

"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-shipping 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 Filasia 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.

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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.

###

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.

Turn 26

The First Expeditionary Fleet has returned to Vulcan after completing the survey of the Abraxas system. The Second Expeditionary Fleet is on the other side of our empire scouting an unexplored lane in Aurora. If that jump lane dead ends we'll have to rely exclusively on the Vulcan system as our route to new frontiers. If Vulcan does become a hub of expansion for the Federation we'll have to build a Supply Depot there to extend supply beyond the Vulcan system.

The eight Sentry FF that we built at Nova last turn have received their orders. Three are added to the Sixth Patrol Fleet which will return to Silence to take up position in that system once more. Three more constitute the new Eighth Patrol Fleet and the remaining two form the Tenth Patrol Fleet. Both of these squadrons are dispatched to Phoenix. From there they'll spread out and take up positions in the border systems. More than likely they'll end up moving to upspin to Oppenheimer and Vulcan to reinforce those systems.

A massive new starship construction project is underway in the Nova system. The Federation Navy has secured funding for a new prototype supercarrier, the *Nova*-class. This carrier prototype costs 28 economic points to build and is over 50% bigger than a

Hyperion battlecruiser. The supercarrier has enough hangar capacity to base 15 Javelin light fighters, though its drop bays are being configured to support a heavy fighter three times the size of the Javelin as its standard fighter complement. The Admiralty hopes to eventually build one Nova supercarrier for every inhabited system in the Federation. Such a concentration of military power would protect these systems from attack and act as mobile fighter garrisons during times of war.

The Nova joins the Guardian and Ceres prototypes already under development at Nova. All of these are next generation (TL 1) starships that are intended to revolutionize the Federation Navy and keep it competitive with other powers like the Filosi Consortium (though we really don't know what the Filosi are capable of).

We've spent another 7 economic points on tech investment in the Nova system, bringing our total tech pool to 59.

Popular opinion in Nova is starting to come back around to the Federation's side and the system receives +1 Morale from its loyalty check.

Turn 27

The Second Expeditionary Fleet completed a successful jump from the Aurora system to the outskirts of a dim red dwarf star. This system appears to be very mineral rich and would make an excellent mining base to fuel future economic growth. Captain Bates, *NFS Pandora*, has named this system Forge for obvious reasons. There are four jump lanes attaching to the Forge system, including the one that connects back to the Aurora system. This gives us a number of new exploration options. Unfortunately, we can only currently trace supply routes to Forge itself and not to any systems located beyond that system. Exploring the Nova/Aurora jump lane would remedy this situation, however.

Forge: MV Single Star System, 4 CAP, 6 RAW, 1 BIO, 4 JUMP

Before too long the Federation will have to seriously consider building a secondary Supply Depot in either Vulcan or Forge to extend the operational range of our fleets. It would cost us 125 EP to build a supply depot in either system based on their distance from Nova (50 EP + 25 EP per jump). A lot depends on the value of systems we find beyond both of these worlds. The First Fleet has already mapped the Abraxas system beyond Vulcan and while that system contains a strategic resource its overall value is very low.

Military redeployments continue this turn. The Avenger CL *Achilles* has been transferred to the Sixth Fleet from the Ninth and is now serving as that fleet's command ship. The other four Avengers in the Ninth, including the damaged *Apollo*, then moved back to Nova. *Apollo* will undergo repairs at the Nova shipyards next turn.

The Fourth Patrol Fleet, comprised of 1 x Tempest CVA, 1 x Avenger CL, 3 x Sentry FF, and 5 x Javelin LF has been moved to the Pacifica system to see to that system's

defense. The Eighth and Tenth Patrol Fleets, containing a total of 5 x Sentry FF, that were moved from Nova to Phoenix last turn will now merge into a single fleet under the banner of the Eighth Fleet to patrol Phoenix. Any enemy incursions into Federation space are going to come from Pacifica, Forge, or Vulcan, so we can afford to redeploy our fleets to protect these three vital systems. In fact, these are the only three systems that we would currently need to heavily reinforce to ensure the safety of the inner systems of our sphere of influence. It might be worth considering prototyping a class of remote Construction vessels that could build fixed defenses in these systems. Starbases are cheaper to maintain than starships and we could maintain twice the tonnage of bases in a system compared to mobile fleet units. That's sometime to consider down the line once we know what lies beyond the Vulcan/Forge jump lanes.

A population increase in the Pacifica system has increased it to 2 Census. The system's Morale remains at 2, however, as many of the existing inhabitants resent the presence of so many new faces and are actively fighting Federation colonial authorities and demanding limits on immigration to the colonies. The colonists are just going to have to get used to the influx of new people to the system because Pacifica is in a key position as our sole access point to the Filosi Consortium.

The Federation is desperately in need of a system that can support major agricultural development as our food supply is becoming quite constrained and population growth is tapering off significantly. Additional agricultural investment in Nova could double our food supply, and that might need to be one of our top priorities for the next six months. Agriculture was expanded in Pacifica this turn, increasing the system to 2 Agriculture, to help address the food problem there.

This might also be a good sign that I need to ratchet food costs back to 2 per Census instead of 3, as right now the Federation can't colonize as much as I would prefer due to a lack of food.

