

VOICES

OF

WAR



CONFEDERATION
AND EMPIRE

ARMADA

WING COMMANDER.™



VOICES
OF WAR

Confederation Oath of Service

I am the heart of the Confederation.

A servant of peace ...

A deliverer of freedom ...

A guardian of worlds ...

As I pave the road to victory

I shall not fear the enemy

For he cannot conquer justice.

As I light the righteous fire of peace

I shall hold life sacred

For it is my duty to rise against evil.

In my comrades I do trust

For we are one anothers' eyes.

Even in the face of death

We wear our rank in faith

That justice will right all wrongs.

The Kilrathi Oath

My heart does not know fear

For I am a servant to Sivar.

My claws do not know shame

For I am a warrior of Kilrah.

My Clan shall not be disgraced

For I serve my Hrai and Lord.

With my tongue I offer fealty.

With my claws I unsheathe victory.

With my mane bowed I lie down.

And offer up my life for honor.

Introduction to the Terran-Kilrathi Conflict

The home planet of the Kilrah culture is nestled within the Orion arm of the Milky Way; a year-and-a-half's travel from the Terran base of Earth. The Kilrathi have possessed interstellar flight knowledge for the last century, using that development to conquer hundreds of planets in outlying sectors. Though they encountered several other life forms, none could compete with their scientific knowledge – until they ran into a Terran exploration party in 2634.

The Terrans, likewise, had befriended several nearby worlds and quickly assimilated them into the Confederation. All were advanced, but none possessed technology that could rival that of Earth's. Since the Terrans and Kilrathi had experienced wars between their own people in past centuries, the tools for interstellar war were already in place by the time the two races crossed paths in 2629. With a new outlet for frustration and hatred, each side rapidly unified after the first few encounters.

Now after almost thirty years of continuous war, the Terrans and Kilrathi have arrived at a stalemate, with the Kilrathi gaining slight advantages in sectors with tactical jump locations. Still, this desperate fight pits humanity against honor and survival, compassion against the deliverance of justice.

Timeline *(Note that Kilrah uses base 8)*

Orbit 151, Sun Year 5105

While establishing footholds in the recently explored Krat'na Sector, the destroyer K'rath'kan detects an intruder. Leader Brath'kar nar Caxki reports that the unidentified ship is attempting to neutralize his shields with wide-band radiation. When the enemy fails to leave the area of trespass after three-eighths of an hour, the destroyer opens its guns to eliminate the threatening vessel.

2629.105

The Terran Confederation expands exploration and colonization efforts and penetrates Vega Sector. On 2629.105 (March 16, 2629 Terran time) the Iason encounters a spacecraft of unknown origin. Commander Jedora Andropolos transmits an international wide-band, non-verbal greeting designed by the Committee for Interaction with Alien Intelligences.

Andropolos keeps Iason's guns off-line for the TCN-recommended 20 minutes and awaits a response from the alien vessel. Finally, without warning, the unidentified ship opens fire with full lasers, utterly destroying Iason and all hands.

Sun Year 5112

Encounters with the unknown race continue as exploration ships cross normal Kilrathi patrol routes. Vessels are noted to have external firing weapons and are attacked on sight to prevent further penetration into Kilrathi territory. Captured debris indicates that the ships originate from the "Terran Confederation."

After drones radio back images of a colonized planet 3 trillion eights starward of Kilrah, the Emperor decrees that Kilrathi forces are to search out and eliminate this strategic colony. The Imperial military draws up plans for a massive attack on the colony and its orbital space station.

When the attack commences, resistance is greater than expected – three carriers and many eights of fighter-craft. It appears that the

enemy's technology parallels Kilrah's knowledge of spacecraft and inter-sector jump mechanisms. For four days, the Kilrathi battle the Terran forces into retreat, then return victoriously to Kilrah. Leaders predict that forces will conquer the alien race in seven moons.

2634

On 2634.186, the Terran Confederation officially declares war on the Empire of Kilrah for committing countless acts of piracy and unwarranted assault.

On 2634.228, TCN cryptographer Ches M. Penney partially decodes a stray Kilrathi cipher. The intercepted message implies that a strike will be launched soon against a Confederation colony on McAuliffe, then on its orbiting space station *Alexandria*.

Confederation High command orders a counteroffensive twice the size of the anticipated fleet, hoping to reach McAuliffe first and ambush the attackers.

On 2634.235, the Kilrathi fleet invades McAuliffe's territory. It is quadruple the expected size (the incomplete translation underestimated the size of the offensive fleet). So begins the McAuliffe Ambush engagement.

In several days of bloody combat, a well-armed Kilrathi force all but obliterates the Terran fleet. The still-sizable force of functional Kilrathi spacecraft, momentarily daunted by Terran resistance, turn back to regroup. The first large-scale Terran-Kilrathi engagement ends with the Kilrathi spearhead momentarily broken.

Sun Year 5117

Thraxhath's forces successfully invade and occupy McAuliffe, a colonized Terran world abundant in metal resources and convenient to Kilrah's jump points. Upon claiming the planet, warriors take countless captives to prevent reciprocative attacks by the Confederation. (Leaders have concluded that the race follows a religious belief that values individual lives.)

A concentrated attack force battles the Kilrathi fleet, led by a surprisingly light squadron of heavy-class fighters bearing small, stationary devices. The engagement turns bitter for Kilrathi troops as invading fighters release static explosives, apparently mines of some sort. An undetermined number of Terran ships bolster the enemy fleet, arriving through a jump point corresponding to the middle of the battlefield. After a heated fight, the enemy fleet limps back into Terran territory. Losses for the enemy number several eights.

2639

On 2639.033, Kilrathi occupation forces land on the human-occupied world of McAuliffe. Invading troops hold a quarter of a million humans hostage under orbital guns and await Terran reprisals. This triggers the McAuliffe Ambush engagement, a tactical situation complicated by the presence of hostages.

The Confederation implements Phase One of the ambush, bringing in an attack force against the Kilrathi fleet. The attack force consists principally of *Raptor*-class heavy fighters reconfigured to carry extra Porcupine Space Mines and practically no missiles.

Phase One forces drop their mines in one region of space near McAuliffe and engage the enemy. Kilrathi ships evade the mined region and concentrate on destroying the small fighter entourage.

When Kilrathi navigators realize that the mined region corresponds to a principal McAuliffe jump point, it is too late: Phase Two has begun. A single radio signal detonates all the specially modified Porcupines mines. Moments later, the rest of the Terran fleet arrives through the jump point, making its first strike against the gunships threatening the human colonies. The enemy ships are destroyed, with minimal loss of life among the colonists. After a pounding match, the McAuliffe Ambush ends with the Kilrathi in retreat. Casualties are nearly identical between the two fleets, but the Kilrathi have been successfully pushed from this strategic position.

Imperial troops continue to push into Krat'na Sector, ferrying in supplies and troops to launch offensives on occupied worlds. Terran invasion forces launch a strike against Kr'azna colony, but are immediately repelled by nearby Kilrathi fighter support. The intruding ships are pushed back to the Terran boundary line, while Kilrathi forces easily cripple the carrier *Tiger's Claw* and its complement of fighters.

2644

Terran ground forces launch an attack on a fortified Kilrathi colony, only to be routed by unexpected Kilrathi fighter-craft support. The Terrans quickly reform and turn back, their lightly armed transports chased by heavy Kilrathi warships. The TCS *Tiger's Claw* is detached from its previous station and assigned to intercept the pursuing ships in a delaying action eventually referred to as Custer's Carnival.

Though swarmed and badly damaged by Kilrathi fighters, the carrier distracts Kilrathi forces long enough to allow the Terran fleet to reach safety. The *Claw* makes it back into Terran space, even with three-quarters of its engines destroyed and half its pilots listed as casualties.

Orbit 437, Sun Year 5136

The Kilrathi Imperial Command deploys supply and colonization vessels to nearby worlds to enslave the Mopoks to the Kilrathi war effort. A new Imperial starbase is built for use as a central command post for Kilrathi movements in surrounding sectors. The Terrans eventually locate the starbase, for which the base's Security Commander is executed as a traitor. After a prolonged battle with the Terrans, the Emperor orders the command relocated to Kilrah.

2654.287

Terran Intelligence reports that the Kilrathi High command is directing war efforts from Venice System. Reconnaissance patrols identify Kilrathi ships and follow patrols, uncovering the Imperial starbase weeks later. The Kilrathi launch a significant resistance that is eventually overpowered by missiles fired from swarming fighters. Badly beaten, the Kilrathi are forced to retreat their central command to Kilrah.

Orbit 506, Sun Year 5136

Pending a new development in weapon technology, a site is chosen to spot-test the military's new atomic proton-accelerator gun. After magnetically buffering all radio waves to isolate the selected planet, life-removal experiments prove successful. Terran forces arrive too late to stop testing and are lured into an ambush with the captured Confederation ship *Gwenhyvar*.

Survivors of the enemy fleet, however, search out and incapacitate the dreadnought *Sivar* and its deadly weapon. For this failure, the Admiral of the ill-fated fleet pays the ultimate repentance and is executed in the presence of his father, the Kilrathi Emperor. With the Admiral's death, Prince Thrakhath becomes heir to the throne of Kilrah.

