

DataNet Collection 3.0

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The DataNet

Somewhere between military secrecy, corporate shilling, and pirate anarchy lies the truth. The discovery and dissemination of such truths is the primary mission of the DataNet. Undercover DataNet “commando journalists” study press releases, track ship and troop movements, and even launch covert data raids to find the secrets of the various human factions. This information is inserted into existing data networks, acting like an old Earth computer virus. DataNet is the only unbiased news outlet available since Earth’s destruction.

The DataNet is about delivering the truth, not serving deceit or propaganda.

DataNet node: 1982_1225.2: Samaritan

The DataNet is the only unbiased news outlet available to the survivors since Earth’s destruction. Check here regularly for stories sifted from the DataNet. We also look forward to hearing personally from any “commando journalists” out there. Send in your own report or give us your commentary to any existing report. Send your e-mail to AIEvent@Microsoft.com and put DataNet in the subject line.

Date: 09.20.2150 / File: 00058
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Rixians Pressed for Space

The DataNet boards have been busy all week, with various factions looking to recruit the best of the independent scout pilots. Although factions are often reluctant to openly reveal their identity on the boards, several have been openly posting such advertisements, such as the one below, with the apparent hope of recruiting more "independently" minded pilots:

Looking for adventure and excitement? Prepared to defend mankind?

If so, the Iron Coalition may be looking for you! Recent deep system activities have required us to seek out the best scout pilots not yet affiliated with any faction. If you have you logged significant time in the seat of any scout-class ship, or have completed military-style contracts for ANY faction, give your local IC recruiter a call. Please note, that having performed any contract directly against the IC WILL NOT automatically disqualify you.

As of last night, the reasons behind this recent recruiting drive have become abundantly clear. Several factions have reportedly sent scouting parties to Rixian sectors, presumably in the interest of gaining control over those Alephs believed to lead back to the Rixian homeworld. However, little success seems to have been made by the faction scouts and their recently recruited mercenaries . . . except for those in the BIOS *Gen-6x4* squad.

Arriving in Rixian space, the aliens were quick to defend their Alephs, dropping scores of devastating gun pods and laying several fields of anti-ship mines. In the face of such bristling defense, IC and Belter scouts were quickly turned away. However, the Gen-6 squad, most likely disdaining the use of fickle mercenaries, managed to establish themselves in the outskirts of the sector area, refusing to be pushed out by continued assault waves of Rixian fighters.

Those returning mercs have begun posting word of the battle. As full payment of their contracts apparently hinges on a certain amount of non-disclosure, none have been willing to discuss the reasons behind this scouting expedition. They have, however, made reference to the fact that the Rixians most heavily defended the areas immediately surrounding the Alephs, preventing anyone from flying through. If such is the case, can it be surmised that many of the scouts were hired not just to investigate the area before the Aleph portals, but behind them as well?

Is the rumored invasion of Rixian space set to commence? As always, we'll be the first to post any and all information we hear.

>>**HeppieMan: 6448:02929:18:** I went on that mission, and I can tell you one thing for damned sure: getting through those Alephs won't be easy! Something tells me, if the Rixians could, they'd prefer to blow the things up rather than let a human pass!

>>**Apok_Ochoa: 2216:91818:918:** Yeah, I went on the raid, too. And no IC contract is worth the kinda defense they threw against us. I think our base lasted all of twenty minutes against some Rix calling himself *GutterboyX*.

>>**Entity-X: 6662:9161:61111:** Where are the Rixian posts? After one of their vic's aren't they usually here ranting about the Code?

>>**PodKiller_Phil: 872727:918717:** Who sez they won? The BIOS tubers are still there, aren't they? Rix can't be none too happy about that.

Date: 09.21.2150 / File: 00059
Report filed by: "Conscious_One"

System Showdown

The Rixians crusaders, seem unable -- or unwilling -- to communicate with this system's residents beyond persistent messages about joining their cause, following their Code . . . messages even more fanatical than the Iron Coalition's.

As such, most posts on the DataNet boards by Rixian agents remain largely ignored. One can only hear the same message repeated for so many times before completely tuning it out. Consider GigaCorp's past advertisement campaign for their now defunct BioWear line. However, in recent days, Rixian posts seemed to increase not only in frequency, but in severity as well. The other factions' aggression against Rixian-controlled Alephs no doubt helped spur the Rixian Unity to warn of an impending campaign to "cleanse the system of all non-believers."

Sources report that at 17:12 last evening, this promised Rixian campaign began. Their reinforcements, having arrived last week and ambushed for the tech-cargo they carried, seemed to have finally organized effective strike units. Just as another wave of IC and GigaCorp scouts arrived at the Alephs, far more heavily armed than for their first sorties, the Rixian carriers unleashed wave after wave of assault fighters.

In their attempt to drive off all human interlopers, however, it would seem the Rixians failed to concentrate on their greatest threat -- the BIOS.

BIOS stations had remained near the Alephs since their preliminary scouting missions earlier this week, stubbornly refusing to retreat in the face of Rixian "encouragement." As the Rixians themselves withdrew, to collect their forces and prepare for last night's assault, they unwittingly left the BIOS time to organize effective battle plans of their own.

History between these two factions has always been sorted. In philosophical posts on the `Net, the Rixians have long considered the BIOS as the one faction with the greatest potential, viewing the BIOS advancement of genetics similar to the Unity's religious desire of ascension. For some time, the BIOS even appeared to join forces with the Rixians, sending countless recruits to the Unity ranks . . . until it was determined that these recruits were nothing but spies sent to steal Rix tech.

According to our sources, no one but the BIOS themselves were aware that yet another generation of soldiers had been prepared. As the Rixians attacked, the BIOS pilots, calling themselves Gen-7a, were unleashed into battle, where they quickly devastated not only the Rixians, but ships of all other factions as well. Survivors report certain Gen-7a pilots, flying under such call-names as *Rain_Dog*, *JanmanX*, and *GMANXpolar*, as fighting with seemingly unlimited energy and unprecedented ferocity. As the Rixians did their best to fend off Gen-7a, forced to concentrate two or three fighters against a single BIOS ship, Gen-7a pilots proved just how hardy they were. Those who lost their ships did not appear to eject lifepods, but directly ejected into the breach of space itself, where they were able to survive in a quick-onset hibernation state until picked up.

By battle's end, absolutely nothing could stop the BIOS agents. Not the Rixians' gun pods. Certainly not their Code. Nothing. It has been rumored that the recent Gen-7a squad must have been transported to the battle site either in the strictest confines or else in suspended animation within their own ships. With the Rixians defeated, the BIOS Gen-7a pilots turned on themselves, attacking their own carriers when no other enemy could be found. While our sources state that they watched the start of this attack, they did not stay around to watch its conclusion, choosing instead to escape back to their own carriers. However, the end results of last night's showdown remain clear. The Rixian defense has been broken apart. The Alephs remain open to any who wish to travel through.

>>**MusicMan: 33663:91818:9:** I watched them BIOS pilots. It was like nothing I've ever seen. In the span of minutes, they took out the Unity's refinery platform, teleport receiver, starbase, heavy outpost . . .

>>**PanicAttax: 72172:2727:** I hear that. The IC tried to signal a truce with the BIOS, and the BIOS voted 16 against, and 1 abstaining. Then, the 16 took out that one guy who abstained!

>>**Lt. Hammel: 1515:019818:09:** Let me just state for the record the results of that truce not panning out. Right afterwards, the BIOS destroyed our advanced tactical lab and heavy receiver. *GMANXpolar* alone took out 12 bases!

>> **MusicMan: 33663:91818:9:** Wonder how the BIOS got their pilots back on board? Maybe they built them to simply die off after, say, a couple hours?

>>**PanicAttax: 72172:2727:** Let's hope so, but it isn't likely. Last night's battle lasted almost four hours, and Gen-7a didn't look even close to calming down!

Date: 09.22.2150 / File: 00060
Report filed by: "Col. Jefferson"

A Mutiny Fails

A message from the editor

The following report was sent in by one of the IC's chief press officers. Despite its critique of the DataNet boards, we feel that censoring Colonel Jefferson's message would go against the very philosophy of the DataNet both he and the IC protest. The DataNet remains the only unbiased source of information left to the system. Rest assured, all sources and posts will continue to be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

This message is being sent for two express purposes. First, to condemn the actions of those younger pilots who sought to commit the serious offense of mutiny against their ranking officers yesterday. The second is to condemn all members of the Iron Coalition who seek to breach IC's policy of non-disclosure of any and all information to outside agencies.

As to the first part: Yesterday evening, an initial group of approximately thirty enlisted pilots sought to wage an illegal and unmitigated attack on their ranking officers. The reasons behind this attack were clear: In recent weeks, several voices have been raised, crying out for an invasion of Rixian space via the Aleph portals the Rixian Unity currently guards. Two days prior, an assault force, heavily composed of BIOS commandos, managed to cause a serious breach in the formerly unified Rixian defense. As such, several IC units, mostly those composed of younger, excitable pilots, demanded an immediate and total invasion of Rixian space.

At that time, IC officials deemed such an invasion totally premature. No formalized plans had yet been made. An invasion launched so spuriously would have met with obvious results: failure. There is no telling what kind of forces the Rixians control in their home sectors; in addition, an IC invasion would leave not only our Luna bases but also Earth painfully undermanned.

However, IC officials are pleased to report that wiser heads have prevailed. Those pilots participating in mutinous activities have either been dealt with accordingly on the field of battle, or else detained and awaiting court-martial. Normally the punishment for mutiny is clear -- execution by stellar ejection. However, in these times of war, when every man and every ounce of manpower is needed, these offenders will most likely be sent to the He3 mining colonies deep within the lunar core.

As to the second part: IC officials were largely made aware of yesterday's attack due to illicit postings by these young pilots on the DataNet boards. As has been stated above, the IC has always maintained a policy of non-disclosure to outside agencies. In recent days, however, some pilots feel that not only should they post to the DataNet boards, but that doing so under assumed aliases will protect them.

Allow me to dispel such myths right now. Not only is the act of posting information by IC soldiers illegal, but we will take every measure to track down those soldiers who have chosen to do so.

As a final note, I am aware of the unfortunate hypocrisy of stating the illegality of posting to the DataNet by posting to the DataNet boards. Unfortunately, this seems the most likely medium to reach our target audience.

>>**MusicMan: 2636:1711:171:** Uh oh guys! Poppa's mad now! If only you worked for the Belters, you'd know something about the freedom the IC is supposed to protect!

>>**GrommieBreath: 621626:18117:** Yeah -- Lt. Hammel, Aunt_Sam: where are you guys? Maybe if you turn each other in, they'll take it easy on ya!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1515:019818:09:** I don't know what the heck you people are talking about. I've never posted to these boards before. Now, I have to get back to defending the greatest faction in the system, the blessed IC.

>>**MusicMan: 2636:1711:171:** Guess that's the last we hear from Sam for awhile. Jefferson's message is almost a blessing.

Date: 09.25.2150 / File: 00061
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Recent History

Over the past weekend, history was made as humanity launched its first military campaign outside of the solar system.

True, ever since the discovery of the Alephs, scouting missions have traveled deeper and deeper into uncharted territories. Yet, most of these missions remained pet projects of the factions, who sought to discover new supplies of He3 and other resources. As a result, the incredible supply of data these missions must have gathered has remained locked away, unavailable for public consumption.

With the breach of the Rixian defense around key Alephs, however, the human factions have seemingly put together a concerted effort to invade the Unity's home system. As more and more scouts continued to arrive around these Alephs over past few days, so too did the first long-range carriers -- and this despite the Iron Coalition's most recent public statement that no invasion campaign would be forthcoming.

It would seem that while some have used the DataNet boards as a free exchange of information, faction leaders also continue to plot in secret. How the four human factions managed to arrange a secret invasion without the DataNet hearing rumors is no less wondrous than the willingness of the four factions to organize together at all. It may be remembered that the last time this system saw such a human alliance was when the Rixians first arrived. Then, with some of the best human pilots rushing to their side out of curiosity, and the previously unknown war technology of the gun pods, the Rixians seemed an unstoppable force. Until, that is, the human alliance formed which handed the Rix their first, and most crushing, defeat.

And now, a second human alliance has apparently come about. As reported by innumerable witnesses, those carriers arriving at the Alephs moved through early Friday morning. It was also reported that the remainder of the Rixian defenders returned through the Alephs as well, desperately looking to either head off these human carriers or else race back to help bolster the Unity's gathering defenses.

One result of the Rixians' retreat: With the Alephs left completely undefended, several pilots loyal to the DataNet have also been able to travel through, looking to provide in-depth coverage of events taking place in Rixian space. With them goes noted field reporter Conscious_One, set to provide a critical look at life on the Rixian side.

As always, we'll post the latest information just as soon as it comes in.

>>**Conscious_One**: <node withheld>: Just sending back some notes of what I've seen so far. The human factions have been able to hold it together, at least up to this point, and have gotten past the first of the Rixian defense outposts. I've seen more of those Gen-7 BIOS, and they do appear to have been transported *in stasis*, then "thawed," so to speak, before being sent into battle. Also, while the first preliminary human scouts have reached the Rixian homeworld, the Rix did manage to brutally beat them back. And the name of the Rix unit to do so? They called themselves "*Rix Deefnd*". English, it seems, has indeed made its way back here, which some of the Rix have already begun to pick up.

>>**Conscious_One**: <node withheld>: A postscript on the last report. The Rix seem capable not only of understanding some of the human language, but the human psychology as well. I don't know all the details quite yet, but I've been given the understanding that the Iron Coalition believed the Rixians to be breaking down internally. On Sunday, 09.24.2150, the IC *Pale Riders* moved in to take advantage, and that's when *Rix Deefnd* tore them apart. A well-played ruse by the Rixians!

Date: 09.26.2150 / File: 00062
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Further Victory for Humanity

Humanity continues to roll over the Rixian Unity, it would seem, achieving further victory last night in the aliens' home sectors.