Turn 28

This was largely an uneventful turn for the Nova Star Federation. The shipyards in Nova are busy prototyping new ships and repairing a damaged Avenger CL. Repairing a ship takes half the time normally required to build it, but that still means that *Apollo* is going to need two turns in the yards before it's ready to rejoin the fleet. The Ceres DD prototype completed work this turn and is now under construction. Development of the Nova CVD is also ongoing and the lead ship of the class should be ready to start construction in a few turns.

The diplomatic corps has remained in contact with the Filosi Consortium since we made first contact several turns ago. Our ambassadors have been slowly building up a rapport with their filosi counterparts and it is finally bearing fruit. Our relationship with the Consortium increased to +12 this turn (from +6). So far we haven't broached the topic of signing any additional treaties, mainly because we don't know anything about

the filosi territories and don't know how large their empire really is or where their systems are located. We do know that they have a colony in the system bordering Pacifica, but that's the extent of our knowledge. They have been reticent to betray information about their territorial holdings, but then we have done the same. We may want to sign a trade treaty with the aliens at some point, but we won't pursue the matter until Pacifica is large enough to be worth including in our own trade network. Extending trade to that system would reduce the cost of extending trade into Consortium space when the time comes.

Turn 29

New research complexes have been established in the Phoenix and Pacifica systems. These small lab installations will increase the number of free tech points we receive each turn from background research but it also increases the number of tech points that we could potentially purchase each turn.

The Avenger CL *Apollo* completed repairs this month as expected. The lead Ceres DD was also completed and is now ready to receive orders. We hope to build several of these new Ceres DD, but right now our money has to be saved to expand Agriculture in Nova and start colonizing additional star systems to aid future imperial expansion efforts on the rim.

Turn 30

Colonists have arrived in the Aurora system this turn. Aurora was only the second star system beyond Nova to be discovered by our exploration forces, having been discovered nearly 27 turns ago. It has taken this long for us to accrue the necessary funds to pay for a colony mission to the system. Aurora was chosen as the site for our third extra-solar colony because its Biosphere value is high enough that the colony can be made to produce enough food to feed all of its own Census. This is the same reason that we previously prioritized colonization of Pacifica. None of the other systems that we've explored have Biosphere values greater than 2. Even Phoenix is only a 2 Biosphere system, and it was colonized more for its 4 RAW than any of its other qualities.

Nova continues to suffer from Morale losses with another -1 Morale in the system this turn. The miners in the outer systems are up in arms again over production quotas that the Federation trade commission has instituted to help pay for new spending projects.

Our relationship with the Filosi Consortium increased by 2 and is now at +14.

Turn 31

The lead ship of the *Guardian*-class is completed this turn. The Federation Navy needs to secure additional funding for ships of the Guardian and Ceres classes before it can

create its first fast reaction fleet. Plans right now are to focus on building up a flotilla of Ceres DD to create a full squadron of eight destroyers under *Guardian's* command.

Population increases have been purchased in both the Pacifica and Aurora systems. Agriculture expansions were also paid for in these systems to cover their increased food costs and prevent starvation in the empire.

The inhabitants of Pacifica are still very upset about the influx of new colonists to their system and our intelligence services indicate that the situation in the system might deteriorate into open defiance of Federation rule unless something is done to dissuade the colonists. This is very troubling for many reasons, the most pronounced being that there isn't any local Industry in the Pacifica system and that prevents us from building ground forces in the system. Unfortunately, the Federation fleet doesn't possess any Cargo or Assault units that could move troops from Nova to the outer colonies in the event of a rebellion. This is going to become a major priority for us in the near term and may require us to take a look at creating a variant of one of our existing ship classes to fill this hole in our order of battle until a more permanent solution can be found.

In the interim the Federation will need to invest resources into purchasing and training spies that can run counter-insurgency missions against Pacifica.

Turn 32

The Federation Council has ordered a general round of infrastructure upgrades at the colonies this turn. Aurora receives 1 Economy and Pacifica received 1 Industry. The investment in Aurora increases our income by 4 EP per turn while the industrial buildup in Pacifica will allow us to start building light infantry ground forces in the system to protect the system against rebel militia should the system go into rebellion.

A single spy was purchased in the Pacifica system. This spy is going to be used to run counter-insurgency missions in the system. The intelligence arm of the Federation hopes that this should ferret out potential anti-establishment leaders and prevent larger scale demonstrations that could disrupt the colony's economic infrastructure.

Three new *Ceres*-class destroyers have started construction at Nova this turn. The destroyers *Vesta*, *Pallas*, *Juno*, and *Astraea* will take two turns to build.

The *Nova*-class supercarrier is locked in development hell. It is still being prototyped in the Nova system and senior engineers assure the Admiralty that it should be ready to begin construction any day now, but they've been saying that for over six months. The prototype is up to a +5 modifier to its prototyping rolls but refuses to advance to the construction stage. By the time all is said and done it will have taken over two years to build the first of these super carriers, and by then it'll probably be time to upgrade them to a new tech level.

Technology investment has taken a backseat to colonial and economic expenditures as of late and this has put the Federation at a long-term disadvantage. The Nova Solar

Federation's population is now up to 14 Census and its tech advancement cost is 350. Right now it only has 113 tech points in its tech pool. This is less than one-third its total tech cost. Federation research facilities generate 8 tech points per turn. At that rate it would take 30 turns to achieve TL 2 without any additional investment. If we made it a priority to invest an additional 10 economic points per turn into tech investment we could cut this time by more than half to 14 turns. Theoretically we could invest up to 40 economic points per turn into tech, but our total income after expenses is only 39 per turn. While we would never invest all of this into tech, if we did we could cut the time until our next tech advance down to 6 turns.

