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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.

DataNet File: 5612/41.22_99: "Supposedly the Belters and the Coalition have hammered out an agreement to hit GigaCorp - hard."

Report filed by: "Dogface Joe"

A lot of my regular readers know I harbor no fond feelings toward the Iron Coalition. To me, they're no better than GigaCorp - and worse in a lot of ways. A bunch of self-serving, pompous tin soldiers who don't realize the destruction of Earth changed everything forever. We can't just act like nothing happened and go about our business. The old ways are gone forever and the Coalition had better learn to swing with the times or be left behind.

That's why I was so intrigued when I got wind of the rumor that old man Fisk has decided to cut a deal with the Belters to stick it to GigaCorp. If true, it'd be big news, especially for poor old Mercedes Kelleher. Till now, she probably figured Fisk would never swallow his pride and work with that collection of cutthroats and criminals. Well, like I said, the Coalition's got to change or be left in the dust. Maybe Fisk has got more sense than I gave him credit for.

My sources in the Coalition (and believe me, they're good ones - I'm just not saying who) tell me that this isn't just a rumor. Fisk has been making overtures to the Belters for months. Problem is they won't play the game according to his rules. Orion Sholes and his cronies don't like GigaCorp any more than Fisk does. They'd love to see the whole bloated corp go down in a fiery blaze. They're just not willing to sell out to Fisk and his lickspittles to do it.

Naturally, Fisk was a little upset by this. Understandable, I suppose. So, he wonders how he can get Sholes and company to sign on. Remember, the Coalition needs the Belters. Without them, they're back where they started. Let me tell you something from personal experience, the only way to deal with the Belters is on their terms. They don't play anyone's game but their own. And of course, not all the Belters play the same game. Sholes is their spokesperson, but he's not their leader. The sooner Fisk learns that, the happier he'll be. Actually, that's not too likely, since I don't think the guy ever smiles. In any case, Fisk's got to learn that the Belters aren't at all like the Coalition.

So, there you have it. Ramrod straight Fisk is trying his best to get into bed with the Belters. If that isn't news, I don't know what is. You can bet I'll give you more details as I become aware of them. For now, watch your backs, keep your ears to the ground, and check back here for the latest news the Coalition doesn't want you to have.

>>HorrorShow_81: node: 0031.2981_81: Believe it when I see it, Joe.

>>Dogface Joe [node restricted]: Hey, it could happen.

>>HorrorShow_81: node: 0031.2981_81: I'll bet you a liter of He3 that it never happens.

>>DogfaceJoe [node restricted]: You got a bet, wiseguy.

DataNet File: 0412/2912_20: "Orion Sholes Speaks to DataNet"

Report filed by: "Dogface Joe"

For several years, the Belter factions have apparently been led by reputed smuggler, pirate (and occasionally legitimate businessman) Orion Sholes. During a stopover at Hastur Free Port, DataNet stringer "Dogface Joe" ran into Sholes and managed a brief interview.

The following is a transcript of the encounter:

Dogface Joe: Are you the leader of the Belters?

Orion Sholes: No, of course. The Belters don't have a leader. That's what makes us unique in this solar system. We don't bow to anybody but ourselves - and sometimes not even then.

DJ: What position do you occupy then?

OS: None really. You might call me the Belters' spokesman, but even that's a lot more official sounding than I really am. I'm a businessman.

DJ: How so?

OS: I run Ragnarok Independent Prospectors, Ltd. And like I said, the Belters don't have a leader. Even when I speak for them, I'm not necessarily speak for all of them. The only person I'm definitely speaking for is myself.

DJ (laughs): Then why am I talking to you at all?

OS: That's for you to answer.

DJ: Point taken. So, are you saying the Belters don't speak with one voice?

OS: Yes and no. The Belters are a lot different than the Coalition and GigaCorp. We revel in our differences and are suspicious of uniformity. But we share one common trait. . .

DJ: Which is?