2654.326

Tiger's Claw receives the message that all radio contact has been lost with Goddard Colony. Intelligence suspects the Kilrathi possess a new super-weapon that they plan to use against the inhabited planet. Rushing to the rescue, fighter wings from *Tiger's Claw* forge a path for transports and corvettes, only to discover that a quarter-million human lives have already been sacrificed by the Kilrathi.

The *Claw* pursues the Kilrathi into enemy territory, only to be ambushed by a captured Confederation *Exeter*-class ship. After escaping immediate danger, reconnaissance ships locate a dreadnought ship suspected of carrying the prototype super-weapon. The *Claw* succeeds in eliminating this *Sivar* dreadnought.

Battle fleets and war priestesses plan the annual Sivar-Eshrad ceremony honoring the war-god Sivar, which is to take place in Firekka System. The sacrificial event, however, is disrupted after the captain of the Ras’Nik’hra is captured by the Terrans and tortured to reveal the location of the ceremony. The Kilrathi Imperial Guard pushes the enemy out-system after Prince Thrakhath deems the Firekkans unworthy of destruction.

2653-2655

The Confederation pledges to protect a newly discovered race, the Firekkans, who plan to unite with the Terran alliance. A huge Kilrathi battle fleet moves into the system, led by the fearsome Prince Thrakhath and his Drakhai (Kilrathi Imperial Guard). The fleet’s intent is unknown until the Kilrathi defector Ralgha exposes a plan to use Firekka as a location for a strange alien religious ritual in which warriors rededicate themselves to Sivar, the Kilrathi god of war.

Confederate forces decide on a desperate plan to damage enemy morale by disrupting the religious ceremony. Marine troopships jump into the system and land on the planet to stage the assault on the Kilrathi priestesses. When the mission succeeds, the *Claw* retreats back to Terran-controlled space, closely pursued by Kilrathi ships. As the *Claw* escapes, the Firekkan natives revolt and force the Kilrathi to withdraw.

Sun Years 5140-5153

Prince Thrakhath orders advances in Enigma Sector in order to gain control of jump-points leading to the Terran worlds. One Kilrathi planet in the Ghorah Khar system, also known as Ghorah Khar, falls under Terran rule. This angers Thrakhath and his leaders, who then order retaliatory strikes against the colonies there to eliminate any surviving cowards.

In the following moons, the Terrans lose many eights of ships in Enigma Sector, failing to dislodge the Imperial presence and the headquarters at K'Tithrak Mang. After an eight of sun years, Thrakhath ceases the attacks on Ghorah Khar and relocates the Imperial headquarters to a hidden location outside Enigma Sector. About the same time, spacecraft research culminates in the production of stealth fighter technology.

2656-2667

Over the next 11 years, Confederation forces attempt to remove the Kilrathi from Enigma Sector. The fight for this area is critical – failure means giving the Kilrathi strategic jump nodes throughout Enigma that lead directly to the human homeworlds.

The first attack on the headquarters at K'Tithrak Mang falls short, but Confederation forces are able to successfully defend Olympus Station (the human starbase established for the rebel Kilrathi world of Ghorah Khar) from Imperial Kilrathi assault. As the extended battle for the Enigma Sector continues, forces make a daring jump behind enemy lines to destroy the Kilrathi sector headquarters of K'Tithrak Mang, the same mission that finally destroys the renowned *Tiger's Claw*.

Sun Year 5153

Having concentrated efforts elsewhere for several sun years, Kilrathi forces once more strongarm their way into vital jump points that lead to the human homeworlds. This time, the attacks are concentrated on Pembroke Station, the gateway system between Enigma and Vega Sectors. To divert Terran forces, Prince Thrakhath orders a retaliatory attack on the rebel planet of Ghorah Khar.

In the next moon, Sivar tests Thrakhath's skills as a leader by staging an assassination attempt and giving him over to the Terrans. The Prince proves his worth by escaping with the help of spies and reassuming rule over Kilrah. He commands one last attack on the Terran starbase of Olympus and obliterates Ghorah Khar's few remaining colonists.

Confederation forces successfully fend off a Kilrathi attack on Pembroke Station, the gateway system between Enigma and Vega Sectors. Then, forces attend to a mutiny aboard Rigel Supply Depot, where mutineers split into two factions: Rigel pirates who want to continue their piratical lifestyle, and the crew members that want to return to the Confederation. The pirate ship is eventually gunned down.

The Imperial Kilrathi make an unsuccessful attempt to quell rebelling planets in the Ghorah Khar System. An Imperial leader named Khasra then tries to assassinate Prince Thrakhath. Thrakhath is captured and brought aboard the *Bonnie Heather*, but escapes shortly after. Finally, a desperate attack against Olympus Station in Ghorah Khar is thwarted, saving the rebel Kilrathi planet.

Sun Year 5154

The war is going well – in one-and-a-half sun years, Kilrathi forces destroy seven escort carriers, two fleet carriers and twenty-four eights of other capital ships. Even though the number of actual conflicts is dropping to several per moon, the Terrans are resorting to coward's attacks on rear forces – supply vessels and transports.

Thrakhath and Baron Jugara, having foreseen the need for additional ships, reveal the existence of a shipyard that is secretly producing a new class of Hakaga carriers. An intricate plan emerges from a meeting of the Imperial Kilrathi, who offer a false armistice of peace to the foreign minister of the Terran Confederation. The remote shipyard continues producing a carrier fleet to destroy the Terran homeworld.

Seven months later, Thrakhath implements the new carrier fleet and launches a climactic attack on the Terrans, who are in the midst of dismantling warships and weapon production facilities. The homeworlds are expected to surrender after witnessing the total destruction of three minor planets. Defense efforts against the Imperial fleet are weak, allowing Kilrathi warheads to punch through to major points of operation on Earth.

For twelve months, Terrans strike the Kilrathi forces hard, eliminating nine carriers under construction. Running low on combat ships, the military changes tactics and concentrates on removing troop and supply vessels. To add to the destruction, they cripple dozens of transports and four shipyards. The Kilrathi are forced to retreat for supplies, thus weakening the front lines.

Just as the pendulum of war swings toward the Terrans, a peace accord is surprisingly offered by Kilrah. All fleets are withdrawn from the middle of an engagement to take Munro, a crucial system possessing a jump line straight to Kilrah.

In the following months, several frontier colonies refuse to abide by the armistice rulings, investing both forces and ships in an attempt to search out suspected active shipyards on the far side of the Kilrathi Empire. Using captured stealth equipment, private forces intercept a HoloVid of the rumored facility, along with a message that Kilrathi forces are embarking on a mission to attack Earth. The armistice is renounced, and a force of still-intact Confederation ships prepare to defend against the attack, bolstered by private ships and carriers.

The first enemy hits result in total radiation-warhead destruction of Warsaw, Gilead and Sirius Prime. Front-line Marines land on the Imperial flagship carrier, with a select few suicidally placing and detonating mines. They destroy three of the super-carriers, but the remainder of the fleet reaches striking distance. The Kilrathi successfully launch anti-matter rockets on crucial defense cities – Chicago, Pittsburgh, Boston, Miami, Quebec, Berlin, Paris, Kiev and others – then retreat to Kilrah.

Commander's Log — 2668.330

After the tense months leading up to the destruction of the secretly produced *Haraka* carrier force, this last assignment was anti-climactic, to say the least. The *Concordia* was growing rather rickety after years of abuse, and she'd been placed on indefinite patrol status, Code 4. What this translated into was running routine "safe" sector patrols. So I did just that, flying sortie after sortie in clear, open space. For eight months straight.

Now, as the *Concordia* rounds Damioyn, I gaze out the tiny porthole in my bunk. A waning crescent moon dips behind the thick clouds of this transfer planet, brightly lit off the starboard hull. The rapidly approaching haze is a curious swirl of avocado and cranberry, like nothing I've seen before. In a less than half an hour, I'll taste the first steak I've had in months. Showers, phones, all the conveniences of real life on a real planet. Best of all, I'll be transferring home.

Packing up what few odds and ends I've collected, I begin to think I might actually miss this old bird after all. There's the brass wing Shotglass gave me after K'Tithrak Mang. And the tall, thin Firekkan chalice that my feathered friend K'Kai gifted me with during her last stop-in. Finally, there's the framed picture of the crew's last launch party. Friends hugging friends. Some friends who never came back.

After I'm through packing, I zip my standard-issue duffle shut and jog toward the decompression lounge. I wave goodbye to my quarters and envision beaches, blondes, brunettes and banana daiquiris. Not to mention a promotion or two.

TO: Clanmates of the Twenty-Third Vessel of the Imperial fleet

FROM: Baron M'rathtak nar Ragitagha

You are hereby ordered to the temple of Sivar in three eights of sun shifts for your next hunt. Make your resolves with your blood-born hrai and home clan, for the mission that awaits requires your highest bidding of honor. The annual sacrifice to Sivar is not far off, and the Prince himself has decreed that the twenty-third vessel will be our final messenger to the Terrans.

After a feast honoring the war-god Sivar, you will jump into Terran strongholds and prey on their military forces and homeworlds. This will be your finest sacrifice and an eternal honor to your lair.

In return for your obedience, the Prince grants the offspring of each member of the hunt partial blood of nobility. Upon entering the service, young warriors will receive preferred appointments. Females will likewise find privileged positions within Sivar's temples.