Turn 33

Four *Strider*-class pirate frigates appeared in Aurora this turn. The system is defended by the Third Patrol Fleet that contains 1 x Avenger CL and 4 x Sentry FF. Both the defenders and the pirates are at Poor readiness (-1 to combat rolls) and have 1 intensity to spend on scenarios. The Federation fleet wins the tie for initiative and uses its intensity to generate an interception scenario. The scenario length is 3 turns (half of normal, as this is an interception) but it receives a +1 bonus to its combat rolls that negates its Poor readiness penalty.

During the first round, heavy defensive fire from the Third Fleet blunted the pirate's initial attack and the pirates were unable to land a hit. The Federation return fire damaged one of the pirate Striders, ablating 50% of its armor belt.

Pirate fire control compensated for its shortcomings on the next round as its point defense worked to shoot down incoming missile and kinetic fire while at the same time pummeling two of the Sentry frigates. The ship's defenses were overwhelmed and before long they were bleeding air from multiple hull breaches. In return the Third Fleet ate into the armor of two other Striders, but not enough to cripple either of them.

Knowing that his fleet's movement vector was about to take it out of engagement range, Third Fleet's commander ordered his ships to concentrate fire on the pirates one last time before accelerating to disengage from the battle. Point defense remained constant on both sides of the battle with all units in elevated formation levels that protected them from errant volleys. The Strider's heavy armor remained a decisive advantage for the pirates and the Third Fleet's final wave of fire only managed to damage one previously pristine Strider and finally cripple one of the Striders that was damaged during the first round of combat. Return fire from the pirates succeeded in crippling a third Sentry and destroying one of the fleet's injured frigates.

At the end of the engagement the Avenger-class cruiser *Agrippa* was undamaged, but it had lost one of its Sentry frigates. Two other Sentry frigates are crippled but the other is undamaged. Despite a numerical and firepower advantage the Third Patrol Fleet was unable to destroy the raiders and they remain active in the system.

The pirate force wisely chooses not to generate another scenario against the system's defenders. Even with one Sentry destroyed and two others crippled the pirates know that they can't bring enough firepower to the table to do much more than harass the defenders and further weaken themselves. They'll have to wait and hope that no reinforcements arrive in the system next turn or that more pirates crawl out of the woodwork to further destabilize the system's security.

The pirate presence in Aurora is costing us 2 economic points per turn. The system is now contested, which means that supply routes can't be traced through the system. Supply can still reach the Third Patrol Fleet because supply routes can still be traced *into* a contested system, just not *through* it. This means that the Second Expeditionary Fleet in Forge is now out of supply. Luckily those ships are equipped with significant onboard supply reserves that will allow them to operate outside of supply lines for two turns before they run out and start taking damage.

Strider-class frigate

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

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

Atmospheric, FTL 1

Despite the pirate attack in their system, the people of Aurora are happy and contented. They probably recognize that without the Federation fleet's presence in their system they might have found themselves set upon by deadly, blood thirsty pirates. 1 Research infrastructure was also placed in Aurora this turn. (+1 Morale @ Aurora)

Another three Ceres DD (*Hebe, Iris, Flora*) have been purchased in the Nova system. These ships will eventually join the same fleet as the three that were already under construction at Nova that were completed this turn. The Admiralty originally wanted to wait to deploy any of the new starship classes until a full eight destroyers were available to be paired with the Guardian patrol cruiser, but with the pirate attack in Aurora that plan no longer seems feasible. Instead, the Guardian CL and the four completed Ceres DD will be dispatched to assist the Third Fleet in eliminating the pirate threat in Aurora. The Guardian and Ceres were built with faster FTL drives that allow them to make two jumps per turn and they can make the trip from Nova to Aurora in a single turn where it would take two turns for any of the Federation's other jump-capable ships to get there from Nova.

A solitary light infantry unit has also been purchased at Pacifica. These small ground forces aren't particularly powerful but they can be completed in two turns and even a system like Pacifica that has limited industrial capacity can build them.

The spy assigned to perform a counter-insurgency mission in Pacifica failed. His presence was not detected by the local constabulary forces, however, and he can continue his efforts next turn.

Turn 34

The Tenth Reaction Fleet (1 x Guardian CL, 4 x Ceres DD) departed Nova this turn and transited two jumps, moving first to Phoenix and then on to Aurora, to engage the pirates that attacked the Aurora system last turn. The fleet jumped rendezvoused with the survivors in the Third Patrol Fleet so that they could coordinate their attack against the raider forces. Planet-based sensors have been tracking the pirates for the last month and we know exactly where they're at (Complete Detection). Unfortunately, the pirates seem to have been tipped off about the arrival of the Tenth Reaction Fleet as their active sensors were lit and scanning when the *Guardian* and her destroyer escorts arrived in the system. They must have a mole in our planetary defense operations. That's... worrisome.

As the superior force in the system, the Federation Navy gets to force the issue and they chart an intercept course for the enemy (Interception Scenario). We're able to plot a perfect trajectory for our intercept course and all of hands are at battlestations ready to obliterate the pirates (Excellent readiness). The fleet manages to approach to fairly close range before the pirate Striders show any signs of activating their active and passive defenses. It would seem that while they knew the Tenth Fleet was inbound they hadn't received any advanced warning about our attack (Poor). The fleet's course allows for three rounds of weapons fire before the pirates will be able to break free and outrun our own ships (Scenario Length 3).