OS: Which is this: leave us the hell alone. We ain't bothering nobody out here and we'd like you to respect that. Leave us be and we'll return the favor.

DJ: But what about your mining activities?

OS: What about them?

DJ: Don't they guarantee you'll run afoul of the Coalition and GigaCorp?

OS: Only because they want it that way. The Belters don't want trouble. We just want to be allowed to continue living life as we always have. The Belt is plenty big enough for everyone to find their own He3. There's no need to step on each other's toes.

DJ: I take it you don't think much of the Coalition or GigaCorp?

OS: Doesn't matter what I think.

DJ: Let me rephrase that. The Belters don't think much of them, do they?

OS: Depends on the Belter, I guess. In general, though, Belters don't like anyone who tries to tell them what to do. Both the Coalition and GigaCorp are plenty guilty of that.

DJ: So, you plan to fight them?

OS: Only if they don't respect our Code and try to seize what isn't theirs.

DJ: I see. Anything you'd like to say to them?

OS: Nope. Besides, I didn't think they much liked your lot either.

DJ: True enough. Parting words, Orion?

OS: I think I've said all I need to.

>>**RedPlanet_20123: node: 5126.281.21_18:** Wow. Someone less lucid than Dogface Joe!

>>**LoneWolf_31: node: 0981.2981_210:** He isn't much of a talker. But he's a hell of a pilot and he knows how to run a battle. In a scrap against GigaCorp or the Iron Coalition, there's nobody better to have covering your back.

DataNet File: 2971/31.32_67: "Coalition Plays Down Bios Threat"

Report filed by: "Inquisitor"

Despite continued rumors of a large battlegroup of Bio vessels massed near Saturn, the Iron Coalition urged calm. Major Robert Terrance, Brigadier General Fisk's personal assistant and reportedly the Iron Coalition intelligence chief, warned against "accepting rumor and tall tales as fact. I suspect that the media have been taken in by Belter stories rather than by anything verifiable."

For weeks, there have been increasing reports of unusual ship movements beyond the asteroid belt. These reports come mostly from Belters and others operating within that region of the solar system. As Major Terrance intimated, these reports vary greatly. Even the number and type of ships seen varies. This has led many to conclude that the stories cannot possibly be true, but are yet another example of the fictions for which the Belters are often responsible. Terrance added, "The Coalition is as concerned as anyone about the reports circulating on DataNet and elsewhere about these Bios. If there's any truth to them, you can be sure the Coalition will act accordingly. For now, I'd recommend a skeptical stance toward these latest reports."

Major Terrance refers to the video circulating throughout the solar system that purports to show a Bio "enhancement facility" in the outer solar system. If the video is indeed genuine, it represents a possible widening of the conflict in the solar system by introducing a new faction whose goals are as yet unknown. To date, both the Iron Coalition and GigaCorp have been reluctant to make definitive statements regarding the true nature of the Bios and the threat they may pose. This latest round of rumors will only put further pressure on them to act forcefully.

>>LuckyStar_9100: node: 54102.8192_29187: Incredible. We do some of the best investigative journalism anyone's seen in a century and these guys still don't believe us. Don't buy their line for a minute. I was there. I saw that enhancement facility with my own two eyes. I don't scare easily, but that place frightened me half to death. If I can ever get the sight of those Coalition troopers as they were being "enhanced" out of my head, I'll die a happy man.

>>ProfessionalSkeptic: node 0001.189_291: I'm not sure if there's any truth to this latest round of rumors about weird ships beyond the belt. It doesn't matter, though. The Bios are out there - waiting, watching, learning. The Bios are real and they're a threat. Not just to the Coalition or to GigaCorp, but to us all. They're not just going to sit out there beyond the asteroid belt forever. One of these days, they're the ones who're going to act. We'd better be ready.

>>SpaceDog_66: node 7781.920.19_2: Pull the other one, guys. Bios might exist emphasis on "might" - but I doubt they're much of threat.

>> LuckyStar_9100: node 54102.8192_29187: Remember you said that when you're floating in a gene vat.

