imminent – within the next several hundred years, the star would go nova, destroying Omelos and all of Dilgar civilization with it!

Luckily for the Dilgar, their explorers had already discovered a star system that would serve as a perfect world for relocation. New Omelos would be located in the Ven'sheta system (*Note: This is the Haven system that the EA recently explored*) and would be a wonderful second homeworld for the Dilgar people.

The knowledge of their star's imminent doom and the need for relocation was of course kept secret from the population at large. Only those with the highest-level security clearances in the government were allowed access to this information. Warmaster Jha'dur was one of the few that had reviewed the data. As an intellectual, she had a gut feeling that all of the data backed up the scientists' claims. Omelos was in jeopardy, and the Dilgar Imperium would have to act efficiently – and quickly, if possible – to avert the disaster.

Before the arrival of the Grome, Jha'dur had assumed that the slow but steady migration to Ven'sheta would be conducted over the

course of the next ten years, commencing as soon as the first stable jump lane to the system could be laid by Dilgar scoutships. However, the Grome opened the Box to knowledge of the galaxy surrounding them. The Dilgar were not alone in the universe; far from it, they were surrounded by several intelligent, starfaring alien species, most of which by all accounts lacked the Dilgar's own fortitude and good sense.

To Jha'dur, this was an opportunity of untold value. By all accounts, the Grome were gullible fools who would believe anything they were told. Her agents among the first contact team found it easy to trick the Grome into offering unrelated information with a minimum of goading or leading questioning. If all Grome were so easily compromised, the Imperium could potentially find them useful as pawns in a future bid for power in the sector.

Looking over stellar maps "procured" during first contact, Jha'dur could tell that the species called "Humans" would be a major stumbling block for the Imperium. Perhaps most worryingly, several Earth Alliance colonies were located precariously close to the future Dilgar homeworld at Ven'sheta (*Haven*). If the Dilgar were to assert their claim over that region, they would have to provide an adequate display of force to dissuade EA intervention in their annexation of that region.

Only time would tell what strategy Jha'dur and the council would adopt in concern to the expansion of the emerging Dilgar Imperium...

Ettata, Dar'kar Connected

In a historic move, the Centauri Republic and Narn Regime pooled their collective resources to facilitate the upgrade of the Ettata->Dar'kar jump lane from unimportant to minor status. This will allow trade relations to be formally established between the two powers.

The Narn Regime paid \$13 billion credits, whereas the Centauri Republic was responsible for \$37 billion credits worth of the financing. The reason for the discrepancy comes from the Narn Regime's extremely poor economic condition following the end of the Ipsha War. Their economy has never recovered from that conflict.

Markab Annex Promith Territories

The Markab Theocracy announces that they are officially annexing the Banir system

after one of their Talafat Scouts completes a survey of the star system. The Promith Free Association is less than thrilled to learn of the Markab acquisition of their claimed territories, but are in no position to contest the claim. Additionally, Banir is a poor system to begin with and not worth fighting over.

Anti-Drazi Terrorism on Cascan

Anti-Drazi insurgents on the Cascor hoemworld, Cascan, attempted to detonate a thermonuclear device beneath the main Drazi planetary administration center this month, but their attempt failed. Drazi maintenance workers intercepted, detained, and beat up the insurgent while waiting for local authorities to intercept them. If successful, the attack would have been successful in causing major damage, killing millions of Cascor along with the several thousand Drazi administrators residing in the bureaucratic compound.

Dilgar/Grome Non-Aggression Pact

As much out of mutual need as anything else, the Dilgar and Grome enter into a non-aggression pact. The Dilgar hoped that this would be the beginning of a stronger relationship between their worlds, so that they could more easily manipulate the Grome Margus to their whim, but the Grome remained largely uninterested in the Dilgar Imperium.

Luckily for the Dilgar, the Grome would not disappoint them...

Mitoc/Krish Peace Treaty

The two powers affirm their friendship with a formal peace treaty. A Mitoc war fleet remains in the Krish system to provide vital system defense against raiders and other opportunistic parties.

An EA/Ipscha Alliance?

For the first time, representatives of the Ipscha Baronies approached Foreign Minister Fargate to enter into initial negotiations for a possible Earth/Ipscha treaty of alliance. Though the Baronies are not ready to commit to such a relationship at this time, they are optimistic that a strong alliance would help to preserve the peace in the region.

Reaction within the Earth Alliance is mixed. Some senators welcomed the offer, calling it a 'major step towards stabilizing the

region and preventing another war.' Still, others saw the potential for an Ipscha alliance to be a recipe for disaster. "The Ipscha have already started one war; do we want to be involved in the next one?" one senator was quoted by the media.

2225.2

The Kotok Naval Treaty of 2225

At the behest of the Narn government, representatives of the Earth Alliance and Ipscha Baronies met at Kotok to enter into discussions relating to military deployments along their nations' borders.

Citing their own economic problems, the Narn Regime offers to begin a partial, voluntary military reduction so long as their neighbors will do the same. The Regime proposes that each of the three governments scale back their active military forces by 10%. This reduction would lessen tensions along the border.

The Narn and Ipscha are both receptive towards acceptance of the naval accords, but the Earth Alliance is hesitant. The EA Senate would love to jump on just such an agreement, but the diplomatic corps have their doubts. The Earth Alliance has been overextended by its recent territorial acquisitions, and there are few fleets that could be voluntarily removed from service lest their borders be left undefended.

In the end, the best that could be decided upon in the Kotok Naval Treaty of 2225 was a general agreement between the signatories to scale back their military forces. The Narn and Ipscha agreed that a 10% reduction in forces would be appropriate, but the Earth Alliance would only say that they would look into slimming their military budget by a "reasonable amount."

The Marga Chulda Considers Action

At the urging of the Margus, the Grome Marga Chulda begins considering their options in dealing with the "Earth problem." For several months now, the Margus has felt that the Grome's relationship with the Earth Alliance has been at the detriment of his government. Earth has now become a roadblock to future Grome expansion in the region. This is unacceptable.

Unless something is done soon to sway the Margus' decision, there is a very good

chance that he may soon begin ordering his diplomats to break their peace treaty. There is even some talk of a declaration of hostilities – perhaps even war! – should the Margus not be appeased.

Narn and Markab Diplomats Sign Non-Aggression Pact

Despite long-held hostility within the Kha'Ri, the Narn Regime accepts a Markab offer of Non-Aggression. The enmity between the Narn and Markab began with the Markab annexation of the Alon system, a system which had claimed by the Regime prior to the outbreak of war with the Centauri. Following the Narn/Centauri conflict, the Narn were unable to exploit their claim on the system, while the Markab were in a perfect position to add the territory to their empire.

The Narn decision to accept the Markab Non-Aggression Pact is a practical one. The Regime cannot afford the political fallout from a forceful re-conquest of Alon. Militarily, the Narn would have no trouble retaking the star system. However, following the EA intervention at the end of the Ipsha War, the Kha'Ri believes that the Ipsha/EA sphere would attempt to block any Narn attempts to expand into the Markab sector.

2225.3

Kotok Treaty Goes into Effect

This month, the Kotok Naval Treaty of 2225 went into effect within the signatory nations. The Narn and Earth Alliance move their fixed defenses into reserve status, and the Narn Regime has mothballed an entire squadron of warships to help meet expectations.

The Ipsha take a different approach towards meeting the spirit of the agreement and place their entire fleet, minus their scout forces, into reserve status. This cuts their maintenance costs nearly in half, giving the Barons more leverage in financing future economic and territorial expansion.

The Drazi Enter Vansa

After over six months of active exploration, Drazi hyperspace probes finally emerge in the Vansa star system. A force

comprised of two Nightowl Hyperspace Probes make transit into the system, emerging far enough out-system to allow maximum opportunity to scan the system for potential hostiles. A group of two Vorchan Warships and two Lias Supply Ships are located in the system and detect the Nightowls' jump signature as they enter the system.

Before the Drazi can get any hard system data on Vansa, the Centauri Vorchans set against them in deep space. The Vorchans successfully cripple one of the Nightowls. In exchange, one of the Vorchans is heavily damaged – nearly destroyed.

Knowing that the hyperspace navigation data they had found would be lost should they be destroyed, the Drazi force retreats into hyperspace. The Centauri fleet attempts to pursue, but the Drazi ships disappear from their scanners before a true pursuit can begin.

With the Drazi discovery of the hyperspace route connecting Enfil to Vansa, the Drazi Freehold is prepared to launch a major strike into the system next month.

2225.4

The Drazi War: The March Begins

Having discovered a semi-stable hyperspace route connecting their Enfil system to the enemy system of Vansa, the Drazi launch a massive armada of starships into the system to begin the all-out invasion of the unknown enemy downspin. The fleet is comprised of over 40 starships, including a mix of Peregrines, Sunhawks, Darkhawks, Strikebirds, and Stareagles among others.

The Drazi armada arrives in the system on April 4, 2224 and immediately fans out, in search of any local resistance. Two lone Vorchans – the survivors from last month's encounter – are located, hunted down and destroyed by the Drazi. The Centauri ships had been attempting to hide out in the shadow of a gas giant's moon when they were discovered and destroyed by the Drazi force. The supply ships previously seen escorting the Vorchans are nowhere to be found and it is assumed that they have evacuated the star system.

On the flag bridge of the Peregrine Jump Ship *Razorfang*, Drazi Fleet Marshal

Camron stood, his large form leaning in over the pale-lit situation table. He braced himself, stooping to gaze with a furrowed brow at the data being displayed on the many computer screens and transparencies that littered the table. He pored over the situation reports being submitted to him by his subordinates in the fleet. Vansa was clear of an enemy presence, this much was certain. Those two light warships were the only defense features in the system.

The destruction of the vessels had given the Drazis their first chance to see the face of the enemy. The aliens called themselves 'Centauri,' a very poor name if Camron had ever heard one, and seemed to be little more than pasty, follicly-endowed primates who were incapable of mounting a meaningful defense. Surely the Centauri had known that the Drazis would avenge the trespass and menacing of one of their fringe systems? Surely they could not be that stupid? In all of his years in the service of the Freehold, Field Marshal Camron had met many stupid Drazis. He had even served under several. But to not expect retaliation after an incursion into Drazis space? That was ludicrous!

The prosecution of the Centauri campaign would be Camron's responsibility. The military leadership back home would undoubtedly wish to interfere at every convenience, but the rank of Field Marshal came with many privileges. One seemed to be the right to do whatever you damn well please when operating in the field. To that end, those helpful notes and critiques that the war committee on Zhabar sent on to the Field Marshal and his staff had all been lost due to a corruption in the data stream. Camron would fight this war his way, or not at all. If they had been good enough to subjugate the Cascor, they would be good enough to take out some backward hominids on the Drazis frontier.

Field Marshal Camron's first order of business would be to secure Vansa. Once that was done, the war could be expanded in all directions. For Camron, there would be no end to the violence until the Centauri homeworld lay broken and consumed by the flames of victory.

The Centauri Reaction

The Vorchans of House Kolara were destroyed in Vansa, sacrificial lambs led to the slaughter, but they did their job. After having their presence revealed, the Vorchans were able to send a final tachyon relay to the base at Algol to warn that an enemy force had entered the

system. The Centauri did not however receive any definite knowledge about the size or disposition of the Drazis forces that had jumped into the system, presumably from the Enfilis system. All that was certain, was that Vansa was now under the control of their enemy from the uncharted upspin territories.

Upon receiving this information, Centauri Admiral Dallo forwarded on the full body of the final transmission of the *Sculador* to the Centaurum along with a plea for them to begin taking the situation seriously. An enemy fleet of unknown capabilities now stood a single jump from Algol, and but a month away from Centauri Prime itself!

Luckily for Dallo, his impassioned plea was brushed aside by neither the Royal Court nor the Centaurum. With the full blessing of Emperor Kurghan, the Centaurum passed a near-unanimous resolution declaring hostilities against the Drazis Freehold. The resolution affirmed that the Centauri Republic would not stand for the destruction of Centauri vessels or the capture of Republican territories by hostile powers. To that end, the Centauri Imperial Navy would be granted full authority to actively engage and repel the invaders using any means at their disposal. The resolution stopped short of being a full declaration of war, though it is likely that the Republic will be marching to war sooner than not.

With the gloves removed from the Imperial Navy also came increased emergency military funding from the Centaurum for all of the Republic's armed forces. Additional ground forces were conscripted on many colony worlds, including Algol. Starships laying in ordinary at Centauri Prime shipyards were demothballed and readied for a return to service. Finally, new defenses were begun at Algol. Admiral Dallo had been requesting funding for the construction of a full Kraken Starbase at the system since the first unfortunate encounter with the Drazis, but his requests had fallen on deaf ears until the Drazis emergence into Vansa.

2225.5

Markab Annex Gharno

Markab Talafat Scouts continue their streak of successful explorations when they discover that one of the unexplored routes out of

the Banir system leads to the Gharno system. It was previously thought that only two jump lanes passed through Gharno.

Given the fact that two of the three systems connecting to Gharno are owned by the Markab Theocracy, the elders of the Theocracy order the annexation of the Gharno system.

Centauri Prime Declares War!

The Centauri Republic declares WAR on the Drazi Freehold as a result of their incursion into Vansa and the destruction of two Imperial naval vessels in that system. The measure passes by a razor-thin margin in the Centaurum.

The decision to declare war has caused major descent among the noble houses. Those with interests on the frontiers are generally pro-War, as the Republic's intervention in the conflict will help to defend their interests. The houses on Centauri Prime however do not see war as a justified or in their best interests. If the war goes well for the Republic, the outer worlds will surely benefit the most through the influx of new territories and on-site military contracts. Meanwhile, back home, only those houses with a strong enough voice in the Royal Court to bend the ear of the admiralty will see the most lucrative contracts, and their chance of expanding interests among the colonies is small.