Captain Justine Hayward, commander *NFS Guardian*, ordered her point defense teams to concentrate their defensive fire on the *Guardian*, *Agrippa*, and the one crippled Sentry from the Third Patrol Fleet that accompanied the Tenth Fleet into battle. This placed each of these ships into a level 2 formation bonus. The pirates allocated their point defense to protect their three healthiest frigates, leaving their sole cripple to fend for itself.

Missiles and kinetics from the Federation fleet encountered opposition from enemy electronic countermeasures and most missed their targets. Weapons fire still managed to break through and score damage against two of the Striders, including the cripple. Return fire from the raiders succeeded only in damaging one of the heavy destroyer *Juno*.

On orders from Hayward and the *Guardian*, the Federation fleet temporarily broke off its attack on the pirates and retreated to cover both the *Juno* and the damaged Sentry frigate, *Revere*, and protect them against further enemy weapons hits. The pirates chose not to pursue the fleet and instead concentrated on shooting down incoming fire. Once again the now severely crippled Strider was denied protection by the fleets guns and left to its fate. None of the pirates heavy weapons penetrated the Tenth

Fleet's defenses. The return fire from *Guardian's* task force scored additional damage against one of the Striders from the previous turn, gutting most of its internals but failing to eliminate it outright.

Determined to end this fight, Captain Hayward orders her task force to dive into the pirate formation and let loose with all guns, ignoring point defense and concentrating on wiping out the pirate ships at all costs. Only the *Juno* and *Revere* remain in a level 2 formation bonus. This aggressive action sends the pirate force into utter chaos with a near complete breakdown in unit cohesion. Only the lead pirate ships remains in a level 2 formation bonus.

Missile launchers and railguns ripple fire as the Federation cruisers and destroyers descend into the middle of the pirate fleet. Not a single Strider frigate survives the slaughter. A single cannon round from the lead pirate ship finds the Sentry *Caernarvon* and cripples it, but otherwise the pirates score no other damage to the Federation fleet. Hayward's gambit has succeeded with minimal loss of life. Aurora is now free from pirate threat and supply routes have been reestablished to Aurora and the outer systems.

This is the first battle that any of the new second-generation Federation warships have participated in. They demonstrated much better survivability and firepower than their predecessors, but that's to be expected considering that the new ships cost considerably more to build.

Meanwhile, out on the rim, the Second Expeditionary Fleet continues its exploration mission in Forge and discovers a viable jump lane leading to a system they're calling Elysium. This is a binary star system that contains two red dwarf stars. Planetary systems orbit both stars, providing substantial Carrying Capacity. The system's RAW and Biosphere values are mediocre but still fairly good.

Elysium: MV Binary, 10 CAP, 4 RAW, 2 BIO, 4 JUMP

This jump takes the Second Expeditionary Fleet beyond its normal supply lines, and its supplies are now exhausted. The fleet must jump back to Forge next turn to prevent it from taking damage from future out of supply levels.

Unfortunately, as fate would have it, a pirate force comprised of 2 x Thresher destroyers has appeared in the Forge system and cutoff supply through the system. The Prometheus light scout cruisers will be forced to fight their way through these enemies next turn. The Admiralty has sent emergency directives to Captain Hayward to advance her fleet into Forge to support the scouts next turn.

The military victory in Aurora has made for good public relations in Nova, as demonstrated by a positive shift in Morale in the system. The striking workers in the outer system seem to be somewhat happier that despite their unsafe working conditions and exploitation by the corporate elite they at least don't have to worry about pirates. The citizens of Aurora don't share their zeal, however, and are starting to have second thoughts about having migrated to the system (-1 Morale in Aurora).

Military construction continues with the completion of three Ceres DD at Nova and a light infantry at Pacifica. A new fighter prototype -- the *Phantom*-class heavy fighter -- is initiated at Nova. This atmospheric fighter design is much more powerful than the existing Javelin light fighter but costs three times as much and requires three times as much hangar capacity. The Phantom heavy fighter is intended for use aboard the new Nova supercarriers or at planetary airfields and fighter garrisons. A colony with 3 Industry could purchase five flights of Phantoms per turn. Phoenix and Pacifica are both in a position to be upgraded to that level of productivity. Each of the colonies have enough planetary basing to maintain three of these flights for active combat operations in the system. In contrast, Nova could support 23 Phantom heavy fighters from ground bases throughout the system.

***Phantom*-class heavy fighter**

BC 3, MC 2, BT 2, TL 1 Flight

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

Atmospheric

Relations with the Filosi Consortium took a hit after one of our negotiators ended up inadvertently insulting an alien ambassador. The relationship drops by 1 to +13. We are starting to learn a bit more about the filosi, though, and from what we gather they are an intelligent plant species. Our interactions with them to date indicate that they aren't especially aggressive (AG 39), and they show no predilections towards xenophobic attitudes when dealing with our species (XE 12). The most troubling aspect of our dealings with the filosi government is that they don't seem to understand the concept of binding agreements (IN 12). Their own alien psychology seems to lend itself to a culture of rank opportunists that would push their own mothers down the stairs if they thought it would provide them with the most short-term benefit of the options available to them. It's probably going to be impossible to form a stable relationship with the Consortium without considerable diplomatic effort, and even then it could all fall apart if one day the oligarchs decided to abrogate their treaties. This makes extending trade into the filosi sphere an exercise in futility.