Signed,

Jak'rav nar Caxki

Messenger of the Emperor



TrainSim Challenge

The *Red Rangers* of Squadron 23 have organized a TrainSim flight challenge, slated for tomorrow at 1300 hours. Pilots and non-pilots are eligible to participate, with semi-valuable prizes to be awarded to the top three scorers. Rumor has it that the prizes include platinum-plated wings, an autographed Camden Payne poster, and a check for 1000 dols good at any Confederation trading outpost.

If you need more information, contact 1st Lt. Merri Lancaster by 1800. Following the usual daily exercises, the TrainSim will be available to anyone who wants to brush up on their combat skills. Captain Dane McAllister has generously offered hands-on training to anyone who personally delivers to him a litre of Firekkan Fire liquor.

Remember, you must reply tonight to be eligible for this competition.

As I hoist the honorary bowl of Vak'qu to my furred lips and drink, the vivid images finally come. Precious, vivid images of odd black-and-white striped beasts without claws. Crackling, dry beds of camouflage as footsteps pound out the final moments of the hunt. The final twitches of a fresh kill secure in my jaws and reeking with the warm red scent of blood.

Scenes like these are now rare on Kilrah, but the instinct of ages is enough to drive the thrill of the hunt. Even Prince Thrakhath is caught up in the moment as he spells out to us his plan to attack the Terran homeworld of Earth.

"Stand tall, my mighty warriors, as I send you to accomplish what I know to be the will of Sivar. By striking at the very heart of the Confederation, we shall stand unopposed in our rightful expansion into Terran sectors!

Clenching my muzzle in pride, I feel hot cheers rise all around me. Someone shouts above the clamor, but I cannot make out the words over the crowd's roar. Over a dozen clans clutter the pilot's rites ceremony, each represented by a splendorous coat-of-arms. On my own breast, I proudly boast the heavy red and gold shield of Kur'u'tak, my home-clan.

The words of Thrakhath rouse more cheers from the growing temper of agreement. As if to signal the occasion, an honorary transport shuttle streaks in through the red western sky and lumbers to a slow halt on a nearby launch platform.

One by one, my somber crewmates file onboard, the line dictated by blood and rank. I offer a paw to my mate and hrai, and they in turn touch my coat-of-arms for one last blessing. As I turn away, I flick my mighty tail toward the kneeling masses in a gesture of pride. The crowd's clamor gives way to silent breathing when the airlock door squeezes shut behind the last Kilrathi pilot. While the shuttle rises above the temple city, I fall into deep thought and absorb what might be my last glimpse of Kilrah.

Commander's Log — 2669.012

My leave was unexpectedly cut short yesterday, after a Confederation courier hand-delivered sealed assignment papers. Strange, since the navy ordinarily sends out electronic orders. Expecting some podunk patrol assignment, I was confused even further after reading them. All they said was to pack up and register for the transport shuttle run to Goddard Transfer Station at 1850 hours. Instinct suggests a dangerous priority assignment, length and type unknown. So much for my rest and relaxation...

Upon arriving, I meet General Sturdivan, a stern associate of my old troublesome commander, Tolwyn. The solemn briefing seems like a bad dream – I'm to tell the crew only that our ship is performing a dangerous strike run. Sworn to secrecy, I'm whisked off to Concourse 4, a tightly guarded isolation level. Equip crews work around the clock to ready a new ship for flight, complete with self-sufficient oxygen planetariums, water-producing modules and greenhouse gardens. I'm to have the crew report to Goddard as soon as possible.

Alone in my room, I send exactly 61 urgent e-mails on the red line.

DATE: 2669.011

PILOT: #TCN/SHIP-133B/CREW

SECURITY: Level II

STATEMENT OF SECRECY: This information is the sole property of the Terran Confederation and is not to be distributed publicly. The penalty for doing so, as stated in the Terran Security Council Proceedings, Section 1.32-A, will result in a fine of 25,000 dols and no less than 36 months confinement in a military holding facility.

MISSION ORDERS: Report for duty at Goddard Transfer Station by 1700 hours, 2669.018. Return date not yet determined, estimated to be 4 - 6 months.

To-day I hold my hrai close to my heart. Was it only two days ago that I bowed to them and oathed to bring honor to my clan? It was a noble gathering, with over a thousand-fold of Thrak'hra and Kilra'hra alike gathering around the temple of Sivar. The Emperor himself spoke to the clans and bestowed upon us numerous words of honor. My mate, cousins and cublings I feasted on fine Firekkan roasts and drank of Vak'qu. I can still hear the ringing yowls given by the crowd as I lifted the sacred bowl to my jowls and passed it on to my mate and other hrai.

The jewelery to Leader of Arms also swells me with pride, for my offspring now reserve the right to apply for privileged Imperial service positions. Even my smallest cub, Rathka, dreams of accompanying his father and assimilating the spirit of Sivar. He and my clan sacrifice gifts in faith that our war-god will protect us from the enemy.

The hair on my mane stiffens at the dishonorable thought of ever kneeling to lowly humans. I do not understand their ways of war; they are of a lesser blood and scoff at our claims of superiority. The only way to quell such rebels is to conquer them. There is only one human we find not to be weak, a warrior whom we know as the Heart of the Tiger. Being of thick blood and high stature, he alone stands worthy of battling Prince Thrakhath. What would I not give to slit his throat and hang him as my captured prey!

It is with much hope and spirit that I give my clawmark of honor. As always, I depart with the humblest of hopes that I can rightfully bring victory to Kilrah.

Mangkrah nar Caxki, Leader of Arms

As I feel the tug of artificial gravity on my gut, the carrier lifts off the Transport Holding Deck and pushes through a thick cloud cover. I bark out the usual go-aheads ... “Apply Gravity,” “Engage Main Thrusters,” “Check Comm Network.” It feels strange to be issuing the orders – I’m used to the hoarse roar of commanders past.

Stelkta, the main moon of Goddard, sails smoothly past the main port window, immediately replaced by the streaming rays of an ascending sun. The only sound I hear on the bridge is the heavy hum of the twin engines as they de-thrust. I give the all-clear signal, sending the crew scattering to the cafeteria, lounge and recreational facilities. I don’t give them a chance to ask questions.

Making my way into the freshly furnished Commander’s Quarters, I settle into a large, leathery chair. Now, where’s that blasted security access card? I fish it out of my sleeve pocket, slide it into the log station and apply the proper code sequence of numbers ...

```
LOGIN>> login victory/security1/emp185020957
```

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PLEASE TYPE PASSWORD>> *****
```

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IDENTIFIED: ENLISTEE #185020957, 2669.018>>
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WELCOME. YOU HAVE (1) NEW MESSAGE TO READ.
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TO ACTIVATE FILE, PRESS CONTINUE.
```

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WARNING: THIS FILE WILL SELF-DELETE IN 8 MINUTES.
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Commander,

I’m sorry our last meeting occurred under such extreme circumstances. Our thoughts are with you as you embark on this unselfish demonstration of loyalty. Attached, you will find your official briefing. It’s no different from what you were told earlier, but between you and me – this is the first you’ve heard of it.

Good luck from those of us back home!

-Admiral Hancock

FROM: Sector Fleet Admiral Price Hancock

DATE 2669.016

PILOT: #185020957

RANK: Commander

SECURITY: Level I

STATEMENT OF SECRECY: This mission entails the highest level of secrecy. You are to mention this briefing to no one. Specifically, do not relay details to the crew until you complete the final jump sequence. The penalty for doing so is prescribed in the Terran Security Council Proceedings, Section 1.32-A, and shall not amount to less than loss of rank, a fine of 100,000 dols, and 10 years confinement in a solitary prison.

MISSION ORDERS: You are to jump through Kilrathi jump point KL-23 and proceed through uncharted territory. You are to seek out and destroy all Kilrathi forces you encounter. You are to locate and eliminate the homeworld of Kilrah.

MISSION TERMINATION CONDITIONS: None. Due to your position in uncharted territory, we cannot guarantee a reverse-jump. No occurrence of medical conditions or equipment failures shall warrant mission abortion procedures. If resource levels become critical, explore and mine suitable planets.

RETURN DATE: To be determined by mission success.

I watch the lines slowly melt from the phosphorous-green screen, wondering how I'm going to tell the crew that we'll probably never go home again. Punching up the personal log, I reach for the keys and begin to type ...

Commander's Log — 2669.019

It's a fine morning, 8 tense hours until we sneak into the Kilrathi jump sphere and make our final jump. This by far is the most delicate of assignments, the most risky, but mostly just insane. Sixty-two men and women, eighteen ships, an almost self-sufficient carrier. One last jump into who knows where.

The worst part about this mission is its secrecy. I was told to instruct the crew only to report to Goddard colony station, nothing more. I couldn't tell my friends and family goodbye. I couldn't bring along all those sentimental items that make my home a home ... there just wasn't enough room. Worst of all, now, is my conscience – how can I tell the crew our final destination? They don't know that we're essentially running a suicide mission. And now, I have only myself and a mindless log computer to bear the brunt of my words.

I'm still wondering why I accepted this assignment. I guess I took it on for one reason. No, make that two. The first reason is Admiral Price Hancock. Someone, wish I knew who, came up with the bright idea of feeding a small force through a Kilrathi jump point in hopes that it could penetrate the battle line and strike Kilrah. It was Hancock who made the idea reality.