The first order of business following the declaration of war against the Drazi was the ordering of construction on a new series of warships. The Centauri purchased six Sulust Escort Destroyers, two Octurion Battleships, and four Vorchan Warships in May of 2225, with construction of the forces spread between shipyards at Centauri Prime and Immolan.

As new construction began to be laid down in the yards at home, the First Imperial Expeditionary Fleet, under the command Admiral Soladdo, completes its transit into Algol. Soladdo is a veteran fleet admiral that served as the commander of the second failed attempted invasion of Dar'kar during the Narn/Centauri War. To his credit, Soladdo refused to waste his men and ships in that last battle of the war, withdrawing and negotiating a cease-fire with Narn Warcaptain G'dir once the outcome of the battle was evident. Soladdo did not win any friends in the Royal Court by way of these actions, but he did gain the full support of his crews, who trust him implicitly.

With Soladdo's arrival in Algol, there is now some question as to the chain of command

in the system. Admiral Dallo previously oversaw all military forces in the system in addition to his other assigned duties that came with being the head of the exploratory mission in the sector. However, this has now changed. Admiral Celean Soladdo is now in command of the Centauri mobile military forces in Algol and will be chiefly responsible for prosecuting the war against the Drazi Freehold. Dallo will retain his command of the exploratory missions out of the system, though for now that is of little importance, but will also be placed in the position of military governor of Algol through the remainder of the conflict. As military governor of Algol, Admiral Dallo will be responsible for the defenses assigned to defend the linchpin system.

On that subject, the defenses at Algol continue to improve. Transport Fleets are being used to transfer personnel and resources from the Ettata system to Algol to assist with its fortification. Construction on the Kraken Starbase in orbit of Algol II is approximately 34% complete. Engineers estimate it will take four months, maybe more, to complete the base. While crews work on completing the monolithic Kraken, others are busy placing Phalanx Orbital Satellites and proximity mines in orbit of the planet. To date, over 24 satellites and 32 minefields have been deployed at Algol to counter any potential Drazi assault into the system.

Drazi Dig in at Vansa

With the Vansa system firmly in their control, and with no sign of Centauri attempts to liberate the system, Fleet Marshal Camron begins readying for the long-term occupation of Vansa. The system, albeit uninhabited, will likely be the nucleus of the Drazi war efforts due to its location between the uncharted territories and the Freehold home systems.

In an effort to improve supply lines to Vansa, the Drazi upgrade the Enfili/Vansa jump lane to unimportant status. This provides the temporary relief offered up by the new Enfili military supply depot to reach Vansa, keeping Camron's armada in supply and ready for a fight. This supply depot will necessarily need to be moved forward to Vansa, but that will not happen for some time. As a stopgap measure, the Drazi Freehold has authorized the construction of a fleet of Transbird freighters for use as long-range logistics ships. The Drazi military lacks a large, dedicated supply craft for the role, necessitating the construction of larger

numbers of Transbirds. Freehold naval commanders first looked at building the smaller, cheaper Freight eagles to fulfill the same role, but their lack of defenses and resilience to damage were seen as major disadvantages given the area they were to be deployed.

New Mineral Reserves Discovered at Quadrant 14

The Narn discover a hidden vein of rich natural resources on Quadrant 14, increasing the valuation of local mineral rights.

The most important beneficiary of this discovery is the Promith Free Association. The extra revenue generated by the increased mining activity helps to increase their trade fleet revenues by 50%.

Earth Alliance Signs Non-Aggression Treaty with the Krish

Citing a desire for prolonged peace between their worlds, representatives of Earth and Krish met at Krish to sign a formal non-aggression pact. Earth diplomat David Sheridan met directly with Krish Leader-of-the-Day Awky Birdy to finalize and sign the treaty. Also present at the signing were representatives from the Mitoc government, who maintain a military presence in the Krish system for the planetary power's own protection. Despite strident efforts, Krish remains an industrial power, lacking all but the most rudimentary space flight capabilities.

The creation of an Earth/Krish non-aggression treaty brings additional stability to region. Between this treaty and the existing Earth/Mitoc political agreements, there is little threat of hostilities erupting in the region.

Anti-Earth Sentiment on the Rise on Gromahk and the Colonies

Within political circles, it is increasingly apparent that continued relations with Earth are not favored by the Margus or his government. The Margus released a series of edicts this month condemning the Earth Alliance and its "imperialistic attitude towards minor powers on its borders."

Plans for expansion of the Grome military forces continues with additional warships ordered to fill a short-term dearth of available ships. The Margus desires to double the size of the fleet by year's end.

It is only a matter of time before the Grome Autocracy begins severing their ties with the Earth Alliance altogether. There is even the potential that the Margus could get greedy, desiring to seize lucrative EA colonies or territorial colonial claims before they can react to Grome aggression. The fate of relations between the two powers rests in the hands of the Margus and his staff of diplomats.

CM's Note: Yes, the NPE rules coupled with the special racial traits applied to the Grome government have sent their relationship with the EA down the tubes. The "whim of the Margus" means that all relationship results are doubled, both the positive AND the negative. Right now there is a base 21% chance of the Grome declaring hostilities/war against the EA, and they are no longer able to sustain their Trade and Peace Treaties, so are attempting to break them. As CM, I am preventing a roll for the Trade Treaty until the Peace Treaty is broken. The Grome are earning a lot of money from trade with the EA, so it doesn't make sense for them to break that treaty until the Peace Treaty is dissolved.

I have a bad feeling that we will likely see one of two courses of action come to pass:

In the first, worst-case scenario, the Grome will successfully declare hostilities and break all of their treaties with Earth. In the short-term, this will leave Earth scrambling to react and defend Proxima and Epsilon Eridani from Grome attack. In the long-term, look for 'regime change' on Gromahk because the Grome are both economically and militarily incapable of prosecuting a successful war against the Earth Alliance. They might be able to make early gains and delay EA reprisals, but in the end the EA will be able to repulse the Grome forces. The situation is even grimmer for the Grome should the Ipsha decide to intervene (oops!).

In the second scenario, the Grome will break their Peace and Trade Treaties and give the EA more than enough forewarning to decide how exactly to respond to the threat. Given that I am 'playing' the EA as a player race, I will have the responsibility of deciding how exactly they will react to the potential threat. Pragmatism could lead them to simply bulk up their military forces and wait for any potential attack, but it would definitely be in the EA's best interests to capture all of the Grome colonies sans their starting worlds to teach the Grome (and the other worlds, too) a lesson that they should not bite off more than you can chew.

This does bring up another side topic, and one that I think is interesting to touch upon in this diary, even though it might provide spoiler-level foreshadowing for some of the future campaign developments. So consider yourself warned!

The topic I speak of is that of an interstellar war. The EA intervention in the Ipsha War has created a political atmosphere in which too many parties feel that they have been backed into a corner. The Narn aren't entirely happy about the EA intervention, and they would likely have responded to the Markab claims on Alon with violence if not for that intervention. You see, the Narn Regime now believes that the EA/Ipsha sphere will forcibly intervene in their affairs in the future. This leaves them feeling constrained in what they can do without inviting outside threat. Until the Regime is consolidated, they will likely not feel ready to stretch forth their hand any further, either by dealing with the Markab or forcibly reclaiming Promith.

On the other hand, we have wars aplenty fomenting in the downspin sectors. The Grome are a powder keg that is just waiting to explode, and the Dilgar are not exactly sprouting roses and goodwill.

All in all, there is a very good chance that the Drazi/Centauri War will end up acting as a catalyst for the first true interstellar war that this campaign has ever seen (and seen in very few of my other VBAM campaigns, either). There are too many variables right now to think about. What if the Drazi meet the Narn and end up becoming their best buddies? A Narn/Drazi alliance would not only serve as a perfect counterpoint to the EA/Ipsha sphere, it would provide the material support mechanism to allow the Narn Regime to be as belligerent as they want to be.

Things could be getting interesting before too long!

2225.6

The Drazi War: The First Battle of Algol

A Drazi reconnaissance in force into the Algol system is met by a full Centauri vanguard who have been waiting for a Drazi incursion into the system. New construction and reactivations moving into the system from Centauri Prime

reinforce Admiral Soladdo's fleet, making them more than a match for the Drazi fleet.

Upon detecting the size of the Centauri fleet in the Algol system, the Drazi commander orders his fleet to move to the local jump gate to retreat from the system. Unfortunately, he is set upon by the Centauri fleet, which decided to give pursuit in an attempt to prevent the Drazi from escaping back to Vansa with knowledge of the Centauri forces in Algol.

Admiral Soladdo shouted orders as he watched the battle unfold on his tactical display. The *Herua* lumbered forward into the middle of the fleeing Drazi formation. Her guns blasted in all directions; space was literally clouded in twin array fire as the behemoth moved forward towards her goal. The Drazi flagship, a Peregrine Jump Ship, was in the *Herua's* gun sights. Soladdo's Covran Scout had used its electronics to give the *Herua* and her escorts additional targeting data, and this data would be put to good use shortly.

Rapid-blast fire from the fleet's battle lasers and twin arrays shot into the Drazi flag squadron. The enemy flagship crumpled under the fire, exploding fabulously as the Centauri fleet continued its advance. The decision to thrust into the heart of the Drazi fleet did not come without consequences. One of the Octurion's light escorts, a Haven Patrol Boat ill equipped for true escort duties, was blow apart by particle blaster fire as it pursued enemy fighters.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, the Centauri were inducing high casualties in the Drazi's carrier force. The Drazi Strikebirds tried their best to evade incoming fire, but it was no use. Two were destroyed outright and another two heavily damaged as quick moving Vorchans tore at their flanks.

Centauri fighters took advantage of the chaos, darting back and forth while they harried the Drazi forces. Sentries Medium Fighters succeeded in disabling one Sunhawk and destroying another. Not a single pilot was killed in the exchange, the Sunhawk's particle beam gunners being too busy concentrating their fire against other larger, more worrisome targets. Meanwhile, a swarm of 48 Star Snake Light Fighters, 8 flights in total, descended on a Vorchan strike group. Unfortunately for them, their attack run was cut short by four flights of escorting Sentries. After the debris had cleared, six Star Snake flights had been destroyed to the loss of only two Sentries flights.



Soladdo smiled wryly as the Drazî reacted much as he expected. With their force commander dead and their flagship destroyed, the remaining Drazî attempted to scatter and run for safety. Some further accelerated, trying to make their way to the local jump gate. Others decided to turn on their axis and begin a foolish charge back towards the Centauri battle line.

What worried Soladdo the most were the remaining Peregrines in the Drazî fleet. They could and would be a problem, should they survive to take their forces out of the battle...

The thought had only just manifested when his staff alerted him: the Drazî were attempting to retreat into hyperspace, just as Soladdo had just predicted moments before!

Turning to one of his lieutenants, Soladdo yelled, "Sefra, order Argenti and Tafalo to each engage one of the fleeing Drazî squadrons."

"What about the flag squadron, Admiral?" Sefra asked.

Soladdo's eyes turned to flame as he muttered, "Destroy those Darkhawks."

Sefra nodded, turned on his heel, and ran to pass on the admiral's orders to the rest of the fleet.

Two Drazî squadrons dove towards their jump points, Centauri warships hot on their tails. Long-range battle laser fire from Primus Battlecruisers coupled with twin array fire from the Vorchans were successful in eviscerating the retreating Drazî fleets. One ship after another exploded in a fireball, leaving only debris flying along the crafts' original vectors. A Sunhawk attempted to turn and engage its pursuers, but no sooner than had it rolled to bring its weapons to bear it too was blown out of the sky. A single Peregrine Jump Ship succeeded in making it to safety, but it did not get away without cost. The hull was scarred and battered.

As the *Herua* pursued the enemy Darkhawks, they were soon set upon by a group of Sunhawks. Soladdo's fleet had not anticipated the attack, and none of their weapons in that arc were able to counterstrike before the Drazî squadron could let loose their salvo of destruction. Particle blaster fire rained upon the *Herua* and its escorts. A single Haven that moved to shield the *Herua* was struck, the wrecked hull spiraling out of control and out of formation. The ship was venting atmosphere and would likely not survive the engagement. The crew's sacrifice would not be for naught.

The Drazî Darkhawks fired a wave of missiles at the Centauri flagship. Unfortunately for them, the *Herua's* point defenses were more than capable of intercepting the ballistics long before they could reach detonation range. In response, the *Herua* guns came alive, striking out and connecting with the Darkhawks. The lead Darkhawk, whose commander had become the de facto fleet commander following the destruction of the death of his superior, was left without a starboard side. The *Herua's* battle lasers cleaved the entire wing off of the ship in a dazzling display of pyrotechnic fury. Meanwhile, Vorchan Warships descended on a crippled Strikebird, destroying it with ease.

For the Sunhawks who made a fast strike against the *Herua*, vengeance was on the wings. As soon as they pulled away from their attack run they were set upon by no less than 17 flights of Senti Medium Fighters. The 102 fighters in those flights swarmed the hull of the Sunhawks, destroying one pristine Sunhawk while leaving another damaged 'hawk unable to maneuver or fight. A group of Star Snakes attempted to disperse the Senti swarm, but the act cost them their lives. If the Drazî pilots had survived the battle they would have come to appreciate the high quality of Centauri interceptor fighters.

The battle seemed nearly won. But the Drazî had a final gift to bestow on the Centauri who had bested them in combat.

The Drazî Darkhawks did not break course as the Octurion *Herua* continued to advance on their position. No, they instead accelerated to full and altered their trajectories to ensure that they would strike the battleship. They were going to ram Soladdo's flag!

The flag squadron scrambled to react to the fast incoming birds. Twin arrays swiveled to bring the Darkhawks into view and commenced firing on the ships. The undamaged Darkhawk took severe damage and the lead Darkhawk

was peppered with fire, but neither broke away or was destroyed...

Both Darkhawks impacted with the *Herua*, ripping deep into the ship's forward and port hull plating. The decks creaked as metal was pulled, warped, and ripped apart by the force of the impact and resultant explosions. The Darkhawks disappeared in a flash of blinding light as they impacted the Octurion's hull. When the explosion dimmed all that remained were two large rents in the *Herua*'s hull.