For the first time, human factions were able to breach the Rixians' planetary defenses, opening the way for possible bombing campaigns of the alien homeworld itself. Led by the military machine of the Iron Coalition, the human forces were further supplemented by a unit of Belter "free agents." Together, these combined forces annihilated the joint Rixian squads sent to drive them back. Even more remarkable than last night's victory may be the fact that for the first time in recent memory, an alliance between human factions held strong throughout the conflict before peacefully leaving the field.

Of course, the lack of a cohesive Rixian defense did nothing but assure the humans their victory. Unlike the previous success of *Rix Deefnd*, the two Rixian units sent out against the invaders last night seemed not only unable to effectively respond to the humans but also unwilling to work together. Reports have come back claiming these two Rixian units actually traded shots with one another in the face of the invasion force.

If such is true, does this signal a complete breakdown within the Rixians? Previously, infighting has been determined to be a clever ruse, designed to draw attackers close enough for planetary defense forces to destroy them. Yesterday's actions, however, seem to have been nothing but actual internal dissent. Of course, the Rixians may be smarter than any speculation gives them credit for: Perhaps they look to use these recent invasions as a chance to thin their own ranks of those pilots not loyal enough to the Code.

In any event, for a faction calling itself the "Unity," the Rixians appeared anything but unified yesterday.

>>Conscious_One: <node withheld>: A further report on the battlefield. The Iron Coalition seems to be leading the effort so far, and after yesterday's success, are starting to organize their fleet of bombers.

At the same time, there are voices being raised in opposition to any plans of bombing the Rixian world -- most notably GigaCorp's, which has ironically pledged full support to the invasion efforts. GigaCorp spokesman Miguel Sanchez issued statements protesting any destruction of the Rixian planet itself and the resulting loss of irreplaceable technology, artifacts, and culture that would go along with it. Keep the invasion to the sectors of space, Sanchez's statement went on to read. The last thing anyone wants is another Dresden massacre -- this time on a planetary scale.

>>Conscious_One: <node withheld>: Another note to add: Members of the Rixian Unity have started inviting certain members of the human invasion force to the capitol cities of their planet. This does not seem to be done with the intent of negotiating a peace settlement; instead of the military, scientists and researchers, myself included, have been invited. Most likely the Rixians wish to further advance GigaCorp's opinion against destroying their planet by allowing human researchers to study and grow enamored of their culture.

Of course, the idea that the Rixians would take advantage of humanity's curiosity in order to more easily collect prisoners of war has also crossed at least this reporter's mind.

Date: 09.26.2150 / File: 00063
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Current Military Strategy

The following report comes from Iron Coalition channels.

Priority: 1 (Top Secret: for official eyes only) **Operation: Squelch Intelligence Summary**

In the midst of the current military situation, we have learned that GigaCorp has launched a secondary psych-ops campaign of its own. The goal of their primary campaign echoes that of all human factions currently participating in the war efforts: defeat of the Rixian Unity. The goal of their secondary campaign, however, is to achieve the most advantageous position in regard to Rixian reparations pending the outcome of the conflict.

This can be assumed following Miguel Sanchez's statements released yesterday, condemning the plan to bomb the Unity homeworld into submission. While an effective bombing campaign will prove the only sure means of forcing a Rixian surrender, if GigaCorp voices its opposition to it now, they will be the one faction with which the Unity will likely look to negotiate a peace settlement. The Unity may then look to GigaCorp to facilitate distribution of any and all war reparations.

Such a psych-ops campaign cannot be allowed to achieve even partial victory. The sooner the Rixians look to negotiate with GigaCorp, the more dangerous GigaCorp will become to the Iron Coalition. It is possible that the Rixians will go so far as to make an offer of alliance with GigaCorp even before the war's end. If such an alliance forms, the Coalition's chances for victory will be greatly diminished.

The entire human alliance threatens to dissolve if no action is taken. Already, representatives from the Belter Unions have demanded increased pay rates. And if GigaCorp is allowed to jump sides and ally with the Rixians, then all is lost.

The best course of action would be to assault GigaCorp's primary fighting units as soon as possible. If placed in a position of needing supplies and repairs this far from its home sectors, GigaCorp will most likely look to the Iron Coalition for aid and forego any further attempt to ally with the Rixian Unity.

On the matter of the DataNet: Efforts to mask all reports of the gathering invasion force appear to have fully succeeded. Those early leaks made to the DataNet boards worked in IC's favor, using the follow-up release to deny that any military campaign in Rixian Space would be possible. Those pilots leaking information to the DataNet are currently being ferreted out.

However, in the close confines of the Rixian sectors, chances have increased that any number of intelligence reports can and will be intercepted in transit. The previous action of detaining a DataNet reporter failed due to the fact that he was released and allowed to spread word of his detention. It is recommended that all known and suspected DataNet reporters be permanently detained, for the higher good of the war effort.

>>**Conscious_1: <node withheld>**: You heard it here first. I post this message in the event I am not heard from again.

Shortly after we received this report, *Operation: Squelch* appeared to have launched, with an IC strike team, *Death's Fist*, attacking a GigaCorp unit heading toward the Rixian planet. It is believed that most of the GigaCorp pilots, along with an unknown number of researchers they were escorting, were killed in route.

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node restricted>**: Tough news, Conscious. Of course, how are we to know you didn't just tack on that last paragraph yourself? It doesn't match with the rest of the document, now does it? Of course, the release of time-sensitive military information is an infringement on stellar law, which the IC does have the legal authority to enforce.

>>**Muzak_Man: 818187:191881**: Easy, IC. We may be fighting the same battle here, but you'll never win any long-term support throwing those kinda threats around.

Date: 09.28.2150 / File: 00064
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Deathmatch

Never have the full brutalities of warfare been more fully realized than last night.

These days, stellar conflict has become a somewhat sterilized fighting system. True, in the heated dogfights, dozens, even hundreds of pilots are forced to eject during a single battle. Yet, once in their life pods, few are further assaulted by their enemies. Most factions aim for the destruction of costly ships, while so-called "pod-killing" of live pilots is almost universally frowned upon. With such a mindset, a faction such as GigaCorp, with huge war coffers yet limited military experience, has managed to become a major force to be reckoned with.

Last night, however, few pilots chose to follow the accepted conventions of modern war. The Rixians, with their home planet at stake, launched an attack designed apparently not to win back human-controlled sectors, but to exterminate all pilots in those sectors.

Of all the human pilots, the Gen-7 BIOS proved the most capable to counter just such an attack. As has been witnessed before, once released from their hibernation-tanks during transportation and released into battle, almost nothing can stop these Gen-7's.

While the battle, dubbed *Anyone's Guess* by fellow war correspondents, had a definite start time of approximately 17:16 UST, there was no apparent end. All five units participating left the field still in control of a piece of sector territory. Instead of sector conquest, then, the real winner appears to have been the unit achieving the most kills -- in this case, *Gen 7z1* of the BIOS.

For now, the Rixians have failed in their attempt to exterminate the BIOS pilots. However, as has been hinted at in past battles, they may not need to put forth so much effort. Members of the BIOS council have admitted shipping the dangerous Gen-7's *in stasis*. Although they have not made any comments on further rumors that the Gen-7 pilots simply die off after an extremely short period of time, witnesses to the battle have advanced this claim. Battle-damaged but intact ships have been seen floating back to their BIOS carriers, Gen-7 pilots dead at the controls.

Will the Rixians discover on their own this fact of the pilots' limited lifespan? Quite likely, considering the amount of time they've recently spent battling the Gen-7 pilots. And will the Unity take full advantage of this discovery? Also, highly likely. Given that the Iron Coalition has been known to make use of automated ships in the past, the Unity may choose to sacrifice such ships of their own. This could draw out the BIOS pilots into battle and cause their demise, in the hopes of depleting the Gen-7 stock.

All this leads back to the question, of who will win the war: The faction with the most ships or the most live pilots to spare?

>>**Ltc Hammel:** <node restricted>: Conscious! Do you work for the Rixian Unity, or something? This is a war we're fighting here, and you're giving the Rixians strategy tips!! And don't think they can't read these DataNet postings -- if anything, their English is only getting better!

>>**Major_Tom:** 818187:191881: Hammel's right. You see the names of their units last night? *Victory* and *Win!* Hell, the night before, I thought they were even using German!

>>**XpressX:** 26262:18171: Not a bad strategy either, once we all get back. Let the bee sting you, then it's dead. Someday we'll be up against those Gen-7 tubers.

Date: 09.29.2150 / File: 00065
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Recalled Home

History may very well come to view the Rixians as a peaceful race. Despite the aggressive invasion of humanity's system, and the Rixians' persistent crusades designed to convert by force, the Unity as a whole simply does not seem capable of supporting large-scale war. Even when that war is designed to defend their very planet.

Consider the Rixians' latest efforts. Recalling their missionaries from work abroad, these Rixians returned to bolster defensive units -- with little or no effect. Yet again, the Gen-7 BIOS proved their superiority, routing both Rix missionary units with the help of GigaCorp reinforcements.

Meanwhile, xenologic efforts have continued on the Rixian planet despite the continued threat of an Iron Coalition bombing campaign. While research scientists look to study the Rix -- their culture, their ability to absorb the human language system -- they are also studying the Rixians' apparent crusader mentality in spreading their Code. Initial reports indicate that while all Rix believe vehemently in the Code, not all are as militant-minded as those missionaries sent to our solar system. If anything, the majority of the Rixian people are in favor of negotiations to end the war as quickly as possible.

If our first impressions of the Rix were of them as zealous crusaders, one can only wonder how their populace views humanity now. Despite a minority of peaceful scientific researchers, our initial forces arriving to their system have been nothing but thirsty for war. It is almost a credit to the Rixian Unity that they wish to negotiate at all with a people at least partially composed of the Gen-7 BIOS -- absolutely ruthless fighters bred for war and who die off at a battle's conclusion.

Others will disagree with this report. The Rixians may be merely feinting yet again, trying to appear peaceful if only to avoid a destructive campaign against their planet. However, it is the opinion of this reporter that with the end of the Rixian War the true enemy of humanity will be realized. The greatest threat to our system is not the Rixians, but the seventh generation of BIOS.

>>David_633: 363636:633_633: You're damned right people disagree with your report! The BIOS are the heroes of this war! We have done more to defeat the Rixians than all other factions combined! And if we are not paid the respect we are due, we will take steps!

>>CueBall: 22_15611a: The BIOS are about as alien now as the Rixians. A three-hour lifespan? The ability to withstand space? They're both enemies of humanity.

>>Victor_676: 71771:918111: You "people" aren't worthy of BIOS help. Go ahead. Settle with the Rix after we softened them up. See what that gets you.

>>Leon_677: 8128723:198187: While certain factions of humanity have failed to advance their genetics, they have failed to advance their thinking, as well. Respect the BIOS, or you will come to fear the BIOS!

Date: 10.02.2150 / File: 00066
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

An Invasion Fails

As this war correspondence continues, it would seem that the military campaign underway in Rixian space might be coming to an end sooner than anyone anticipated. Yet while just last week the Rixian Unity seemed all but ready to fold, this week it is the human alliance threatening to dissolve.

Over the weekend, several key events occurred, leading to the complete reversal of the war's momentum. Long-time rivals, GigaCorp and the Iron Coalition, managed to put their differences aside in order to coordinate the upcoming bombing campaign. GigaCorp themselves offered to launch the initial attacks on the Rixian planet, with the desired effect of softening up the planetary defenses -- and this following GigaCorp's recent public protest against just such a campaign. However, even when agreeing to participate, GigaCorp utterly failed in their efforts. Sending two strike units against the Rixians, both met with stiff resistance and eventually returned to the human armada, none of their mission goals met.

The human alliance had previously scheduled a press conference, which several reporters from the DataNet were invited to attend (and send representatives in their stead). The conference was most likely planned as a means for the human alliance to reiterate their need for a destructive bombing campaign in order to bring the war to a quick conclusion. But as our representatives reported back, the council quickly degenerated into a shouting match between GigaCorp and Iron Coalition officials.

Officials from the Iron Coalition accused GigaCorp of intentionally losing their battle with the Rixians, in order to sabotage the bombing campaign and continue favorable negotiations with the Rixians on their own. GigaCorp, led by spokesman Miguel Sanchez, countered these accusations by pointing out their heavy loss of 400 lives in the effort. Sanchez went on to condemn the Iron Coalition for failing to support GigaCorp's pilots, a promise IC officials apparently made before the battle. GigaCorp advanced the claim that the IC intended to follow up their bombing campaign by continuing to move forward and assault a weakened GigaCorp side.

Hours after the conference, units from all four human factions were launched, apparently in open conflict with one another.

Although the Rixians must still worry about the safety of their planet, their best defense seems to be allowing human nature to work against itself.

>>**Muzak_Man: 6363:19181:1**: GigaCorp cannot be trusted, no matter how many pilots they claim to have lost. Records might indicate how many ships were destroyed against the Rix, but those could've been automated, like the IC's drones. And if any faction has the money to spend on such a ruse, it's Giga.

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>**: There's a lot of rumor-mongering these days about IC's "drones" and "techno-pilots." For the record, I'd like to say that those reports were never substantiated.

>>**Gromnie_Breath: 1616:17171:171**: Hey, Hammel, since when are you IC stooges considering the DataNet "the record"? And you even invite them onboard the armada flagship? These wars are changing the times, I tell you.

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>**: Just keep your opinions to yourself, Gromnie. Whatever the heck a gromnie even is. Next time you're tempted to open that trap in jest of humanity's last defense against anarchists and corporate robots -- SHUT IT!

Date: 10.03.2150 / File: 00067
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Ambush: Earth

Since the launch of the Rix Wars, the Rixian Unity has increasingly come to be known for its strategic tricks. First came the apparent fighting between Rix units, a ruse that drew human pilots into the fray only to be annihilated by the Rixians themselves. Then there was the invitation for human research scientists and reporters to study the Rixian culture -- in an apparent effort to generate opposition to the IC's plan for a bombing campaign.