Why he wanted me to lead this run, I'll never understand. Maybe it's my recklessness finally paying dues ... maybe Tolwyn just wanted me out of the Confederation for good. It's hard to turn down an offer like that. Especially when you've got five stars and eight ribbons staring you down, just waiting for the slightest excuse to toss you out the nearest hatch.

The second reason I took on the mission is simple. I detest cats. The damned cats have smoked over half our carrier force and pushed our defense to its most fragile limits. This war's taken a spin toward hell, with the Kilrathi gaining clicks on every starhold we have. And if I can contribute to our success, by God, I will.

Maybe someone someday will tractor in the shrapnel of our ship, then solemnly salute us as the Confederation's last attempt to penetrate the heart of Kilrah. Maybe someone somewhere will read this. Like a fledgling moon loosed from an uncharted planet, so do we head into the dark bowels of the universe...

"Jrath'kar, I do not understand the habits of our human captive. He wants for food, but not of the flesh and Ak'rah leaves we give him. Are the prey species not plant- and meat-eaters?" *I watch as the odd, bare breasted creature stirs in his cell, standing erect and desperately uttering a string of peculiar syllables.*

"I have noticed this also, Liege-lord," my servant replies as he turns toward the babbling form. "If not for Thrakhath's orders, I would as soon claw his throat as nourish him. What value does he find in keeping this tuka, this low scum of humanity?"

"Do not question Thrakhath's reasoning!" *I rebuke him in a low growl, my ears laid flat in disgusted anger. I see that my harsh outburst causes the bristles on Jrath'kar's mane to rise. Good, he should learn more respect for his Emperor. Immediately, this inferior officer lowers his haunches and falls prostrate to me. I am tempted to claw him, but I restrain myself.*

"The Prince wishes to make a public spectacle of this Terran. Morale among the commoners has been lessened by recent setbacks on the front lines, and the clans whisper of revolt. Perhaps if they tear apart a human captive and feast upon its hot meat, they will unify once again." *I would like to do so myself, were it not my Lord's orders to shuttle this cowardly human back to Kilrah.*

"I apologize, my lord. If I may suggest, let us summon our Leader of Tongues to communicate with the human."

"Make it so, Jrath'kar." *As I send the chagrined officer off to find the translator, I study the captive. "And what of you, shamed human? Do you have a hrai? What would they say if they learned of your fate?"*

It was, after all, a quirk of fate that had delivered this human to me. The stranded pilot had run out of fuel, probably missing a jump rendezvous with his mother ship, and drifted directly into the path of my carrier. Towed in by beam, he had been unable to resist capture.

Yes, Thrakhath had been most pleased by this news. My left jowl curling up in a slight smirk, I spin sharply on my hindpaws and leave this miserable creature to his own thoughts.

Chief Ambassador Vladkomer Kirreman

Outpost ES-341

Terran Alliance, Enigma Sector

Dear Ambassador Kirreman:

Let me thank you for submitting your Resource Allocation Statement to the Terran Council for Planetary Resources (TCPR). Although your planet presents a very favorable position within Enigma Sector, we are unable to grant your shipyard construction permit at this time.

As stated in the Galactic Trading Rights, Section 112-64.23, you have the right to know why your application was denied. You will find these listed below. If you feel this decision has been made in error, you may appeal using Form GTR-A-123.

1. Your planetary resource samples show insufficient amounts of materials to warrant a full-fledge mining operation. The required percentages of necessary elements break down as follows:

Element	%Minable	Resource rating (kg/meter)
Kormion	.005%	.5
Titanium	5%	9
Uranium	.002%	1
Plutonium	.008%	.5
Nickel	20%	3
Aluminum	20%	4
TOTAL	45.015%	18

2. To support a shipyard, you must have a resource rating of at least 20 and have a 100,000 meter square area with non-violating terrain (no faults, volcanoes, or major bodies of water). Terra engineers report that the upper crust of the asthenosphere measures 314 degrees centigrade, ruling out any possibility of mantle drilling for heavier elements.

However, we have a compromise offer concerning your Titanium resources. For normal trading compensation, you can contribute 4% of your available stock (3.6 kg/minable meter) to a top-secret war effort. I cannot reveal the details of the mission. Should you choose to sell your Titanium, an unnamed ship will dock on your planet for final fueling at approximately 1300 hours on 2669.120. Please have all sources mined and readied for transport on this date.

Once again, I thank you for your generous offer to join the mining planets of the Terran Confederation. We hope to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Alynnna Marbro

Resource Manager

E-Mail Address: #TCN/RESOURCE/142135234



M'rathka, I leave our den in good faith, confident that we will at last conquer the Terrans. Though I hail from lesser blood, it is my glorious destiny to fight toward this purpose. Sivar the war god has given me signs in dreams and hails our efforts.

I dreamt that we all died bravely, our fighters and carrier sucked into the explosion of their precious homeplanet Earth. Their solar system echoed with screams of defeat, then we were all lifted into the stars and caused new points of light to appear in a new constellation measuring fourteen hundred eights long from Kilrah.

Worry not, M'rathka. I have left instructions with our oldest cubling to assume my clan duties. Instead of mourning my departure, honor me at each moon's appearance in the usual manner – blooms of red Frak'ha, scattered across the Imperial deathstone at the temple.

Farewell, my mate of many years. You have brought much joy to our clan and hrai, and my heart purrs for you eternally.

Yours in honor,

Mar'buk

Notice: Action Report

Hard news has just arrived of losses on the front line, though our Navigation Leader cannot pinpoint the time of transmission. Our brother forces lost two light carriers in a battle near Omega Sector, along with seventy-four brave warriors. The message from the last remaining carrier indicates that the enemy task force was presumably attempting an attack on a Feeding Colony on Bordrav. Six Salthis torpedoed the Confederation carrier in time to prevent the attack.

Notice: Security Level Update

A reconnaissance Jrathek patrolling this sector has detected vapor trails from a recently jumped vehicle. The origin of the gases is unknown and possibly indicates that a Confederation ship has intruded into the area. Constant radar scans fail to identify any such craft. In preparation for the possible intrusion of enemy forces, the carrier security level has been raised to Level II.



Commander's Log — 2669.024

It's been five days now, and we're all feeling the pangs of reality. The jump several days ago was uneventful; we ran into no opposition and cleanly stepped through into Kilrathi territory. No one's been this far yet, which means our trillion-dol navigation system isn't worth a damned dime now.

I finally broke the news. Needless to say, it was a solemn meeting on the bridge. I broadcast the general briefing on the bridge VidCom and called for five minutes of silence to honor those who've died already in this war. Those were the longest five minutes of my life. The crew read the screen and looked away. Some glared at me, others bore their stare straight into the steel tiles. A few grins broke out among the young kids aiming for glory and adventure. No one had the inclination to speak, not even me.

As I passed them by and retired into my quarters, half the salutes rang with eager pride. The other half stung with hatred and resentment. What they don't know, what they don't understand, is that I feel it too. Maybe after everyone settles down a bit, I can plant the seeds of heroism. After all, we could all be heroes if this bird ever toasts Kilrah!

To: DADDY
From: GRAHAM



Mommy sez you HAVE to fly in to the
and go real far. I wannned to go, But you sed I hav
to be a good BOY and stay HOME with Mommy. She
gived me a star o? your foot an I putted it on the
Blu cote you BOT for me on my Birthday.

Why do you fite the kats? I like my kittin!!
He is real soft and never Bits me. My friend Billy
sez the Big Kats in plays try to shoot you. How kan
a KAT drive a space ship? They dont Have fingers like
the sterin stik. I think you must Be rely scared so
I am mayling you my stufed good luk Kat. Pleez Bring
Him Home wen your thru fiting.

We luv you a lot DADDY!!

Son,

You're a brave kid to stay behind and take care of
your Mom. I know it's hard to understand, but the
cats I'm fighting want to take away your freedom. Do
you know what freedom is, Graham? It's sort of like
being able to choose what you want to wear, then
going outside to play with your friends.

Sometimes really strong people with big guns think
that they can control freedom and tell everyone else
what to do. That's why I'm fighting - the big cats
you asked me about want to take over our planet and
hurt people.

I know your friends say that some people don't come
home after they fight. But I don't want you to
listen to them ... as soon as I see you, we're going
to go on a long vacation at the beach. So, be a good
kid and give your Mom lots of hugs for me. I miss
all of you just as much as you miss me, and hope to
come home soon.

Love,

Dad

P..S. Mister Cat is being a great help - he's
perched right on top of my pillow and guards my bed
while I'm out flying!

Commander's Log — 5155.032

I cherish the spirit of this war, for I command a treasury of loyal warriors who are ready to lay down their lives for Kilrah. I, too, would gladly fight by their side to the death for honor if nothing else. Yet, I have lost half of my hrai to this cause, the conquest of the Terrans. I was away defending Ghorah Khar when the humans fired upon the inhabited moon of Trak'mar. The stunning grief haunts me even now as I write, and I know the humans feel this same swelling hatred. Were it not for my honor, I would have nothing left for which to fight.

Still, the war continues. And for what, besides sadness and more rocks upon which to plant Ak'rah bushes? I do not see an end, for the generations continue to die in multitudes of eights.

I pause now to bow my mane in shame, for I should not question Thrakhath's wisdom in this matter. He is wiser than I, of nobler blood, a capable commander of Kilrah. He himself has survived one battle with the top pilot in the Confederation. Should he even hear of the words I write, I would most definitely disgrace my hrai and world.