On the flag bridge of the *Herua*, Soladdo struggled to bring himself back up on his feet. The force of the impact had knocked him to the ground, throwing him hard up against the room's central combat information station. He pulled himself up slowly, cringing as he realized he could not put full weight on his left leg. He reached down with his left hand and felt the damp wetness of blood. He pulled his hand back and raised it into the light so that he could see the blood trickle down the face of his palm. His leg was broken.

Noting his distress, one of Soladdo's aides scrambled across the room and helped the admiral to his feet. Soladdo stood as best he could, leaning on the planning table for extra support. Damage reports were coming in from every deck. Casualties were massive and structural integrity had been compromised.

Soladdo ordered, "Fleet, fall back to protect the *Herua*. We are in need of immediate assistance."

From across the room, Sefra replied, "Admiral, the last Drazzi Sunhawks have been neutralized. One was destroyed by battery fire from the fleet. The other detonated of its own accord – sensors indicate that they were suicide charges. The Drazzi fleet has been neutralized."

Soladdo nodded. "Order the fleet to stand down." He thought for a minute and then added, "Tell Captain Argenti to begin a thorough system patrol. I want to make damn sure that the Drazzi didn't leave us a 'gift' in the system somewhere. We don't need them spying on us while we continue our mobilization."

"Aye aye, sir," Sefra replied.

A week later, Sefra found Soladdo sitting alone in a cushioned chair staring out at the stars outside of the ship. The admiral was still recuperating from his injuries. In one hand he held a cane – temporary, but necessary after breaking his leg – and in the other he held a flask of bravari from which he was taking generous swigs.

"Admiral," Sefra interrupted, "I would like to report that the damage to the ship was more severe than previously estimated. Fleet supply ships think that they might be able to perform field repairs once they have requisitioned the correct parts, but it is likely going to keep the *Herua* out of combat for several months."

Sefra paused. *Was the admiral even listening to his report?* He certainly didn't betray any recognition of his presence. He just sat there, still as death, staring at the unchanging starscape.

After a silent sigh, Sefra continued with his report: "We have managed to analyze some of the Drazzi wreckage, as evidenced on the reports that have been submitted to your PDA the last week. We believe we have a good handle on some of their weapon systems, and have determined that their metallurgical sciences are inferior to our own, but so far we don't have much more to go off of. Salvage techs managed to retrieve some Drazzi bodies as well. We will be sending them back home for dissection and analysis..."

"Sefra," Soladdo interrupted. "I don't mean to sound dismissive, but I have read the reports. All of them, several times. I don't need to be babysat by you, Lieutenant. I'll be fine."

Sefra's posture visibly straightened, and he answered, "I am sorry, sir. I did not mean any disrespect..."

Soladdo raised his flask and pointed out the window. "Lieutenant, have you ever sat here and just looked at the star? I mean really *looked* at them? It may be just the bravari talking, but I never quite grasped the enormity of it all until today." He reached down and slapped his leg, his face scrunching in agony. "This... this injury is a testimony to not having paid enough attention to what was going on... out there, in space I mean."

The admiral pointed his finger at a distant point of light, directing Sefra's gaze to the star's faint glow. "That star there. We've never been there. But what's to say someone else hasn't already walked on that distant shore? Will they be our enemy too, Sefra? Will we ever find *peaceful* aliens in this universe?"

Soladdo paused as he took a deep draught from his flask. Before Sefra could answer his question, Celean spat, "Bah, to hell with all of them, that is what I say! Let their worlds burn, it matters little to me so long as Centauri Prime is protected and the greater glory of the Emperor is preserved."

Lieutenant Sefra did not say anything. At this point he didn't know if it was the admiral or the alcohol that was speaking.

Sefra stood watching Soladdo while away in his melancholy before silently excusing himself. His shift was over, and for that he was grateful.

Drazi Fleet Marshal Camron was livid upon receiving word from his fleet's sole survivor from the battle in Algol. He spent the better part of an hour storming about his ship destroying breakables and assaulting crewmembers before finally calming down enough to begin acting in a sensible fashion. A massive Drazi fleet had been effectively destroyed, leaving him with over one-third of his expeditionary fleet destroyed.

The news couldn't get much worse, Camron thought. How horribly wrong he was!

Drazi Attack in Kacheses

The commander of the Drazi expedition to Kacheses, one Force Marshal Kok, was a good soldier. But he was also a soldier who had been promoted beyond his competence. The fact that he ended up with the rank of Force Marshal and in command of one of the Drazi expeditionary forces during the Drazi/Centauri War was a truly unfortunate confluence of events which the Freehold would come to regret (as would his uncle, who originally 'arranged' Kok's promotion).

Upon entering Kacheses, the Drazi strike fleet, codename Blood Rapture, detected numerous contacts within the system. The drive signature of the vessels was similar to that of previously encountered Centauri craft, though they all possessed a similar misalignment in their drive systems. To Marshal Kok this was a trifling matter. The drives were of a Centauri signature, so they had to be Centauri. There was no doubt in his mind!

Even more fortuitous, the Centauri presence in Kacheses was fairly light, roughly equal to that possessed by Kok's own Blood Rapture fleet. The Force Marshal eyed a great opportunity to demonstrate his prowess in battle and possibly earn *another* promotion!

It was not until the battle had already been joined – the Drazi fleet initiated combat, drawing the 'Centauri' fleet out – that a horrible realization was made. These ships might have exhibited Centauri drive signatures, but they were *not* Centauri ships! They belonged to an entirely different species, which called

themselves Narns, and they were not exactly thrilled about the Drazi attack on their system.

In the end, Narn Warleader Tu'Kar was successful in driving off the Drazi invaders, though at significant loss to his fleet. Force Marshal Kok survived the battle, but only by using his subordinate commanders as cannon fodder while his flag squadron made the jump into hyperspace.

Drazi Fallout from Kacheses

Force Marshal Kok learned during transit to Vansa that he was being demoted – immediately – to the rank of Ship Marshal, and would soon be serving out the remainder of his career on the smallest, most 'combat-worthy' (as Fleet Marshal Camron put it) ship in the Drazi fleet. A Stareagle, perhaps, or possibly a Strikebird (Note: Camron preferred the idea of Kok commanding a Strikebird, given the mortality rate among ships of that class in recent engagements).

Kok's actions against the Narn in Kacheses left Fleet Marshal Camron in an untenable position. The Drazi Freehold now has to worry about possible warfare on two fronts. Maintaining control of Vansa is going to be a major challenge for Camron now. He resolves to try and hold onto the system, but he has to admit that the chances of success are now looking incredibly poor. He will have to request assistance from homeworld – something he vowed not to have to do. Otherwise defeat was already in the air.

A Common Foe

Following the Drazi attack on Kacheses, the Narn dispatched formal diplomatic requests to the Centauri to explain what had happened at Vansa and how an alien fleet could have attacked Kacheses from the system. The Centauri were quite forthcoming with relevant information for the Narn Regime; they had no reason to lie. They told the Narn about what they had found in Enfil, about the enslavement of Cascan and Enfil, and the Drazi invasion of Vansa.

The Narn were shocked. True, they would have gladly invaded small, defenseless bordering nations if any existed, but the sheer aggressiveness of these Drazi concerned them. As far as could be determined, the Drazi had not reacted civilly to any of the alien sentients they had made contact with thus far. In fact, they

seemed determined to overrun and conquer every inhabited world in the region! The Narn would not stand for further Drazzi incursions into their space, nor would they suffer a Drazzi foothold in the strategically valuable Kacheses system.

After discussing the implications of the Drazzi threat to the Regime and Republic, the Narn and Centauri agree to sign a co-belligerency pact against the Drazzi Freehold. Plans for coordinated fleet actions are still a ways off, but this understanding to support one another in battle will set the foundation for future actions against the Drazzi. Little do the Drazzi know that Kok's folly may have just signed their death warrant.

Colonists Depart for Ven'sheta

The first Dilgar colonists leave for Ven'sheta this month. This wave of colony ships is only the first of many to come. The value of Ven'sheta is unparalleled in the known universe, and the Dilgar Imperium are eager to begin exploiting its resources to their own benefit.

Grome Break Peace, Trade Treaties with Earth

In an expected move, the Grome Autocracy formally severed most of its major treaties with the Earth Alliance in June of 2225. The official reason for the breaking the treaties was as an act of protest against EA treatment of minor powers along its borders. In reality, the Grome Margus simply had come to view the EA as weak and a potential conquest for his government.

The Earth Alliance saw the declaration was what it was: a prelude to attack if not outright invasion. Grome posturing had been going on for months, and it was not difficult to figure out what the Margus had in mind.

During closed-session meetings between President Kane and her ministers, the decision was reached that additional funds would be diverted to Earth Force via shell accounts within the Alliance. This would keep the funds undisclosed except from select members of the Senate and the parties directly concerned with responding to the Grome threat. These monies would be used to finance the expansion of the Earth Force space fleet. President Kane left the particulars of purchases to the discretion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of

Earth Force, relying on their expertise to get the job done and done right.

As much as she hates to admit it, the only way to diffuse the situation might be via a direct confrontation with the Grome. A show of force is probably the only thing that they will understand, and Earth Force seems more than willing to 'take the gloves' and respond in kind, should it come to that. Also, as Erica muses, wartime presidents can often carry the popular vote, so fighting a successful war during the next two years would certainly help her chances of being re-elected early in 2227.

President Kane directs Foreign Minister Fargate to begin readying for a dissolution of the Grome/EA non-aggression pact. Given the Grome's recent attitude towards the Alliance, Kane sees no reason for that treaty to be maintained. Breaking the treaty may even force the Grome to be more rational. If not, then the conquest of Van Maanen would more than likely do the trick!

The Formation of the Greater Outward Co-Prosperity Sphere

Ipsa Barony and Earth Alliance representatives meet at Orion to complete the formation of a binding treaty of alliance between their governments. The Orion Charter lays out the creation of a 'Greater Outward Co-Prosperity Sphere,' a grand alliance created with the intent of preserving the peace in the outward sectors of known space.

The reasons for the Orion Charter and the formation of the Co-Prosperity Sphere are varied. The Ipsa learned during their war with the Narn that belligerent behavior would not benefit them in the long run. Their offensive into Regime territories stalled and then reversed, leaving the Ipsa homeworld in peril. Without a strong bond with their one other neighbor, the Humans, the Ipsa would be doomed to 'go it alone,' and that was no something they desired any longer.

For the EA, the alliance with the collective Ipsa Baronies is a matter of providing stability in the region. The Co-Prosperity Sphere will ensure the safety of EA interests in Ross, freeing up military assets to be deployed elsewhere, such as along the Grome border. The combined power of Earth and Ipsa will also be able to counter the force of any one other major power, too, so that both can negotiate from a position of power in the future.

Promith/Centauri Non-Aggression Pact Causes Row with Narn Regime

A decision by the Promith Free Association to enter into a non-aggression pact with the neighboring Centauri created a minor political crisis between Promith and Homeworld this month. The Kha'Ri indignantly maintain that Promith is a breakaway state of the Regime and as such should not be negotiating treaties without direct Narn involvement in the proceedings. Promith's leadership disagrees and responds saying that the independent Promith Free Association has every right to exert its sovereign powers in any way that it chooses.

2225.7

Centauri and Narn Jointly Reject a Drazi Peace Offer

Reeling from their defeat in Kacheses and Algol last month, the Drazi Freehold dispatched envoys to meet with representatives of both the Centauri and Narn governments. The envoys' mission was simple: negotiate an end to the conflict!

Much to the Drazi's chagrin, they found that the Centauri and Narn did in fact have a previous relationship, though they still did not know the particulars of their past transgressions. What they did discover was that the Centauri and Narn had been in communications after the encounter and that both had vowed to dislodge the Drazi Freehold from Vansa – by force, if necessary.

Further complicating the Freehold's peace mission was the announcement that the Narn Regime had signed a co-belligerency pact with the Centauri Republic, in essence bringing them into the conflict on the Centauri's side. The Drazi ambassador to Narn emphatically attempted to demonstrate to his Narn peer that the Drazi attack against Kacheses was a fluke and not intentional in the least. Needless to say, the Narns were highly skeptical and would not be easily swayed.

The Drazi ambassador dispatched to Algol met with even less success. Upon entering the star system, his shuttle was boarded and he was detained for questioning. The Drazi could

not have received a clearer answer as to the Centauri's intentions.

The Drazi Freehold now knew that there would be no peace, at least not for now. In maneuver that stunned many Drazi, the Freehold expanded their declaration of war to include the Narn Regime.

The Narn Regime was not entirely surprised to hear this announcement. They had expected as much from the Drazi, and were making preparations to aid the Centauri in Vansa. Additional assistance from the Regime would be minimal, however. The Narn did not have anything to gain by way of a protracted war in the outer reaches of the Centauri frontier, and the Centauri were unwilling to give up territorial claims to worlds in the region. They may have been interested in liberating Enfil and Cascan if not for the fact that altruistic intentions were not enough to fuel Narn generosity, and neither world had the credits to pay for Narn assistance.

The Centauri Republic Waits For Reinforcements

In large part due to the crippling of the Octurion Battleship Herua in the pursuit battle at Algol, the Centauri Minister of Defense, Lord Jaddo, recommends that plans for a counterstrike into Vansa be delayed until such time as reinforcements can arrive from Centauri Prime. Lord Jaddo also cites the approaching completion of Algol Station. "Once that Kraken Starbase is completed," Jaddo states in one of his reports, "the Algol system will be able to defend itself from any future Drazi attacks. This will in turn free our forces to take the fight to their soil."

Admiral Soladdo disagrees. Despite damage to his fleet flag, he feels that the Drazi are most vulnerable *now*, not later. Unfortunately for him, the Royal Court favors caution in this matter and orders Soladdo to maintain position in Algol as his fleet undergoes field repairs. Additional new-construction ships will begin reaching Algol in two months time. At that point in time, the offensive against the Drazi shall begin.