The latest of the Unity tricks came while members of the human alliance continued to fight amongst themselves. In the rush through the Alephs leading to Rixian space, the human alliance made one key mistake -- they forgot to post a defense at those very same Alephs. Perhaps they thought to simply leave them open -- for later reinforcements to arrive from the solar system. A potentially fatal error.

At the same time that the Rixians spoke of negotiating a peace, they sent a raiding party through these Alephs. And at 17:00 UST last night, their objective became clear: Old Earth. In order to save their own planet, the Unity planned a coup d'etat against the planet of their attackers.

If not for veteran forces left behind to guard Old Earth, the Rixian plan would surely have succeeded. However, there is no faction committed to the defense of Earth other than the Iron Coalition, and however many resources they may have committed to the Rix Wars, they still left some of their best behind. For once, even the DataNet applauds the efforts of this usually tyrannical regime.

In over three hours of fighting, the IC's *Driven Eagles* unit fended off pilots from *Rix Thrust*. And, in a surprising show of human solidarity, a Belters squad quickly showed up, lending what support they could to the IC. The outgunned Rixians eventually met with defeat.

Of the spoils to be gained from this attempted coup, surely the Rixians themselves must count among them. So far from their home sectors, the defeated pilots were rounded up, and the Rixians ships evenly distributed between the IC and the Belter scavengers. If any faction can perform the job of effectively interrogating the Rix, it's the Iron Coalition -- as at least one of our reporters can attest to. And while fighting continues in Rixian space, this latest effort must surely indicate that the conflict will soon return home.

>>**Worm_Can: 1616:9884734:** I don't fathom what in blazes you're taking about with "*lend what support they could.*" Do you people even listen to battle transmissions? At the end, it was the Belters with over 50% of the field, not them IC goons!

>>**PrideoftheBelt: 1611:272272:** Wormie's right. Why else you think the IC agreed to divvy up the Rix ships like they did? Simple appreciation? Ha!

>>**Major_Tom: <node withheld>:** Whatever. Can't you people just admit that you're only mercs and not a real faction? You should feel lucky the IC lets you play with us at all.

>>**Conscious_1: <node withheld>:** Horus, it's really not appropriate to discuss my imprisonment. Just because you weren't picked for the Rix Wars assignment is no reason to take it out on me in your column. When I come back, expect the chief to hear about this.

Date: 10.04.2150 / File: 00068
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Negotiations

Having failed to ambush Earth, senior members of the Rixian Unity agreed to meet last night with leaders of the human factions in the hopes of negotiating a peace settlement.

High ranking officers of the human factions likely patted themselves on the back preparing to attend the meeting, feeling that with the Rixians' failed coup d'etat, the alien Unity had played its last card. Or had they?

Consider the terms of the Rixian peace accord, as reported by those DataNet sources in attendance. The Rix, controlling a system rich in resources, offered to open trade routes with each of the four human factions. And yet the aliens were able to word the accord in such a way that while every faction received something, no one side received acceptable compensation.

Instead of parceling out trade rights evenly between all the factions, the accord granted sole trade rights of the Rixian system's He3 reserves to GigaCorp, sole trade rights of Rixian ship technology to the Belters, and sole access rights to the system's Alephs to the BIOS. The Iron Coalition was granted the right to oversee and tax all of the above trade, however they best see fit.

Such an accord may have worked if the human factions functioned within the same overall alliance, as they did for the most part in coordinating their war campaign against the Rix. However, with the war over, the factions were quick to revert back to their independent, and competitive, natures. Feuding and infighting had already begun before the first human representative had even reached the negotiating table. The Rixians may have played their final card in drafting the peace accord in the face of the factions' unwillingness to work together.

Our sources report that through the heated discussions that followed, the Rixians played their role brilliantly, innocently promoting the accord as benefiting everyone. As for the human factions, they left the negotiations with the accord unsigned, vowing to settle the matter between themselves. With the best pilots already gathered together, a renewed outbreak of hostilities is almost certain to follow.

>>**Muzak_Man: 3737:1282732:** Hostilities already have broken out, like sores. Forget the Rixians -- it's the humans we have to worry about.

>>**PrideoftheBelt: 1611:272272:** Listen to Muzak. The IC and BIOS forming an alliance? And after us Belters just helped the IC defend Earth! That's low, man. Low.

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>:** None of these hostilities would be taking place, and I do mean none of them -- against the Rix or in our own solar system -- if the other factions would concede that the IC has the inalienable right to oversee and tax ALL trade. The Rixians were simply attempting to extend the IC's rule of law, and for that, I applaud them.

>>**I, Horus: <node withheld>:** I talked to the chief yesterday, Conscious. Not only did he say I was in the clear, but he's interested in having accounting take a look at your expense reports when you get back.

Date: 10.05.2150 / File: 00069
Report filed by: "SystemCheck"

Gladiator

A message from the editor:

The following account comes to us from one of our rarest sources -- a member of a group not affiliated with any of the warring human factions. Instead, SystemCheck claims to represent an environmental group working to protect what it can of the system's remaining resources. We can only wish him well in his hard-fought battle against the factions' utter destructiveness.

A message from SystemCheck:

Readers of the DataNet! I call upon you to realize! Realize who the true loser of these stellar wars will be: The very solar system itself! Think about it.

While the Iron Coalition claims to protect our Mother Earth, what have they done besides misuse ancient laws of government to advance their own commercial interests? Truly, their aims are no higher than those of the openly corrupt and greedy GigaCorp! Even the Belters, those anarchists and pirates who profess to love freedom with all their hearts, are merely after the next easy deal.

And what will these factions do to advance their cause? Loot the very system they fight to control. New ships are created by the minute -- how long before precious ores in the asteroid belt are depleted? Already the He3 fuel needed to drive these weapons of death grows scarce. Scarce to the point that mankind has invaded the system of the first intelligent race discovered outside of our own. Instead of the peaceful exchange that could have happened, ushering in a new era for all mankind, we assaulted the Rixian Unity, out for nothing more than non-renewable resources. Disgusting.

Throughout the years, it has been only the BIOS who have proven themselves capable of caring for the system. They have done wonders in advancing the science of genetics. While the Rixians offered to ascend humanity through religion, the BIOS could have done so by improving our own natural genetic code -- as they have done within their own community for generations. They should be envied.

However, recent developments have disturbed everyone to the point that I must write in open condemnation of the BIOS. They have lost their way. After the Rixian Wars ended, to the betterment of no one, it has been reported that the BIOS set free their remaining Gen-7 children into the open embrace of space.

But, did they do so out of love? Far from it! They merely wanted the Gen-7'ers -- children of their kind -- to battle amongst themselves. To what end? That they might kill each other off, and so the BIOS would be free of the burden of caring for them.

These actions cannot be allowed to continue! The BIOS are human, as are their recent Gen-7 creations. And these Gen-7 children need to be nurtured and cared for, or else they will continue their violent ways! Already, I have commissioned like-minded Belter agents to assist me in the rescue of the remaining Gen-7 BIOS. I encourage all who care for life in this system to join me in this noble cause!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1615:8332:19018:** Holy freakin' maniac!! Where do you come from, System? What needs to be checked is your head, man. Do you have any idea who these Gen-7 pilots are? They ain't kids! They're animals!

>>**System Check: 17171:9348327:** You're wrong, Sam. The BIOS need our love, just as you do.

>>**Muzak_Man: 92872:11515:** Hahahaha. He's got you there, Sam. But here's the thing: The Gen-7 BIOS might be organic, but they're more like biological weapons of war, not people.

>>**SystemCheck: 17171:9348327:** Muzak, it's this war that turns all men, even you, into biological weapons of war. I tell you, the BIOS can be saved.

>>**Muzak_Man: 92872:11515:** Whatever. Good luck trying. I just hope your shields are fully charged.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1615:8332:19018:** SystemCheck, I swear to all that's sworn to, I will find you and show you all the love you'll ever want to meet.

Date: 10.06.2150 / File: 00070
Report filed by: "Muzak_Man"

Saalvshok

A message from the editor:

The following report was sent to us from one of our most dependable sources. While Muzak_Man has thrown his lot in with the Belters, he still finds time to supply the DataNet with some of the most reliable firsthand accounts from around the system. How Muzak came into the following report is not for the DataNet to ask; merely, to post.

Scouting Report:

Ladies and Gentleman of the Corporate Board: Please find following my scouting report, concerning Planet Saalvshok in the Rixian sectors.

To provide a brief background: As the human armada slowly returns home, GigaCorp has requested a detailed survey of those sectors between Lapi and the return Alephs. This survey has proven more vital now than ever, considering that with the end of the war the leaders of the human factions have been fighting incessantly over the proposed Rixian peace accord. For any one of these factions to gain strategic advantage on this return trip depends upon knowledge of those sectors to be crossed.

And here is where my expert opinion comes into play. Yesterday, the main Belter force broke off from the Armada, hired to go after the Gen-7 BIOS pilots. Using their deployment as cover, I was able to sneak off from the human armada and scout the surrounding sectors. Here's what I've concluded:

Of the area between Lapi and those Alephs leading back to the solar system, the best sector in which to base a campaign would be at Saalvshok (see attached map files). The sector has been named after one planet in the vicinity once inhabited by the Saalvshok race. It was the ruins of their civilization, in fact, which drew me to the planet.

Landing on the surface, little of their civilization remains. And what does shows obvious signs of Rixian weapon technology. I even came across a Rixian gun pod, destroyed by the planetary defenses. No doubt about it: The Rix took out their neighbors in the system some time ago. Most likely a failed conversation effort.

Yet while the Saalvshok are gone, the resources around their planet remain. Not a great deal, but with advanced knowledge, a faction can make a good launch base out of the area. I suggest keeping this information as secure as possible.

Filed by:
GromnieBreath

>>**PodkillerPhil: 878373:19181:** Dang. I knew the Belters were mercenary, but not to the point of selling each other out!

>>**GrommieBreath: 1616:976351:847:** Don't let Muzak fool anyone! I never made that scouting report -- he did! He just signed my name to sell it to GigaCorp and then used his own name to sell it again to the DataNet!

>>**CorpAccount: 9887:18165:12:** GigaCorp would like to take this opportunity to deny ever purchasing any such report. At no time was a plan ever devised to scout the system with the intention of ambushing our fellow human factions. During these times of struggle, we humans must come together, for the good of all, not for the profit of some.

>>**SystemCheck: 17171:9348327:** For those who are not aware of yesterday's painful failure to rescue our Gen-7 brothers, rest assured -- another attempt will be made.

Date: 10.09.2150 / File: 00071
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Gen-7 Extermination Attempt

The human factions, coming off their victories scored against the Rixian Unity, looked this weekend to next go after the BIOS.

The BIOS, it may be recalled, played the most influential role in forcing the Unity to the bargaining table. However, the Iron Coalition, having organized the campaign, may have felt that the time had come to use what resources they'd already gathered against the war's greatest fighters.

A calculated risk, to be certain. And judging from the results of this weekend's conflict, a very costly mistake. The Iron Coalition may have put its ego above its reasoning yet again, sending a dwindling armada force against the BIOS. What could the IC strategists have been thinking? That despite major victories achieved by the BIOS, the IC could still win against them? Certainly, such was their hope.

However, as events indicate, while the Rixian Unity may have been full of tricks, the BIOS proved doubly so. As transmissions reflect, the BIOS were able to restrict access to certain sectors using password-protected electronic countermeasure devices. Failing to submit the proper password meant that no ship could enter those sectors, thus preventing the Iron Coalition from properly gathering its forces. In addition, the BIOS managed to crack and alter IC inter-ship broadcasts, further preventing Iron Coalition forces from assembling at the official times designated by their commanders.

Tricks worthy of the Rixians.

And yet, used to far more deadly effect, when one considers that the pilots eventually faced were not Rixian crusaders but deadly Gen-7 BIOS. The battle, between the remnants of the IC led armada and the BIOS, finally commenced on Sunday, 10.08.2140. Yet however many times the start may have been postponed, the outcome proved inevitable. Plagued by the BIOS tricks, the armada forces never stood a chance. While final results are still being tabulated, and survivors slowly returning to their flagships, the BIOS clearly won this round.

Can further attempts to assault the Gen-7 pilots fare any better?

>>Muzak_Man: 7176:171:97: So that's what the heck happened out there. We Belters flew in, expecting to meet up with the IC, straight into a BIOS defensive line.

>>RaaapidFire: 787176:091871:1: The IC headed the op, but GigaCorp did the planning. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't just them all along getting the schedule all tangled in a knot.

>>Apok_Ochoa: 6155:9871:142: I can tell you this: however messed up things are with the armada, they won't be for long. Don't expect this foolish alliance to last more than another day or two at the most. Bad idea to begin with.

>>SystemCheck: 17171:9348327: I can only reiterate the system's disappointment in the continued failure to rescue the Gen-7'ers. Can you not hear them crying out for salvation?

Date: 10.10.2150 / File: 00072
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

This Man's Land

Reporting from the solar system once more, I have returned and found -- not much has changed.

Despite humanity's first visit to another inhabited system, despite victory against a once seemingly unbeatable foe, our system has not paused for even one moment to lay down arms in its own conflict. Instead, the Iron Coalition has decided to use its allied armada against its next major opponent: the BIOS.

In response, senior members of the BIOS council recently released the following statement.

To the humans of the system:

After having won the Rixian Wars for you, the IC-led alliance has decided to attack our peaceful faction. A truly human action. An action that not only disturbs and disappoints us greatly, but also forces home the belief that the BIOS have forever transcended mere humanity.

Forthwith and forevermore, the BIOS council has decreed that the all members of our genetically superior race have reached a new level in human evolution, to the point that we are no longer of the same species as homo sapiens. Just as homo erectus led to homo sapiens, at long last the next step in the evolutionary chain has been forged, with us: homo supremus.

As such, the BIOS can no longer be held to the same petty laws of a feeble and antiquated race. The BIOS ruling council stands as the one and only voice for homo supremus; however, other councils will still be respected as the voice of authority for their lesser factions, respectively.

