

"Lost In a Sea of Stars II": *The Nova Solar Federation Playtest Diary*

Prologue

The Nova Solar Federation is the interplanetary government that administrates the Nova system. This single system power is descended from human deep-range colonists that arrived in the system aboard a generation ship that was launched from Sol prior to the onset of anomalous solar flare activity that led to its ultimate abandonment. The robotic caretakers of the N9 Project arrived in the system we now call Nova several hundred years before the colonists themselves. That time was spent preparing the system for human inhabitation. Colony structures, power plants, environmental terraforming, and other projects were all completed by these robotic sentinels before any humans crossed the threshold into the system's gravity well.

It has been 70 years since the Mechan Rebellion and the outlawing of the artificial intelligences. The people of Nova only distantly remember the memory of war, and the scars on the landscape have all been healed or plastered over so that no one can be distracted by the memory of the bloody conflict that killed the best and brightest of a generation. More importantly, scientists have finally succeeded in unlocking true FTL technology. The Tantalus drives of the old generation ships were too slow to make space travel practical, but these new Ramikin drives are nothing short of fantastic. It's now possible to travel several light years in a single month. The potential for even faster drives exists - it's all a matter of time, money, and research.

The Nova Federation Navy is responsible for safeguarding Nova against outside threats. Most of the ships in the Federation Navy were originally created to fight in the Mechan Rebellion. They were mothballed after the fighting but within the last decade the Admiralty has secured funding from the Federation Council to reactivate and refit the ships in preparation for its new mission: to expand beyond the confines of the Nova star system and establish a multi-system empire.

We currently have two expeditionary fleets prepared to depart from Nova. Each expeditionary fleet is comprised of five *Prometheus*-class light scout cruisers. While we could send these scouts out individually to cover more ground at once, placing them in a single fleet allows them to more efficiently coordinate their exploration activities. This increases their chances of success.

The remainder of the Federation Navy is divided between the Home Fleet and the Third and Fourth Patrol Fleets. Their compositions look something like this:

Home Fleet

2 x Hyperion-class battlecruiser

3 x Tempest-class heavy carriers

8 x Avenger-class light cruisers

Third Patrol Fleet

1 x Avenger-class light cruiser

8 x Sentry-class police frigates

Fourth Patrol Fleet

1 x Avenger-class light cruiser

8 x Sentry-class police frigates

All three of these fleets are positioned in the Nova system, as this is the only system that the Federation currently has explored. The following is a brief summary of each of the active ship classes.

The ***Hyperion-class battlecruisers*** *Hyperion* and *Helios* are the largest warships presently serving in the Federation Navy. These ships serve as the command elements of the Home Fleet. Between them they have sufficient Command Rating to control all of the units in their fleet.

Hyperion-class battle cruiser

BC 17, MC 7, BT 9, TL 0 Starship

DV 10, AS 10, PD 6, CR 8, CC 3

FTL 1

The sole carrier class in the Federation fleet is the ***Tempest-class heavy carrier***. These large carriers are capable of basing up to five light fighters each. Their armor plating is weaker than most ships of their size, but they have respectable point defense capabilities and enough heavy guns to hold their own against light combatants.

Tempest-class heavy carrier

BC 12, MC 5, BT 6, TL 0 Starship

DV 7, AS 2, PD 4, CR 6, CC 2

FTL 1, Carrier 5

Avenger-class light cruisers serve as the primary medium attack craft in the fleet. These ships are about average size for a light cruiser and are built more for anti-shiping duty than as anti-fighter or anti-missile escorts. Our fleet relies on these ships as secondary command and control vessels for our anti-piracy patrol fleets as well as to provide heavy hitting power for the Home Fleet.

Avenger-class light cruiser

BC 7, MC 3, BT 4, TL 0 Starship

DV 5, AS 4, PD 2, CR 4, CC 1

FTL 1

The **Prometheus-class light scout cruiser** is a long range exploration and science vessel. It's designed to operate outside of Federation supply lines for several months at a time without ill effect. They are very poorly armed and armored and won't be able to survive engagement with a hostile enemy force for very long. Each of our expeditionary fleets contain five of these light scout cruisers, which combines just enough Scout value to provide them with a +1 exploration bonus. The lead ship *Prometheus* is in command of the First Expeditionary Fleet while its sister ship the *Pandora* commands the Second Expeditionary Fleet.