Grome Declare Hostilities Against the Earth Alliance

In a feat of blustering fury, the Grome Margus takes to the tachyon-nets and publicly admonishes the Earth Alliance for so blatantly

demonstrating their desire to dominate the region. He asserted that “the Co-Prosperity Sphere will destabilize the entire region and make war inevitable.”

In summation of his case against the Earth Alliance, the Margus declared that his government would be severing all ties with the EA and that all of his fleets would be immediately authorized to detain or destroy any EA ships entering Grome territory.

Following the Margus’ announcement, President Kane called an emergency session of the EA Senate to discuss the situation. On July 17, 2225, Kane delivered her historic “Fire in the Air” Speech to the full Senate advocating an in-kind declaration of hostilities against the Grome Autocracy. President Kane went further, though, saying that any declaration of war against the Alliance should be responded to quickly:

“Threats made against the Alliance under the promise of vengeance should not and shall not be tolerated. We must respond with equal and overwhelming fury if we are to secure the freedom and protection of our citizens. Already the Grome Margus has threatened that security. It is the job of this Senate to make sure that our constituents can sleep well at night. Ladies and gentlemen, there are tens of thousands of men, women, and children who will not sleep easy tonight. Their worlds stand but a jump from imminent peril. The Grome may simply be bluffing, attempting to provoke us into a conflict. Maybe we should sit and wait, and respond only when we have proper reason to do so. No, that simply will not do! If we sit by and wait for a ‘proper reason,’ then it will only come when fire fills the air of our colonies and thousands of our people lay dead and broken, their dreams and security shattered because we could not be bothered to provide them an adequate defense!

“I am not however advocating a pre-emptive strike against the Grome. No, we will act with honor in battle even if our enemies have none. When or if the Grome Autocracy decides to declare war against our Alliance, only then shall we deliver our response to their threats. But we must be ready for that day to come; Earth Force must be ready. It is because of that I am here today, to implore you to reciprocate the Grome’s declaration of hostilities and give Earth Force the weapons and resources they need to defend the innocents at home and

abroad. We can only win this war – a war against fear as much as anything else – if we are prepared for it. To do otherwise would be foolhardy and reckless.”

Kane’s speech met with applause from the assembled Senate. Kane found an unlikely ally in her search of support for her hostilities declaration. Senator Sita Budianta, and outspoken hawk among doves, took to the floor following the President’s speech and delivered her own oratory urging her fellows to authorize the use of force against hostile Grome movements into EA space, as well as to appropriating funds for Earth Force to use in improving security in space and on the ground.

The Senate approved the measure by a majority vote, despite a handful of abstentions and votes against the measure. The Earth Alliance was now officially in state of hostilities with the Grome Autocracy.

Shortly after the EA Senate’s decision, word arrived from the Ipsha barons. In accordance with the terms of the Orion Accords, the Ipsha Baronies would join the Earth Alliance in declaring hostilities against the Grome.

(CM’s Note: I accidentally rolled for the Ipsha attempt without rereading that the Alliance rules say that it only happens for when War is declared. Oops! Anyway, the Ipsha did succeed on their roll, so I decided to resolve it in this way.)

Promith Free Association Mends Relations with Narn

The Promith Free Association met with representatives of the Narn Regime this month to attempt to placate the Regime following the ‘misunderstanding’ of the previous month. A great deal of headway is made at mending relations between the former-colony and Homeworld, though true reconciliation remains a long way off.

Promith did however agree to allow Narn military vessels access to Promith space in return for protection from outside threats, such as the Ipsha, Markab, and Drazi. This mutual defense pact will help secure Promith from outside attack, but it also gives the Narn Regime something that they have been wanting for some time: access to the unexplored jump lanes leading out of Free Association territories. This route of expansion for the Regime was cut off

during the Ipsha War and subsequent independence of Promith.

Infrastructure Construction on Ipsha Homeworld Nearly Complete

Since the end of the Ipsha War, the Ipsha Baronies have been diverting most of their resources into increasing the industrial potential of their homeworld. Decades of internecine warfare left the Ipsha infrastructure in atrophy when compared to that of other powers. The recent improvements to Ipsha industry will allow them to take advantage of the planet's incredible mineral wealth. Ipsha is one of the richest sources of raw materials in the known galaxy, and thus was eyed as a worthy prize by the Narn Regime prior to the EA intervention at the end of the Ipsha war.

2225.8

New Earth Force Military Construction

With the blessings of the EA Senate, Earth Force is given an additional \$52 billion credits to use in preparing for the possibility of war with the Grome Autocracy. The under-the-table funds previously given to Earth Force by the President was used to begin construction on two Nova-Alpha Dreadnoughts. With more money, Earth Force orders the construction of three Avenger-Beta Carriers, three Hyperion-Alpha Heavy Cruisers, and six Artemis-Beta Heavy Frigates. Construction of the heavy fleet units will take place at shipyards at Sol, while the shipyards at Ross and Orion take on part of the burden of building the Artemis Frigates.

Earth Force hopes that this new construction will provide a massive superiority in arms. Ship construction is slated to take three months for the frigates and four months for the cruisers and carriers. The latter units will be completed simultaneous to the completion of the Nova Dreadnoughts. Current plans are to form two core strike fleets, each commanded by a single Nova Dreadnought. One of these forces will be fighter-heavy, while the other will be cruiser-heavy. These two fleets will then be deployed to the borders, with one stationed in Epsilon Eridani and one in Proxima.

Should open warfare erupt between the Alliance and Grome, it is planned that these

fleets will launch simultaneous attacks against Van Maanen and Merkeht, fracturing the Autocracy in a single, swift motion. The Joint Chiefs only hope that the Grome will wait that long to declare war. Should the call to arms come sooner, then Earth could be looking at a hard go of it until the new construction is completed.

Promith/Ipsha Non-Aggression Treaty

In a historic treaty, the Promith Free Association met with representatives of the Ipsha Baronies to negotiate a formal Non-Aggression Treaty. This treaty stops short of formalizing future borders between Promith and Ipsha, but it does represent a major milestone in relations between the two powers. The Promith Free Association was formed when Promith was cut off from the remainder of the Narn Regime as a result of hostile Ipsha actions during last year's conflict. The Ipsha unsuccessfully attacked Promith during the war, and relations have been skittish ever since.

2225.9

Earth Force Construction Continues

In an attempt to better protect Proxima from an impending Grome attack on the Proxima system, Earth Force orders the construction of six Shepherd-Alpha Starfury Transports. These atmospheric transport craft are capable of basing four flights of Tiger Starfuries. Because they are atmospheric capable, factories on Proxima itself are able to begin construction on two of the ships (the other four are built at Sol). This will provide Proxima with additional defenders in case the Grome become bold and threaten the colony.

CM's Note: I know the Porcupine and Shepherd, both designs from the old The Babylon Project RPG, have been much derided within the Babylon 5 Wars community. However, with stats converted over from the Earth Wars playtest pack, these units have been invaluable assets to the Earth Alliance so far thanks to their flexibility. The Porcupines in particular have allowed me to project EA fighter firepower on the cheap to the outer colonies. Given the time period, the only other way to bring appreciable fighter firepower to bear would be to build many expensive Avenger Heavy Carriers, which really

isn't economically feasible from a maintenance perspective.

Baron Harpenn Rides to the EA's Aid

Acting as the personal representative of the Ipsha Council of Barons, Baron Harpenn of the Oer Barony has readied a fleet (formed from the Ipsha Slighting Fleet) to move to the Epsilon Eridani star system. The Oer Barony's decision to move the bulk of its assets into Epsilon is motivated by a desire to demonstrate to the Earthers the Ipsha's devotion to the Co-Prosperity Sphere and its charter.

Baron Harpenn fought in the final battle at Ipsha during the Ipsha War. His carrier squadrons were considered some of the more powerful fighting units the Ipsha Baronies possessed at that time. Harpenn now leads four Early Carrier Cubes plus a vanguard of disparate other Ipsha ships to Epsilon via Elitria.

In order to prepare for an Ipsha arrival in Epsilon Eridani, the Ipsha and Earth Alliance exploration arms agree to launch a cooperative project financed entirely by the Ipsha Baronies to upgrade the route connecting the two systems. This will allow the Ipsha persistent contact with EA territories in that region.

Grome Secretly Declare War

The Grome Margus secretly meets with his war ministers and signs an act of war against the Earth Alliance. It is the understanding those to lead the future war effort that the Grome will wait to attack Alliance territories until the last possible moment, likely waiting until after the Grome economy has finished a full military gearup.

CM's Note: The Grome have a IN (Integrity) stat of 13 and rolled 70% on their chance that the Grome would be duplicitous about making public their declaration (the target was 20% or less being that it would be publicly declared). That Grome Margus, what a card!

Centauri Prepare for Attack

In the Algol system, war preparations have hit a fevered pitch. Admiral Dallo reports to Minister of Defense Jaddo that construction on Algol Station, a Kraken Starbase, has been completed and the base is now fully operational. Admiral Sollado also reports that his Octurion Battleship is finishing up its required field repairs and will be ready to be committed to battle by early next month.

Numerous new-construction Centauri ships are either in the Algol system or en route to the system from shipyards at Centauri Prime and Immolan. Within two months, another dozen starships are slated to arrive in the Algol system.

With Algol now fully fortified and the *Herua* repairs nearly complete, the Centauri Republic will once again be in a position to comfortably mount an offensive against the Drazi forces presumably remaining in the adjoining Vansa star system. No intelligence or other reconnaissance missions have been launched into Vansa since the system fell to the Drazi Freehold, but the Centauri are sure that a Drazi force as large or larger than the one that attacked Algol remains in the system. It is for that reason that Minister of Defense Jaddo has requested caution in proceeding with this military campaign.

For the Drazi, the Hunt has Gone Cold

The Drazi Freehold's governing council is none too happy about Fleet Marshal Camron's performance to date. In their eyes, the Marshal has succeeded in completely squandering any initiative the Freehold had in its campaign against the Centauri. Not only that, due in no small part to the bungling of a subordinate, a second front in the war had been opened when the Narn, too, declared war on the Drazi Freehold.

Luckily for Camron, he was not at Zhabar to be dressed down by his superiors. If he were, he would likely have a blade in his gut. His superiors were not much into talking; they enjoyed sticking sharp instruments into warm flesh far more.

Despite his losses and failure to date, the Fleet Marshal was being left in command of the expeditionary force on this hunt. However any further failures would be fatal – the Freehold admiralty made that quite clear in their communications to Camron and the fleet.

Heavy reinforcements were to arrive in Vansa in several months' time. A total of twenty new Sunhawk Battlecruisers had left the shipyards at Zhabar en route through Freehold territories to relieve his weakened forces. Additional ships would be forthcoming, but the logistics of moving large fleets through the Freehold remained a problem. Camron's superiors indicated that much of the Drazi economy would be redirected in coming months to upgrading jump lanes throughout their space, with an eye towards creating a continuous route

of major jump lanes from Zhabar all the way to Enfili. This would allow swift movement from the shipyards at home to the warfront at Vansa (and beyond). However the cost of such upgrades plus the time involved meant that new forces would be slow to arrive for the next six months to a year. It almost seemed as if the Freehold was no longer fully behind this war of aggression.

Camron was right. The Freehold leadership had tried in vain to negotiate a truce with both the Centauri and Narn after the situation began deteriorating. Unfortunately, neither party was willing to sign an armistice with the Freehold. The Drazi stubbornly maintained a demand for ownership of the Vansa system, something that neither of its enemies could allow due to the system's strategic location as a jumping off point connecting to other vital transfer points and uncharted territories in the region. The offer of peace remained open for the most part, though future victories could weaken the Drazi desire for peace.

In Vansa, Field Marshal Camron could only sit and wait and hope beyond hope that his reinforcements would arrive before the Centauri and/or Narn decided to launch an offensive against the system. If an attack came from Algol or Kacheses, Camron would almost certainly be forced to flee (but only after ensuring that the insufferable fool Kok was killed in action!). Such an act would put an end to his career, Camron knew, and he would be lucky to walk away with his scales intact (oh, his beautiful, beautiful scales! The pain, the pain of it all!).

Refugees Arrive in Tross

Narn refugees from Kacheses arrive in the Tross system and take up residence in the system. The civilians cite the constant warfare in Kacheses as the primary concern motivating them to relocate.

Human and Alacan Scientists Begin Collaborative Efforts

Scientists from some of the most prestigious academic institutions on Earth and Alaca get the go ahead from their respective governments to begin working on a series of cooperative research projects aimed at benefiting both powers. Obviously, the Alacans will receive the most benefit from this research treaty, but it will also provide some minimal benefit to the Earth Alliance, too.

CM's Note: The Alacans offered the EA a treaty. I had a choice between a Naval Appropriations Treaty or Research Treaty, so I thought the Research Treaty was more apropos to the Alacan's current situation.

2225.10

The Drazi War: The Centauri Liberation of Vansa

"Jump point forming in sector one-oh-eight by fifty-four by ten thirty-nine," Lieutenant Sefra deftly reported. His eyes scanned the situation board as his fingers skipped nimbly across the controls. "It is the Covran, sir. The reconnaissance mission into Vansa was a success."

Sefra reached to his ear, steadying his comm-gear as he listened to the ship's captain reporting in over the scrambled comm channel.

He shook his head, and turned to Admiral Soladdo. Soladdo returned his glance with a scowl, the same scowl he had been wearing for months. But in the admiral's eyes Sefra saw the message his lips did not convey.

Without breaking his gaze, Sefra nodded and said, "Admiral, the Covran's captain reports that his ship was able to get in and out of Vansa completely without detection; they didn't set off even a single detection buoy. He has a complete readout of the Drazi forces in the system and their locations."

Soladdo nodded. "Show me," he said through clenched teeth.