That is all.

Members of the Iron Coalition were quick to compose a statement of their own. It read, in part, as follows.

To the BIOS ruling council and those who would follow them:

Just as all humans developed on Earth, so too did humanity's finest governing laws and precepts. Despite recent conflicts, the Iron Coalition strives for nothing else than to hold humanity to these finely crafted and carefully considered laws. Laws designed for the good of all.

At many times in the history of Earth did certain groups look to split off from the main governing body. However, these groups were not allowed to do so out of necessity. For common law to work, the good of all people must be placed above the good of special interests. Only then can all the people be governed with the same universal hand of justice.

As such, the executive officers of the Iron Coalition have no choice but to refuse the BIOS claim of existing separately and apart from humanity. However doctored their genetics are, they are still human by nature, and thus fall under humanity's law. Law to be upheld by the Iron Coalition.

Date: 10.11.2150 / File: 00073
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

The Trial

The Iron Coalition may lag behind the BIOS in terms of scientific optimization. And yet, when it comes to upholding the laws of Old Earth, the IC fights better than any other faction out there.

And so they proved last night, sending their heavily outfitted unit, *Freedom Fighters*, to the fringes of BIOS-controlled space. In a conflict lasting well over an hour, the *Freedom Fighters* managed to not only defeat a Gen-7 patrol unit, but to place the survivors of that unit under arrest. As they returned with their highly sought-after prize of Gen-7 pilots, IC officials were quick to release the following statement:

In the past, many have falsely labeled the Iron Coalition as fighting under the banner: might makes right. However, following the recent capture of the Gen-7 BIOS pilots, the judicial procedures of Old Earth will be followed to the utmost extent of the law. These pilots will soon be placed on trial, as representatives of the hostile BIOS ruling council. Their testimony, and the findings of the IC court, will determine whether an organized campaign should continue against the BIOS as punishment for recent statements and actions mutinous to all humanity.

The BIOS ruling council, it may be recalled, released an official decree declaring themselves as having evolved beyond homo sapiens, and therefore immune to all of humanity's law.

Despite the reassurances by the IC, their true motives behind the recent arrest are being thoroughly questioned. Consider that the Gen-7 BIOS have a known lifespan of only several hours. In order to bring the BIOS to trial, the IC ships involved in the conflict yesterday must have been prepared with cryogenic tanks, capable of transporting the Gen-7 pilots in stasis.

It seems more likely that any investigation done by the IC will not take place in a court of law but in the research stations of Luna. The Gen-7 BIOS are thought to be the fiercest fighters around; yet the IC went after their undermanned *Zeta* patrol unit yesterday, clearly looking to achieve their mission goals as easily as possible.

Also consider those rumors of IC's testing of automated craft. Yet the IC must realize that the other factions will surely ally against them if they choose to send out automated drones into combat. Perhaps the IC will attempt to take a different path to the same end. In order to keep their own pilots safe, the IC may be looking to grow a new crop of Gen-7 BIOS, but ones loyal to their own cause.

Can IC recruiting have reached such an all-time low as to necessitate this plan?

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>**: You DataNet reporters really love your conspiracy theories, don't you? We'd be happy to provide you with edited transcripts of the upcoming trials, just as soon as they become available.

>>**Muzak_Man: 711:11:18:10832**: Ha! That's a beauty! Don't you mean just as soon as the 'trial' can be scripted?

>>**Gregory 654: 88176:181726:1**: On behalf of the sixth generation, I would strongly advise the Iron Coalition to release our pilots immediately. Failure to do so will bring instant retribution. We are prepared to rain bombs upon Luna until that satellite no longer exists. And then we will start on your precious Earth.

>>**Antzman: 2524:191827:716**: Pilots? Who says the Iron Coalition isn't looking to replace their top brass? How frightening an idea is that: seven generations of Ltc Hammel?

>>**Muzak_Man: 711:11:18:10832**: Or Aunt_Sam?

>>**Aunt-Sam: 171:191817:1918**: The system should be so lucky, Muzak.

Date: 10.12.2150 / File: 00074
Report filed by: "Muzak_Man"

Connectivity

From time to time it behooves me to write, to post my thoughts on this fine establishment known as the DataNet.

Incidents of last night compel me to write once again.

I am a Belter. Now, just what does that mean?

It means I fly hard, fight hard, and when the battle's done, drink hard.

It means I don't pod kill, unless it's someone known to pod kill himself. It means the ship I fly looks like a piece of cobbled-together junk, but can withstand the full assault of a Rixian gun pod or a BIOS fighter. I love my ship.

It means that I sometimes fly mission after mission, if it's for the good of the Belt, without a shower, shave, or minute of sleep found in between.

It means I'm not a worker drone or goose-stepping stooge of those other factions out there. I don't screw around with my own genetics. And I sure as heck don't follow the Code.

It means I love my Belt, and my fellow Belters, and from time to time will hire on with them to help one faction out against another. Assuming, of course, the price, and the risks involved, are high. Hire on a Belter crew and you might not have the cleanest, smartest, or even most loyal unit, but for the duration of that contract, you'll have the best damn utility fighters and scouts you'll ever want. We ask a high wage, but we are worth every cent of it.

So to all you other factions, here's what NOT to do. Do NOT come calling on the Belt, if what you have is trouble on your mind. Do NOT offer to hire on a Belter crew unless you VERY FIRST offer is square and reasonable. Do NOT try to low-ball us and dicker around looking to get the best bargain, like we were nothing more than lengths of pipe or some other useful tool.

GigaCorp, you broke every one of those Belter rules of thumb last night. Don't even think of coming back to the Belt unless it's with an apology and a whole lot higher of an offer.

That's all I want to say.

>>**Miguel_Sanchez: <node withheld>**: On behalf of GigaCorp, I would like to comment on the utter lack of professionalism as shown by the Belter renegades. Contract negotiations are standard business practice. Assaulting the negotiators is not.

>>**8_Ball: 716165:99871**: Amen, Muzak! You forget to mention that being a Belter means having the most fun!

>>**MinuteMan11: 14214:161421**: Or facing the fewest idiotic faction regulations!

>>**Aunt-Sam: 171:191817:1918**: Or losing the most ships in a fight, you pathetic, rock-crawling vermin.

Date: 10.13.2150 / File: 00075
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Succession

For whatever good it seems to have done, the Iron Coalition laid waste to several BIOS-controlled sectors of space yesterday.

While the BIOS decreed themselves free from human law, the Coalition has made every military attempt to show them the error of their thinking. Last night, the IC continued their campaign, finally managing to destroy a BIOS Gen-7 defensive unit after over five hours of fighting. Further proof that there are battles fought fast and hard. . . and then there are epic battles spanning the course of an entire evening.

Yet, several strange occurrences took place during the course of last night's battle, in addition to its incredible length. For one, in order to achieve their victory, the Coalition may have allied, at least for a short while, with GigaCorp. Bitter rivals, the two factions have appeared to be on friendlier terms ever since the mutual alliance formed against the Rixian Unity. Difficult to believe, coming just one month after the suspected GigaCorp bombing of a Coalition starship in Martian orbit.

However, even stranger are those reports of the Rixian Unity's complete ineptitude during the battle. Over the course of five hours, the Iron Coalition achieved over 700 kills; GigaCorp, over 500.

The Rixian Unity failed to make a single kill last night.

Those scientists studying the Unity have put forth the following theory: Following the Unity's loss in their own system, they may be sending certain pilots into battle only to be slain by the enemy's hand. Whether this is for punishment or as some form of sacrificial Rixian tribute remains unclear.

Of course, it is unlikely that the BIOS will ever recant their former statements of genetic superiority. But for now, the Coalition has succeeded in driving their message home, that succession from humanity is not an easy option.

>>GromnieFace: 1414:1411:151: What in the holy heck happened last night? Five hours, and the Rix didn't take out anyone? Unbelievable!

>>Ltc Hammel: 02387376218: No, not unbelievable. Not when you consider what a well-planned and decisively launched military campaign can truly do. Coordination. Coordination by the Coalition and their allies is the reason for the Rixians' failure.

>>Aunt_Sam: 716561:1161: That's right, Hammel! The IC really gave the BIOS something to chew over, too.

>>Podkiller_Phil: 63626:1812653: Oh please. The IC and their allies spent over five hours taking out one BIOS unit? Seems to me, it's the BIOS who should be mighty proud of the battle's results!

Date: 10.16.2150 / File: 00076
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Miners' Folly

Nothing makes or breaks alliances faster than hint of the system's most precious resource -- He3. Fueling the engine drives and weapon systems of every faction ship, there is truly nothing more important, despite the lofty pledges occasionally put forth by various faction leaders.

Consider this past weekend. Certain messages found their way to the DataNet boards, of an unnamed faction looking to hire on freelance miners. Nothing unusual, except for the fact that while the faction remained nameless, they went so far as to mention the system to be mined: *Stellar Ice*. A suspicious slip, considering the expected results: Once word of this system got out, the race was on.

Every faction sent out units, looking to take control of this previously unknown system. However, such a desperate rush only stood to reason, considering that faction resources must be depleted all around after both the recent Rixian Wars and humanity's trial against the BIOS.

The Iron Coalition, prominent in both recent campaigns, seemed as hard pressed for He3 as anyone. To the extent that the Coalition went so far as to align themselves with the Rixian Unity in a move designed to fend off the other three factions. How quickly old hatreds are forgotten, with material wealth at stake.

And yet, what success did this gold rush eventually find? None. As reports come back, concerning heated activity near the Belt, the truth begins to out.

The Rixian Unity, up to its old tricks, seems the party most likely to have posted the original tip. With the factions off on a wild goose chase, including a contingent of Belters, the Rixians made their move against the under-defended Belt. And while the *Stellar Ice* system proved utterly dry of He3, the Belt is well known for its rich, and tempting, supply.

The Rixians' trick appears to have worked. While not all Belters were fooled into heading off after fool's gold, those who remained to defend their precious Belt found themselves quickly overrun. The actual amount of He3 the Rixians managed to harvest from the asteroids remains uncertain; the Belters, for one, aren't telling. Yet even after failing to defend their home system against the human invaders, the Rixians still prove to be an effective thorn in the humans' collective side.

Will another invasion of Rixian Space prove necessary?

>>**Muzak_Man: 37262:1615:1028:** I'll tell you how much the Rixians took -- too much! Any ounce of He3 taken out of the Belt isn't mining, it's theft. And that's war.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 17161665161:** Aw! The mean ole' aliens took all your pretty rocks -- and your pride! Tough luck, rock-huggers!

>>**Podkiller_Phil: 63626:1812653:** Stuff it, Sam.

>>**WordofMouth: 1515:19178:117:** For those of you who are interested, while there is nothing to be found on Stellar Ice, keep your ears open for further word of Dark Heart. Just a tip: that's the place to be.

>>**Light_of_Issa: 1110_111_10001:** Those who do not follow the Code walk unenlightened. Yet those who walk the true path cannot be swayed. Or fooled.

Date: 10.17.2150 / File: 00077
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Win 2K Eludes Belters

If there has ever been a faction looking for a good cause to celebrate, than it would have to be the Belters.

While the Iron Coalition professes to carry forward the laws of Old Earth, it is the Belters who uphold Earth's traditions. Consider their Fourth of July celebration, culminating in a raid on GigaCorp shipyards using high-impact explosives. Or their Winter Holiday party last year, in which they delivered a fleet of captured Iron Coalition scout ships to the BIOS, who had helped them in a previous battle.

Most recently, several Belters had begun posting messages on the DataNet boards, alluding to some strange event known only as *Win 2K*. As the event neared, official Belter explanation finally leaked: According to records, the Belters had been accredited with almost 2000 military victories in the war between the factions.

Looking to simultaneously reach this mark and celebrate its achievement, Belter leaders Orion Sholes and Simon Lennox each sent out a unit, competing for this 2000 win.

However, although the aspirations were there, the victory was not. Both Belter units appear to have been defeated by allied GigaCorp and Rixian forces. If these reports prove true, this would be the second remarkable alliance between the Rixians and their former human invaders in as many days. Of course, stranger things have happened; after all, no one would have thought the allied human armada invading the Rixians would ever have been possible, either.

Just days prior, the Rixian Unity managed to raid the asteroid belt, making off with a precious gain of He3. Perhaps this loss of the precious resource hamstrung the Belters more than they would have thought. In addition, GigaCorp has been looking to regain some lost pride in the Belt, following their humiliating defeat there last week. All things considered, not only does the GigaCorp/Rixian alliance make sense, but so too does their defeat of the Belters.

Although their day will assuredly come, for now the Belters must postpone any *Win 2K* celebration.

>>**Orion Sholes:** <node withheld>: The 2000th win has managed to elude the Belters, and I'll tell you whom to blame. Not the Rixians. Not GigaCorp. The underhanded Simon Lennox!

>>**Simon Lennox:** <node withheld>: Don't even start, Sholes! I told you before the battle, that you take the X-coord sectors and my men would take the Y! Just because you got greedy and sent pilots all over the place doesn't mean the loss was my fault!

>>**Orion Sholes:** <node withheld>: That's not the way things went down at all! We made our agreed upon launches, and Lennox refused to support our positions when necessary! He left us hanging out to dry!

>>**Simon Lennox:** <node withheld>: Wrong, wrong, wrong! I would not commit pilots to your foolhardy maneuvers! Not only would we have lost anyway, but even more Belters would have died! I saved my pilots' lives, and for that, we will celebrate!

>>**Orion Sholes:** <node withheld>: You cost us all a victory in trying to reserve that 2000 win for your men! Pilots died, not lived, because of you! This is not the last on this, Lennox! Mark my words!

Date: 10.18.2150 / File: 00078
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Renegotiations

GigaCorp, apparently still eager for revenge, continued fierce hostilities against the Belters last evening. Deploying their heavily armed *Recon Force*, GigaCorp pushed the mercenary Belter faction even deeper within their home asteroid belt.