I am a Commander, I am the spirit of the men I lead through this war. For them, I must be strong and able to place faith in my Lord. I must remember this as we wage revenge on the Terran doorstep.

In true faith of Sivar,

Commander Azruk'ha nar Caxki



Medical Notice

All crews should report to the Medical Suite between 1450 and 1800 hours to obtain a preventative viral patch. Being in a foreign sector, it is possible that you may be exposed to unknown contaminants. For this reason, all spacewalk suits exposed outside the ship airlock will be incinerated upon removal.

Medical Report.

Procedure Analysis of Morale

Commander,

I have noticed some marked changes in the crew as of late. Over twenty men and women have come to me within the last 48 hours, some for counseling, others for various anti-anxiety medications. For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot discuss individual cases with you. But, I feel that you should be aware of the morale situation.

Medically speaking, it seems that many crewhands are suffering from borderline hysterical anxiety. Common threads among the counselees are feelings of hopelessness, thoughts of mutiny, and requests for functional coping patches.

I assume, obviously, that the state of the war and the mission at hand are contributing to the stress levels of the men and women onboard. In other words, your crewhands are about ready to blow their corks!

I've slated group sessions for 1300 hours every day to build ship morale. Unless we want mass hysteria on our hands, I suggest that we both attend.

With all due respect,

James Heircho, TCN M.D.



Mail Notice

One final mail drop will be transmitted to a central processing planet preceding our cross into enemy territory. Any mail not posted to the SYSTEM>>MAIL>>OUT>> network by 1200 hours will not be sent. Remember, do not disclose any information outside the scope of normal civilian knowledge.

Today I scratched my twenty-second kill mark onto the hull of a *Gladius*. It's weird ... I feel equally sad and hyped each time I blast one of the furballs. You know they've got families, just like we do. You know that they breathe, feel and die just like our pilots do. As many as I blow away, the feelings of remorse never quite fade.

Still, years of fighting these mange-ridden pilots have taught me not to waste much time being humanitarian. If an enemy is injured or retreating, blast him. Just don't give him a chance to take you out first. A buddy of mine made that mistake once when he hung around to study the exhaust mechanism of an injured *Jalthi*.

The Kilrathi are a strange race, vaguely humanlike – if you overlook the fur. They stand erect and communicate. Once, I even saw their written language inside the cockpit of a captured ship. It reminds me of written Morse code, turned on its side. Stacks of vertical lines, some short and others long, represent phonetic syllables.

The cats remind me of the old Imperial Army, never giving up honor even at the cost of life. They've even committed Zu'kara for simply insulting their superiors. Imagine that, clawing out your own throat in a ritual suicide just because someone *tells* you to!

Another oddity I find is their crazy hierarchy. They take the phrase “born leader” quite seriously, passing royalty down from one generation to another. Kilrah swears loyalty to its current dictator, and even the Imperial bloodlines are themselves subdivided into clans of sorts. Apparently, a cat's entire future is determined by his social status from birth. I guess that kind of compares to being born on Pluto versus Jupiter or Manhattan Island on Earth.

As strict as the cats are on social “rules,” they sure aren't the chauvinistic type! All of their religious factions have females in charge. I find this interesting – after all, it wasn't until the late 1990s that we even let women hold high church offices on Earth.

Oh well, enough of my analysis of the hairballs ... it's time to grab a bite and fly. With any luck, I might bag another cat before the day's out and add more meaningless entries into my bank of Kilrathi knowledge!

2nd Lieutenant Niekro Hammond

Classified Ads

Goods

Used HP-QR32 Wrist computer. Looking to unload fast! 150 mHz, optical plug-in, digital wave modem, 2-inch VidPager. 850 dols OBO.

WISEO virtual gaming set w/optical elicitor, wireless finger sensors. Will part with *Storm of Kilrah*, *VidSlayer*, *Sector Genie*. All equip./games for 520 dols.

Authentic Kilrathi fangs straight from the Empire. Available singly, in pairs, or strung. Cleared by TCNI services.

Change your luck with pocket-sized Juwalidi stones. Ideal for pilots, deckhands. Retail at 5 dols each, now selling for half-price. #TCN/ADA/9283.

Found in men's barracks: Campaign Ribbon, pilot's wings. If you can describe them, call #TCN/ADS/8294.

Companionship

SWMNSDF, 22, stranded in space! In need of a lifeline, friend, romance. Call me! #TCN/ADS/3822.

Spirited SWF, 23, craves friendship, otherwise. I'm a stargazer, poetry lover, communicator searching for a compatible heartbeat. #TCN/ADS/1305.

Euro-techno percussionist/guitar duo needs vocal addition. Evenings/weekends in Rec Room. No exp. necessary, but must possess talent.

GravTread burnout desires platonic companion for daily fitness activities. #TCN/ADS/8212.

Services

Calling all pilots! Relieve stress and battle fatigue with a rubdown from a pro masseuse. 0800 - 1900 daily, reasonable rates. #TCN/ADA/3209.

Time for a new Will? Let a certified legal guru set your estate straight. Will barter fee or assume minor % of estate. Contact #TCN/ADS/1532.

"Mar'buk."

"Sire?"

"I wish to see you immediately."

"Yes, my Lord." *Though my voice runs steady, I feel fear turn cold and dark inside me. Butlav descends directly from the Imperial family and never himself asks to speak with individual officers unless something is terribly unright. Pulse pounding, I follow him slowly into a nearby Holo room. He closes the door with meticulous care, and I steel myself against what is to come. I think this is my end ...*

"You have spoken with the human, no?"

"I have, Butlav, he ..."

"Is this what our race has stooped to, Mar'buk?"

"My Lord?"

"Sit! You will listen and watch. Do not disturb me with your words!"

I watch him flick on a monitor, then my heart falls as I see myself on the screen. I am interrogating the human prisoner. I visibly loose a massive sigh, then slump frustratedly back into the Interrogation chair. As I slowly sink into somber thought, sounds from the Holofilm pierce the silent room.

I remember now that the air in the tiny Interrogation Quarters had turned warm and sticky with human sweat. Other cats had awaited their fate there, accused of non-fealty and treasonous words. Most had met with death. But not this human, who was to be Thrakhath's toy once he contributed enough threads of knowledge.

How I wished now not to have heard his words of peace, his cowardly pleas for a bargain ... what did he call it, a "hostage deal"? I did not know this word. He is merely a prisoner, one of many weak Terrans who would rather jump from their burning ship than die honorably.

A flash of anger courses through me. How dare the Commander tape this conversation and thus violate my honor! My thoughts seething, I watch my Holoform turn angrily toward the creature and growl awkwardly in the clipped language of the Terrans.

"Human! I will only ask this of you once more. What plans has the Confederation laid for their next attack? You are of high standing among your people and should know of these objectives."

I watch as the golden-headed human's jowl opens and closes rapidly, releasing a few uninterpretable utterances mixed with words of desperation. He points to a strange emblem on his left bicep, a colored scar of some sort decorated with numbers. It appears to be some type of medal, drawn directly on the thin, pale hide of the human.

"Look, all I want is for you to radio this badge number – see, it's tattooed right here on my arm. Just key it out to the nearest Confederate ship and we can work out some kind of deal. I know you hairballs have a few cats stranded inside our systems, and I've got contacts. All you have to do is mention the name Corporal ..."

Before he can finish, I hear my Holoform bite his words off sharply.
 "Would you dishonor your hrai as you do now? If I were you, death would be the only welcome reward for such cowardice!"

"You're all such damn martyrs that you can't see the meaning of real honor!" exclaims the sweaty human. "Okay, try this – put yourself in my shoes. What would you rather do, die miserably alone at the mercy of the enemy, or fight like a drowning cat to stay alive long enough to see your family, your hrai, whatever you call it?"

"Your only *choice*, Terran, is to honor your god of war and lose your life as a hero. Were I to do as you say, my superiors and hrai would fight amongst themselves to decide who should claw me to death."

I see the human close his eyes, a small splash of red flushing his stubbled cheek.

"Maybe that's the difference between you and me. We have no 'god of war' as such. The beings that we worship, at least for those of us that do believe in such beings, stand for peace, not war."

Peace? Was that the word he had used? I struggle with my thoughts, for an instant remembering that I had almost offered this Terran the privilege of addressing him by name. I scold myself for having weakened at his words.

"I do not know this peace you speak of, human. War is necessary for our survival. We survive on Kilrah because we must. When the fresh meat and the plants and the water are not enough to feed our clans, we are entitled to search for other sources elsewhere. Would you not wish the same for your ... family?"

I watch the screen as my clone on the Holo straightens its back. I remember feeling quite pleased with my use of this foreign word for hrai. The human should by all means have sprawled on his back then, forepaws up to me for serving him such a word. Instead, he falls silent and solemnly gazes at my form on the screen.

“War is not about survival, Mar’buk. War is pure hell, fathomed out of someone else’s principles and ideas of what is Ôgood for the homeland.’ We fight not for food, but for freedom. I doubt you know this word, but it means that all living beings have the same rights to survival.

“When we ran out of supplies for our 14 billion-plus people, we built self-sufficient hydroponic stations on uninhabited planets. Our scientists searched for ways to streamline and improve our survival skills. Then, your people came along and destroyed our colonies. We weren’t intruding on anyone else’s world ... you cats, on the other hand, take what you want and pay no heed to freedom or life.”