With a few keystrokes, the briefing room's situation table was lit aglow with graphical depictions of the detailed strategic data the fleet's Covran Scout had gathered from within Vansa. A series of seven concentric circles appeared around a small, red sun.

Admiral Soladdo mumbled to himself as he pointed at the concentration of red dots on the map. Each one represented a separate, clearly defined drive signature detected by the Covran during its stay in the system. Centauri scouts were far better than any others in the galaxy, spare the Minbari, and their delicate electronics systems had been thorough. This was the total number of Drazi ships in the system. Now it was just a matter of determining where and when to attack.

After collecting his thoughts, Admiral Soladdo thrust his right index finger towards an especially large cluster of ships sitting just beyond the fourth planet in the system.

"Here," the admiral began, "this is where we need to concentrate the first wave of our attack. If we can capture the transfer point we can cut off a Drazi retreat from the system. Their fleet doesn't have the luxury of redundant jump capability, at least not that we have encountered thus far. That fleet," he said, gesturing to a cluster of blips six light seconds from the local jump gate, "are identified as having a lower radiant power signature than the other ships of the same hull configuration. That means they are probably auxiliaries – troop ships, carriers, supply ships, who gives a damn? It doesn't matter. That is where they are weakest. That is where we are going to strike."

Sefra nodded and motioned for several other officers and subordinates to begin readying precise jump calculations. The Centauri fleet was moments away from a strike into Vansa...

* * *

Fleet Marshal Camron fell out of his bunk when he heard the klaxons begin their deathly wail. He grabbed the nearest piece of clothing he could find, a not entirely adequate undergarment, and made a mad dash to get to the bridge.

Camron did not stop to dress himself. Rather, he ran down the corridors of his flagship naked, pulling and tugging at the clothing as he ran. By the time he reached the bridge he had managed to don the garment, but he looked entirely out of place compared to the rest of the bridge crew who had already been on shift and in uniform.

"Give me a situation report, people!" Camron shouted as he entered the command and control.

Rather than explain the situation in words, the nearest crewmember thrust a print out into the agitated fleet marshal's hands. The clear transparency contained all of the information the Drazi fleet in Vansa had so far gathered on the intruding force. It was the Centauri, which didn't surprise Camron in the slightest. He knew the Centauri would show up sooner rather than later. He had just hoped that his fleet's heavy reinforcements would have arrived before the Centauri decided to make their play for Vansa.

What surprised Camron was that his adversary had chosen to assault his logistics force, which the marshal had stationed at the Rurak-1A transfer point. What method drove the Centauri's madness? Evidently it was an effective madness, as the logistics fleet would be set upon quickly and suffer heavy attrition before his own force could hope to intervene.

"Order the fleet to Rurak-1A," Camron ordered. As an aside to himself, he added, "We will meet you in deep space, Centauri. You have picked the place of battle, but you shall not win it!"

* * *

The Centauri war fleet's jump coordinates were not as precise as they would have liked, but they were still close enough to allow them to jump into Vansa in close proximity to the Drazi logistics force at Rurak-1A.

Nearby, the remainder of the Drazi fleets were moving into position to make good a defense of the system.

Centauri squadrons plunged into the Drazi ranks, opening fire on the nearest applicable targets. The Centauri Covran held back, foregoing fire to concentrate on electronic warfare.

The Covran acquired a hard lock on the lead Drazi Sunhawk, which was escorting three Transbirds. This lock was then transferred to the other ships in the Centauri flag squadron, including the Octurion Battleship *Herua*. Long-range battle laser fire from the fleet wiped the Sunhawk from the sky. Vorchans set upon the now-orphaned Transbirds, destroying one and crippling another.

The remainder of the Centauri fleet scored similar damage to the remainder of the Drazi freighter group. Another Sunhawk and two more Transbirds died. The Drazi surprise was nearly total and few of the ships managed to get off a shot before being destroyed.

Amidst the chaos a single crippled Peregrine suffered additional Centauri fire before making good an escape into hyperspace. At least one Drazi ship would survive to tell the tale of the Centauri Liberation of Vansa.

Drazi Star Snakes attempted to repel the Centauri's own Sentri fighters from within the formations of the logistics fleet. The attempt cost them their lives. Between taking pot shots at freighters, the Sentris eviscerated the Drazi fighter squadrons, leaving none of them alive.

The fighter battle had already been won by the time the rest of the Drazi battle line arrived to engage the Centauri fleet and draw off firepower from the heavily damaged Drazi freighter squadrons.

As the Drazi fleet screamed forward through the void, the Centauri fleet turned its heavy weapons to deal with the new threat. The two Centauri lead squadrons opened up fire on Drazi Strike Fleet Epsilon. Battle laser fire from three ships sliced through the hull plating of a Nightowl Hyperspace Probe, cutting the ship to ribbons as the beams traced from stem to stern. The glowing embers of the probe burned brightly for an instant before setting the battlefield alight with death's last glimmer of life.

In exchange for the Nightowl, a single Centauri Vorchan took superficial damage to its upper vertical fin. The ship shuddered under the assault but bore the damage well, simply veering strongly to port to avoid further damage. Elsewhere on the battlefield, two Sunhawks received heavy fire from a pair of Primus Battlecruisers and their escorts. One Sunhawk exploded under the bombardment, while the other survived and moved in closer to defend the Drazi flagship from damage.

Drazi Fleet Marshal Camron was beside himself in anguish. His fleet was being cleaved apart by the Centauri, and there was little he could do to stop the carnage that was unfolding around him like something out of a nightmare. The Centauri medium fighters were even now darting amongst the remaining freighters, destroying or disabling them with little fear of retribution. Camron would have loved to be able to commit some of his squadrons to anti-fighter defense to cover the fleets, but he simply did not have the ships to commit to the defense of his fleet's support units.

Camron's options were running out. He had no hope of defeating the Centauri fleet at his current fleet strength. With that in mind, Camron did something he knew would signal the end of his career, and likely his life. He signaled the fleet to retreat. Camron's war squadrons would open their own jump points, facilitated by their Peregrine Jump Ships, while the Transbirds and their surviving escorts would have to make a break for the local jump gate and put their lives in Droshalla's loving care.

The Drazi fleet dispersed, spiralling in opposite directions as the Peregrines spun up their jump engines to prepare for jump. The Centauri did not waste the opportunity, maintaining their constant bombardment of the

Drazi fleet. Three more Drazi ships exploded in balls of fire before the Peregrine Jump Ships could open their jump points to beat a hasty retreat from the system.

Fleet Marshal Camron and Ship Marshal Kok both succeeded in reaching the relative safety of hyperspace with their squadrons. Squadron Marshal Drus was not as lucky. His Peregrine Jump Ship was destroyed by a direct plasma accelerator blast to its reactor just as the ship began its acceleration towards the vortex. The aft hull of the Peregrine shattered in the explosion as the jump engine overloaded. The derelict hull's momentum carried it forward on its previous vector, straight into the maw of the collapsing jump point! When the unstable jump point finally collapsed, the energy from the collapse finished off Drus' command ship. The two accompanying Sunhawks did manage to break off course and get away from the jump point before it collapsed, but they barely escaped the destruction.

Meanwhile, the Drazi logistics fleet moved to the transfer point and successfully activated the local jump gate. Thankfully for the Drazi, the rapid pace of the battle had prevented the Centauri from completing a lockout of the gate's controls, which would have prevented their retreat from the system.

The Drazi freighters exited the system without taking any additional fire. The Centauri were far more interested in taking out their frustrations on the Freehold's more valuable fleet assets.

The Drazi retreat from Vansa left only the two Sunhawks from Squadron Marshal Drus' fleet in the Vansa system. Without a jump engine between them and their path to the jump gate blocked, the two ships signaled the Centauri fleet and indicated that they were willing to discuss terms of surrender.

* * *

The Liberation of Vansa was a successful for Admiral Soladdo and the Centauri Republic. In one move the Centauri had successfully dislodged the Drazi presence in Vansa and reclaimed the system for the Republic. The Centauri had received very few casualties, either, making it a relatively cheap victory as far as victories are concerned.

The crews of the surrendered Drazi ships were interned on prison barges and dispatched back to Algol where they would be imprisoned in makeshift gulags. The Drazi offers

had been offered amnesty as part of the terms of the surrender, but the Centauri definition of 'amnesty' would likely not be entirely to their liking. They, too, would be interned at the Algol gulags; however, the captured officers would act as voluntary guards and overseers for their crews. Any attempts at dissension by the crews would be answered by executing the officer in charge of their conduct. "That should keep the filthy creatures in line," Minister Jaddo is quoted as saying to someone in the Royal Court.

For the Centauri, the decision now became just how hard to press their advantage. The answer that came back from Admiral Soladdo, who of course was not asked but gave his input anyway, was that the Drazi had been weakened and that a full assault was the best way to capitalize on his fleet's offensive momentum.

Minister Jaddo strongly disagreed with Soladdo's course of action. He maintained that holding Vansa until reinforcements arrived, be they Centauri or Narn, would be preferential to an uneducated probe into the Enfil system. Jaddo also cited that a Drazi scouting fleet was still unaccounted for in the system and most likely would be returning to Enfil to reinforce the Drazi fleet in that system.

Unfortunately for Admiral Soladdo, Defense Minister Jaddo had the Emperor's ear, and Emperor Kurghan approved the plan of action against the admiral's objections.

* * *

Fleet Marshal Camron did not live to see Enfil. A crewmember found Camron's body in his quarters about a day into their hyperspace voyage back to charted Drazi territories. His throat had been slit from ear to ear, and clearly not of his own doing. There had been agent of the Council aboard Camron's flagship the entire time, keeping tabs on him.

In the wake of Camron's 'suicide' (as that is what the Drazi reported it as, for fear of running afoul of the culprit), Ship Marshal Kok temporarily received a field promotion to the rank of Field Marshal and placed in charge of the surviving fleet. Kok appreciated this vote of confidence and promised to make the most of his command position. The military leadership back home just hoped that he didn't screw up again. Their first choice would have been Squadron Marshal Drus, but he was obviously no longer an option. Drus' death in Vansa had left the chain of command in the fleet

threadbare, and the Freehold had few options available to replace Camron's position.

The Mysterious Encounter in Davala Than

The Minbari Federation successfully explored the final jump lane emanating from the Ulouzor this month, discovering the remarkable Davala Than star system.

Minbari explorers discovered extensive ruins on the surface of Davala Than. The extent of the dead cities on Davala Than astounded the Minbari. The entire world had once teemed with life. Based on the surviving infrastructure, nearly a billion sentients could have lived in the system at one time. Now, however, all that was left were the bombardment-scarred remnants of the alien civilization.

The Minbari fleet had been in the system for at most three weeks before a sensor technician reported that a jump point had formed in open space close to the fleet's position. The in-bound traveler was far enough away to not pose an immediate threat to the expedition, but it was also close enough to reach them within an hour's time.

In preparation for contact with this unknown vessel, the Minbari fleet commander recalled her forces from the planet's surface. They would have to finish their excavations at a later date. Little did the Minbari know who they would soon be meeting...

The first visual reports of the contact in Davala Than showed that it was an elongated ship, yellow-green in color with four large, forward-facing spires. The vessel resisted scanning attempts, betraying about itself to the curious Minbari.

Upon reaching closer proximity to the Minbari, the ship – a Vorlon ship – powered down its drives and sent a single message to the Minbari. In the message, the Vorlons identified who they were to the Minbari and warned the Vorlons to stay away from the Ventox system for their own safety. With that the ship turned and jumped back out of the system and disappeared.

The Minbari were stunned. The Vorlons were a half-remembered memory to the Minbari people dating back to the last Shadow War. The Vorlons had come to the Minbari's rescue, but they now seemed disinterested in contact.

The Minbari made a note of the Ventox system on their star maps along with a standing order to stay clear of the system, lest they draw the ire of the Vorlon Empire.

Crimson Bard Raiders Strike Minbari Convoy in Mitoc

A Minbari convoy was ambushed, and its Quantum 40 cargo stolen, by a band of raiders in the Mitoc system this month. Mitoc has been hit hard by raising raider activity the past few months, and the raiders are becoming bolder. The Minbari trade fleet was unescorted and local Mitoc patrol forces were unable to intercept the pirates before they had finished their strike on the convoy.

2225.11

The War Conspiracy

Neither Soladdo nor Dallo were happy with Defense Minister Jaddo's decision to stall the Centauri offensive into the Drazi Freehold. Both admirals wholeheartedly believed that to not press the military advantage at this stage would result in the same backpedaling that plagued the Centauri navy during the Narn/Centauri War.

Over the course of two weeks in November of 2225, the admirals conducted real-time tactical discussions over restricted, high-security tachyon comm-nets. Secrecy was paramount in these meetings; both knew that Jaddo had moles and spies throughout the military hierarchy, so they had to be careful whom they invited to join in these closed-door war discussions.

It was Admiral Dallo that first brought up the possibility of using the alternate corridor out of Vansa to strike at the Drazi. Just before the Drazi invasion of Vansa, Dallo's Algol-based exploration command had found a second jump lane, albeit weak, leading into what appeared to be a heavily inhabited Drazi star system. The Drazi had not detected his scouts' arrival in the system, and the fleet was able to transit back to Vansa before the Drazi invasion. In Dallo's eyes, the liberation of Vansa had put the Centauri Republic in a perfect position to capitalize on the 'closed' jump lane and strike deep into Drazi space.

The effects of a successful strike against the Drazi Hilak system were many. Depending on the jump lane system within the Drazi empire, which was only partially known,

and even then restricted to information gathered from the liberated Cascor national, an attack on Hilak could draw pressure off of Vansa. This would in turn allow the Centauri (and Narn) to more easily fortify the contact system against future Drazi incursions. A second front in the war would be invaluable, and the Centauri certainly had the forces readily available to make this a reality.

The strike would also maintain the Centauri's current war momentum. Sitting and staring over a border is never prudent, Soladdo pointed out, to Dallo's agreement. By waiting one or two months, the Drazi may be allowed enough time to rebuild their fleet and fortify Enfil, which simply was not an option in their eyes.