Turn 35

The Tenth Reaction Fleet moved into Forge and engaged the two pirate Thresher DD in the system. The pirates had the advantage of detecting the anti-piracy force on its approach (Significant) but the Second Expeditionary Fleet assisted the Tenth Fleet in pinpointing the pirate's location amongst the inferno moons of the innermost gas giant (Normal). Two the *Prometheus*-class light cruisers were temporarily detached to the Tenth Fleet to assist in the takedown of the pirates. The combined fleet rushed in and destroyed the pirates in a two round interception. The already damaged *Juno*, a

Ceres DD, was targeted by the pirates and took severe damage in the battle, but both Threshers were soundly defeated.

Given the recent spate of pirate activity, the Admiralty has decided to bring one of the *Avenger*-class light cruisers from the Home Fleet into the Nova shipyards so that it can be refit into our fleet's first mobile field repair platform. The *Perseus* has been selected as the lead ship of this new class. While it would be preferable to design an entirely new ship instead of refitting an old one, prototyping takes more time and the Navy really needs a repair ship now. The *Perseus*-class light repair cruiser strips out 3 AS (leaving 1 AS) and adds 2 Repair to the hull. This swap out is made possible by upgrading the ship class to TL 1 as part of the refit. Two *Perseus* CRL are required to repair a single escort, but that's at least a start. This refit costs 33% more to maintain than a new construction unit with the same statistics, a drawback of hull variants, but we can begin unrestricted construction of more *Perseus* repair cruisers after the first one is finished in 4 turns.

A second light infantry joins the troop garrison on Pacifica, bringing the size of the Pacifica Army to two light infantry units.

We just received a priority message from the First Expeditionary Fleet that is operating upspin of Vulcan, and it has set the Navy abuzz. Their report states that they jumped into a previously-unknown white dwarf star system two weeks ago. During the routine system survey their sensors detected a metallic object in a decaying orbit of an ice giant in the outer star system. The fleet moved in to investigate... and what they found was the battered remnants of an alien dreadnought!

Away teams that visited the dreadnought indicate that the ship is still in fairly good shape. Computer systems are still operational and the main datacore appears to be intact (but inaccessible due to the impossibility of translating a dead alien language). Signs indicate that the ship's engines and primary life support failed after some sort of a reactor overload and this led to the ship's untimely demise. Dead alien bodies litter the interior of the ship. These creatures look like a cross between a sea anemone and a two-headed ostrich. They are definitely not filosi.

Scientists have named the system Sheshano which is a phonetic translation of the strange alien sounds that they heard emanating from many of the still-active computer systems onboard the derelict. They believe that the word or phrase is likely the alien's equivalent of a distress signal or other emergency warning that still calls out to the ship's long dead crew.

Sheshano, DVII Single, 4 CAP, 3 RAW, 3 BIO, 1 JUMP, Alien Derelict

Sheshano Dreadnought

BC 27, MC 23, BT 14, TL 11 Starship

DV 23, AS 27, PD 12, CR 12, CC 5

FTL 3, Electronic Warfare 6, Bombardment 3

This discovery is nothing less than earth shattering. The Second Expeditionary Fleet isn't in any position to transport the derelict back to Nova for study or repair but they were able to pull it out of its decaying orbit and it is no longer in an immediate threat of descending into the gas giant's upper atmosphere, not that there was much risk of that. Projections showed that the ship had another decade or two left before it would have irretrievably descended into the gas giant's atmosphere and been destroyed.

Access to such advanced alien technology would accelerate our research and development efforts by years. There are others among the Admiralty that are vehemently opposed to reverse engineering the derelict, however, as they would prefer to study and refit it for military service as a new fleet flagship. I can see where they are coming from -- the Sheshano dreadnought would be an extremely fearsome addition to the fleet -- but being able to advance our entire technology base ahead twenty years almost over night is too appealing an option.

Our biggest problem is getting the derelict back to Nova for study. Colonizing the Sheshano system and assembling a fleet base there to salvage the dreadnought is out of the question from both a logistics and strategic location perspective. The next most viable option is to build enough of our new Perseus CRLs to move into the system and repair the ship to the point it can return back to Nova for study. Based on the dreadnought's size it would take 14 Perseus CRLs to retrieve the dreadnought. That's almost more light cruisers than is in our current fleet! Salvaging this dreadnought is definitely going to be a long-term project for us.

On the strategic front, it's unfortunate that the Sheshano system, like Abraxas before it, is a dead end with only one jump lane connecting to it. This makes it so that two of the four jump lanes out of Vulcan terminate a jump away. This is leaving us very few options for expanding out of our particular region of the galaxy. There is one unexplored lane remaining in Vulcan and we can only hope that it heads to a new jump nexus that we can use as a springboard into the upspin and outward sectors. We can just be grateful that Forge and Elysium are offering us so many expansion opportunities.

Given our current understanding of the upspin rim territories near Vulcan, if we don't find any more outlets beyond Vulcan we can only assume that Sheshano must have been the home system of the strange anemone/ostrich aliens that built it. There is a planet in the system that seems to be a post-garden world that may have once supported life but is now a hot house world subject to a runaway greenhouse effect. The planet's cloud cover is impenetrable to visual and electromagnetic sensor detection which prevents us from searching for any signs of prior inhabitation.