These human words strike me strangely even now, though I know not why. He has not experienced the hunt, nor the honor and thrill in bringing home extended life to his clan. I remember being quite exhausted at this point, halfway feeling a remote pity for this Terran.

“Do the humans not hunt for food, then? How do you feed the people with these ... with these hydrones?” *I ask these questions of the Terran, my ears slightly tilted for his response. His lips curl upward on either side in a strange expression, and he parts with a strange guttural sound.*

“Uh, I think you mean hydroponic. We raise food, see, both meats and plants. People in the processing stations prepare the food and send it out to all the worlds. It’s not hunting, really. Though I guess in our anthropological background, we used to wield clubs and antique projectile guns to gather food. Listen, I’d love to sit around and talk gardens with you some other time, but ...”

Suddenly, the Holoscreen floods with the bleeps and flashes of the remote siren indicator. I hear the halls echoing with the footsteps of dozens of Kilrathi pilots, their hindlegs clicking on beaded steel floors.

Our conversation thus interrupted, I can almost see my momentary sensation of understanding pass, the cold stare of war returning my Holoform’s eyes to a deep, glazed yellow. Without a word, I watch myself exit the room and close the door on this gold-headed human.

I remember silently make my way to the bridge, thinking I ought to request cooked meat and warmed milk for his next daily platter.

I am jolted back into my present predicament as Butlav addresses me.

"Mar'buk. You know that you have failed me by allowing yourself to empathize with this scum."

I lower myself before Butlav in the proper gesture of disgrace.

"My Lord, I was simply trying to gain some understanding with the human. How else could I extract information from a creature who does not respond to normal methods of torture?"

"It is inexcusable, Mar'buk! Now, leave my presence and administer your punishment!"

He is almost screaming at me now, not understanding what I had learned from this human. I cannot refuse his orders, for I have shamed my Liege-Lord. The punishment he speaks of is the harshest, expected of any warrior that fails in his duties. My takhar, my human equal, may your fate be better than mine ...



HoloVid of the Week

All hands are invited to tonight's screening of *The Dangerous Angels* at 1900 hours in the HoloVid room. This thrilling saga pits intergalactic supercop (played by Camden Payne) against a ruthless pirate (Allen Amikov) who makes his living by disrupting commercial trade routes.

According to the International Film Reviewers, Payne's "good guy" performance is legendary and breaks away from his usual assortment of evil roles. His love interest in Caren McCall (Sheena Anne Zwastky) is convincing enough to evoke tears from the most hard-hearted of movie-goers. The critics rave at the romance between the two, which consists mostly of holographic e-mail messages.

With its suspenseful scenes and romantic allure, *The Dangerous Angels* proves that classic action Holofilms haven't given way to commercialism. Payne and Zwastky turn out to be pleasurably compatible, and their romance takes a unique twist midway through the plot.

LOGIN E-MAIL> /#TCN/BBS/PILOTS

SUBSCRIBERS> SAMBYA, MARIKA

CONNECT TO?> FRASIER, JAY

<JF> Getting off duty at 1600. Dinner? :)

<MS> Can't. Have to meet with Jacorski.

<JF> Meeting with the big man! What's up?

<MS> Don't know. Maybe I'll finally learn what's going on!

<JF> If you do, and it isn't confidential, let me know... no one's talking, not even Cap!

<MS> I hate this. It makes me feel like a cadet all over again!

<JF> You have to admit, it's exciting. Exactly what I had in mind when I signed up!

<MS> Well, I don't remember the paragraph in my enlistment papers about accepting a mission before I'm briefed.

<JF> Me either, but I like surprises. Don't get boring on me now...

<MS> Boring? I'm just worried that a furball's going to surprise ME!

<JF> Hey, you can't sit around worrying if you'll survive your next mission. Jump into it!

<MS> Right. What I'm really worried about is three kids back home. You play cool, Mr. I -Wanna-Be-A-Fighter-Hero, but I bet you worry about home sometimes, too.

<JF> Not anymore. Know what home is to me?

<MS> What?

<JF> A steaming pile of charred cat dung. All because of those damned kamikaze cats! You worry about home when you still have the chance to protect one!

<MS> Maybe the cats are worried about their own families. They've got homes too, you know.

<JF> I love it. Do you realize what you're saying? We've got to take the fight to THEM... wipe them clean before they get the last of us! Can't you see sense?

<MS> You're the one who needs some sense, Jay.

<JF> You're starting to sound like one of those philosophizing, uppity ambassadors. More

concerned with everybody being nice than winning a war we didn't start!

<MS> Hey, the ambassadors are trying to end this hellish war, just like you are. Only without all the deaths. That's more than the snot-nosed kids you fly with. They're just interested in their kill-scores.

<JF> They might be cocky, but you shouldn't knock them yet. They've never been in battle.

<MS> Yeah, that's my point exactly. They'd better get all their ducks in a row before I get paired up with one of them!

<JF> Anyway...

<MS> Anyway. Dinner at 1900?

<JF> 1900. Rec Room. Be there.



My Liege-Lord,

At this time, my body surely will have been discovered by a crewmate. You are correct to assume that I have failed in the eyes of the Kilrathi creed of war. After many hours of deliberation, I find my only recourse to be death.

While interrogating the human, I allowed him to weaken my mind and question my ethics of duty. He does not understand our ways of survival and tried to sway me with a wagging tongue. I was unable to extract anything useful from him – he is a skinned creature of higher rank and wishes to be “traded” to his Liege-lord's ship. I infer that this means he means he wants to be exchanged for a similar Confederation prisoner.

My mission thus failed, it is with much sorrow and repentance that I remove myself from the line of duty. I hope you find some slight hair of honor in my retribution.

Honorably yours,

Mar'buk nar Caxki

Leader of Tongues

Notice: Personnel Policy

At four-eighths past dinner, Leader of Tongues Mar'buk disposed of his own life. He failed in his attempts to extract military information from our human prisoner and will not be granted normal burial procedures. No one is to communicate with the Terran until further notice. Any warrior that breaks this command is subject to an isolation sentence.

Gunnery Officer's Report

TO: Fellow pilots and gunners

FROM: Marcus O'Donnell, TCN Gunnery Officer II

Since we're about to encounter the Kilrathi's top defenses, I've taken the liberty of gathering a list of weapons. In the attached report, you'll find weapons used in both fleets. As far as I know, the cats have about the same level of technology that we do. It's long, and it may bore you. But, I'm trying to keep you alive, and any bit of information I can offer may help. Read it, remember it, use it – none of you flyboys are good enough to ignore me!

Weapons of the Terran and Kilrathi Fleets

Weapons are categorized into two types – guns and missiles. Guns are all multiple-fire weapons that draw energy from a ship to function. Missiles encompass all single-shot munitions, both dumb-mechanism missiles and those equipped with targeting systems. Years of combat have determined that the Kilrathi possess nearly the same types and numbers of firearms that we do. *Note: Items in parentheses indicate Kilrathi equivalents.*

Guns

Mass Driver Cannon. The mass driver has medium range, good accuracy and applies medium damage. Heat buildup and power drain are minimal, and the damage potential remains constant within the cannon's range. Though other types of cannon have evolved, the mass driver remains a solid weapon in any situation.

<i>Damage</i>	20 dp/h (damage potential per hit)
<i>Range</i>	2500 km
<i>Speed</i>	2000 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.14 sec

Laser Cannon. The laser is a lightweight weapon and a staple among carriers and transports. It drains less power than other mounted guns but delivers more shots wielding slightly less damage. Its range of 5000 meters surpasses that of most guns.

<i>Damage</i>	13 dp/h (10)
<i>Range</i>	5000 m (5000)
<i>Speed</i>	3000 kps (3000)
<i>Refire delay</i>	.125 sec (.125)

Flux Cannon (Kilrathi). The flux cannon uses magnetic pulses to track and identify enemy ships. It delivers average damage at medium range and low energy cost.

<i>Damage</i>	20 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	2500 km
<i>Speed</i>	2000 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.14 sec

Photon Cannon. The photon cannon came into service recently and falls into the category of sophisticated arms. Although it depletes blaster power quickly, the damage potential is high enough that a single shot can down your ship if you're not careful. With long-range and high velocity, the effectiveness of the photon is second only to the reaper cannon.

<i>Damage</i>	37 dp/h (40)
<i>Range</i>	4200 km (4200)
<i>Speed</i>	2800 kps (2700)
<i>Refire delay</i>	.165 sec (.125)

Neutron Gun. A relative of the mass driver, the neutron gun is found mostly on light fighters designed to attack at close range. Blasts from this gun apply piercing damage to armor and can obliterate another fighter at close range.

<i>Damage</i>	18 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	4400 km
<i>Speed</i>	2400 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.133 sec

Flak Gun. Flak guns provide most of the side and rear gun protection for carriers. Computer-operated, they employ explosive energy bursts. Flak guns have medium range and high firing rates, and they diminish power more slowly than other guns.

<i>Damage</i>	50 dpph
<i>Range</i>	2500 km
<i>Speed</i>	2500 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.1 sec

Electron Gun (Kilrathi). This weapon fires high energy bursts of electronic energy that effectively diminish shields. However, the electron gun has medium range and refire delay.