So the conspirators agreed that the Centauri Republic *would* pursue an aggressive policy towards the Drazi Freehold. The fleet *would not* stay in Vansa as ordered – it would attack Hilak by the end of the month, in direct violation of standing orders!

In order to facilitate the attack, Admiral Dallo agreed to draw up falsified orders and give them to fleet captain Argenti, the officer in charge of the mobile fleet in Algol, sending him to Vansa to reinforce the system. Argenti would not realize the ruse until his fleet transited into Vansa, but that would assure that Vansa would remain protected, even if the Hilak gambit failed.

Both admirals staked their careers on the success of the mission. They knew that the Centauri was governed as much by politics as by the chain of command. By circumventing Minister Jaddo they would draw the ire of his how, and potentially some ill will from the Emperor himself. However, should the strike succeed, there was a good chance that the favor earned within the Centaurum would balance out any other repercussions. Their careers may falter or end abruptly, but the Centauri Republic would go on.

Attack on Hilak Successful

Under the command of Admiral Soladdo, the First Expeditionary Fleet makes the treacherous jump into the Hilak system. The Herua and its brethren rely on the accompanying Covran Scout to track the weak beacon signal connecting the Vansa and Hilak systems. Several times during the trek the Centauri nearly lost the beacon signal, but each time they relocated lock-on.

The Centauri arrived in Hilak only to find a barebones Drazi defense force in the system, consisting of a single Warbird Cruiser and three Throkan Corvettes. The Drazi fleet was protecting a colony of some 100,000 Drazi on a watery world within the system's habitable zone.

The Drazi commander, seeing the numerical superiority enjoyed by the Centauri, ordered his fleet to the local jump gate to escape the system. The Centauri fleet gave pursuit and handily destroyed the force before they could escape Hilak. In return, a single Vorchan Warship received heavy damage, crippling it.

Following the extermination of the local Drazi defenders, Soladdo's fleet moved into parking orbit above the Drazi planet and began suppressing the local productivity.

The admiral was slightly dismayed by the Drazi reaction to his fleet's incursion into the system. Rather than running scared and begging for mercy from their new Centauri overlords, the Drazi population on Hilak 7 resolved to fight the Centauri occupation forces at every opportunity. The two regulars stationed on Hilak quickly disbanded, entering guerilla-status among the colony's census.

The capture of the Hilak system, sans the colony Hilak 7, proved to be an intelligence boon for the Centauri. Captured Drazi databanks revealed more about local geography. Hilak connected to three other Drazi systems, including the Drazi home star system, Zhabar. The other two systems Hilak linked to were similarly important, vital star systems held by the Freehold. Fendamar was the primary military transfer system in the Freehold, while the cul de sac of Tithalis is a major economic powerhouse.

With this information in hand, Soladdo can begin planning ahead to next month's campaign. He is heavily tempted to dispatch a squadron to Tithalis to probe that system's defenses. There is some indicators that the system might boast some pretty fearsome defenses, but the possibility of shutting down Tithalis' industry in addition to that at Hilak 7 is almost too tempting.

The Drazi Reaction

The Drazi had originally planned to reinforce Vansa this month, but that order was cancelled following the final failure of Camron. Instead, the heavy reinforcements Camron had been counting on for his survival arrived in Enfil and took up orbit around Enfil. They hooked up



with the survivors of the Vansa strike groups and began the process of reorganizing the fleet.

Onboard one of the Sunhawk Battlecruisers arriving in Enfil was Space Marshal Krauss, special envoy of the Drazi High Council. Krauss had been dispatched with the fleet two months ago. The High Council had suffered Fleet Marshal Camron's inability to lead for long enough and had planned to relieve him of duty, one way or another.

Space Marshal Krauss found himself in control of a fleet of broken ships. The ships and their crews had been left in tatters by the Centauri liberation of Vansa. Morale was horrible, and Krauss could smell despair in the ranks like a heavy mist.

Krauss had only just begun restructuring the fleet in Enfil when word came from Hilak that the Centauri had struck the system by way of a previously unknown jump lane. The Space Marshal was infuriated, but there was little he could do in Enfil, and the High Council had not yet sent a recall order, though it would certainly come at any moment. The Centauri were now a single jump away from homeworld, and the lines of defense around the system had been stripped to present the strongest battle line possible!

Recall orders from the High Council never arrived in Enfil. However, Space Marshal Krauss did receive a special directive informing him that his fleet would strike Vansa next month and to begin readying for that assault...

Contact with the Abbai Matriarchate

Ipsa explorers move into the Tirolus system after an extended period of failure in their exploratory programs. Unfortunately for the Ipsa, the Tirolus system is already an Abbai colony!

The Ipsha and Abbai made contact soon after the Ipsha appearance in the system. The contact situation is extremely affable and neither the Ipsha Barony nor the Abbai Natar in charge of the local system defense forces seems inclined to violence or even belligerence.

The initial meeting leads to an extended dialogue in which the Abbai Matriarchate clearly communicates its borders to the Ipsha. They will not suffer violations of their sovereign territories, but wish the Ipsha to know that they are friendly and open to future relations.

Shortly after first contact, the Ipsha made arrangements for a group of human ambassadors to likewise meet the Abbai. The Abbai are far less taken with the smooth-skinned hu-mans, but continue to be extremely friendly towards the outsiders.

(CM's Note: Okay, if we were looking for three major powers to round out the Co-Prosperity Sphere, we might have just found them. The Abbai are extremely friendly and control a relatively large, if mineral poor, empire.

In generating their empire, I found that the Abbai had previous knowledge of the EA Alfonso system. The Abbai hadn't colonized the system nor had they done anything there yet, but they did know about it. That helps to tie the Abbai into the rest of the known galaxy, and keep them from being a complete "pocket" empire like the Drazi currently are.)

Raiders Continue to Target Minbari Shipping in Mitoc

For the second straight month, raiders attacked Minbari civilian Quantum 40 convoys passing through the Mitoc home system. This time, however, the Minbari were ready and waiting for them. Three Tinashi War Frigates appeared out of hyperspace soon after the attack began, jumping in on top of the three Xebecs and fighters. The raiders were neutralized before they could do any major harm to the convoy. One Tinashi was crippled in the exchange after taking concentrated medium laser hits from the Xebecs.

The Minbari government lodged a formal complaint against the Mitoc government requesting that they try to keep the raiders in check. Raider activity in the system has already cost them dearly, and if the trend continues they may be forced to pull their interests out of the system altogether.

Political Ramifications in the Aftermath of the Liberation of Vansa

The unilateral decision by the Centauri admiralty to blatantly ignore Defense Minister Jaddo's direct orders leads to a political maelstrom on Centauri Prime. As expected, Minister Jaddo is extremely upset by the turn of events and calls for Admirals Soladdo and Dallo be arrested and charged with mutiny.

Unfortunately for Jaddo, his problems are only starting. The Centaurum steps in and intervenes in the matter, passing an emergency resolution pardoning the admiralty and exempting the two admirals in question from having official action taken against them.

Rather than being upset, the Centaurum is ecstatic with their success thus far. The decision to strike Hilak was a radical one and had paid off.

Minister Jaddo had one last hope of getting his orders performed. Jaddo insisted that Emperor Kurghan intervene and overrule the Centaurum's resolution. The word of the Emperor would surely be enough to ensure that the Imperial Navy would heed the Minister's decisions.

As a second disappointment for Minister Jaddo, Emperor Kurghan did intervene, but not in the manner he had hoped. The Emperor reaffirmed the Centaurum's resolution, but then went so far to promote Admiral Dallo, the admiral credited with the idea to attack Hilak, to the title of Minister of Defense Pro Tempore. Admiral Dallo would occupy the post until the end of the war, at which point a new, permanent Minister of Defense would be appointed.

Stripped of his title and humiliated, Lord Luca Jaddo found himself evicted from the Royal Court. He would have to fight long and hard to regain his family's position within the Republic.

2225.12

The Battle of Enfil

Centauri Captain Argenti's Second Imperial Expeditionary Fleet moved into the Enfil system, only to run into an outbound Drazi fleet that had itself been preparing for a jump to Vansa. The two fleets clashed in orbit of Enfil, with deadly consequences for both sides.

For the first time in the Drazi/Centauri War, the two battling fleets are nearly evenly matched. Space Marshal Krauss' fleet is comprised of over twenty Sunhawk Battlecruisers, in addition to the survivors from the liberation of Vansa. War Scout Fleet One, a forward scouting fleet stationed out of the Enfil system, also joins the fleet.

The Centauri fleet includes numerous Primus Battlecruisers and Vorchan Warships, plus some new-construction Kutai Gunships fresh from the shipyards at Centauri Prime and Immolan.

The fight drug on for hours before either side showed signs of definitive gains. Marshals Krauss and Kok were forced to retire from the field, as were Captains Argenti and Tafalo. This left their subordinates to continue the fight in earnest.

In the end, the Centauri fleet was forced back from Enfil. With their back up against the wall, the fleet jumped out of the system and back to Vansa.

The Drazi fleet took heavy casualties during fighting and the decision was made not to pursue the Centauri fleet. Instead they sat in Enfil and began making plans to reinforce their position in Enfil.

The Centauri Probe Tithalis

A Centauri fleet dispatched by Admiral Soladdo probes the Drazi Tithalis system. Tithalis is the largest extra-solar colony maintained by the Drazi Freehold, and the Centauri find the world heavily fortified. A large Brostili Warbase is detected in orbit of the colony with several wings of Star Snakes and Sky Serpents performing local system patrols to protect against incursions.

The Centauri have no intentions to attacking the base, and the Drazi similarly have no intention of attempting to engage the Centauri in deep space.

With no combat taking place, the Centauri establish a blockade of the system.

The Drazi Fortify at Fendamar

As the war continues to intensify, the Drazi begin a military build up in the strategic Fendamar system. Fendamar contains jump links to all of the major theaters of conflict in the war and is vital to the Freehold's war efforts.

The current plan is to organize sufficient war fleets in Fendamar to allow for an attack on

the Centauri First Expeditionary Fleet in Hilak, dislodging them and liberating the Hilak and Tithalis systems.

Activity Spikes at Cascan Shipyard

The recent turns in the Drazi war have forced the Freehold to begin utilizing the former Cascor shipyard at Cascan to attend to ship repairs. The Drazi will begin using this shipyard as a repair yard for ships damaged on the frontlines in Enfil and beyond.

Minbari Discover Roundabout into Grome Space

Coming off of their discovery of the Vorlon Empire, scouts in Davala Than follow up their find by finding a back door into Grome space. To the Minbari's surprise, the last remaining unexplored jump lane from Davala Than connects to the strategically invaluable Van Maanen star system.

This discovery puts the Minbari adventurers back in-supply via their contacts in Volantha and, after a short stop to resupply, the Minbari leave the Grome-held system.

Widespread Rioting Plagues Kacheses

After years of resentment, the local government on Kacheses begins officially petitioning the Narn Regime for either a greater military and economic presence in the system, or to allow Kacheses to be annexed by the Promith Free Association!

The Narn Regime agrees to look into the population's demands and find some sort of resolution to the problem as soon as possible.

It was the end of the Earth year 2225, and the galaxy was standing on the abyss. The first flames of the coming war burned bright against the darkness. As Centauri and Drazi fleets continued to clash in the upspin sectors, a new spectre of violence had appeared outward. An alliance of peace paved by good intentions had provoked the paranoid Grome to begin conspiring against the peace.

2226

Insert witty comment here

2226.1

Drazi Economy Brutalized by War

The expansion of the war into Drazi Freehold space has caused massive problems for the Drazi Freehold. Despite having reached a full war footing months ago, it is growing worrying clear to the High Council that the Drazi economy cannot sustain the conflict in the long-term. The blockade of Hilak 7 and Tithalis has cut the Drazi Freehold off from a great deal of its industrial infrastructure. The Drazi have had no contact with Hilak 7 and Tithalis since the Centauri invaded the Hilak system two months ago.

This month, the Drazi treasury stands at a meager \$13 billion credits of available funds to repair and reinforce their war-weary forces. Most of these funds will be spent at Cascan to repair much-needed auxiliary units so that they can return to the front lines.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Drazi Examine their War Strategy

In early January of 2226, the Drazi High Council had to decide what strategy to adopt in the war. Their first offensive under Fleet Marshal Camron was an abject failure. Under Krauss, the Drazi navy was at least able to win a morale victory and temporarily halt Centauri encroachment in the sector. Unfortunately, the Drazi Freehold simply does not have the resources to press home this advantage. Half of Strike Fleet Bravo, Krauss' command, was destroyed in the Battle of Enfil. This represented a major fleet loss for the Freehold, and on that could not be immediately addressed by the High Council due to a lack of available funds.

Of major concern to the High Council is a sustained Centauri presence at Hilak. The colony could likely survive for an extended period of time under major blockade, but the ramifications of the Centauri gaining control of the system would be dire. Hilak is a single jump



from Zhabar and would make an excellent jumping off point for any Centauri attack on the Drazi capital system. The Centauri occupation of the Hilak system also placed Fendamar and Tithalis in immediate jeopardy. Given the fleet losses in Enfil last month, the Drazi cannot suffer a continued Centauri presence in Hilak.

With that in mind, the Drazi strategy for the next several months seems clear. The fleet gathering at Fendamar will strike Hilak this turn, hopefully driving off the Centauri force in the system. Elsewhere, at Cascan, all available credits will be spent to repair combat units damaged in recent engagements. These units will then be rotated back to the frontlines, allowing the damaged units there to move back for repairs. The Drazi would have preferred to perform field reports but the Centauri ravaged their mobile logistics force during their attack on Vansa. The few surviving military supply ships of the Transbird class sat idle at Cascan, useless until they themselves could earn dock time at the planet's small, atrophied shipyard.