Prometheus-class light scout cruiser

BC 6, MC 2, BT 3, TL 0 Starship

DV 3, AS 0, PD 2, CR 4, CC 1

FTL 1, Scout 1, Supply (2)

The majority of our starships are small **Sentry-class police frigates**. These ships aren't build for open combat but rather excel in an anti-piracy role. Their primary purpose is to intercept ships and perform customs inspections to search for contraband. They are great for securing a system against pirates, but not very good in a fight.

Sentry-class police frigate

BC 3, MC 1, BT 2, TL 0 Starship

DV 1, AS 1, PD 1, CR 3, CC 1/2

FTL 1, Police 1

The **Javelin-class light fighter** is the Federation Navy's premier attack fighter. Each of these small fighters is equipped with a single close assault fighter missile whose fire control is optimized for the anti-shipping hunter/killer role. Javelins are incapable of engaging other fighters or shuttles and must rely on their carriers for point defense.

Javelin-class light fighter

BC 1, MC 1/2, BT 1, TL 0 Flight

DV 1, AS 1, PD 0, CR 3, CC 1/2

The Federation Army is comprised of ten active **Light Infantry** divisions that are stationed planetside in the Nova system. These ground forces are more than sufficient to provide armed security of government installations in the system and can respond quickly to quell unrest at any planet or base in the system. Their small size will also make them easier to move to other systems, even though the Federation Navy currently lacks the heavy lift capabilities necessary to transport troops to other star systems.

Light Infantry-I

BC 4, MC 2, BT 2, TL 0 Ground

DV 3, AS 3, PD 2, CR 3, CC 1/2

Turn 1

The first month of exploration is mixed. The First Expeditionary Fleet reports that one of its members, *Epimetheus*, was crippled when its FTL drive unexpectedly discharged. The energy surge knocked out several of its engine nodes and caused multiple hull breaches. Emergency damage control teams have staunched the cruiser's bleeding but it's going to require repairs at the Nova shipyards before it's fully repaired. The Second Expeditionary Fleet meanwhile reports that its making good progress probing a different unexplored lane and its commander is hopeful that it's just a matter of time before the lane is explored.

Turn 2

The Second Expeditionary Fleet has successfully explored the Federation's first jump lane. The fleet departed Nova and arrived in a new system that contains an orange dwarf star. This system, which has been Phoenix, appears to be mineral rich with traces of key organic compounds that would facilitate limited agricultural development. Gravitational surveys of the Phoenix system reveal a total of five jump lanes connecting to the system (including the Nova/Phoenix lane). This makes Phoenix a very important jump nexus that should provide a number of expansion opportunities for the Federation in the future.

Phoenix: KV Single Star System, 6 CAP, 4 RAW, 2 BIO, 5 JUMP

The Federation Council has authorized a 30 EP research grant to fund its research and development efforts. The government research labs in Nova are producing 6 tech points per turn, and this infusion of capital will increase this total by 30 tech points this turn. This is the maximum number of tech points that the Federation can currently spend each turn and represents a significant proportion of its monthly income.

Turn 3

Hot on the heels of its last exploration success, the Second Expeditionary Fleet reports that it has successfully explored a second star system via one of Phoenix's unexplored lanes. The Aurora system is a binary star system with a blue-white supergiant primary component. No planets orbit the supergiant, but its companion star supports a small planetary system that includes a tundra world that appears to be a good colonization candidate. The system has four jump lanes.

Captain Alexander Bates, commanding *Pandora*, has been informed that he and his crew are to receive special commendations to recognize their exploration efforts.

Aurora: AI Binary Star System, 5 CAP, 4 RAW, 3 BIO, 4 JUMP

The Third Patrol Fleet, consisting of one Avenger light cruiser and eight Sentry frigates, has been ordered to move into the Phoenix system. This fleet will protect the system

against pirates and secure a system that looks to be one of the Federation's most points of access to the rest of the galactic jump lane network.

Turn 4

The First Expeditionary Fleet continues to explore one of the unexplored lanes in the Nova system, but isn't having any real luck. The Second Expeditionary Fleet has also run into problems and ended up out of supply after traveling too far off course while exploring a jump lane in Aurora.