<i>Damage</i>	25 dpph
<i>Range</i>	3500 km
<i>Speed</i>	2500 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.15 sec

Plasma Gun (Kilrathi). Plasma-bolt guns are new weapons, present only on a few fighter prototypes. These guns are only effective at short ranges and apply little damage. Don't take them lightly — the blasts use little power and can be fired indefinitely.

<i>Damage</i>	37 dpph
<i>Range</i>	4200 km
<i>Speed</i>	2800 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.125 sec

Reaper Cannon. The heaviest gun developed to date, the reaper cannon has gunned down more ships than all other weapons combined. Besides acting effectively at long range, this blaster has powerful damage potential and recharges quickly.

<i>Damage</i>	40 dpph
<i>Range</i>	4200 km
<i>Speed</i>	2700 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.175 sec

Particle Cannon. The particle cannon fires nuclear particles that inflict average damage on energy shields. This weapon has medium range and speed.

<i>Damage</i>	23 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	3000 km
<i>Speed</i>	2200 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.13 sec

Tachyon Cannon. The newly developed tachyon cannon emits sub-atomic particles that are able to penetrate weakened shields and retain their damage potential.

<i>Damage</i>	25 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	3500 km
<i>Speed</i>	2500 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.15 sec

Ionic Pulse Cannon. This high-power cannon fires ionized electrical pulses that can down a light fighter with just a few shots. It inflicts high damage at medium range but reenergizes more quickly than other guns. (Kilrathi Matter Disruptor)

<i>Damage</i>	33 dp/h (33)
<i>Range</i>	2000 km (2000)
<i>Speed</i>	2500 kps (2300)
<i>Refire delay</i>	.1 sec (.1)

Mass Accelerator Gun (Kilrathi). A relative of the super-collider, this gun delivers light damage using blasts of sub-atomic particles.

<i>Damage</i>	15 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	2600 km
<i>Speed</i>	2000 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.14 sec

Sonic Accelerator (Kilrathi). Still in the prototype stage, the long-range sonic accelerator gun uses a sonar tracking system. Damage potential is low, but will probably improve with time.

<i>Damage</i>	18 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	4400 km
<i>Speed</i>	2400 kps
<i>Refire delay</i>	.13 sec

Phase Blaster (Kilrathi). These guns interrupt the electrical phasing mechanism of energy shields. Phase blasters inflict heavy damage at medium range.

<i>Damage</i>	30 dp/h
<i>Range</i>	3000 km
<i>Speed</i>	2200 kps
<i>Refire</i>	delay .13 sec

Missiles

Dumbfire. This missile is a point-and-shoot weapon that doesn't require a missile lock – just aim at a target and launch it. With no homing capability, a dumb-fire is most dangerous against pilots who can anticipate your reactions. Pilots usually reserve DF missiles for use in close quarters or against slow-moving targets. In most cases, you can easily evade these missiles by outmaneuvering the missile. (Kilrathi brand Paw, Terran brand Dart.)

<i>Active timer</i>	30 sec
<i>Speed</i>	2800 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	0 dps
<i>Damage</i>	210 dp/h
<i>Lock time</i>	-na-

Heat-Seeker (HS). The engines of fighters and capital ships generate a lot of heat, a fact that the heat-seeking missile uses to its advantage. The targeting system looks for the hottest, closest object, so you can try flying near an enemy ship. In some cases, the missile will adhere to a second heat source and quit tracking you. (Kilrathi brand Stalker, Terran brand Javelin.)

<i>Active timer</i>	20 sec (20)
<i>Speed</i>	2500 kps (2400)
<i>Turn rate</i>	60 dps (60)
<i>Damage</i>	250 dp/h (240)
<i>Lock time</i>	1.5 sec (1.7)

Image-Recognition (IR). An image-recognition missile operates by “memorizing” a targeted ship. It's difficult to evade once it gains a lock, and a chaff pod won't distract it from a target. If you spot one coming at you, your best bet is to dart behind another

enemy ship and hope that it inadvertently hits your opponent instead. (Kilrathi brand Claw, Terran brand Spiculum.)

<i>Active timer</i>	20 sec
<i>Speed</i>	2300 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	60 dps
<i>Damage</i>	260 dp/h
<i>Lock time</i>	2.5 sec

Friend-or-Foe (FF). The friend-or-foe missile locks onto the nearest enemy ship. Capable of identifying the distinctive signal broadcast by enemy ships, it makes a beeline for the nearest ship that isn't broadcasting. This weapon will target friendly ships whose communications systems are damaged. Even the firing ship is not safe! (Kilrathi brand Fang, Terran brand Pilum.)

<i>Active timer</i>	25 sec
<i>Speed</i>	2200 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	60 dps
<i>Damage</i>	275 dp/h
<i>Lock time</i>	-na-

Torpedo. A mainstay in both Kilrathi and Confederation loadouts, the torpedo is the only missile capable of destroying a carrier. It can penetrate heavy-duty phase shields in a single shot. This weapon is reserved for medium-to-heavy class fighters.

<i>Active timer</i>	28 sec
<i>Speed</i>	2600 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	0 dps
<i>Damage</i>	18,000 dp/h
<i>Lock time</i>	-na-

Leech (L). The leech missile first appeared on prototypes of the Confederation's *Wraith* fighter. However, recent developments incorporate hardpoint mounts for the leech. It drains a target of all energy for 20 seconds.

<i>Active timer</i>	12 sec
<i>Speed</i>	2300 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	45 dps
<i>Damage</i>	1 dp/h
<i>Lock time</i>	2.5 sec

Chaff Pod. Pilots drop chaff pods to intercept incoming missiles with locking mechanisms. Try to persuade the opposing pilot to drop these early during a battle, then launch one of your heat-seeking missiles. With any luck, he won't have any pods left to counter your missiles.

<i>Active timer</i>	30 sec
<i>Speed</i>	0 kps
<i>Turn rate</i>	0 dps
<i>Damage</i>	-2 dpph
<i>Lock time</i>	-na-

Flight Deck Officer's Report

TO: All pilots

FROM: William Harrison, TCN Deck Officer III

We're about to fight the most important battle of our lives, and it is imperative that we gain the upper hand. Therefore, I've done a little digging to unearth resource files on five Kilrathi ships that we're most likely to face. In the attached report, I have listed these ships and their statistics. You will also find brief explanation of some of the rating characteristics.

Maximum Velocity/Cruise Velocity. These velocity settings are governed by the ship's computer and set in relation to (a) the flagship, (b) an escorted vessel, (c) a nearby planetary body, (d) a beacon or (e) a value derived from radar positions of all visible ships. The velocity is expressed in kilometers per second (kps), although the Kilrathi use "octomaks" instead of meters.

Acceleration. This evaluation of the ship's acceleration rate is described as Bad, Poor, Average, Good or Excellent.

Maximum Pitch, Roll and Yaw. These characteristics are expressed in degrees per second (dps).

Pitch. Ability to change direction up or down.

Roll. Ability of a ship to rotate along an imaginary axis extending through the nose and tail.

Yaw. Ability of a ship to turn right or left without changing its vertical position.

Ship's Armor. Defensive armor is measured in centimeters thickness of Durasteel, while Fore and Aft values have values displayed equivalent to centimeters of Durasteel.

The Kilrathi have possessed spacecraft technology for over six centuries, following nearly the same timeline as us. Engineers have decided that presently our technologies are almost equal, with the Kilrathi having more access to raw materials for ship construction.

Dralthi

Class Light Fighter

Length 28 meters

Mass 4725 kg

Max. Velocity 745 kps

Cruise Velocity 500 kps

Acceleration Excellent

Max. YPR 5/6/7 dps

Weapons

Mass Accelerator Gun (2) Paw Dumbfire (2)

Armor

Fore and Aft Shields 1.5 cm equivalent each

Front and Rear 1.5 cm each

Right and Left 1.5 cm each



Shok'lar

Class Medium Fighter

Length 39 meters

Mass 7150 kg

Max. Velocity 695 kps

Cruise Velocity 500 kps

Acceleration OK

Max. YPR 5 dps

Weapons

Sonic Accelerator Gun (2) Matter Disrupter Gun (2)

Stalker Heatseeker (2) Claw Image Recognition (2)

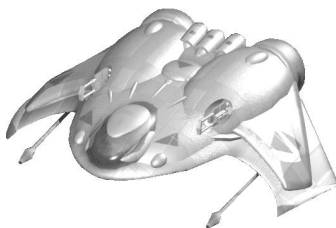
Chaff Pod (1)

Armor

Fore and Aft Shields 2.7 cm equivalent each

Front and Rear 2 cm each

Right and Left 1.5 cm each.