At home, a small fleet of newly constructed Stareagles, twelve in all, maintained a twilight vigil for any Centauri attempts to break into the Zhabar system. The Stareagles were originally intended to reinforce Sunhawk and Peregrine attack squadrons, but it is far more likely that they will now be used to plug holes in fleets from Zhabar to Enfil until the necessary resources are acquired to once again devote to cruiser construction.

On that note, six Peregrine Jump Ships remain under construction at the Zhabar fleet yards. They will be completed at the end of this month and then will be able to be deployed throughout the Freehold. The High Council hopes for success at Hilak, after which many of these new Peregrines will be stationed at Hilak 7

to prevent a second Centauri invasion of the system from being successful.

Tithalis Readies for Defense

Cut off from Zhabar, the leaders at Tithalis begin construction of a shipyard complex at the colony. The Drazis lack any non-assault ship atmospheric designs and they simply cannot place their faith in a fighter-centric defense. The colony also cannot bank that they will be liberated anytime soon. With a Centauri fleet in the system, they have to begin thinking about defense.

It will take the Tithalis colony four months from start to finish to complete the shipyard complex. Once finished, the colony plans on mass producing cheap Warbirds for defense.

The Centauri Plan Their Next Move

Admiral Dallo is dismayed by the failure of the Republic's fleet to capture a foothold in Enfil, but at the same time he knows from the reports of his fleet captains that the Drazis suffered as much or worse in the battle. That being said, there is little that the Centauri can do at the moment to capitalize on the situation.

A full fleet of reinforcements, including two more Octurion Battleships and six each of Maximus Defense Frigates, Vorchan Warships, and Altarian Destroyers, will be making the jump to Vansa this month, at which point Dallo believes that a second attempt to wrest control of Enfil from Drazis hands could succeed.

Admiral Dallo has been in contact with Soladdo in Hilak and the two conference regularly on the course of the war. Soladdo has of course reported that the probe into Tithalis revealed the presence of a major Drazis colony world, heavily fortified and beyond reproach – for the moment, anyway. Soladdo has a gut feeling that the Drazis are going to try something sneaky soon; he can feel it. Dallo can offer little words of advice, being located safely below the fortresses of Algol, but comforts his friend with this thought: another two full expeditionary fleets can be formed out of the massive force moving into Vansa this month. And, from Vansa, those two fleets can split off, carrying out a massive two-pronged assault on the heart of the Drazis Freehold. With the Narn Regime's token destroyer and frigate force left to secure Vansa, the Centauri are truly free to be as aggressive as their fleet assets will allow.

The one real effect that the Battle of Enfil has had on the Centauri Imperial Navy is that it severely weakened Centauri cruiser strength in the Second Imperial Expeditionary Fleet. Numerous Primus Battlecruisers were specifically targeted for destruction during the battle. Concentrated punishment unleashed by flotillas of Drazis Sunhawk Battlecruisers was enough to destroy or cripple all of the heavy fleet units engaged in the battle. For this reason, Dallo has ordered the construction of seven new Primus Battlecruisers at Centauri Prime. These fleet units will begin construction in docking slips alongside nine Orto Troop Transports already in the last phases of construction.

Finally, since being bestowed the honorary title of Minister of Defense Pro Tempore by the Emperor himself, Admiral Dallo has had a special advisor aiding him in his planning. Dallo had taken the liberty of freeing expatriated Cascor Representative Quccar Raccac from house arrest and assigning him to his team of political and military advisors. The furry, racoon-like Cascor politico looked entirely out of place among the imperial regalia of the converted exploration command offices, but he had become an invaluable asset to Dallo when it came to understanding the geo-political situation in the region near Cascan.

From Raccac, Dallo had learned a great deal about the history of the area before the Drazis came to Cascan. The Cascor Commonwealth was a multi-planetary association, an alliance forged between Cascan and its various colonial assets. At its height, the Commonwealth held dominion over the Cascan, Zachai, and Enfil systems. Raccac made mention that two other solar systems had also been discovered near Cascan prior to their fateful war against the Drazis, but the beacon routes to both were cut to prevent the Drazis from gaining access to them – the Cascor never went into great detail on this point.

The Enfil had been a client power of the Cascor. They were a primitive people and were awarded protectorate status by the Cascor. Otherwise their system was ignored.

The Drazis first made their presence known in Zachai when a Nightowl Hyperspace Probe appeared in the night's sky over the Mocala colony. The ship scanned the area and disappeared for months. The Cascor attempted contact, but could never figure out where the Drazis ship had come from.

Eventually the Drazis did return to Zachai. This time, though, they came leading a

full-scale invasion force. Zachai was quickly subjugated.

With their empire split in two, the Cascor struggled to fight off the Drazi advance. Enfil fell to the Drazi invaders within a matter of months. Cascan held out longer (over a year!) but it, too, was conquered by the Freehold.

Quccar Raccac insists that his people will rally behind the Centauri should Cascan be liberated. Dallo hopes so, as a popular uprising on Cascan (and possibly Zachai!) would be just enough to push the Drazi to the breaking point, making their final defeat that much easier to attain.

There is of course the matter of what to do with Cascan and Enfil after the war is over. The topic is a bit presumptuous, but it has been the matter of some debate already within diplomatic circles. The Narn ambassador to Centauri Prime especially has made it clear that her government desires input on the fate of these worlds.

The current plan is to re-establish the sovereign rule of the Cascor Commonwealth over Cascan and Zachai. Even should the Centauri Republic (and, by extension, the Narn Regime) sign an armistice with the Drazi, this will be non-negotiable; it is just good politics. The Cascor will adore the Centauri for freeing them from slavery, but more importantly the Centauri will have a buffer zone protecting them from Drazi attack, should relations once again bring them to the brink of war. Enfil on the otherhand will become a neutral possession controlled by none and put in the vested protection of a multi-government consortium until such time as the native Enfil have developed interstellar capabilities and can manage their own affairs.

The Second Battle of Hilak and the Destruction of the *Herua*

No one in the Centauri Imperial Navy could have imagined that the Drazi would have had the audacity to launch their daring January raid into the Hilak system, least of all Admiral Soladdo. It came as a complete surprise to his force when a fleet of Drazi Strikehawks and Egret Combat Scouts emerged from the local jump gate, bent on destruction of the Centauri forces in Hilak.

The Centauri fleet was at a severe disadvantage in numbers. More troubling to Soladdo, though, was the composition of the Drazi incursion force. Where before all Drazi

fleets had been conspicuously light on fighter deployments, this force of Strikehawks was replete with Sky Serpent Super Heavy Fighters. Some fifteen Sky Serpents, maybe more, launched from their catapults soon after their fleet made transit into Hilak. The Centauri Republic's own Sentri interceptors would have a hard time dealing with such a threat.

After a quick communication to Captain Ahad Rehasa, commander of the Tithalis expeditionary forces, Soladdo ordered his own fleet to move in and engage the Drazi force.

It took several hours for the two fleets to converge. The Drazi made good use of this time, breaking off their scout squadrons from the main body of the fleet and dispatching them forward to trail the edges of the Centauri advance. Using their sensors, the three Drazi Egret Combat Scouts were able to gain invaluable intelligence information on the Centauri fleet before returning the security of their tight-knit battlegroup.

The Second Battle of Hilak proved that the Drazi were not the simple-minded barbarians the Centauri mistook them for. A very cunning tactical wit was at visible in the Drazi modus operandi. Rather than focusing the initial brunt of their attack on the Centauri main fleet units, the Strikehawks and Sky Serpents instead struck at Soladdo's support units. The Centauri's supply train was hit first by a series of Drazi raids that left the sole Lias Supply Ship destroyed, along with its two Sulust escorts. The Drazi finished up this success by crippling, and then later destroying, the Centauri's only Covran Scout in Hilak.

The loss of the Covran Scout delivered a massive blow to the First Imperial Expeditionary Fleet. They could no longer flee back to Vansa; the restricted lane was too volatile to maneuver without aid of scout ship. This was now a do-or-die scenario, and the Centauri were taking disproportionate losses compared to that being suffered by the Drazi fleet.

Even after falling back to a secondary defense point, the Octurion Battleship *Herua* found itself under constant fire. Particle cannon and blaster fire ravaged its hull. Hull plating melted and vaporized under the bombardment. Explosion decompression propelled atmosphere, equipment, and personnel outward, forcing the cracked and scarred hull to buckle and vent outward as well.

Onboard the bridge of the *Herua*, the entire crew knew what lay ahead. Captain Lihafa of the *Primus Royal Sovereign* had radioed their

condition only moments ago, but now the ship was gone, blown to smithereens by the marauding Drazi. All of the *Heruas* other escorts had also disappeared. They were the last ship standing. The *Heruas* gunnery capabilities were trivial at this point. All of the ship's main guns had been destroyed or rendered operable by the numerous Drazi strike waves. Her twin arrays had been stripped by the Sky Serpents who now battered the hull without fear of retribution. All of the Sentries were gone, destroyed by the Sky Serpents, though not without taking their own heavy losses in return.

Some captains would have elected to go down with their ships, and Admiral Soladdo may have done just that if not for the intervention of Lieutenant Sefra. Sefra herded Soladdo and many of the flag bridge to the escape pods, and they escaped the ship shortly before it blew. Sefra barely survived the explosion, working until the last to save as many lives as he could.

As Soladdo's small escape pod flew away from the blackened mass of the *Herua*, he could only watch helplessly as one final string of explosions tore through the ship. After a bright flash the ship was gone. His flag had been destroyed.

* * *

In the aftermath of Second Hilak, the Drazi had regained control of the Hilak system, including their colony at Hilak 7. The local Drazi population greeted their liberators and were quick to inform their saviors that the Centauri had been active the region, moving into Tithalis as well as maintaining their position in Hilak.

This information troubled Drazi Space Marshal Rothar, the commander of the victorious Drazi carrier fleet. If this additional squadron (possibly two) of Centauri ships had been in Hilak this month, his forces would have been crushed. Now, though, the chance of crushing the Centauri in the coreward sectors of the Freehold was almost guaranteed.

The Drazi collected the many Centauri escape pods from the wrecked fleet. Among those prisoners of war captured were Admiral Soladdo and Lieutenant Sefra. Captain Lihafa had also miraculously survived the battle.

The high-ranking Centauri captives were moved to secure confinement at a remote weather monitoring station on Hilak 7. Interrogation soon followed. Soladdo refused to give up any information, but Sefra was more accommodating – his pain threshold was much

lower it seemed than that of his mentor. Captain Lihafa refused to talk. The captain died under the effects of intense torture. The Drazi left his body in chains to rot alongside the still living forms of Soladdo and Sefra. Those two, along with several hundred other Centauri survivors, were interned at the makeshift prison at Hilak. At the very least, the prisoners would make excellent bargaining chips to be offered up in future peace negotiations.

2226.2

Dallo's Dilemma

With the unexpected loss of the First Imperial Expeditionary Fleet at Hilak, Admiral Dallo is left with quite a quandary, and even bigger political headache (*CM's Note: Yes, Soladdo is really alive, but the Centauri don't know that!*). The destruction of the Hilak fleet along with the death of Soladdo, one of the masterminds of the new offensive, had sent shockwaves through the Centaurum. The doves were quickly gaining ground in their mission to negotiate an end to the conflict. Contacts in the Royal Court have reported that former-Minister Jaddo is once again making his presence known in the Court and that more than one minister has his ear.

Admiral Dallo however does not have time for political games and the intrigue that goes with them. He has a war to run, and he is determined to make Soladdo's death in Hilak mean something.

Given the loss of one of the highest ranking fleet officers in the theater, Admiral Dallo elects to shake things up a bit by authorizing a number of wartime promotions. Fleet Captains Argenti and Tafalo both receive promotions to the rank of Vice Admiral and placed in command of separate Octurion Battleships. Argenti takes command of the Fourth Expeditionary Fleet, while command of the Fifth Fleet falls to Tafalo. Tafalo is Argenti's junior and Dallo makes that clear in his briefing of his subordinates.

The three discuss many options for retribution this month, but Dallo tables the idea of launching a second attack into Hilak. The first had been risky, but without a consistent line of supply to the region and avenues of escape the plan simply is not feasible. It is better, Dallo says, to leave a fleet at Vansa to defend that



system while driving ahead into Enfil and on into Zachai, Cascan, and Fendamar. Ever self-conscious Quccar Raccac, the Cascor national, also recommend this course of action.

Driving Dallo's own desire to dedicate the Emperor's forces against the Drazi in Enfil is the fact that nine Orto Troop Transports will be leaving drydock at the end of the month. It will take another month to marshal the Imperial marines, readying them for transport. Because of the economic burden this will place on the Republic, Dallo would prefer to keep the ground units on the move and headed towards the war front. Once the converted civilian auxiliaries and these new Ortos reach Vansa, a full-fledged assault on Drazi territorial holdings will be possible. Dallo only laments that such assets were not available to Sollado, as the immediate capture of Hilak could have had a lasting effect on the war in the region. Nevertheless, the war must go on – with or without Dallo's good friend.

With all of this in mind, Admiral Dallo orders the Fourth Imperial Expeditionary Fleet to launch an attack on Enfil. No current intelligence reports exist for the Drazi fleet strength in the system, but Dallo has a good feeling that the attack on Hilak last month is a good sign that the Drazi redeployed at least some of their fleet in the months since the Battle of Enfil. If this is true, then the fresh Fourth Fleet will be able to steamroll over the Drazi opposition, pushing them back to Zachai (or possibly Fendamar, but that is a far less likely route of retreat).

Drazi Success Breeds Cautious Optimism

The Drazi liberation of Hilak solved one problem while presenting another. The Centauri fleet at Hilak may have been destroyed, but

there was still a Centauri fleet in their space, and it was blockading their major colony at Tithalis. The Drazi fleet currently in Hilak could possibly move on to Tithalis and finish off the handful of Drazi there, but it was likely that any such attack would leave their fleet too weak to repel future attacks on Hilak. The problem would attend to itself, the Drazi thought. They would wait until after reinforcements from Zhabar arrived at the end of the month, then they should move against the stranded Centauri survivors.