As it currently stands the Federation Council is seriously considering financing a massive expansion into the systems beyond Forge. This plan calls for the mapping of the Nova/Aurora jump lane to cut our travel time to the region by one jump. This action would extend our supply lines out to the Elysium system and any other stars

one jump from Forge. Elysium would then become a priority colonization target. After colonizing a sector capital would be built in the system to help us extend administrative services into the area and cut down on the expense of establishing new colonies and facilities in the region.

Our relationship with the Filosi Consortium increased by 5 (now at +18).

Turn 36

Political problems in the Nova Star Federation continue to mount. Both Phoenix and Pacifica lost Morale today because their representatives were denied representation on the Federation Council. Both colonial delegations had been petitioning the Council to grant the colonies political representation on the basis that both worlds now have populations larger than several of the Nova colonies that have seats on the council. The Council doesn't want to anger its own core corporate backers that are fervently opposed to an expansion of colonial political power because the admission of the worlds to the Council might eventually lead to the inhabitants of their own corporate-controlled mining bases in Nova looking to also petition the Council for full membership.

Long range monitoring stations in the Forge system have sent back troubling news of pirates active in the nearby Elysium system. A fleet of 2 Thresher DD and 2 Strider FF are supposedly operating in Elysium. The system is located outside the Federation's sphere of influence so the pirates won't affect our bottom line but it will make it more difficult for us to expand into the region in the future. Once we can extend supply into Elysium we'll have to dispatch some ships to take the pirates out.

The Filosi Consortium contacted our government this month and offered us a trade treaty. This unexpected offer was accepted, but we know how capricious the filosi oligarchs can be and it may be some times before we actually begin trading with them. As part of the trade treaty both parties were required to inform the other as to the location of their closed trading posts. Our only trading post is in Nova itself, and navigation data for the Pacifica => Phoenix => Nova chain were handed over to our filosi trading partners. In return the filosi revealed that their homeworld of Filos Prime is the system located one jump from Pacifica and this is the location of their nearest trading post. We don't have a trade route to Pacifica yet, but once we do it will be fairly easy to extend a trade route to Filos Prime. Our trade commissioners just worry about putting too much money into establishing trade routes into Consortium space when they could decide to rescind the treaty at any time. Our relationship with the filosi also increased to +20 this turn (+2 relationship bonus).

Turn 37

Agriculture investment in Nova increases the system to 7 Agriculture. This more than doubles the amount of excess food produced per turn in the Federation territories (to 9 leftover food from 4). We can now support three more Census at our colonies. This

isn't a very safe margin for error and the Federation desperately needs to find another garden world like Terra Nova (our homeworld) if we hope to support larger populations. Another possibility is to invest in orbital farms at Nova. Such facilities would be expensive to maintain, but it would give us an extra 7 food per turn.

A trade route has been extended to the Pacifica system at a cost of 15 economic points based on distance (5 for Phoenix, where we already have a trade route, and a further 10 for Phoenix). Adding Phoenix to our trade network increases our commerce income to 7 EP per turn.

A counter-insurgency mission launched against Pacifica failed this turn. Local law enforcement detected the mission but didn't apprehend any of our operatives. They retreated to their safe houses at the colony to await future attempts to subvert public opinion at the colony.

Turn 38

The first human traders have begun arriving at the filosi homeworld to establish a permanent trading mission. Meanwhile, representatives of the Consortium trade cartels have established a trade route of their own to the Pacifica system. This is our first experience with interstellar trade. We're already seeing a slight jump in commerce income from our trading operations in Filos Prime (+2 commerce income).

The intelligence service has expanded its presence in the Pacifica system. We now have 2 spies there. The existing spy performed a counter-insurgency mission in the system and succeeded in increasing its Morale. Pacifica now has 3 Morale to match its 3 Census.

The First Expeditionary Fleet encountered hyperspace turbulence during its recent exploration mission in the Vulcan system. Four ships in the fleet were damaged (three just short of crippling). The only other ship in the fleet is the Epimetheus which was already crippled during an earlier exploration mishap. The fleet needs to be returned back home for repairs sooner rather than later.

Turn 39

The Admiralty has ordered the First Expeditionary Fleet to move back to Nova for repair. The fleet is currently in Vulcan and it will take three turns for them to reach Nova via the Vulcan => Oppenheimer => Phoenix => Nova chain.

To help prevent the need for such mass deployments in the future we're starting construction on another four *Perseus*-class light repair cruisers at Nova. The decision was made to build new ships rather than convert existing ones because we may need the firepower the Avenger CL offer at least for a few more years.

The Phantom-class heavy fighter has finally completed prototyping at Nova. This new fighter class is more advanced than the Javelin and significantly more powerful. The

only problem now is that our existing carrier fleet is largely incapable of fielding these new fighters. Each Tempest CVA has 5 Carrier value, and each Phantom flight requires 3 Carrier. That means that we can place 1 Phantom per Tempest, displacing 3 Javeling flights in the process. That's a fairly decent exchange overall as the Phantoms are equipped for an interception role where the Javelins are strictly anti-shipping fighters. We'll start building more of these ships in the future, but it may also be worth refitting the Tempests to give them extra Carrier capacity. That's definitely something to consider.

The *Nova*, the lead ship of our new supercarrier class, is officially half finished. It has another 7 turns of construction at the Nova shipyards before it'll be completed, however. Once finished it will be a shining star in the Navy's crown, but it's probably going to be the only supercarrier that it'll have available for the foreseeable future. The Federation Council is not keen on spending money on more expensive supercarriers after how much of a boondoggle the current project has become with its long development during the prototyping stage.