Four Sentry frigates from the Third Patrol Fleet have been split off to form the Fifth Patrol Fleet. This new formation is moving into the Aurora system to police it against raiders and other threats to civilian craft that are currently operating in the system.

The current situation in the Federation has the inhabitants in Nova optimistic about their futures. It's hoped that peaceful exploration can continue for years to come. (+1 Morale @ Nova)

Turn 5

Exploration activities continue. The Second Expeditionary Fleet has succeeded in exploring a jump lane out of Aurora and has arrived in the Haven system. This system is a yellow dwarf star that contains a number of inhabitable planets. Conditions on these worlds are harsh but they're still viable candidates for colonization.

Haven: GV Multiple Star System, 8 CAP, 3 RAW, 2 BIO, 2 JUMP

The population in Nova proves to be incredibly fickle and they no longer are as happy as they were last month. (-1 Morale @ Nova)

Turn 6

Our first colony fleet has arrived in the Phoenix system and the system is now a Federation outpost with 0 Census and 2 Morale. Phoenix is our first extra-solar colony and hopefully will be one of many. The limiting factor for us right now is food production, and the Federation needs to increase its food supply if it's going to be able to sustain colonial growth. To this end the Federation has funded an investment in the colonial infrastructure in the Nova system, expanding the population in the home system to 7 Census. This investment has made the system happier again and it gains an additional 1 Morale on top of the Morale bonus from the population increase.

The First Expeditionary Fleet has finally succeeded in exploring one of Nova's two remaining unexplored lanes. The fleet has jumped into the Silence system, which is a planet-less white dwarf system. The Nova/Silence jump lane is the only one connecting to the system, which means that Silence is a cul-de-sac with no other outlets or opportunities for expansion. This is a bit troubling as it means that Phoenix

and Aurora are the Federation's only real hope for new routes of exploration away from Nova.

Silence: DVII Binary, 0 CAP, 0 RAW, 0 BIO, 1 JUMP

Turn 7

The First Expeditionary Fleet has return to Nova from its sojourn into the Silence system as that system doesn't have any unexplored jump lanes left to explore. It will be redeployed to the Phoenix system to explore there. The Second Expeditionary Fleet is continuing its exploration in the Haven system, and Captain Bates' report indicates that they are continuing to make slow but steady progress in their mission.

The Federation Admiralty has made several adjustments to fleet deployment this turn. The Fourth Patrol Fleet has been ordered to move to Phoenix from Nova, the Third Patrol Fleet moves from Phoenix to Aurora, and the Fifth Patrol Fleet moves from Aurora to Haven. This extends our system patrols into these new systems and increases our overall security. There has been some talk of building additional *Sentry*-class police frigates to increase the size of our patrol fleets, but those plans are on the backburner for now.

Our population in the Phoenix system has increased to 1 Census after a concerted colonist training and relocation program. The Federation fully intends to build up the system due to its strategic location.

Tech investment continues, with another 10 tech points purchased in the Nova system.

Turn 8

The Second Expeditionary Fleet reports that it is out of supply in the Haven system. Luckily its onboard supply stores are enough to keep all of the units resupplied until they could return from their latest hyperspace probing mission. First Expeditionary Fleet moves into Phoenix and prepares to start exploring lanes next turn.

Economic investment at Phoenix improves its Economy infrastructure to 1. The colonists in Phoenix are happy, and their Morale increased by 1 from a system loyalty check.

The Federation purchases another 10 tech points in Nova. The empire's tech pool at the end of the turn is 98 tech points. The Federation currently needs 200 tech points to advance its empire tech level to TL 1.

Turn 9

Agricultural development projects in the Phoenix system allow it to begin producing food locally (+1 Agriculture). This reduces the amount of food that the system has to import from Nova, but it's never going to be possible for Phoenix to produce all of its

own food using solely planetary infrastructure. The Federation could build an Orbital Farm in the system that would increase its food output, but such a project is currently seen as too expensive to build and maintain given the current size of the Phoenix colony.

The population of the Phoenix system also increases this turn, bringing the colony up to 2 Census. The colony is now considered to be a Settlement instead of an Outpost.