Jrathek

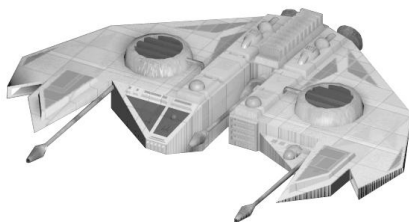
<i>Class</i>	Medium Fighter
<i>Length</i>	35 meters
<i>Mass</i>	6300 kg
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	595 kps
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	450 kps
<i>Acceleration</i>	Excellent
<i>Max. YPR</i>	4/7/5 dps
<i>Weapons</i>	Flux Cannon (2) Fang Friend-or-Foe (2) Chaff Pod (1)
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields Front and Rear Right and Left



Photon Cannon (2)
Claw Image-Recognition (2)

Kor-larh

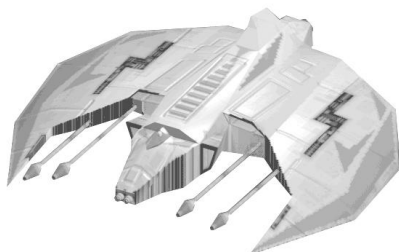
<i>Class</i>	Heavy Fighter
<i>Length</i>	38 meters
<i>Mass</i>	7135 kg
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	695 kps
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	500 kps
<i>Acceleration</i>	OK
<i>Max. YPR</i>	4/3/3 dps
<i>Weapons</i>	Flux Cannon (2) Paw Dumbfire (4) Torpedo (2)
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields Front and Rear Right and Left



Phase Blaster Gun (2)
Claw Image-Recognition (2)
Chaff Pod (2)

Goran

<i>Class</i>	Heavy Fighter
<i>Length</i>	42 meters
<i>Mass</i>	8200 kg
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	375 kps
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	350 kps
<i>Acceleration</i>	Poor
<i>Max. YPR</i>	2/3/3 dps
<i>Weapons</i>	Laser Cannon (2) Electron Gun (2) Fang Friend-or-Foe (2) Torpedo (2)

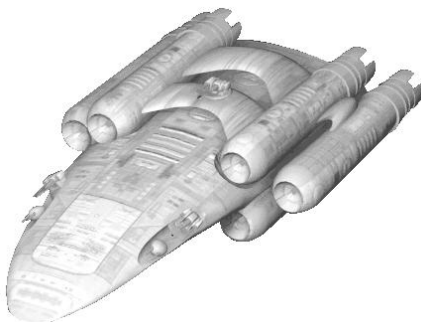


Flux Cannon (2)
Paw Dumbfire (4)
Claw Image-Recognition (4)
Chaff Pod (2)

Armor Fore and Aft Shields 8.0 cm equivalent each
Front and Rear 6.5 cm each
Right and Left 4.5 cm each

Kilrathi Carrier

<i>Class</i>	Capital Ship	
<i>Length</i>	715 meters	
<i>Mass</i>	2.8 million kg	
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	50 kps	
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	50 kps	
<i>Acceleration</i>	Poor	
<i>Max. YPR</i>	1 dps	
<i>Weapons</i>	Flak Gun (12)	
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields	120 cm equivalent each
	Front and Rear	80 cm each
	Right and Left	80 cm each



Supplement, Year 2654.092

TO: Clanmates of the 23rd vessel

FROM: Z'ratmak nar Kur'u'tak

As ordered by our Liege-lord Butlav, I have compiled an update for interstellar spacecraft. This document has been specifically revised for warriors in front-line sectors. The supplement contains the latest specifications on common Terran craft.

All pilots are ordered to familiarize themselves with these specifications. If you wish, archived computer files of this material have been placed in the main computer. For those of you unfamiliar with the evaluation system, review these rating categories:

Maximum Velocity/Cruise Velocity. Ship velocity, set relative to nearby objects, planets or radar positions of other ships. The Terrans express velocity in kilometers per second (kps), roughly equivalent to 12 octomaks per second.

Length. The length of the ship. Terrans measure this in meters, comparable to 1.2 of our maks.

Mass. Mass of the ship. Terrans measure this in kilograms (1 kilogram equals 12 octogrammas).

Acceleration. The ship's acceleration rate is given as Bad, Poor, Average, Good or Excellent.

Maximum Pitch, Roll and Yaw. The Terrans measure these vectors as we do, in degrees per second (dps).

Ship's Armor. Armor measured in zarmaks thickness of Durasteel (12 zarmaks are equivalent to 1 Terran centimeter) or values equivalent to zarmaks of Durasteel. Higher numbers indicate more effective armor.

Confederation spacecraft have been in production for almost 1130 sun years, paralleling our research in the field. Though the Confederation ships have different designs and levels of functionality, their basic premise of operation is almost identical to ours. Only eleven eights of Confederation ships have been sighted in the last 24 suns. The evident statistics for all current ships are listed in this entry. Several data may be skewed slightly because of damage on captured ships.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are Terran measurements.

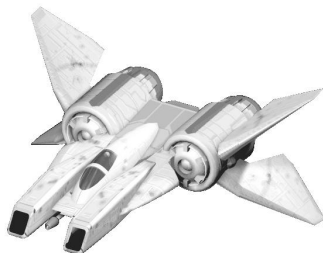
Arrow

Class	Light Fighter	
Length	22 maks, (18 m)	
Mass	10,376 octogrammas (og), (4350 kg)	
Max. Velocity	1433 octomaks/sec (om/s), (795 m/s)	
Cruise Velocity	764 octomaks/sec (om/s), (500 m/s)	
Acceleration	Excellent	
Max. YPR	6/6/7 dps	
Weapons	Laser Cannon (2) Dart Dumbfire (4)	
Armor	Fore and Aft Shields	1 zarmaks (zm) equivalent each (1.7 cm)
	Front and Rear	1 zm each (1.2 cm)
	Right and Left	1 zm each (1.2 cm)



Phantom

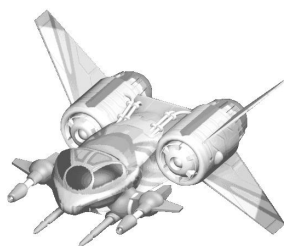
Class	Heavy Fighter	
Length	50 maks, (40 m)	
Mass	17,531 og, (8025 kg)	
Max. Velocity	1267 om/s, (695 m/s)	
Cruise Velocity	733 om/s, (475 m/s)	
Acceleration	Good	
Max. YPR	5 dps	



<i>Weapons</i>	Laser Cannon (2) Dart Dumbfire (2)	Mass Driver (2) Spiculum Image-Recognition (2)
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields Front and Rear Right and Left	2 zm equivalent each, (2.6 cm) 2 zm each, (2.1 cm) 2 zm each, (2.1 cm)

Wraith

<i>Class</i>	Medium Fighter
<i>Length</i>	43 maks, (35 m)
<i>Mass</i>	15,054og, (6700 kg)
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	1123 om/s, (595 m/s)
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	702 om/s, (450 m/s)
<i>Acceleration</i>	Excellent
<i>Max. YPR</i>	5/4/5 dps



<i>Weapons</i>	Particle Cannon (2) Dart Dumbfire (6) Leech (2)	Reaper Cannon (2) Spiculum Image-Recognition (2) Chaff Pods (3)
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields Front and Rear Right and Left	4 zm equivalent each (4.0 cm) 3 zm each (3.2 cm) 2 zm each (2.2 cm).

Gladus

<i>Class</i>	Medium Fighter
<i>Length</i>	44maks, (36 m)
<i>Mass</i>	15,364 og, (6900 kg)
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	1356 om/s, (750 m/s)
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	764 om/s, (500 m/s)
<i>Acceleration</i>	Good
<i>Max. YPR</i>	3/4/5 dps



<i>Weapons</i>	Laser Cannon (2) Tachyon Cannon (2) Javelin Heatseeker (1) Chaff Pod (1)	Particle Cannon (2) Dart Dumbfire (8) Torpedo (1)
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields Front and Rear Right and Left	5 zm equivalent each (5.0 cm) 4 zm each (4.0 cm) 3 zm each (3.7 cm)

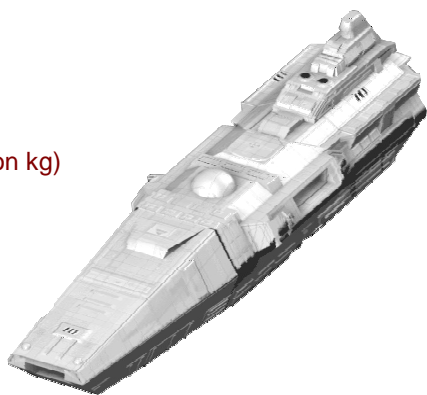
Banshee

<i>Class</i>	Heavy Fighter	
<i>Length</i>	maks, (43 m)	
<i>Mass</i>	53 og, (8345 kg)	
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	20,231 om/s, 395 kps)	
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	536 om/s, (350 kps)	
<i>Acceleration</i>	Poor	
<i>Max. YPR</i>	3/2/3 dps	
<i>Weapons</i>	Neutron Gun (2)	Ionic Pulse Cannon (2)
	Photon Cannon (2)	Dart Dumbfire (2)
	Javelin Heatseeker (2)	Pilum Friend-or-Foe (2)
	Leech (1)	Torpedo (2)
	Chaff Pod (2)	
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields	7 zm equivalent each (7 cm)
	Front and Rear	5 zm each (5 cm)
	Right and Left	5 zm each (5 cm)



Terran Carrier

<i>Class</i>	Capital Ship	
<i>Length</i>	1325 maks, (725 m)	
<i>Mass</i>	4 octomils (3.25 million kg)	
<i>Max. Velocity</i>	62 om/s, (50 m/s)	
<i>Cruise Velocity</i>	62 om/s, (50 m/s)	
<i>Acceleration</i>	Poor	
<i>Max. YPR</i>	1 dps	
<i>Weapons</i>	Flak Gun (10)	
<i>Armor</i>	Fore and Aft Shields	170 zm equivalent each, (120 cm)
	Front and Rear	132 zm each, (90 cm)
	Right and Left	132 zm each, (90 cm)





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