DataNet File: 19283/9297.1283_912: "Iron Coalition Scoutship Destroyed"

Report filed By: "Samaritan"

GigaCorp security forces announced today that an Iron Coalition incursion into corporate-owned territory was detected and intercepted near the "Aladdin" research colony.

According to GigaCorp spokesman Miguel Sanchez, "There was, thankfully, few casualties in the encounter. Unfortunately, the unknown intruder craft was destroyed. A rescue pod was recovered, and we are interrogating the subject before releasing him."

Sanchez also indicated that the ship appeared to be an Iron Coalition LP1-C "Longview" Spotter Ship, though, he admits: "It is possible that the pilot was not an Iron Coalition soldier. Belters are known to use captured craft."

The Iron Coalition leadership has not issued any statement in the matter, though troop movements in the adjacent Aleph route would indicate that the downed "Longview" was in fact an IC ship. For the last several weeks, Coalition forces have staged through several Alephs in the region, apparently searching for He3 deposits and laying mines.

Since the incident at Aladdin, Iron Coalition units - notably the 131st Marine Division ("The Assassins") and the 77th Scottish Guards Division ("Screaming Death") - have mobilized. A pair of destroyers, reportedly the Eisenhower and the Kennedy, have moved into the region.

>>Albatross_182: node 19832_9128312: "Interrogation?" GigaCorp "debriefing specialists" aren't known for their gentle and winning ways. If that IC flyboy comes out of Aladdin alive, he'll probably be nothing more than a vegetable.

>>KillCrazy: node 172718_1828_28: So what? Fisk's troops weren't exactly gentle on Luna. Or Mars. Or anywhere else.

>>Albatross_182: node 19832_9128312: Hey, I'm no IC apologist. But it could have been any one of us that strayed into GigaCorp space. I'm no fan of Fisk or his policies, but you gotta feel bad for a lone pilot being tortured just for doing his job.

>>Palmetto_X: node 001992_2881.282: Update, gang. There's a new destroyer and two cruisers augmenting the Iron Coalition in that sector. I just hopped into the region - shoulda checked the DataNet first, obviously - and ran smack into an IC patrol. Tagged 'em with a holorecorder and rabbited through a local Aleph; I was pretty lucky.

>>KillCrazy: node 172718_1828_28: I'll say. You should scrub the holo and see if you can get a make on the new ships.

>>Palmetto_X: node 001992_2881.282: Will do. My computer's a dinosaur - an old Pentium XX - but I should be able to clean up the image enough for at least a partial ID. I'll be in touch...

Date: 03.01.2151
File: 00151
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Minor Sphere of Hell

Activities have continued around Mercury, as the factions attempt to mine the system's innermost, and most deadly, planet.

An Iron Coalition memo, circulated amongst all IC officials in an effort to boost support for the Mercury operation, found its way into DataNet hands. The memo read, in part:

“. . . So long as rival factions such as GigaCorp succeed in landing troops onto the surface of Mercury, then so must the Iron Coalition try to accomplish the same. We cannot allow, on any field of battle, at any time, the enemy to gain so much as a preserved inkling of an advantage. If the enemy thinks they will win, then they will win. This has been proven time and again in the annals of warfare. And so shall this fight be taken to Mercury.”

Rallying words, to be sure, yet also confusing ones nonetheless. At what point has GigaCorp succeeded in landing troops on Mercury? So far as our sources and listening outposts indicate, they have not.

It might be assumed that GigaCorp has been leaking false messages to the Iron Coalition, speaking of landings they have not made, simply in order to increase the IC's desire to send troops to the hellish surface of the planet. And, as has been witnessed in recent battle, the IC blast shields are not up for the challenge. It would seem that the IC is not sending its troops to secure victory, but rather to a hasty, ill-conceived death. And, while IC has condemned its own troops to execution, GigaCorp has masterfully played the strings of the entire operation.