Our relationship with the Filosi Consortium continues to grow stronger. The filosian ambassador and his staff met with Council representatives this month and hammered out a non-aggression treaty. This agreement forbids our military commanders from opening fire on filosi units, and vice versa. This should save our empires some money as we can now safely place border defenses into reserve status to save money on maintenance. We'll likely give time for the ink on the treaty to dry before we worry about ordering any of our forces to stand down, however, given how little we know about the filosi.

Morale at Pacifica increased to 4 this turn. It seems that our propaganda from last turn must have been especially influential!

Turn 40

Federation colonists have been sent out to colonize the Oppenheimer system. Oppenheimer is a 5 RAW system that contains a strange spatial anomaly that we're looking forward to studying. The mining industry in the system should eventually cover the expense of its infrastructure and make it easier for us to pay for future colonization missions into the Vulcan rim territories.

Pacifica gained another Morale from loyalty checks this turn. The system seems to be coming around to the fact that it's going to become a major travel hub in the future and the Federation's principle trade corridor to the worlds of the Filosi Consortium.

Relations with the Filosi Consortium hit a bit of turbulence this turn as our relationship dropped by 5 to +15. We're not quite sure what we did to make the filosi mad, or even if it was something we did. From what little we've been able to pry out of the filosi delegation it looks like some of the oligarchs are upset that the trade revenue they're earning isn't high enough to cover their anti-piracy expenses in Filos Prime, but it all seems like a lot of bluster to us.

The Admiralty has secured funds to bring the *Tempest*, currently on station in the Home Fleet, back into the Nova shipyards to undergo a comprehensive refit. This refit will convert the *Tempest* into a Tempest-II heavy carrier with +1 DV (8) and +1 Carrier (6). These upgrades increase the maintenance cost of the class to 6 (from 5), but in the end the Tempest-II will be able to take more damage and have enough Carrier value to base two flights of Phantom heavy fighters. This should extend the lifespan of the Tempest carriers for another five years (or at least that is the hope). It probably won't be cost effective to upgrade the carriers any further once TL 2 is achieved because the maintenance cost increase will be too great and it'll just be cheaper to prototype a new carrier class.

Looking ahead to our future needs and the topic of a Tempest replacement, certain prominent members of the Admiralty are pushing for a light carrier design to succeed the *Tempest*-class once the Federation advanced to TL 2. One of the light carrier designs put forward by these admirals would cost 9 economic points to build and would have as much basing capacity as the new Tempest-II. Their survivability would be poorer (about 2/3 the Defense of the Tempests), but they'd make up for it with speed of construction and their lower Command Costs.

The first flight of Phantom fighters has now been completed. They're going to remain crated at the Nova shipyards for a few more turns until they can be loaded aboard the new Tempest-II. In case of an emergency we can always transfer them to one of the other two active Tempest CVA that are in the Home Fleet in Nova.

Turn 41

This was a turn of major population expansions at the outer colonies. The first Census was placed in the Oppenheimer system and Aurora's population was increased to 3 Census. Infrastructure investment in these systems purchased 1 Research in Oppenheimer and 2 Economy in Aurora. The spatial anomaly in Oppenheimer doubles the number of free tech points that its Research infrastructure produce each turn. The scientists in Oppenheimer are especially happy to see that the Federation is interested in financing their research activities. The colony's Morale increases by 1. It's now at the system's maximum value of 4 Morale.

The population expansions this turn do have one troublesome side effect. The Nova Solar Federation is no longer producing any excess food and its population growth has ceased. Agriculture investment in Aurora (3 Biosphere) or Phoenix (2 Biosphere) is necessary to increase the Federation's food supply and make it possible for us to expand into any new systems. While we could raise some food in Oppenheimer the system's 1 Biosphere makes building more than a single point of Agriculture in the system largely a waste of money. The availability of life bearing garden worlds continues to be one of our biggest barriers to expansion.

The Second Expeditionary Fleet reports that it has successfully probed the downspin jump lane in the Forge system, emerging on the edge of a KIII binary system that they

have named Illyria. A survey of the system reveals that it is a Low value system with limited system resources but an incredible six jump lanes connecting to it! One of these unexplored lanes appears to connect to the previously explored Elysium system but the lane will be innavigable until a proper gravitic survey is completed.

Turn 42

Colonial expansion continues in the Federation territories with the purchase of Economy in Oppenheimer (to mine the system's rich RAW reserves) and Agriculture in Aurora. Our income is now at 47 EP per turn after expenses, and our food production is giving us 3 PP per turn for population growth.

The Second Expeditionary Fleet has moved back to Forge from Illyria to get back into supply and refresh their ships' stores. It's becoming increasingly evident that we'll either need to explore the Nova/Aurora jump lane to extend supply to the area beyond Forge or else build a supply depot in that system.

The five Prometheus CLX of the First Expeditionary Fleet have arrived back in the Nova system. This is the first time that the ships have been back to the homeworld since they left the system over four years ago. It goes without saying that the crews are ready for a little bit of R&R! While they're enjoying their well deserved shore leave the engineering teams at the Nova shipyards are going to begin repairing them and readying them for their next four year mission. The crippled scout *Epimetheus* is the first to be moved into the dock. It's damage requires more money and time for repairs, and the First Expeditionary Fleet won't be ready to leave Nova for at least two turns.