An official GigaCorp press release claims total victory in the encounter. Spokesman Miguel Sanchez stated in this release that, “. . . *these recent actions against the Belter miners are solely the result of their previous ambush of GigaCorp negotiators. We sincerely regret having to take such violent measures; however, we do feel a message must be sent in order to ensure the safety of all future negotiating missions.*”

Of course, another factor behind the raid must surely be the desire for the Belt's reportedly rich He3 deposits.

Although not an official GigaCorp source, one pilot participating in last night's events submitted the following account of last night's battle:

“I'm sending this report to anyone else foolish enough to consider another raid on the Belt. Forget what the corporate mouthpieces say -- GigaCorp may have won the battle last night, but they lost far too many pilots in the undertaking. More GigaCorp pilots died than did Belters, I'd like to add.

“Sure, we had them on the run. From the go. But were the Belters retreating? Or simply drawing us in? Everyone knows they base their important operations as deep within the Belt as possible. The outer rocks everyone's been fighting over these last few days -- the rocks GigaCorp took last night? Worthless. The He3, the mining operations, the real Belter defenses? All that's found deeper within.

“So why were they leading us there? A tactical retreat? More like playing off Giga greed. If the Iron Coalition had been running this operation, they'd have pressed ahead until they'd both secured the entire area and captured some Belter officers. Not Giga. We were ordered to stop as soon as we reached the first sign of mining operations. So there might have been some Belters defending this site, but anyone (aside from Giga, that is) could see that they were just putting up token resistance.

“By the time we entered the site, the explosive timers left behind went off. I got out. A lot of my squad mates didn't. Giga marched us right into a trap, blinded by stupid greed. Sometimes I wonder why I still fly with them. . . Might as well just sign on with the Belters.”

--Handout

>>**Payback3030: 15144:189761:11:** For anyone reading this trash, let me fill you in on a couple of facts. Handout left Giga weeks ago. There's no way he flew that mission last night.

>> **Payback3030: 15144:189761:11:** Just to add something further: DataNet posting this account without checking facts strikes me as awful suspicious. If all they wanted was the account of the battle, why leave on that last bit about leaving Giga for the Belters? Maybe because the Belters paid them to post this lie.

>> **I, Horus: <node withheld>:** Payback, I stand behind my sources. In the interest of proving the objectiveness of the DataNet, we've decided to post your comments, as well. Stranger conspiracies have been whispered of here, believe me.

>> **Payback3030: 15144:189761:11:** You should post this! Because I know what I'm talking about! Didn't you just write about the Belters using high-powered explosives last Fourth of July? What was that -- maybe a hint for Belter agents to watch out for yesterday's booby trap? Your veil is thin, DataNet. Thin.

>> **I, Horus: <node withheld>:** Like I said, I stand behind this account. If anyone's hiding, I'd have to guess, Payback, you're just some GigaCorp intelligence officer. Aren't you?

Date: 10.19.2150 / File: 00079
Report filed by: "Muzak_Man"

Dark Heart of the System

A message from the editor

The following report made its way to the DataNet from our sources within the Belters, Muzak_Man.

How long have the Belters had their eye on Dark Heart? Hard to say. Well, that's not entirely true. I suppose plans have been a while in the making, but I'm not at liberty to discuss our particular surveying tactics.

In any event, GigaCorp's raid on the Belt provided all the opportunity we needed. They come in the front door, we duck on out the back. Of course before we left, we made sure to rig the outer mining operations to blow. Saved us the trouble of cleaning out the old ops sites ourselves.

By now it's no secret where we went, or why. *Dark Heart*. Forget all those Rixian lies about *Stellar Ice*. *Dark Heart*, a system several hops through the Alephs -- that's the place to be. The sun has been quietly going through its death throes, expanding from a red giant, contracting to a white dwarf. Yet in all this time, the He3 blown onto the planetary bodies had never been harvested. A pristine site.

It's probably a good thing that this operation's scheduled to run as quick as it is. Expedition leaders want us to set down, mine, and scoot on out of there quick as can be. Glad we're not staying; they call the system *Dark Heart* for a reason. Dying sun. Frozen worlds. Not exactly what you'd call inviting. True, some people would enjoy the formations of ice crystals, but not me. Give me the Belt any day!

I'm sure by now every other faction will be sending armed scouts. Of course, it might take them a day or two to trace our route, but they'll come. With He3 at stake, I've no doubts about that. By the time they arrive, though, the Belters should have mined all the ore we can transport and already be headed for home.

There's been a little misunderstanding between the various Belter expedition units, of course, but then again there always is. Especially with Sholes and Lennox not exactly seeing eye to eye. Still, I'm certain we'll get things all sorted out so we can head back with a rich haul and do some much needed celebration.

-- Muzak_Man

>>**DiVinci's Plan: 2525:191872:12:** Word coming back from *Dark Heart* doesn't exactly paint the same pretty picture. Guess those misunderstandings exploded into out-and-out fighting, with the *Glory Seekers* booting everyone else out!

>> **Cap'n_Jack: 446:176153:9:** I've heard similar. Only, not with *Glory Seekers* taking everything. I've got a buddy flying in *Memphis Belle*; he says they took a piece of the action, too.

>> **Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>:** Further proof not only of the misrepresentations of the DataNet, but of the inability of the Belters to function as normal human beings. Units of the Iron Coalition have been sent to police these renegade mining operations at *Dark Heart*.

>> **Payback3030: 039:0218217:1:** From what I hear, GigaCorp's in complete agreement with the IC on this one. The Belters owe some serious reparations for the damage their explosives caused to our pilots. Giga plans to send out a unit themselves. Might as well receive these reparations in the form of Belter-mined He3.

Date: 10.20.2150 / File: 00080
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Domination

Yesterday's fighting between Belter units has apparently cost them their He3 claim. The Belters' previous plan had been to arrive at the *Dark Heart* system, mine ore, and quickly depart, all in one day. As the four Belter units involved bogged themselves down in combat, very little ore, if any, was ever actually mined. Even worse for the ragtag band of mercenaries, however, is the fact that representative units from all other factions have arrived.

With the most precious of resources at stake, the most unexpected of alliances sometimes form. Consider the Iron Coalition and GigaCorp's siding with the Rixian Unity. Or, last night, IC and Giga joining with one another -- the system's oldest, and most bitter rivals.

Communication between these two factions shows a concerted effort to rid *Dark Heart* of all other competition.

The following messages were intercepted last night by unaffiliated ships observing the battle. As units from all four factions approached *Dark Heart*, the battalion leader of the Iron Coalition was quick to signal his counterpart aboard GigaCorp's flagship:

"On behalf of Iron Coalition's Guardian Angels, I submit the following proposal to the members of GigaCorp's World Rulers. An alliance, for the duration of tonight's battle, would benefit both of our factions. The sector layout plays to our advantage. According to the conventions of war, I expect a reply, one way or another, on a more secure channel. Note that this message has been sent on an open transmission, and may be monitored."

It would seem that GigaCorp indeed accepted the Iron Coalition's reasoning, with the two factions utterly obliterating the BIOS and Rixian Unity units involved. Near the battle's conclusion, at approximately 19:30 UST, a similar message was sent from GigaCorp's flagship to a Belter camp on the surface of the system's largest planet:

". . . GigaCorp will be willing to forgive transgressions committed against its pilots in exchange for both a substantial proportion of Belter-harvested ore, as well as mutual military aid in transporting the ore past the Iron Coalition's blockade of the system. Please reply at your earliest convenience."

A GigaCorp double-cross, coming so soon after the battle's end? Such would seem to be the case. As has been mentioned, while the need for He3 can bring together strange partners, it can just as easily break such partnerships apart. Immediately after GigaCorp's transmission to the planet's surface, the Iron Coalition released the following all-faction broadcast:

"The Iron Coalition hereby requests any and all aid in upcoming efforts to secure the resources of the Dark Heart system. Any faction failing to comply with IC mining regulations will be viewed as making an overt act of war, and will be fired upon accordingly."

For now, it would seem, the Iron Coalition and GigaCorp rivalry continues.

Date: 10.23.2150 / File: 00081
Report filed by: "SystemCheck"

The Destruction of Dark Heart

A message from the editor:

The following report comes to us from one of our sources within an underground environmental group working to protect the system's remaining resources. The DataNet would like to wish SystemCheck well in his battle against the factions' destructiveness. However, please note that the following opinions may or may not reflect those of the DataNet itself.

A message from SystemCheck:

How many systems will it take to satiate these petty, squabbling factions? In time past, I have rallied to condemn the gross misuse of our own, beloved solar system. And now, to further their cause of controlling this system, the factions have spread to the outer limits of the galaxy, in desperate search of He3 fuel.

Over the past week, the innocent *Dark Heart* system has been the site of brutal conquest. A tranquil, harmless system -- with a dying sun, the former inhabitants, if there ever were any, have fled its planets. Yet can this system be allowed to die in peace? No. Not with the presence of He3 within its planets' cores.

The Belters, the worst of the lot in terms of ideology, made the initial claim. And as can only be described as typical, the other factions were quick to pursue them to their site.

Was any thought given to the research of this system? No. According to the factions' own reports, *Dark Heart* possessed a unique beauty all its own, with its icy formations and crystalline structures. Was any thought given to cherishing the system for its own sake? Hardly. Consider the loss of scientific data as well. Here was a previously undiscovered system, rich in He3. Had the factions shown an ounce of restraint, they may have been able to study the possible links between the sun, the planets, and the build-up of He3. Any chance for this? None.

Instead, what did occur? A week of relentless, destructive assault, faction upon faction, until all that remains in orbit around the *Dark Heart* sun are the tattered shells of what once were planets.

Allow me to further express my outrage. . .

A further message from the editor:

SystemCheck's report continued on in such a fashion for quite a few pages more. While the DataNet believes in the truth, we also practice the convention of editing for length and clarity. For those interested, SystemCheck's full report may be found on file.

>>**Ltc Hammel:** <node withheld>: What the heck do you think the Iron Coalition was doing, SystemCheck? Fighting for a few small hold-fulls of He3? Wrong! Trying to protect the system against the rampant pirating that eventually did destroy *Dark Heart*.

>> **Muzak_Man: 43636:171532:** Gimme a break, Hammel. Sell that to people who don't know any better, but not DataNet readers. IC's as desperate as anyone these days for the stuff.

>> **SystemCheck: 1616525:1917:** Although my report may have been abridged - unfairly, I would like to add, as each word is clearly as important as the next - I raise my objections against ALL factions, especially the Iron Coalition. The main reasons are three-fold. First:

>> **DataNet: <node withheld>:** Our apologies. However, SystemCheck's lengthy rebuttals can also be found on file. For those interested.

Date: 10.24.2150 / File: 00082
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Maze of the Belt

What could be simpler for a faction returning home than to throw out some injured squatters having taken up residence? For the Belters, plagued by recent internal riffs and the disastrous claim on a promising deep space sector, such actions actually proved too difficult a task.

GigaCorp, looking for revenge against the merc miners, wandered into their home asteroids last week only to trigger Belter-lain traps. As reinforcements arrived, the Belters themselves fled to strike their claim for He3 at *Dark Heart*.

However, things for the Belters did not exactly go according to plan. With four units all looking to make the claim, none actually managed to strike one, as the mission quickly degenerated into a chaotic brawl. By the time things settled down, the other factions, each just as hungry for He3 ore, had arrived. In short order, the Belters were forced off their own claim and sent home -- with little or no ore.

Only then did the Belters' problem become truly apparent. Those GigaCorp pilots previously injured had remained behind, tending wounds deemed too critical to risk a flight back to their own home sector. And not only had these pilots remained, but so did a good number of the reinforcements following behind.

In the end, the Belters' own trap had managed to work against them.

Returning to the asteroids, the Belters knew to expect the Giga pilots. Perhaps they underestimated, however, Giga's ability to navigate the Belters' own asteroid maze. In over two hours of fighting, despite heavy losses against them, the GigaCorp pilots managed to drive the Belters from their very home territory. Will Giga remain, looking to mine the Belt? Not likely. Spooked by the first traps, no further mining operations appear to have taken place during the Belters' absence. GigaCorp pilots will likely take this opportunity to now return to Mars, having made their point in the Belt.

>>**Gromnie_Breath: 2525:18171:** GigaCorp couldn't navigate their way across open space, much less through the Belt! The only reason they won is the same reason we lost *Dark Heart* -- Belter feuding!

>> **Simon Lennox: <node withheld>:** I'm not sure what you're referring to. All pilots under my leadership have been instructed to work with all pilots under Sholes.

>> **Orion Sholes: <node withheld>:** This is a repeat, an exact repeat of the same garbage at *Dark Heart*! Of course my men can't defend against GigaCorp pilots when they have to keep their eyes on other Belters as well! Lennox -- this is war!

>> **PayBack3030: 3625:1917214:** Good job Belters! Way to make Giga's job that much easier!

Date: 10.25.2150 / File: 00083
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Lovers' Quarrel

Further misery faced those GigaCorp pilots attempting to return home yesterday from the asteroids. Having made their message clear to the Belters, a battered and injured squad attempted to return to GigaCorp headquarter facilities on Mars. Their only obstacle between Mars and the Belt? Random Iron Coalition patrols.

Despite startling alliances made between the two factions in recent days, their former rivalry appears to have rekindled following the destruction of *Dark Heart*. With the loss of that system's He3, both the IC and GigaCorp face tough times ahead -- and who better to vent their aggressions against than on each other? Or at least, so seemed the predominate attitude yesterday. As an IC patrol moved in to intercept the returning GigaCorp pilots, possibly looking to see if the pilots carried any He3 ore from the Belt, both sides opened fire almost immediately.

The battle ended almost as soon as it began. The GigaCorp pilots apparently had only enough time to transmit desperate requests for assistance before the IC patrol obliterated a full two-thirds of their unit.