So dangerous is the furnace of Mercury, that even those ships venturing too close to the atmospheric furnace have suffered critical break-downs. During Wednesday's battle, against the *Shakers* unit of the Belters, the following was overhead from IC Defenders' transmissions:

“OK, Captain to IC Defenders! We're gonna try sweeping right under their wing. On my mark, all ships drop 0.005 AU toward Mercury. Follow my lead!”

“Captain, we're already pretty close to the--“

“KEEP THIS CHANNEL CLEAR! I said follow my lead! These ships `ll hold together.”

Moments later, all transmissions ceased from those IC ships involved in the maneuver. Presumably, they perished in the intense atmospheric heat.

As efforts continue with Mercury, other missions have begun, aiming to conquer Venus. Further from the sun, the thick greenhouse gases of Venus have created a surface temperature almost higher even than Mercury's.

Despite the inherent risks, gathered GigaCorp forces have been seen dropping shipment after shipment of supplies to the surface of Venus. Another ruse, looking to pique the Iron Coalition's interest, enough to attempt landing live soldiers there? If so, will the IC bite, and so be burned twice?

As always, as news develops, we'll keep you posted!

Date: 03.05.2151
File: 00152
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Long Lost Colony

The following transmission was captured by Belter miners exploring the edge of the galaxy:

"According to the most reliable instruments still in our possession, it has been nearly fifty years since we've landed on this God-forsaken rock. How optimistic, how full of hope we were at the time of our launch. We, the *Destiny Hunters*. A strange twist of fate, that our actual destiny would never be to map the universe, as originally planned, but instead to crash-land here. A barely livable planet since dubbed *Destiny's Folly*.

"Of the original crew, only myself and a handful of others remain. The rest have all perished, some merciful at the very start, at the hands of the Iron Coalition's assassins. For others, it has proven a long, slow march to death. *Destiny's Folly* had more than one cruel trick in store for us. The comets, streaking through the thin atmosphere almost unhindered. The arctic wyrms, lying in wait under the polar caps we desperately needed for water. Yes, many a crew member lost to such things.

"Of course, through the years, several children have been born, bright spark of joys in this otherwise bleak existence. But with such a thin gene pool to start with, succeeding generations can only grow duller.

"We must leave. It has taken fifty years to scratch out a living here, consuming as little as possible, waiting for GigaCorp rescue ships. They have yet to come, and I suspect we would go on waiting for all eternity unless we ourselves act first. We cannot blame GigaCorp, though. No doubt, the execs assumed us all dead after that initial IC attack. How could anyone think us capable of surviving of so long, with so little?

"The council here, of course, is divided. There are those too afraid to attempt the journey. Our ships have not been used for so long. Yes, I tell them, there will be dangers. But I for one will not die on this rock without trying.

"An even harder argument must be made to the children -- young adults, now, I should say. They know no other way, no other life. To them, what do they have to gain by leaving? Ah, if only they knew!

"At least there are more than a few on my side. Not many, but. . . . We have one more council meeting in which to convince the others. After that, I'm afraid it may come, after all these years living in cooperative peace, to battle. But I can stay here no longer!"

"As always I transmit these reports with the hope that someone in GigaCorp will intercept the transmission and send aid."

While the authenticity of this transmission is still being checked (the Belters, of course, may have simply pawned off a manufactured recording), if confirmed to be accurate, there seems little doubt as to the identity of the speaker.

Fifty years earlier, the highly acclaimed *Destiny Hunters* mission was launched, led by Capt. Marion O'Hearn. Members of the elite GigaCorp scientific community, the *Destiny Hunters* were believed slain at the edge of the system by the Iron Coalition and its allies (the IC has, to date, maintained it was never involved in any such incident).

If the Hunters have indeed remained alive, such would be a finding of monumental accomplishment. As ever, the DataNet continues its investigations.

Date: 03.09.2151
File: 00153
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Won, Lost, and Found

Reap the Harvest

For better or worse, efforts have continued to mine the resources of the inner system. Despite the most highly developed heat shields to date, no one faction has proven able to make a successful mining run on Mercury; yet, coming so soon after disaster there, attempts have already begun on Venus, a planet promising no less risk.