Tech investment continues with another 10 tech points purchased at Nova.

Turn 10

The First Expeditionary Fleet has successfully jumped from the Phoenix system to the outskirts of a blue-white giant star that has been named Oppenheimer. This is a binary system, and the second star is a dim red dwarf that is orbiting close to the blue giant. Long range sensors reveal the presence of a spatial anomaly in the Oppenheimer system. This strange phenomena will increase the number of tech points any colony in this system can produce for its owner. The system contains one unexplored jump lane.

Oppenheimer, All Binary, 4 CAP, 5 RAW, 1 BIO, 2 JUMP, Spatial Anomaly

Phoenix's economic infrastructure is improved to 2 Economy.

8 tech points are purchased at research labs in the Nova system.

Turn 11

Nothing to report. Both of our scout fleets report that they accrued additional partial exploration successes, but neither succeeded in exploring a jump lane. This is a very quiet turn for the Federation.

Turn 12

Exploration continues with the First Expeditionary Fleet in Oppenheimer and the Second Expeditionary Fleet in Haven. No exploration successes this turn, however.

Two Sentry frigates are split from the Fourth Patrol Fleet in Phoenix to form the Seventh Patrol Fleet. This new fleet is then moved into Oppenheimer to establish a permanent system patrol there.

The Phoenix colony is very happy with how things are going. (+1 Morale)

Turn 13

The First Expeditionary Fleet found itself out of supply this turn, but no ships in the fleet took damage thanks to their onboard stores. It should be noted that this fleet still contains the crippled *Prometheus*-class scout *Epimetheus* that was damaged earlier in

the game. We haven't moved it back to Nova yet for repairs because that would leave the First Expeditionary Fleet's Scout value under strength and deprive it of its normal +1 exploration bonus.

The Second Expeditionary Fleet is continuing to rack up partial successes and now has a +5 modifier to its attempts to explore Haven's sole remaining unexplored lane.

With the departure of four Sentry frigates to the Oppenheimer system, the Admiralty has decided to transfer one *Tempest*-class heavy carrier and its five Javelin fighter flights out of the Home Fleet in Nova and move them to join the Fourth Patrol Fleet in Phoenix. This leaves two heavy carriers and ten fighter flights in Nova and helps to reinforce Phoenix in case of any pirate attacks.

The Federation purchases 9 tech points in Nova.

Turn 14

The Pandora and its light scout cruiser consorts in the Second Expeditionary Fleet made their jump out of Haven and across the last unexplored jump lane in that system. This jump took them back to the Phoenix system. We now know that Haven is only accessible via Phoenix and Aurora, which makes it a fairly defensible position because military units stationed in the two connected systems would prevent an enemy force from moving directly into Haven.

Major economic investments in Nova have expanded mining operations in the outer star system, opening up new resource reserves that we can use to fund our future development. (7 Economy @ Nova)

Turn 15

Federation scientists have succeeded in creating genetic hybrids of several plant and animal species native to Nova that can survive on the surface of Phoenix. New farms and ranches are established to cultivate these new food sources. (2 Agriculture @ Phoenix)

The Federation purchases 11 tech points in Nova. We now have 178 tech points invested towards our next tech advance.

The citizens in Nova are protesting the poor and often unsafe working conditions of laborers in the outer star system. (-1 Morale)

Turn 16

Exploration continues, with the First Expeditionary Fleet finding itself out of supply once again.

Turn 17

A total of 30 tech points are purchased in Nova. This is the maximum amount of tech points that can be purchased in the system in a single turn given its current utilized Research infrastructure value. Our tech pool reaches 214 tech points during the Tech Phase of this turn. The population increases we've purchased has increased our tech advancement cost to 225.

Turn 18

Our population in the Phoenix system has increased again. The system now is home to 3 Census and its Morale is at its maximum value of 6. The colony is quickly growing, but with this population increase comes an increase in our tech advancement cost.

The Federation Trade Bureau spent 10 economic points this turn to extend a trade route into the Phoenix system from Nova. The population increase in Phoenix this turn has increased its trade value to 6 (Census x Highest Utilized Infrastructure). This isn't much, but even at these levels it'll only take a little over a year and a half for FTB to recoup the cost of the trade route.