At this time, both factions have taken to blaming the other for starting the battle. (Official statements have been posted to DataNet files.) Although fierce combat between the two factions is nothing new, the apparent bloodthirstiness exhibited by the Iron Coalition yesterday does speak of desperate times. If the GigaCorp statements are to be believed, the IC attacked without warning, fired upon lifepods as well as ships, and ignored all requests for surrender. Is this a new Iron Coalition we are seeing? Perhaps the IC brass has decided to take a more aggressive approach against the other factions. Or perhaps a recent recruiting drive has managed to place the system's most ruthless in the ranks of the IC.

Only further events will tell. As always, DataNet will keep you posted.

>>Miguel Sanchez: <node withheld>: The Iron Coalition has crossed the line. I encourage all faction leaders to protest these zealous murderers as best you can. And know that all sides opposing the Iron Coalition can count on GigaCorp support.

>>Muzak_Man: 236251:18165 If you're referring to financial support, that's one thing. But combat support? Who'd be saving who out there?

>>VoiceofReason: 26125:181:171:1: The IC just isn't that aggressive. I don't know who those pilots were, but they weren't IC.

>>Podkiller_Phil: 3625:1912524: Than who were they? The Rixians in Halloween masks? And for that matter, how do you know anything about last night's massacre, VoiceofReason? Were you there or something, or just like to talk?

>>VoiceofReason: 26125:181:171:1: It doesn't matter if I was there or not. I know what I know.

Date: 10.26.2150 / File: 00084
Report filed by: "Col. Jefferson"

Win or Lose

A message from the editor:

The following report was sent in by one of the Iron Coalition's chief press officers. Colonel Jefferson has written to the DataNet in the past, regarding illicit postings by other soldiers within the IC. Little has been said of this former crackdown, but it can only be assumed that while disciplinary action was taken against the common soldier, the enlisted officer maintains the freedom to speak freely. As DataNet remains the only unbiased source of information left to the system, we have chosen to publish Jefferson's statement.

A message from Colonel Jefferson:

Once more, I am compelled to utilize this dubious service known as the DataNet in order to disseminate a message to a wider audience. While last time I gave a word of warning -- to all loose lips seeking the demise of the Iron Coalition's integrity, this time I am pleased to bring a more pleasant message.

Spurred on by the successful action taken against GigaCorp yesterday, IC patrol units rolled on with all the momentum of a full-scale invasion force. Our target: the alien zealots of the Rixian Unity, who arrived in our beloved, if troubled, system with nothing but bloodshed on their minds.

As of 19:15 UST yesterday evening, two units of Rixian reinforcements arrived in the solar system. Of course, the sending of reinforcements to this system violates the very peace accord the Rixian Unity helped compose. Such actions only prove that the aliens had, at no time, any intent of living up to their end of the accord. Of course, many people will feel that I am stating the obvious, that the Rixians did what had to be done only to rid their system of human invaders. Please bear in mind, though, that in the interest of peace, the Iron Coalition had to give the alien Unity the benefit of the doubt.

Such an error of leniency will not be made again.

The Rixians have begun sending more troops to the system. However, as originally stated, I am pleased to report that the first of these troops have been met, and soundly defeated.

The Iron Coalition firmly stands behind the defense of Earth. Furthermore, we will continue to defend this region of space against the Rixian Unity, as well as any faction who would give aid to these alien warmongers.

That is all.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1161:181716:19187:** Well said, Colonel. Yes sir, well said. I pity anyone who dares oppose the sovereign will of the Coalition.

>>**Muzak_Man: 36315:181715:1:** Jefferson, what the heck are you talking about? Didn't the Iron Coalition ally with the Rixians just last week? Or were you still giving them the benefit of the doubt then, too?

>>**VoiceofReason: 26125:181:171:1:** I'd like to reiterate: The Iron Coalition pilots are not winning these battles! Proxies are being sent in their place, and it's only a matter of time before the system realizes what's being done. Every convention of warfare is being broken right under our noses!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1161:181716:19187:** Whatever, stranger. The Iron Coalition follows the rules better than anyone out there.

>>**VoiceofReason: 26125:181:171:1:** Of course they do. They pretend to make the rules, too -- and change them when it suits their needs.

Date: 10.272150 / File: 00085
Report filed by: "I, Horus

Inhumanity

At long last, the Rixian Unity appears to be making some headway in the system. Seeking an impressive military victory, the alien pilots went after none other than the system's fiercest fighters, the Gen-7 BIOS -- and won. Granted, it took two Rixian units to take out a single Gen-7 unit, but last night the Unity faced a critical must-win situation.

Consider that just two days prior, the Iron Coalition pledged to continue their war against the Rixian Unity in the local system. While the other factions and the IC usually fail to see eye-to-eye, the IC brass has managed to assemble some impressive alliances in recent days -- particularly against the Rixian Unity. While the Rixians have begun sending reinforcements into the system, the threat of allied human forces continuing to work against them might prove an impossible barrier.

As of yet, no officials from any human faction have commented as to why the Rixians are even trying to gain a foothold in human space. At present time, all factions seem to be desperate for He3 -- a resource the Rixians would appear to have in abundance in their region. It may be possible that the Unity truly does want nothing more than to spread word of their philosophical Code. If so, they will have an extraordinarily tough audience to face. First storming the system by force, the Rixian Unity may now be trying a more patient approach.

Of course, while the first steps to establishing a more permanent foothold in the solar system will meet stiff resistance, the Rixians have proven excellent strategists in the past. Last night's victory does nothing to refute this. If the Rix are trying to build a base in the region, they've acted wisely in making the first aggressive move against their toughest single opponent.

Still, questions remain. Why are the Rix remaining so concerned with our species? Perhaps the humans' successful invasion of their space instilled the Unity with a deeper sense of respect for the human race. The more we defeat them, the more worthy they may consider us for conversion.

>>TracerFire: 16165:18115: Who cares what the Rix think of us? They can respect us all they want -- so long as they do it from the comfort of their own dang system!

>>ApostleBob: 16165:191712: The only code to follow in the system ain't the Rixians. Look at the ideals of the Iron Coalition. Or the freedom of the Belters. Now, those are codes worth following. Forget the alien freaks. Stay human!

>>Dr. Carleton: 12615:97541:1111: We should not be so quick to dismiss the Rixians. When they originally arrived in the system, the Rixians posed a considerable threat to humanity. They must be allowed to remain in the system so that they can be studied -- in the event they manage to pose such a risk again.

>>Aunt_Sam: 1161:181716:19187: Whatever, Doc. The IC organized the humans, we took the war to their front door, and we won! Simple as that! We organize against the Rix again, we'll win again. Argument over.

Date: 10.302150 / File: 00086
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

IC's Genetic Ploy

This past weekend saw yet another gross violation of modern warfare, with the Iron Coalition's release of genetically altered pilots.

Rumors of the IC's intent first began several weeks prior, with their capture of a BIOS patrol unit. At that time, the Iron Coalition professed to be arresting the BIOS pilots in order to place them on trial, as representatives of the entire BIOS faction. The crime? That members of the BIOS ruling council decreed themselves evolved beyond *homo sapiens*, into a higher form of life.

What first raised concerns was that the Gen-7 BIOS are known to have a limited lifespan when initially released -- perhaps due to their extraordinarily volatile nature. Their BIOS creators may have always intended for this lifespan to eliminate these pilots, potentially dangerous to even the BIOS' own side. After all, when the Gen-6 BIOS were released, their first actions were an attempted overthrow of the BIOS ruling council. Why then would the IC attempt to hold such pilots on trial? Either the trial would have to last less than four hours -- or would never happen in the first place.

The Iron Coalition has come under fire before, and for similar actions. In months past, they tried using robotic pilots to man their craft. Following the outcry by every other faction, IC officials were quick to deny using these robots for anything but training missions. This time, however, the evidence proves irrefutable. The IC has sent laboratory-engineered pilots into battle, created from the genetics of the captured Gen-7 BIOS. The proof? After suspicions of just such an action occurring, the BIOS pilots have been diligent in the collection of all battle casualties. Following this weekend's battle, BIOS reports reveal, IC casualties have genetically matched those of the Gen-7 stock.

As of yet, the Iron Coalition has made no official statement on this matter.

>>**Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>**: Rumor-mongering and rampant speculation proves nothing. Nothing! Where are these BIOS reports this story is supposedly based on? Can anyone outside their biased faction (and their DataNet cronies) prove these allegations? No!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 463615:181715**: Personally, I have my own theory. Whose to say the match isn't because the BIOS stole IC's genetics? Ah? It's that whole chicken and egg thing, all the way!

>>**Victor11: 17165:109186**: I will not dignify Sam's theory with a reply. However, as to the reports themselves, the BIOS will be releasing our findings shortly. Not that it matters who believes who. We know the theft has occurred, and we will be taking immediate action. This crime will not go unpunished. And it will be punished severely.

>>**Muzak_Man: 462651:1917125**: No wonder the IC's been winning these days. They had me worried there for a second.

Date: 10.31.2150 / File: 00087
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

A Mutiny Begins

Despite claims put forth by the Iron Coalition's propaganda machine, not all pilots in that faction remain satisfied with official policy. After weeks, if not months, of cautious whispering on the DataNet, action was finally taken against the IC last night -- by the IC.

According to sources well known to the DataNet, an internal faction of dissenting IC pilots has slowly been gathering these past weeks. The time to strike came after disgust within the IC reached an all-time high, following the extremely unpopular use of genetically altered troops.

At 18:12 UST, the mutiny began.

The ultimate goal of the mutiny remains unknown. It simply does not seem likely that a handful of rogue pilots will be able to overthrow the vast and loyal majority still within the IC ranks. Especially when one considers the outcome of the mutiny's very first actions against their parent faction.

Looking to better equip their movement, two units of the rogue pilots attacked IC supply ships last night at Luna. As the IC responded, chaos immediately ensued. One unit of the rogue pilots, apparently swayed by the IC's powerful threats, returned to the IC ranks and opened fire on their former mutineers. Yet at the same time, one unit of the IC, similarly dissatisfied with that faction's recent policies, broke ranks and joined the mutineers.

For the Iron Coalition, such internal dissent cannot have come at a worse time. With the factions all looking for precious He3 resources, and more alien Rixians arriving in the system, many look to the IC to help stabilize the region. After their success against both the Rixians and the BIOS, the IC very well may have brought some semblance of order to the system -- which has been their professed goal during these faction wars all along.

Yet now with a mutiny in the IC ranks, the other factions are gearing up to take advantage of a weakened Coalition. Already, units from the BIOS, Belters, and archrival GigaCorp have been sent to lunar space. Can the Iron Coalition even hope to fend them off?

As always, we'll keep you posted.

>>Pvt. Nichols: 261615:191716: Any wonder the IC pilots are steaming mad? Why else would the brass want to use tube-grown troops, except to replace us living, breathing pilots? You see, tube-growns don't need paychecks.

>>Kahn212: 47361:191752: Oh, what's all the fuss about? Not like the Coalition can't handle a little arguing in the ranks. Sometimes that's even a little healthy. Release some tensions.

>>Pvt. Klink: 3627:91715:131: Tell that to the four hundred who died in last night's fiasco.

>>Mjr Patterson: 473651:1016215: Or the hundreds more who can be expected to perish in the days to come. One way or the other, the Coalition needs to stand together, or the other factions will just tear us apart.

Date: 11.01.2150 / File: 00088
Report filed by: "I, Horus

Trick or Treat

As appropriate to the holiday, last night saw its share of both tricks and treats.

For some, the treats came when the GigaCorp unit, *Ruling Force*, entered the fringes of the lunar sector. The mutinous IC pilots, fleeing from Coalition police forces, suddenly found themselves between two powerful enemies. *Ruling Force* apparently returned no hails from either those IC pilots fleeing or those in pursuit, leading everyone to ponder their intentions. Perhaps GigaCorp, in these troubled times, would make the first step toward reconciling with the Iron Coalition by capturing and returning these mutineers. . . and the mutineers' valued ships.

As quickly became apparent, however, GigaCorp's intentions lay in other directions. Refusing to fire upon the rogue IC unit, *The Screaming Eagles*, Giga quickly offered to escort them safely from the area. An offer the pilots readily accepted.

Almost immediately, transmissions of protest went up from the IC pursuers. Yet, as the IC rogues and Giga pilots both replied, all allegiances stand:

<**Meatnog**> You can't stop teams for allying, man.

<**Meatnog**> I'll say again, you can't stop two teams from allying.

<**Cheerful_Wish**> Just because you wanted no allies doesn't mean we can't ally.

Adding to the chaos, as GigaCorp began to escort the rogue pilots away, and the IC dropped their pursuit, two other factions entered the melee. A Belter squad, likely hired on by the IC to assault the rogue mutineers, arrived and immediately opened fire. Almost at the same time, a Rixian squad, possibly attracted by the action and looking for a chance to collect damaged ships, and their He3 fuel cells, joined the fray.

And that's when the evening's tricks came into play. While the rogue IC pilots and Giga safely allied, the Belters and Rixians were not so quick to combine forces.

<**Your_Persona**> This is such bs. The two stacked units always gang up on the two weaker units.

<**Ranmador**> (The Rixians) haven't helped at all. Beware the backstab!

With the Rix and Belters suspiciously eyeing each other, the IC pilots made short work of their stations. According to transmission recordings, the IC pilots destroyed the Belters' outpost, advanced expansion station, garrison, refinery platform, and teleport receiver, in that order -- almost as fast as the Belters could build them.

With their passage cleared of such obstacles, the rogue IC pilots safely made their escape.

>>Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>: So what if a bunch of miscreant privates escaped? Does the IC mourn their loss? No. Not in the least. As to the matter of IC's stolen property, namely the ships they flew off in, GigaCorp would do wise to return those immediately.

>>Miguel Snachez: <node withheld>: At this time, GigaCorp believes the escorting of the IC escapees was performed by rogue GigaCorp agents. GigaCorp itself assumes no responsible for the events of last night, nor do we have any knowledge of the whereabouts of the IC pilots or their ships.