The Admiralty did a cost/benefit survey on upgrading the aging *Prometheus*-class but in the end such a refit would increase each ship's maintenance cost by 50% and only provide a minimal performance benefit. Unfortunately, the Federation Navy is going to have to consider developing a new, more expensive scout class or else build additional Prometheus models to help speed its rate of exploration. Each Prometheus CLX costs 6 EP and it takes five of them to gain a +1 exploration bonus. This means that each new expeditionary fleet we build will cost us 30 EP up front and would have a maintenance cost of 10 EP per year to maintain.

The four *Perseus*-class light repair cruisers under construction at Nova were completed this turn. When combined with the original Perseus that's currently attached to Home Fleet this repair force will be able to conduct field repairs on up to 20 EP of ships at a time (*note: I lowered the cost of repair and increased the amount of Repair the Perseus-class had available based on subsequent rule changes*). This is not enough to repair an entire exploration fleet but it'd make a good dent in it.

Our relationship with the filosi rebounded this year, increasing to +19. This almost makes up for the dip in relations from last turn. It would seem that the corporate interests that were opposed to Novese trading presence in Filos Prime are no longer quite as agitated or else their attention has been drawn elsewhere for now.

This turn Morale increased at Nova and decreased at Aurora. Both systems are sitting good for Morale so it's not really that much of a problem either way.

Turn 43

Our ambassador to the Filosi Consortium has sent an urgent message to the Council informing them that several of the more powerful filosi oligarchs attempted to orchestrate a power play that could have resulted in the Consortium declaring war on our Federation! Apparently the oligarchs couldn't find enough support for their position given our relatively good relationship, but it's still enough to make us a bit more leery of the filosi. Our relationship has dropped to +17. If the current trend continues we may be forced to dispatch our spies in Pacifica to reconnoiter Filos Prime and gather information on its defenses in case we do end up in a shooting war.

The filosi rolled a 1% on their declaration check (it's normally at 2%) and then tried to start a war with the Federation! Luckily their actual chance of declaring war is 25% (base) - 17% (relationship) - 11% (XE) = -3% (impossible). If their XE was 50 like ours they would have instead had a 8% chance of declaring war. A bit schizophrenic, which would be in character for the filosi, but not out of the question considering that +17 is not that good of relations.

In what is one of the most ill-timed decisions in recent memory, the Federation Council ordered the Navy to start shifting the majority of its fleet units into reserve status. The Home Fleet in Nova (2 x Hyperion BC, 3 x Avenger CL, 1 x Tempest CVA, 5 x Javelin LF), Fifth Patrol Fleet in Haven (4 x Sentry FF), Sixth Patrol Fleet in Silence (1 x Avenger CL, 4 x Sentry FF), and Eighth Patrol Fleet in Phoenix (5 x Sentry FF) have all been transitioned into the reserves. This has reduced our maintenance costs by 2 EP per turn, or 10% of our per-turn total. The Federation Council had originally been calling for a 20% reduction in maintenance, but with the diplomatic report from Filos Prime it seems like the naval reduction program is going to have to be put on hold until the situation becomes more clear.

The *Perseus* and its four sister ships were moved out of the Home Fleet prior to its downgrade to reserve status. The ships now constitute the Twelfth Repair Fleet. It moved to Phoenix this turn and is en route to Aurora to start performing field repairs on damaged ships there before moving on to Forge.

Turn 44

The economy in the Aurora system has been upgraded to 3 Economy. This increases the system's income to 12 EP per turn. An orbital farm facility has been built in Nova, too, increasing our food production in the system by 7 food per turn. This should help address our population growth issues at least for a little while.

The First Expeditionary Fleet disappeared while exploring the Nova/Aurora jump lane. None of the fleet's five Prometheus cruisers (*Prometheus*, *Epimetheus*, *Anthe*, *Tethys*, or

Dione) have dispatched reports back to Naval Command during their scheduled communications windows. At this point we have to assume the worst and that they were destroyed while exploring the jump lane.

Yes, I finally rolled a dreaded '12' on my exploration peril result. Ugh. I said no whammy!

Luckily, construction has just started on five new Prometheus CLX in the Nova system. These ships were intended to serve as the Federation's third full exploration force, but now it's looking like it will have to take over for the lost First Expeditionary Fleet.

The sudden loss of the First Fleet has made us reconsider how we use our scouts. In the future, it might be better to break each scout off so it can operate on its own. This mitigates the chances of losing an entire expeditionary fleet but at the expense of making exploration take longer. Given the number of unexplored lanes located beyond Forge in the downspin sectors that really shouldn't be a problem, however, and it might even let us cover more ground faster than we're currently able to.

Meanwhile, on the other side of our empire, the Second Expeditionary Fleet jumped from Forge into the Delphi system across a previously unexplored jump lane. This system is a white sub-giant with mediocre resources but it contains another spatial anomaly similar to the one we found in Oppenheimer. We're not quite sure what this means other than that this region of space exhibits high concentrations of strange astronomic phenomena.

Delphi, FIV Single Star system, 6 CAP, 2 RAW, 3 BIO, 2 JUMP, Spatial Anomaly

While the Federation Council has put plans on hold for cutting back on the Navy's military budget, the Army isn't quite so lucky. All of the ground forces in Nova and Pacifica have been put into reserve status.