A further 10 tech points are purchased in Nova, bringing our total up to 230 tech points. The population increase in Phoenix increased our tech advancement cost to 250. We could have held off on it a few turns until we had our empire tech level increase, but we're in no hurry to tech up at this point.

Turn 19

Economic development in Phoenix occurs as expected to take advantage of last turn's population increase. The system now has 3 Economy leveraging its 4 RAW. This gives Phoenix a total system income roughly one-third that of Nova.

Another 14 tech points are purchased in Nova. This combined with our normal monthly research allotment of 6 tech points (from the system's 6 utilized Research infrastructure) gives us just enough tech points to achieve our tech advance. The Nova Solar Federation's tech level has increased to TL 1. We'll now be able to upgrade our colonies to this tech level and start building ships that take advantage of the breakthrough.

Turn 20

Both of our scout fleets completed their respective exploration missions this turn. The First Expeditionary Fleet in Phoenix made a jump upspin and found a blue-white main sequence star that is orbited by a number of mineral rich planets. Intense radiation

from the local star makes it impossible for the system to support agriculture, however. This system has been named Vulcan. It has three other unexplored jump lanes connecting to it that our scouts will start exploring next.

Vulcan, AV Single Star System, 8 CAP, 4 RAW, 0 BIO, 4 JUMP

The Second Expeditionary Fleet jumped from Phoenix to a system they are calling Pacifica. This red dwarf star supports a significant planetary system including two planets that look to be excellent candidates for colonization. The closest to the star is mineral poor but looks like it should be usable for food production. The second is decidedly colder but seems to have an adequate supply of heavy metals that could be mined to fuel industrial construction in the system.

A single unexplored lane connects to Pacifica. Based on preliminary astrogation data it appears that it's connecting to a system that is located upspin and coreward of Pacifica. This is the same general direction in which one of the unexplored lanes in Vulcan is headed. That means there is a chance that our scouts may eventually be able to find a secondary route between the two sections of territory that we have so far explored near Nova.

Pacifica, MV Single Star System, 9 CAP, 3 RAW, 3 BIO, 2 JUMP

The labor protests in Nova haven't quit, in fact quite the opposite has happened. The dissent has intensified to the point that many of the corporate governors in the outer system have been forced to contract extra private security forces to maintain order at the colonies. The civilian government back on Nova Sola, our home planet, is currently wrestling with what to do about the problem. (-1 Morale @ Nova)

Turn 21

The Federation Council has invested 70 economic points into upgrading Nova's infrastructure to TL 1. Now the system will be capable of building more advanced ships and ground forces.

Turn 22

The first next-generation starship is now under construction at Nova. The Federation Council authorized an appropriations bill that allowed the Admiralty to release funds towards the construction of a new *Guardian*-class light patrol cruiser. This ship will cost almost 30% more to build than the existing Avenger while still having the same combat capabilities as that older class. However the Guardian is equipped with a FTL drive that is twice as fast as the Avenger's and it also has a small fighter bay available so that it can carry a single light fighter into combat with it. The Federation Navy intends the Guardian to serve as part of a fast reaction force that can patrol the

growing Federation territories and respond to emergency situations faster than any of its existing jump-capable starships can.

Guardian-class light patrol cruiser

BC 9, MC 4, BT 5, TL 1 Starship

DV 5, AS 4, PD 2, CR 4, CC 1

FTL 2, Carrier 1

Turn 23

Commander Ashley Weston, commander *NFS Golem*, has issued a dire report from the Silence system. Weston is the commander of the Sixth Patrol Fleet that is on station in that system. Several days ago an unknown drive field appeared in the white dwarf system. Command Weston ordered his pair of *Sentry*-class frigates to intercept the intruder and demand that they stand down for a standard customs inspection. As they approached they discovered that the rogue starship wasn't just a wayward freighter but an armed pirate ship! Without time to change course and safely disengage, the Sixth Patrol Fleet was forced to close within weapons range of the enemy ship. Sensor data included in the comm burst from Weston indicate that the enemy ship is a converted heavy ore hauler that has been designated as a *Thresher*-class destroyer by military intel sources.