Many assumed that the Iron Coalition, burned by GigaCorp into making suicidal attempts to colonize Mercury, would not make the same mistake with Venus. However, such assumptions have proven false. As GigaCorp recently began dropping supply shipments onto the Venetian surface, perhaps to prepare for colonial landings, perhaps to raise the IC's interest, the Iron Coalition made immediate overtures to take control of the sector.

A decision based, most likely, more on greed than on any actual strategy. As the Iron Coalition *Glory Hounds* entered the Venetian sectors, broadcasting warnings for the GigaCorp logistics crews there to disperse, GigaCorp instead responded with a heavy hand. GC's *Opportunists*, lying in wait, maneuvered around the top of the planet, launching a devastating attack and sending the *Glory Hounds* running back to Luna.

It would seem that despite all appearances, no mining operations will ever take place on Venus. Of course, no survey operations, either, have ever breached the planet's thick cloud cover to discern exactly what mineral wealth the planet has to offer. In the meantime, the system's factions have contented themselves with exploring other options -- the asteroid belt, planetary bodies near the Alephs, and, in the case of the Belters, those sectors near the very sun itself.

Looking to collect precious He3 as it streams off the system's solar body, massive Belter ships have been seen maneuvering near the sun, using the planet Mercury as a heat shield. It is not yet known how successful their efforts have been so far in this venture. The Belters have made no announcement, although the BIOS have already launched an initial, probing attack, possibly trying to determine just how much ore the Belters have already gained.

Ant Farm

Although no reporter has been able to approach those sectors around Jupiter and Saturn (nor has been able to for quite some time), the news has nevertheless spread far and wide. According to sources within the BIOS faction, the former ruling council has indeed been ousted, and a new council, comprised of Gen-6, Gen-7, and Gen-Theta BIOS, installed in its place.

Alistair 3-921 has long run the former ruling council, with both a fervent desire to advance the cause of his fellow BIOS, as well as a somewhat conciliatory political stance in relation to the other factions. It may have been this last quality which led to his council's ousting. As the later BIOS generations have developed increasingly violent tendencies, they have likewise expressed a decreasing desire to ever reunite with the rest of humanity. With the new council in place, the BIOS stance may be to conquer, not cooperate.

Destiny Hunters

Following the inexplicable transmission from a supposed long, lost GigaCorp colony, efforts have intensified to determine from precisely where such a transmission originally hailed.

According to GigaCorp scientists, though, it may prove impossible to triangulate the transmission's origins, having dispersed so widely since being broadcast from so far away. In any event, a memorial ceremony, marking the fifty-year anniversary of the disappearance of the colony, the *Destiny Hunters*, is underway. A massive GigaCorp fleet has launched, aiming to follow a portion of the *Hunters'* original route before circling back to Mars.

The Iron Coalition, long considered the culprit behind the *Destiny Hunters'* disappearance, has continued to deny any involvement in the incident.

Date: 03.12.2151
File: 00154
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Backs to the Wall

Though fifty years in the making, revenge has finally been enacted against the obstinate Iron Coalition. Long considered the culprits behind the destruction of GigaCorp's *Destiny Hunters* mission (to explore the far reaches of the galaxy), the IC has continuously denied any and all involvement in the matter. And yet their guilt was recently sealed when survivors from this very mission finally returned from the galaxy's edge, marooned there, they claimed, by IC assassins.

Ironically, the survivors were discovered during GigaCorp's fifty-year anniversary of the mission's disaster. Days prior, GigaCorp had amassed a majority of its stellar armada, designed to follow a parade route resembling the first part of the path the *Destiny Hunters* originally took. Before circling back to Mars, however, witnesses claimed that a lone GigaCorp unit, flying outdated, patched-together ships, was met returning from the other way -- from the deepest recesses of space. Lengthy interviews and several sessions of genetic fingerprinting later, the pilots of this unit were confirmed to be Captain Marian O'Hearn, as well as other members of the original *Destiny Hunters* mission.