Repairs of fleet units at Cascan were now finished, and those units were diverted back to Enfil. The mostly crippled fleet at Enfil would then be reorganized and damaged units moved to Cascan for repairs on a priority basis.

At the urging of the war council, the Drazi Freehold's admiralty finally decides to reactivate its latent exploration program. Drazi explorers have only been used for combat-related deployments since contact with the Cascor, but the current conflict has given the Drazi a new reason to begin exploring. If the Freehold could find a secondary, less protected route into Centauri space, it would allow them to relieve the pressure from Enfil and Hilak, while giving the Drazi a perfect opportunity to damage the Centauri's economy in the process. The chances of finding a 'backdoor' into Republican space is infinitesimal, but hope will drive the Drazi explorers to search for it nonetheless.

The Breakout at Hilak

The Centauri fleet in Tithalis makes a daring attempt to breakout through Hilak to (hopefully) meet up with Centauri reinforcements. Those reinforcements are not in Hilak when the Centauri fleet arrives and they are forced into a deep space engagement with the defending Drazi fleet.

Two months out of supply and beginning to suffer massive equipment failure, there is little the single Centauri squadron can do against superior Drazi numbers. The Third Expeditionary squadron is extinguished at little loss to the Drazi defenders.

The Capture of Enfil

While the Centauri stragglers of the Third Fleet were meeting their end in Hilak, Vice Admiral Argenti and the Fourth Imperial Expeditionary Fleet rolls into the Enfil system. Just as Dallo had expected, the Drazi counterattack at Hilak had denied Enfil vital

reinforcements. Drazzi control of the system was now very much in jeopardy.

Space Marshal Krauss could see little hope in defending the Enfil system against this newest Centauri incursion. His fleet had been due for rotation this month, moving the remainder of his crippled Sunhawk fleet to Cascan to undergo repairs. Several newly repaired units had arrived in from Cascan only weeks before the attack, but they were too few to be of any major assistance defending Enfil from attack.

After much thought, Krauss opted to retreat from the system, but only after buying enough time for his damaged fleet units to retreat back to Zachai. From there they could move to Cascan and, hopefully, prevent a Centauri advance that far into Freehold territories. As soon as the wrecked fleet units had entered hyperspace, Krauss' squadron would join them. This would leave Squadron Marshal Kok and his command to sacrifice their lives in order to buy Krauss' squadron the time it needed to make a final jump into hyperspace.

The Centauri fleet disagreed with Krauss' plans. Rather than concentrating solely on Kok's charging Sunhawk force, they instead split their fire between the two. Battle lasers lanced out at the retreating command squadron, leaving twin array and plasma accelerator fire to deal with the closing Sunhawks. The Centauri concentrated their battle laser fire on Krauss' Peregrine Jump Ship, doing massive damage to the ship only moments after it had opened its jump vortex. A Strikehawk and docked Sky Serpent managed to flee through the jump point before it collapsed, but even then the Strikehawk took heavy damage in the vortex collapse. The Peregrine Jump Ship itself experienced a catastrophic drive failure, destroying the ship – and killing Space Marshal Krauss in the process.

The sole remaining ship in the squadron, a damaged Darkhawk Missile Cruiser, was able to avoid being caught up in the collapsing jump point's wake and pulled a tight maneuver to bring it back in formation with the remaining Drazzi warships.

Another ten minutes of fire left the Drazzi fleet in ruin. Only Kok's flag ship remained alive, and even then it was holding on by a mere thread.

Rather than be destroyed, Kok signalled his ship's unconditional surrender and stood down from battle stations.

After the Second Battle of Enfil, Centauri ships entered orbit of the Enfil homeworld for the first time since the day of first contact in April of 2224, nearly two years before.

The indigenous population demonstrated their appreciation for the Centauri intervention almost immediately. Drazzi communications between planetary outposts on Enfil was hectic and frazzled. All across the planet the Enfil (and interned Cascor, too) had begun revolting against their Drazzi masters!

The slave revolt could not successfully succeed on its own, not against the force of five full Drazzi regular divisions on the planet, but it was a start. Centauri troop transports were already en route. It would only be a matter of time before Enfil would once again be free.

Dilgar Prepare to Seize Raleast

The Dilgar Imperium continues its work to establish itself as a regional power. Their relationship with the Grome remains largely unproductive, though Dilgar ambassadors to Gromahk have detected hints that the Grome may indeed be readying for war with the Humans, a war that the Dilgar would gladly welcome. Though such a conflict would exacerbate EA militarization, it could also distract the EA long enough for the Dilgar to move into position for their expected power play.

As part of that power play, and driven by their distrust of the Earthers, the Dilgar Imperium is dispatching a pair of scouts to improve the jump lane connecting Rohric to Raleast. The Dilgar have every intention of annexing the Raleast system. Raleast will make an excellent expansion point in the future, not to mention that it is a single jump from Alaca. Should the Imperium and EA come to blows, one of the Dilgar's first acts will be to conquer or scour the Alaca system, whichever proves more beneficial to the war effort.

Minbari, Humans, Narn, and Ipsha Sign Euphrates Treaty

In an unparalleled diplomatic event, representatives of Minbar, Earth, Narn, and Ipsha met this month at Epsilon Eridani to discuss opening free trade between the interested parties. Recenter Minbari expansion into the area follows previous Narn and Ipsha activities in the region. The Epsilon Eridani system, located in the Euphrates sector, is an Earth Alliance controlled territory and home to a

major EA colony. Epsilon Eridani also has the distinction of being a major hyperspace node, with jump lanes connecting to all of the major governments operating in and around the region, with the notable absence of the Centauri Republic.

Given the threat of war and conflict raging on their borders, the four invited powers discuss the possibility of using Epsilon Eridani as a corridor for trade and economic development. Of those present, the Ipsha are the most reluctant to sign the treaty. Their relations with Earth are solid, but their past experiences with the Narn and their utter lack of previous contact with the Minbari make them reticent to enter into a long-term diplomatic pact.

Through the efforts of the EA diplomatic staff, the Ipsha eventually succumb to EA pressure and agree to sign the treaty.

The Euphrates Treaty designates Epsilon Eridani as provincially neutral space through which each of the signing parties' civilian traffic can travel without excessive restrictions or tariffs. The Earth Alliance will be responsible for the defense of the system, but government sanctioned trade fleets moving through the system are encouraged to maintain their own escorts, just in case. No ships of light cruiser size or larger are allowed to be used as escorts, with the exception of the Minbari Federation who would not allow their traders to move through alien territory without anything less than a Tinashi War Frigate.

The four representatives of the assembled governments tentatively signed the treaty into effect on January 18, 2226. Final acceptance of the treaty would only take effect after each government ratifies the treaty.

Neither President Kane nor Minister Fargate attended the conference, as they were busy preparing for fallout from the Grome predicament. Instead, veteran diplomat, David Sheridan, represented the Earth Alliance in the talks.

*CM's Note: The Ipsha will need to advance their diplomatic conditions with the Narn and Minbari before they will join in the free trade lovefest, but they at least don't *hate* the Minbari upon first contact (thank goodness!). If the EA have some spare points available in the next year, they might try and spend them to encourage the Ipsha to sign those trade and lesser treaties...*

Ipsha Explorers Delve Deep into Unexplored Space

The Ipsha exploratory program continues to make progress in its mission to map the unexplored jump beacon paths emanating from the Barony space.

This month, the Ipsha scouts entered the Musca system. Much to their surprise, Musca is located deep within the heart of a nebula. Defying explanation, the system is filled with dense nebular formations that make movement through the system more difficult. Sensor technicians on the Early Scout Wheel *Staring into the Abyss* make the observation that sensors operate at reduced efficiency while within the nebula. This means that fleet movements through Musca will be extremely difficult to track. Combat will likewise be difficult, and it is very likely that nebula combat will not be advantageous (though still more so than hyperspace combat).

Grome Spies Discover EA Military Buildup in Proxima

Paranoid that the Earth Alliance may even now know of his war plans, the Margus dispatches a number of trusted operatives to perform surveillance of the EA military forces in the Proxima. They return with startling news: the EA has begun a military buildup along the Grome border!

Panicked by this news, the Grome Margus begins readying his fleet for imminent battle.

2226.3

The War Pauses

For the first time in months, the Drazi/Centauri War has fallen into a lull with little to no fighting reported between the combatants. The Centauri are still reeling from the defeat of Soladdo at Hilak, but the recent capture of the Enfil system has helped to buoy their spirits, if only a little bit.

The Drazi Freehold on the other hand is struggling with the constant disruptions in their military leadership. The death of Krauss at Enfil following the death of Camron has left the Drazi without a strong, central commander in the field.

The war council will have to look into this and promote a new, clear-cut leader of the offensive soon. Currently no consensus can be reached among the council's members.

Enfil Liberated!

Through the coordinated efforts of the Centauri fleet and the local Enfil militias that sprung up on Enfil last month, the Drazzi troops on the planet are crushed. The significant Drazzi population on the system is locked down, though they are given free range in their own settlements. One wrong move, though, and the orbiting Centauri fleet will reduce the Drazzi ghettos to slag.

Jubilant Enfil celebrated in the streets following word of their world's freedom. The Enfil welcome the Centauri as great warriors of peace and agree to an immediate association with the Centauri Republic. The Enfil of course do not wish to become just another Centauri colony, but by the same token they accede that their current situation is due entirely to Centauri blood and determination.



Elite Officers

Flight Leader Ha'rok

Nation: Promith Free Association

Level: 1

Skills & Abilities:

Level 1 Flight Officer

+1 AS to wing

History:

Fought in defense of Promith against Ipsha Admiral Cimmicron, 2223.8. Promoted to flight leader.

Rear Admiral Henri Delacroix

Nation: Earth Alliance

Level: 2

Skills & Abilities:

Level 1 Fleet Officer

Level 1 Flight Officer

+1 Surprise Bonus (fleet)

+1 AF (flight)

History:

Rear Admiral Henri Delacroix's military service record is exemplary. The son of a former General in the Earth Force ground forces, Delacroix began his service to Earth as a pilot but eventually graduated into command training.

Rear Admiral Delacroix was assigned to Orion Starbase *Aphelion* in the Orion system shortly after it came online. As commander of Aphelion Station, Delacroix served as the military governor of the Orion colony until a permanent local, civilian authority took over the responsibility of system governance in 2222.

Since that time, Delacroix has been commander of the Frontier Reaction Forces. In this capacity, Rear Admiral Delacroix was responsible for the overall operations of all military forces in the Orion, Epsilon, and Tau Ceti systems.

Commodore Adrienna Palmer

Nation: Earth Alliance

Level: 1

Skills & Abilities:

Level 1 Fleet Officer

+1 Command Rating (fleet)

History:

An Earth native, Adrienna Palmer entered Earth Force at the age of 19 following a

brief stint at Oxford University. Palmer attended the Earth Force Naval Academy, graduating with honors. Following her graduation from the academy Palmer was posted to the Mars defense forces where she served for many years.

Palmer's first command was the Epimetheus-Beta Cruiser *EAS Thames*. Following the mothballing of the *EAS Thames* in 2217, Palmer was stationed at Geneva where she was attached to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She was later assigned to the command of *EAS Dodana*, an Oracle-Gamma Scout Cruiser. Then-Captain Palmer served onboard the *Dodana* for several years, leading the fleet that opened up the Alacan frontier.

Earth Force budget cutbacks in mid-2224 forced the mothballing of Earth's scouting fleets, and Captain Palmer again found herself being reassigned. Surprisingly, Earth Force opted to award Palmer a promotion to the rank of Commodore and put her in command of the Earth Force First Advance Carrier Fleet, with her flag flying on the Avenger-Beta *EAS Yorktown*.

Characters



Erica Kane

President, Earth Alliance
(2223 - ?)

Imperial Census

Census, 2224.1

Empire	Total Colonies	Total Census	Income from Systems	Income from Trade	Total Military
Minbari Federation	12	43	167	25	693
Earth Alliance	6	27	113	20	548
Narn Regime	6	35	110	12	736
Centauri Republic	6	35	141	12	583
Grome Autocracy	4	19	55	13	185
Ipscha Baronies	3	17	90	9	382
Markab Theocracy	3	16	66	6	152
Mitoc Democracy	1	8	48	21	257
Alacan Republic	1	11	15	2	41
Promith Free Association	1	4	9	0	11
Tuchanq	1	5	15	0	16
Krish	1	6	15	0	3

Census, 2225.1

Empire	Total Colonies	Total Census	Income from Systems	Income from Trade	Total Military
Minbari Federation	13	44	174	25	772
Earth Alliance	7	29	124	21	573
Narn Regime	7	38	124	12	584
Centauri Republic	7	37	144	12	601
Grome Autocracy	4	19	57	28	199
Ipscha Baronies	3	17	92	13	422
Markab Theocracy	4	18	80	7	159
Mitoc Democracy	2	12	57	23	245
Alacan Republic	1	12	15	2	44
Promith Free Association	1	4	12	0	11
Tuchanq	1	6	15	0	16
Krish	1	6	15	0	1
Dilgar Imperium	2	11	52	5	104

Census, 2226.1

Empire	Total Colonies	Total Census	Income from Systems	Income from Trade	Total Military
Minbari Federation	12	45	193	35	842
Earth Alliance	7	29	127	28	799
Narn Regime	8	41	142	23	746
Centauri Republic	8	42	147	22	906
Grome Autocracy	5	20	62	17	394
Ipscha Baronies	3	18	125	22	406
Markab Theocracy	5	20	87	8	193
Mitoc Democracy	3	15	67	23	257
Alacan Republic	1	12	15	2	62
Promith Free Association	1	4	12	3	11
Tuchanq	1	6	15	0	16
Krish	1	6	15	0	1
Dilgar Imperium	3	13	60	7	144
Drazi Freehold	9	46	138	8	805
Abbai Matriarchate	5	23	95	9	271
Vorlon Empire	11	78	230	0	1380