The engagement window between the two forces was thankfully brief, but that didn't keep it from being particularly bloody. *Golem* and her sister ship, *Justice*, were prepared for the fire fight and opened up guns blazing on the enemy destroyer. The pirate's point defense gunners weren't prepared to counteract the hail of kinetic fire that streamed in from the pair of frigates and took significant damage to its armor but the fire from the NSF ships was insufficient to break through the destroyer's armor belt. Return fire from the *Thresher* smashed through *Justice's* defenses, crippling the frigate and causing damage to its engines. The loss of thrust capacity forced *Justice* out of formation.

Before *Golem* could move back to assist the destroyer surprised it by launching a number of breaching pods at the ailing frigate. The pods easily maneuvered into position and latched onto its hull and began disgorging armed mercenaries into the ship's interior. Within half an hour reports from the *Justice* had ceased and it was clear it had been captured by the pirate forces.

Weston reports that he has ordered *Golem* to withdraw from the Silence system. There's nothing his lone frigate can do to salvage the situation, and there's nothing in the system worth defending. The frigate will return to Nova next turn and await reinforcement or reassignment.

Since receiving this troubling report we've begun receiving additional information from civilian sources that claim that they have lost contact with some of their mining and scientific research ships that were operating in Silence. We can only assume that

this is the work of the pirates. Admiral Brandt is currently organizing a retaliatory anti-piracy mission that will strip elements from the Home Fleet to eliminate the pirate threat once and for all.

Thresher-class boarding destroyer

BC 4, MC 2, BT 2, TL 0 Starship

DV 2, AS 1, PD 1, CR 3, CC 1/2

FTL 1, Marines 2

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A Federation colony fleet dispatched from Nova this turn has arrived in the Pacifica system and set down on the surface on the second planet orbiting the local red dwarf star. Pacifica II is an ocean world that offers average resource concentrations. While Pacifica is not as mineral rich as Phoenix, its climate is 50% better and is capable of producing enough food to make the system completely self-sustaining from an agricultural perspective. This is especially important because few of the star systems that our expeditionary forces have discovered contain high Biosphere values. Aurora is the only other system besides Pacifica that is capable of producing enough food to feed its own native populations.

###

Only weeks after colonizing Pacifica, long range sensors in the system detected the arrival of an unknown force on the outskirts of the system. After several days the force closed within detection range of the colony at which points the colonists were able to verify that the intruding fleet's drive signatures didn't match any known energy outputs or configurations known to the Federation. A total of three light cruiser sized vessels were detected in the fleet. The technology level of the ships appears to be somewhat more advanced than our own but seems to be similar to that incorporated into the new *Guardian*-class cruisers (TL 1).

The alien force moved within communication range of the Pacifica colony and initiated first contact with the colonists. Limited information exchanges commenced and our advanced virtual intelligence systems were able to make at least some sense of the data. The aliens are evidently representatives of the Filosia Consortium and this fleet is one of their exploration task forces, akin to our own expeditionary fleets.

No permanent diplomatic ties have been established between our two species, but it would appear that the aliens aren't interested in contesting ownership of the Pacifica system (at least not right now). We are currently in a state of non-intervention with the aliens, though our initial diplomatic relations (+6) indicate that there might be some value in pursuing better relations with the power.

###

The discovery of an alien empire along our borders combined with the pirate incursion in Silence means that this is a good time to review the Federation's current military

situation. The Federation Navy is currently operating a total of 40 starships, 15 flights, and 10 ground forces spread across the Federation territories. The vast majority of our fleet strength is concentrated in the Nova system to defend our home system. System patrols are active in Phoenix, Aurora, Haven, and Oppenheimer to deter pirate activity in these systems. We haven't established permanent system patrols in Pacifica or Vulcan yet, but this is now a priority, especially in Pacifica now that it's our de facto border with another empire of unknown size and capabilities.