>> Ltc Hammel: <node withheld>: That's garbage, and everyone knows it!

>>Muzak_Man: 47462:19171: Geez, Hammel, with leaders like you, no wonder your pilots bolted. We Belters might have been hired to find them, but our hats are off to those brave souls, too!

Date: 11.07.2150 / File: 00089
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

System Events

An intense week of fighting has left the system factions in a state of complete disarray. While the desperate search for He3 continues, the human factions faced yet another problem this week -- a second invasion of alien Rixians.

Luna

The Iron Coalition, despite problems that would likely cripple any other faction, has managed to maintain their strong presence in the system. Following the defect of IC pilots last week, the Coalition has managed to shut down any further attempts to organize similar defections. According to an official release on the matter, "All IC pilots have voiced their complete contentment with the organization, and wish nothing further than to continue driving forward with IC goals."

Suspiciously cheery, and yet the message does seem to have a grain of truth to it. In recent days, the IC has won victory after victory. Are these victories at the hands of happy IC pilots, though? Or their genetically fabricated replacements?

Mars

GigaCorp has officially acknowledged giving asylum to the IC defectors. Stating that the pilots came to them out of their own free will, and in serious need of medical attention, they had no choice but to follow the accepted conventions of war and rescue the pilots.

The Iron Coalition, as expected, has loudly protested GigaCorp's actions, claiming that they bribed the pilots to defect, along with their valuable IC ships.

Deep Space

After the Rixian Wars, humanity believed they had delivered their message clearly: Stay out of the Solar System. As all reports would indicate, however, the Rixians have actually begun sending further crusaders through the Aleph portals.

Their goal? While the first vanguard wave of Rixians attempted to convert by force, this second wave appears to have taken a more peaceful (some would say, insidious) approach. Sending in shipment after shipment of supplies, the alien Unity has apparently begun the construction of permanent fortifications. Those humans enthralled with the alien race claim that the fortress-like structures are temples dedicated to spreading word of the aliens' "Code." Military analysts, meanwhile, have claimed that these supposed churches fit all the specifications of fortified outposts.

The first missions against the Rixian constructs have already been launched.

He3

With all the conflicts ongoing in the system, the need for one resource stands behind them all. He3. Powering everything from ships to shields to weapons systems, the drive for He3 is stronger than ever. Yet, as studies have indicated, the actual amount of this precious ore is in terribly short supply. Without the stuff, will the wars be able to continue? Or will needed expeditions, into even more far-reaching systems, be launched?

Date: 11.07.2150 / File: 00090
Report filed by: "Muzak_Man"

Catch-22

For those of wondering about the origins of this cute little phrase, it goes something like this:

Some time ago, Iron Coalition pilots began to grow increasingly wary of the conditions they were being sent into. Storming over the lunar plains, the pilots were often mowed down by heavily fortified defensive positions (positions manned by GigaCorp, which also leads to the origin of that particular rivalry). IC ships were also often "leaked" mid-flight; that is, enemy saboteurs would breach the ships' hulls, and leak out all the oxygen, killing the IC crews inside. (At the time, many blamed this sort of activity on the Belters, but I wouldn't know anything about that.)

In any event, the IC pilots started losing their cool. They couldn't take combat conditions any longer. Classic shell shock. So they tried going to the IC physicians, claiming to be mentally unfit for combat duty.

However, according to IC regulation *something-something-22*, any pilot able to believe himself mentally unfit must still have some cognitive reasoning left -- and is therefore still fit for combat duty.

The pilots were sent back out in their ships, often ordered to fly point in the most dangerous assaults. In the end, they didn't need to worry about combat conditions for much longer. They were blasted across space.

My point? The phrase now applies to a great deal more than the IC and their gutless pilots. Take the most recent Belter mission. As I send this report in, I do so having joined on with the crew of Li Chow, an adventurer in the true Belter style. Let's face it, folks -- there's no sources of He3 left in the system to mine. Li Chow has taken a team out to some deep space sectors, looking to make a claim.

The catch-22? In order to mine the He3, and fend off other factions looking to jump the claim, you have to use He3. Stuff fuels everything: drives, oxygen generators, life-support heaters. So how much do you use in order to make the claim? Hard to say, without knowing how rich the claim is and how much effort you should devote to defending it.

Anyhow, as I finish this report, we're hemorrhaging fuel in a big way. Other factions just can't stand to see anyone else get ahead, can they?

>>**CueBalled: 3635:19171:1122:** It's not that, you moron. You think the Belters are the only ones short on fuel? It's every faction for itself. Always has been, always will.

>>**PodKiller_Phil: 3636:1:1:1018:** Yeah? Well, I hear that Giga's been developing some sort of new secret fuel -- one to replace He3 dependence!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 47346:1715:1817:** Phil, you're an idiot. And as CueBalled sez, "always has been, always will." Always telling the worst lies, man!

>>**GromnieBreath: 474376346262:** Sam's right. When's the last time GigaCorp developed anything useable? The BioWear line they had to completely recall? The only ships they've developed are the ones they stole for the IC!

Date: 11.08.2150 / File: 00091
Report filed by: "Muzak_Man"

Stranded

I'm sending this report in, not knowing if it will ever reach another living person.

Li Chow's expedition has succeeded in reaching the far expanses of the system. The He3 vein reported by previous scouts was indeed waiting here for us. The problem -- so too were "representatives" from most of the other factions.

It goes without saying that I write this in the midst of savage fighting. Several minutes ago, an Iron Coalition scout blew my own ship out from under me. However cramped, I'm at least thankful to be alive in my life-pod. Drifting on remote pilot to the nearest Aleph, my prospects don't look so good. It's quite a stretch to reach the nearest Belter outpost here, and no one has enough fuel left to bother picking up a lone pod. If my own fuel doesn't run out on this trip back, my air just might.

Times are tight all around, I guess. As these are possibly my final words, I might as well tell it like it is. Despite rumors to the contrary, the asteroid belt back home is all but tapped out. Every other faction assumes we're holed up in there, living off hidden rocks of He3, but that just isn't so. The Belters are as hard-pressed for fuel as the next guy.

No wonder a fairly wealthy guy like Chow made a suicide run out here. If we didn't find any He3 at the other end, we wouldn't have had enough fuel to get back home. Well, we did find some -- but enough? It would have been, except we're burning a lot of fuel fighting off the other contenders. In my opinion, Chow should just power-up the expedition ships, return home, and call the whole thing even.

Anyhow, my time's almost up. Better try and get some sleep to conserve the air. With luck, I'll wake up in the outpost. Without. . . well, who knows where I'll wake up then? *The big roadhouse in the sky*, as we Belters say.

Transmitting.

>>**Editor-in-Chief: <node withheld>**: The above report came in early this morning on open channels. We have heard no further word from Muzak, but wish him well.

>>**Conscious_1: <node withheld>**: The DataNet reporters echo that.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 4746:091761:152**: Boo hoo hoo. One less Belter is nothing to cry over, folks. It's his own dang fault he got blasted.

>>**Podkiller_Phil: 3736:19176:112**: Sam, I've taken the liberty of forwarding your statements on to the Belt. Best of luck yourself.

Date: 11.10.2150 / File: 00092
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Expeditions

As events have often proved, it's not the strongest that survives -- but the most ruthless.

With various expeditions probing the reaches of deep space for He3, word has spread of a "sure site" of the precious ore. Following the Rixian Wars, military data has been analyzed to try and identify possible He3 sites overlooked in the heat of battle. While such information remains almost as valuable as the He3 itself, the fact that every faction helped participate in the Rixian Wars means that every faction's intelligence branch was privy to the same reports. It all just depended on who could analyze these reports the fastest.

As of yesterday afternoon, reports indicated Saalvshok as being the most promising site.

By all accounts, GigaCorp managed to launch their expedition first. Of course, once an expedition begins, other factions are quick to follow. Units from the Iron Coalition and the Belters launched shortly after, with another unit from the Rixian Unity moving in from deep space sectors to intercept the entire convoy.

As has been stated before, Giga's ruthless maneuvering helped ensure their victory. As insiders report, GigaCorp began making alliances with each of the other factions, promising each a share of the gains. Offering to pay the Belters to take out the Iron Coalition, and to pay the Iron Coalition to take out the Rixians, they ensured that none of these other factions would look to assault Giga itself.

And by battle's end, the plan seemed to have worked. Staking a claim in Rixian space, Giga secured 50% of the He3 at a site along the route to Saalvshok, offering a third share of the profits to the Iron Coalition and a sixth share to the Belters. The Rixians, as has been the case lately, were left with nothing.

For now then, GigaCorp's expertise in negotiations has left them with an even larger financial advantage. And the expeditions to Saalvshok continue.

>>Light_of_Issa: 210101:109101:101: Recent events implore me to communicate with all non-believers. To steal from the righteous is to pay for a life of wickedness. Follow the Code.

>>Aunt_Sam: 48348737:1918716: Ah, geez, not you guys again. Listen little buddies, you get your faction kicked all over space each and every time. Why not just give up?

>>Issa's Truth: 110101:00101:10: The Code is the only entity to tell us which path to take. Not a disbeliever such as yourself, Aunt_Sam.

>>Podkiller_Phil: 3736:19176:112: Any word from Muzak yet? Still MIA?

Date: 11.13.2150 / File: 00093
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Return to Saalvshok

Of obstacles facing humanity, no one thought the Rixian Unity would prove to be their greatest challenge. Yet over the weekend, as expeditions returned to Rixian-controlled space, the alien Unity succeeded in repelling all invaders.

Based on military reports, the alien world of Saalvshok was found to be the most promising source of He3. Expeditions soon launched, with each faction sending representative units. One thing the reports did not seem to highlight was the fact that the Saalvshok race had been exterminated long before by the Rixian Unity.

Granted, humanity soundly won the Rixian Wars, sending in a unified and well-armed armada. This time, though, the factions sent individual units, already fighting with one another. Rixian pilots sent to the area made short work of these squabbling invaders.

For now, the human forces have been turned away. Despite protests to the contrary, many believe the solar system's asteroid belt to be the next best source of He3 fuel.

On a final note, the following message was posted on a DataNet message board, which we felt should be passed along to the community at large:

"Flying back from Saalvshok, the Belters ran across one of the saddest sights we've seen yet. A lone pod, drifting through space. No life signs coming from inside.

"Sparing a scout to approach on a parallel course, he reported back that this was Muzak_Man's pod, our brother lost in action sometime last week. Seems like in the middle of a fight, Muzak had to eject. The pod, flying on autopilot to the nearest outpost, never made it. Most likely, the outpost fell sometime while Muzak was in transit. With nowhere else to go, pod autopilots default back to their faction's headquarters -- in this case, all the way from deep space to the Belt.

"Muzak never had a chance. His air supply must have run out days ago. As to his final wishes, we kept his pod drifting in space."

>>Podkiller_Phil: 3451514:11817:115: On behalf of all Belters, our sympathies go out to Muzak's family. Does anyone know if he had any?

>>Aunt_Sam: 48348737:1918716: Yeah, well, who wants to bet you Belters took the pod's fuel before you left him there adrift?

>>GromnieBreath: 33635:191716:117: Only if there was any fuel left to take.

>>Podkiller_Phil: 3736:19176:112: Scum. You're all scum, and I can't wait to get you into my sights.

Date: 11.14.2150 / File: 00094
Report filed by: "Col. Jefferson"

Promise of Li Chow

A message from the editor:

The following report comes to us from a prominent Iron Coalition official. Col. Jefferson felt compelled to respond to last night's Belter raid successfully undertaken against Iron Coalition forces. The leader of the raid, Li Chow, has come into attention for his recent expedition into deep space territories. We can only wish him well in all his future endeavors.

A message from the Iron Coalition:

Those who read these boards thought they already knew what Li Chow's promise was. Fortune. Glory. A chance to make a big strike of He3.

And, many of you decided to take this chance. Many of you believe Li Chow has fulfilled his promise to you. Yesterday, at approximately 18:00 UST, the Belter Li Chow led his hired crew against a region of Iron Coalition controlled space. Coalition crews, dutifully mining He3 -- fuel much needed to keep the stellar order -- found themselves under savage attack.

Many people consider the Iron Coalition a kind of army. I take a slightly different view. I see the Coalition as a kind of navy. Instead of patrolling the seas of Earth, however, we patrol the space above. In our duties, we must ensure the safety of commerce against the modern pirates of the system. It does my heart proud to think of all the many trade ships traveling with heavy loads between the planets.

Last night's attack filled me with great disappointment. And here is what Li Chow's real promise was: To join his band of Belter pirates. To attack sovereign authority. To condemn yourselves as wanted criminals that the Coalition will hunt down, with every resource, until the end of your days.

Sound like a rich and satisfying promise? To many of you, it did, and so you waged your attack against the Coalition miners. So help me, you will not live free long enough to make use of your ill-gotten gains. The He3 you fought so hard to steal will, in the end, be your undoing. Warrants have been issued. Forces have been deployed.

The Coalition knows exactly who you pirates are, and rest assured -- your petty days are numbered.

That is all.

>>**CueBalled: 37237:191761:1:** Very dramatic, Colonel. Any bite to that bark, though?

>>**Ltc Hammel: 3636:101918:116:** What are you people, idiots? The Iron Coalition has won every other battle in the last couple of weeks. Doesn't that tell you anything? Worry!

>>**GromnieBreath: 2727:1917:19187:17:** Sure the Coalition's won -- allying with other units. One-on-one against the Belters, and just look what happens.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 2626:1918:1918716:** Gromnie, what are you talking about? Using fuzzy Belter logic again? The IC has established itself as the system's authority. All you freedom-loving Belters should remember that, locked away in an IC brig.

Date: 11.14.2150 / File: 00095
Report filed by: "VP Peterson"

Internal GigaCorp memos

A message from the editor:

The following memos come to us from unnamed sources within GigaCorp's Martian headquarters. We'll simply allow the memos to speak for themselves, and for GigaCorp's CEO, Mercedes Kelleher, to deal with them in her own time.