Home Fleet @ Nova

2 x Hyperion BC (*Hyperion, Helios*)

8 x Avenger CL

2 x Tempest CVA

10 x Javelin LF

First Expeditionary Fleet @ Vulcan

5 x Prometheus light scout cruisers (1 x Crippled)

Second Expeditionary Fleet @ Pacifica

5 x Prometheus light scout cruisers

Third Patrol Fleet @ Aurora

1 x Avenger CL

4 x Sentry FF

Fourth Patrol Fleet @ Phoenix

1 x Tempest CVA

5 x Javelin LF

1 x Avenger CL

3 x Sentry FF

Fifth Patrol Fleet @ Haven

4 x Sentry FF

Sixth Patrol Fleet @ Silence

1 x Sentry FF (*Golem*)

Seventh Patrol Fleet @ Oppenheimer

2 x Sentry FF

Nova Army

10 x Light Infantry-I

Next turn a squadron of Avengers will be dispatched to Silence to punish the pirates for their indiscretion and return order to that system. Vice Admiral Cartwright has urged the Admiralty Board to send a *Hyperion*-class battlecruiser with the fleet, but Admiral Brandt doesn't believe that is necessary considering that the fleet will be hunting down at most two pirate ships (the Thresher destroyer that the Sixth Patrol Fleet encountered, plus possibly the commandeering *Justice* that the pirates captured during that brief encounter).

The defense of Pacifica is of much higher importance at this juncture, and as such the Admiralty is proposing to split the Home Fleet and create the Eighth Border Fleet. The border fleets would be charged with protecting important border colonies from alien incursions. The Eighth Border Fleet would be comprised of the *Helios*, one of the two Hyperion battlecruisers, at least one Tempest carrier, and up to four Avenger light cruisers. We need more escort units in our fleet, and prototyping a new destroyer model to accompany our patrol and border fleets is a must.

###

Engineers attached to the Guardian light cruiser prototype report that design work is showing positive progress. There is still no definite timeline for completion but everyone's hoping that it'll only be a matter of months before the lead ship *Guardian* will be ready to start construction.

Turn 24

Captain Nikolas Kovalevsky has been assigned command of the Ninth Striking Fleet which is comprised of five Avenger light cruisers that have been separated from the Home Fleet to perform a heavy strike against the pirate presence in Silence. Captain Kovalevsky is commanding the Ninth Fleet from aboard the *Achilles*.

Astrogation data for the Silence system appears to be out of date as the Ninth Striking Fleet translated into the system slightly off course and their entry vectors forced a more reserved interception course with the enemy fleet. However, the engagement window for this battle would be three times longer than that the Sixth Patrol Fleet secured with the enemy Thresher during the previous turn's battle.

No communications were attempted with the pirates as Kovalevsky's orders were quite clear: there would be no negotiations or bargaining with the pirates. The crew of the *Justice* was almost certainly dead, and any survivors would have to get the escape pods if they hoped to be rescued. As for the pirates, they would be offered no quarter in this fight. As soon as the Avengers entered engagement range they let loose with their kinetics and missile racks. Point defense in both the Federation and pirate task forces were prepared for the fight and shot down many of the weapon salvos, but

the fire from the Federation fleet was still sufficient to destroy the wounded Sentry frigate and finally cripple the enemy Thresher destroyer.

In return the pirates focused their attention on the *Apollo*. A number of kinetic volleys targeting the ship managed to break through its point defense, scoring minor damage to a missile launcher and battering its forward armor. At the same time a stream of breaching pods dove through the flack screen and deposited a team of mercenary commandos aboard *Apollo*.

As the enemy marines clashed with the cruiser's security teams the next stage of the battle unfolded. Point defense remained strong, offering both forces adequate formation levels to reduce the amount of damage they received from enemy fire. The Federation's numerical advantage in both ships and firepower proved telling, however, and their weapons smashed into the pirate ship and finished the job of blowing it apart. One of the first volleys succeeded in gutting the Thresher's targeting sensors, and all of its weapons fire shot wide and was completely ineffectual. The destroyer's final wave of breaching pods were destroyed as their carrier exploded in a fiery ball of plasma. With their base destroyed, the mercenary fighters onboard *Apollo* quickly realized that their employers were now out of the picture and surrendered to the ship's security forces. The soldiers are to be detained for trial back home.

The battle to retake Silence is over. Only the *Apollo* took damage during the battle. External damage from enemy fire inflicted 1 damage to the cruiser, but internal sabotage by the marine boarding parties caused additional 1 damage to the ship. This is a minor level of damage, however, and easily repaired once the fleet returns home.

###

Construction has been started on four new Avenger-class light cruisers at the Nova shipyards. These cruisers are to be deployed as command units in the existing patrol fleets that aren't already commanded by light cruisers.

While some military planners have questioned the logic of continuing to build new Avengers when newer technology is available, we have to take a pragmatic approach to our nation's defense at the moment. There is an urgent need for new light cruisers and we can't wait for a new class to be prototyped, at least not yet. Plans have been drawn up however for an updated version of the Avenger that would refit the class to use the newest defensive technologies to improve the class' Point Defense. Unfortunately, this refit class would cost 33% more to maintain than a new construction unit with the same statistics. As a result we're still holding out for the *Guardian*-class to fill our heavy combat needs for the moment.

Avenger-II-class light cruiser

BC 7, MC 4, BT 4, TL 1 Starship

DV 5, AS 4, PD 3, CR 4, CC 1

FTL 1

Speaking of the Guardian, the prototype is showing additional signs of progress. We are now up to a cumulative +2 bonus to our prototype rolls. Once prototyping is complete we expect to begin mass producing Guardians, with the ultimate goal of maintaining several fleets of Guardian cruisers that can act as fast reaction forces to defend the Federation on a moment's notice.

###

Colonial investment in the Pacifica systems continues. The colony's population has increased since its founding last turn (now at 1 Census) and the first farms are now active in the system. These agricultural stations will provide enough food for all of the system's inhabitants and the system won't be reliant on Nova for food. This is especially important in the event that the filosi turn out to be hostile and move in to blockade the system.

Turn 25

Exploration continues, albeit at a subdued pace. The First Expeditionary Fleet has completed its survey of an unexplored jump lane in the Vulcan system. The lane leads to a dead end red dwarf named Abraxas. This is a rather nondescript system with a poor planetary system with 4 Capacity, 2 RAW, 2 Biosphere. However, geological surveys of the system's outer gas giant moons indicate the presence of a substance our scientists have dubbed hyperium. This strange chemical substance exhibits strange properties that might be able to benefit scientific research (Science Resource). Developing the resource locally wouldn't ever make any sense, but if we ever get a colony established in Oppenheimer we could lease civilian freighters to transport the resource from Abraxas to Oppenheimer and build that system into a massive research complex. Unfortunately Abraxas is currently outside our supply lines and the ships are running low on supplies and will have to return to Vulcan for resupply.

The Second Expeditionary Fleet has been redeployed to the Aurora system to conduct exploration of the system's two unexplored jump lanes. One of those lanes is known to connect back to Nova, and that knowledge has made it a low priority exploration target. The fleet won't try to explore that lane until it has finished probing the system's other unexplored lane to see where it goes.

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Military construction projects are ramping up at the shipyards in the Nova system. A new destroyer designated *Ceres*-class has now begun development at the orbital skunkworks. This large escort warship has been built with fast FTL 2 jump drives so that it can serve alongside the Guardian cruisers when they are completed. This is part of the Navy's plan to build a number of fast reaction fleets that can move across the empire in a minimum number of turns to react to enemy incursions on a moment's notice.

Also at construction at Nova are eight more Sentry frigates. This production run is likely to be the last once the Ceres is ready for mass production. These frigates will be used to reinforce defense fleets throughout Federation space.

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A filosi destroyer traveled to the Pacifica system this turn to deliver a diplomatic overture from the senior oligarchs of the Consortium. The filosi government wishes to sign a formal border treaty with the Nova Solar Federation that would normalize relations between our two empires and establish a mutually recognized border between our opposing spheres of influence. The Federation Council has agreed to the terms of this agreement and the alien destroyer will be returning home to communicate the successful political development to their political leadership.

We're relieved that the Filosi Consortium appears to be civil if not friendly. Our limited dealings with the alien species haven't allowed us to really get a feeling for their species. We haven't had any direct contact with them as our only communications have been via data bursts with no audio or visual communication attempted to date. We simply don't know anything about them at all beyond the fact that they seem to be about as advanced as we are and were exploring the vicinity of Pacifica when they made first contact with us.

Because Pacifica is the primary contact system with the filosi it is even more important that we invest heavily in the colony to turn it into a forward base of operations for our fleet. While the Consortium is friendly now we can't be sure of their long-term intentions (or ambitions), and Pacifica is simply too important a system to let fall into someone else's hands.