From: GigaCorp Remote Security
To: VP Peterson
Re: CEO Mercedes Kelleher's scheduled site visit

Mr. Peterson:

I have been led to believe that you are in charge of CEO Kelleher's personal itinerary. I remain unsure of this, as I received your name only after much diligent searching. You are a hard man to find, Mr. Peterson.

In regard to Kelleher's upcoming site visit, on behalf of GigaCorp security, I would strongly warn against this. Reports indicate that BIOS activity has increased in that area as of late. For Kelleher to undergo a site visit would put her in grave danger of attack. If word of her visit were to leak ahead of time, the odds of an attempt made against her life would increase dramatically.

Again, I trust this matter will receive your full attention and the priority it is due. If indeed you are not the person in charge of Kelleher's itinerary, I further trust that you will pass this message along to the proper recipient.

On a final note, please allow me to reiterate: Communication channels to CEO Kelleher should not be so restrictive as to prevent her from learning of matters relating to her own personal security.

From: VP Peterson
To: GigaCorp Remote Security
RE: CEO Mercedes Kelleher's scheduled site visit

Your message has been received and duly noted. Please be aware that CEO Kelleher's site visit has been planned for some time, and proper precautions have already been taken. Of all departments, yours should especially be aware that reports of BIOS activity surface almost continuously.

In this time of corporate emergency, I believe it not to be in GigaCorp's best interests to cancel or re-schedule Kelleher's visit. I trust that she will receive the necessary security, and that her arrival will bolster the morale and confidence of those miners at our stellar outposts.
Thank you.

From the editor:

Transmissions reflect that a BIOS attempt on Kelleher's life did take place sometime yesterday evening. A single BIOS assassin squad appears to have struck at the outpost facility Kelleher had been scheduled to visit.

According to sources close to the battle, the GigaCorp security team assigned to protect Kelleher, although undermanned, did manage to drive off the BIOS assassins. No word has returned as of yet, though, regarding the safety of GigaCorp CEO Mercedes Keller herself. As always, we'll keep you posted.

Date: 11.15.2150 / File: 00096
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Headless Faction

Since the history of mankind took to the stars, one rivalry has dominated all other faction disputes. The Iron Coalition, considered the last remnants of Earth's government, has long battled with GigaCorp, undeniably the wealthiest company in existence.

At times, though, even the fiercest rivals can come to some understanding. In these exclusive DataNet reports, evidence would seem to indicate such secret machinations taking place. Following the assault on CEO Mercedes Kelleher, GigaCorp's second-in-command, Jonathan Markham, has led that faction. An ex-military man himself, Markham has vowed to use every resource in GigaCorp's power to recover Kelleher's missing convoy.

However, now that he has sat in the corporation's highest seat, will Markham be so willing to step down? Already, suspicions have been cast regarding Markham's military connection with the Iron Coalition.

During the recent recovery mission, a unit of Iron Coalition fighters worked to hamper the GigaCorp crew. Listening stations close to the action picked up on the IC's mission objectives:

1. Seek and destroy Mercedes Kelleher's ship.
2. Defend the IC unit.
3. Secure the rescue operation site.

The station was also able to overhear the mission objectives sent in to the GigaCorp pilots:

1. Defend the GigaCorp unit.
2. Defend the rescue operations site.
3. Seek and defend Mercedes Kelleher's ship.

Normally these rote transmissions are edited out of battle reports. However, the connotations of their similarities and listed order speak for themselves. It would almost seem that one hand created both factions' mission objectives, and created them so that Kelleher's ship would remain in the greatest risk of being destroyed.

Has Colonel Jonathan Markham really left the Iron Coalition? Such highly planted spies have been discovered in the past. As always, we'll keep you posted as further developments unroll.

>>Aunt_Sam: 3626:1918:1019: Trust me, the Coalition doesn't want to be associated in any way with a loser like Markham. Last I heard, he'd been drummed out of the IC for cowardice under fire.

>>HackAttack: 4646:1019:19198: Sam, I thought "*Cowardice Under Fire*," was the name of your unit.

>>Red_Queen: 535:1918:181716: Rest assured, Kelleher will return. Just because Giga can't, or won't, rescue her, doesn't mean she can't get back on her own.

>>GromnieBreath: 3736:19176:112: Sez who? Muzak_Man couldn't get back to the Belt. Kelleher might be floating airless by now, too.

Date: 11.16.2150 / File: 00097
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

The (Attempted) Rescue of Li Chow

Whether or not other factions respect the Iron Coalition's authority, the IC at least goes through the motions of the old Earth judiciary system.

That's not the way it is in other factions. Commit a crime in the Belters, and you're sent to a far-flung rock, to last only as long as your air supply. According to Belter stories (if their stories can ever be believed), this punishment covers all crime, from murder to cheating at cards. Yet still, a better fate than what a criminal would face in the BIOS. There, simply disagree with your generation's ruling council, and you'll find yourself dissolved back into base organic components -- to feed the next generation of developing BIOS troops.

Following the capture of the Belter pirate Li Chow, the Iron Coalition showed the integrity of holding some semblance of a criminal trail. On charges for stellar piracy after his attack on an IC outpost, the Coalition prosecutors were quick to present, and close, their case.

When the time came for Chow's defense, however, all semblance of a courtroom atmosphere dissipated. Outside of the garrison, where the trial was taking place, units from both the Belters and GigaCorp launched a sudden attack.

Looking to spring Chow, whose fame has only grown during his recent incarceration, their attempt ultimately failed. Two heavily armed and armored IC security units (the aptly named *Wardens* and *Executioners*), turned the attackers away after an hour-and-a-half of brutal fighting.

For now, Li Chow continues to rot in an IC prison. Iron Coalition authority, in an effort to garner respect, has claimed another victim.

>>**Hyperline: 46436:1918:1916:** Just like the Iron Coalition, man. Just start imprisoning people for no good reason. No trial or nuthin'.

>>**SgtMjrRock: 12121:109174:** What? No reason? What are you talking about? Chow's crew attacked IC miners. Miners! That's just one step above pod-killing, in my book.

>>**HeppieOne: 98171:18151:151:** So *they* say, right? How are we supposed to know the attack ever took place? Who sez the IC didn't just decide to round up some Belters, huh?

>>**Corp_Punishment: 94873:1917:19114:** Because some of us were in that battle! And some of us lost squadmates! Chow's right where he belongs. If anyone has a problem with that -- tough! The IC passed its sentence.

Date: 11.20.2150 / File: 00098
Report filed by: "SystemCheck"

Alien Temples

Generations from now, when humanity has either killed itself off in these allegiance wars, or migrated to other systems, only our artifacts will remain. These will be our representatives, speaking to whatever archaeologists enter this fair system after our departure.

What will they find?

These archaeologists will likely enter from the outskirts of the system. The first artifact they may very well come across will be a strangely constructed temple. They'll notice that the temple, a floating outpost of sorts, consists mostly of thin, spiraling towers. Heavily fortified walls and armored bunkers will reveal the temple's dual nature, as both a place of worship and as a defensible stronghold.

Walking through the temple, archeologists will marvel at the symbols carved into the walls. If their linguists study long enough, they may even piece together some of this archaic language. The writing will speak of some religious philosophy, known simply as "the Code." There will be mention of a rare and powerful fuel, known as He3. Also, it will speak of another world, from which the constructors of the temple originally came from, named "Lapi." Pictographs may even illustrate the arrival at this new system, of armed crusades, and conquests of a weaker, indigenous people.

All this the relics of our system will speak of.

And why will this be? For the simple fact that the Rixian Unity, yet again, has managed to send reinforcements into our system. Despite their utter defeat in the Rixian Wars, the alien Unity has not surrendered its idealistic crusade, not for one moment. They weather our invasion, knowing as soon as they acquiesced to their demands, the human alliance would disintegrate back into its rival factions. They would be safe. As a truly unified race, they could then begin their crusades again.

Over the weekend, the Rixian warships arriving these past days managed to throw together the first stages of just such a heavily armed temple. This structure, on the edge of our system, cannot be allowed to stand. The consequences are obvious. Allow the Rixians to establish a foothold here, and generations from now, others will come to believe these aliens - not humanity! - ruled here.

I implore you: Do not allow this travesty to happen.

>>**PotShooter: 81716:1917:191614:** SystemCheck -- you again? Last we heard from you, it was about saving all the BIOS.

>>**SystemCheck: <node withheld>:** Saving the Gen-7 BIOS. A mission that failed because the other factions refused to cooperate. This time, the goal of my salvation is not a single sect of humanity, but ALL of humanity.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 3726:116:1151:1:** Allow me to check my sheer hatred in order to educate you on one little bitty falsehood in your report. The Iron Coalition has no plans to leave the system! Ever! Your fiction archaeologists come, and we'll still be here! Explaining to them how we drove the Rixians off a long time ago!

>>**SystemCheck: <node withheld>:** I can only hope you're right, Sam. Our goals are more alike then you might think.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 3726:116:1151:1:** There is nothing alike between you and me, pacifist!

Date: 11.21.2150 / File: 00099
Report filed by: "Conscious_1"

Lockdown

Allow me to give a firsthand account of Iron Coalition prisons -- knowledge derived from my lengthy incarceration in one such hole.

First of all, forget everything the IC puts forth regarding the conventions of warfare and the expected treatment of prisoners. These rules apply, in their warped and twisted minds, only to IC pilots captured by other factions. When the Coalition gets its hands on a prisoner, however, expect the worst.

My time in IC detention was spent isolated in a cold, dark cell. I was blindfolded, and my bonds were kept on me for the entire time. I'm still undergoing lengthy recuperative therapy for my arms, wrists, and hands. I was given minimal food and water. I won't even mention the problem of using the toilet.

Of course, I was not alone in detention. Other prisoners, there far longer than me, were able to move around their cells. With mobility comes the power to act -- and to protest. Being blindfolded during my stay, I did not witness such protests, but I did manage to interview several released prisoners in later weeks. They spoke of constant rioting within the prisons, of the underground manufacture of homemade weapons, bombs, and even environmental suits for use in escaping into the vacuum of space. Such riots and attempted escapes met with little success. At the first wind of such activity, the IC could be expected to lockdown the entire detention facility.

As they're trying to do now with the entire system. Following the failed jailbreak of Belter Li Chow, incarcerated in just such a deplorable facility, and the attack of an IC clean-up crew, the Coalition has announced a lockdown of the solar system.

According to official IC statements, all transports are now subject to IC inspection. No flight activity of any kind is allowed to take place within 0.5 AU's of Luna. And all independent military contractors are forbidden, upon threat of raid and seizure, to supply factions in opposition to the IC with arms or ships of any kind.

Will the rules of such an IC lockdown be followed? As the results of last night's battle indicate, absolutely not. In retaliation, or in mockery, of these IC statements, the BIOS and GigaCorp annihilated an Iron Coalition enforcement crew.

The Coalition looks to bring law and order to the system. Without the other factions to keep them in check, is this the kind of law we can expect?

>>Ltc Hammel: 141:141:1817:1918: Talk about your objective journalism. Why not give both sides of the story, DataNet, instead of commissioning the one reporter most hostile to the IC to write this up? Why not interview the families of those IC clean-up crew members killed?

>>Aunt_Sam: 3726:116:1151:1: Yeah, Conscious, geez. You haven't gotten over being handcuffed to the basement pipes yet? I thought you reporters loved that firsthand stuff.

>>401Kay: 1716:101881:10116: Think you can lockdown the whole system? Last I heard, the IC can't even keep their own pilots from defecting.

>>Hayword_Wired: 16161:1019171131: I have my own decree. A lockdown of Luna. Has about the same chance of working, I figure.

Date: 11.22.2150 / File: 00100
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Return to Power?

During these troubled times of allegiance wars and critical He3 fuel shortages, no one's job is safe.

Take the recent events surrounding GigaCorp's CEO, Mercedes Kelleher. Coming to power several years prior, Kelleher has led the system's largest corporation through some very rough times. Continuing its dispute with the Iron Coalition, GigaCorp has dumped countless billions into the war efforts -- and to largely successful results. At the start of any battle, GigaCorp units are often the first to develop costly garrisons and research stations, thanks to the liberal use of that corporation's coffers.

Some would argue, however, that GigaCorp's resources were never meant to have been so heavily invested. GigaCorp, originally researching many varied fields of technology, focused on their military side only after running afoul of Iron Coalition authorities. Continuing that dispute, corporate purists argue, has placed R&D blinders on GigaCorp's top execs.

Such may be the reason behind radical efforts to oust CEO Mercedes Kelleher. On a site visit last week, her personal convoy was lost amidst brutal fighting. Rescue efforts, led by the head of GigaCorp security, Jonathan Markham, appeared less than wholehearted.

Then, yesterday afternoon, Kelleher's convoy, nearly out of air, fuel, and water, returned to Martian orbit.

According to sources within GigaCorp itself, once this convoy was spotted, Markham sent out a security unit to meet Kelleher. Perhaps thinking this unit would guide her convoy to nearby landing fields, the security team was allowed to approach.

A grave error in judgment. Once within range, Markham's security team opened fire, succeeding in driving the convoy away from Martian orbit.

The tribulations for Kelleher continue, it would seem. At this time, no report has been made on her whereabouts, although further GigaCorp units have been deployed. Their mission? Certainly not one of rescue.

>>Miguel_Sanchez: 1161:1901817:115: No official statement is being released by GigaCorp on these events. We would, however, like to assure all our shareholders that no matter the outcome, business has continued as usual, and stock prices remain higher than ever.

>>RedQueen: 1717:191716:1143132: Kelleher is indeed live and well. And extremely pissed off.

>>Podkiller_Phil: 3737:19187:1918: What was that junk about GigaCorp purists? They've always been in the business of war. Markham ousted Kelleher because of his ties with the IC, not because GigaCorp shareholders want the dispute with the Coalition to end.

>>Demon'sDreamin: 3837:19171:118: I second that. Business has never been better for GigaCorp since they started taking on the IC goons.