As celebrations ensued, the real purpose behind GigaCorp's amassed armada became all too clear. Turning back toward Mars, the armada continued forward with all speed toward Luna and the Iron Coalition. The next stage in the war between these bitter, old rivals, had apparently just begun.

It may be that rescue of the *Destiny Hunters*, and their confirmation that the IC had been behind the assault all along, spurred GigaCorp on to demand immediate satisfaction. Of course, it may be just as likely that GigaCorp's armada had always planned to turn toward Luna, and the pretense of an anniversary parade was a cover story all along.

In any event, battle against the Iron Coalition has waged all through the weekend. Observers have noted rising flames on the lunar surface, concentrated around the IC's shipyards, training facilities, and command centers. Although it has been assumed that the Iron Coalition keeps the majority of its forces safe in underground bunkers, the damage to Luna already appears extensive indeed.

Will the Iron Coalition be able to drive back this latest onslaught? Having lost control of the Earth to the BIOS, morale in the Coalition is said to currently be at its lowest point. And with knowledge that the IC, despite fifty years of protest, was responsible for heinous acts against the *Destiny Hunters*, the remainder of the factions do not appear to be siding with the disgraced Coalition. If anything, GigaCorp may find more than a few allies against the IC.

Brigadier General Derek Fisk may be facing the greatest fight his beloved Coalition has ever faced.

As further news develops, we'll be sure to keep you posted!

>>**Aunt_Sam: 165141:191161:11671:** Even though large tracts of Luna have fallen or may fall into the grip of GigaCorp and all the odious apparatus of corporate rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our moon, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight in the sectors above, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the craterous plains and in the seas of tranquility; we shall never surrender!

>>**RedQueen: 9171:10918171:** Stirring words. But words we've heard before. And rest assured, the IC will fall.

>>**SergeantGreggs: 8117:19171:11:** I heartily disagree. Half the IC's landing strips may have been bombed into rubble, three-quarters of its radar posts destroyed, almost all of its surface buildings targeted, but the Coalition will win this fight!

>>**Podkiller_Phil: 1511:191:1:** I dunno. The way you're talking, sounds like you've already all but lost!

Date: 03.16.2151
File: 00155
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Desperate Gambles

As conflict continues against the Iron Coalition, the extent of damage done to their Luna headquarters has become all too apparent. Fires, burning deep within buried facilities, have been seen venting into space, visible from as far away as Mars. It would seem that enemy forces, mainly GigaCorp and the BIOS, have succeeded in reaching the hidden, subterranean recesses of the Iron Coalition's facilities. Unable to defend its most vital areas from attack, many have begun to wonder how soon must it be before the Coalition is no more?

Statements coming from the IC have been more short and directed than ever before. And, unlike earlier months when IC spin doctors handled all official statements to the press, these have come direct from Brigadier General Derek Fisk himself:

"The Faction Wars have taken a decidedly new and dramatic turn. Of this, the system is aware, and which the Iron Coalition itself can no longer doubt. While we once thought to unify all factions under the rule of Earth's Law, it has become clear that such a future is no longer possible. The Iron Coalition's only course of action now is a complete obliteration of all opposing factions. Diplomacy is not an option."

Optimistic words, to be sure, considering that the IC stands on the brink of its own destruction.

Others in the system, however, worry that the loss of the IC's Luna headquarters will mean more than simply the defeat of one faction. Currently, the IC is host to the Lunar Institute, which has so far been spared from any bombing campaign. And yet the Institute is home to thousands of species of flora and fauna, originally collected to study in lower-gravity planetary conditions, which now exist nowhere else in the system following the destruction of the Earth. Institute researchers are worried, not only for their own safety, but for the safety of these priceless species.

So far, the other factions have not made any statements in regard to the Lunar Institute; GigaCorp, however, has professed on several occasions to destroy any stronghold suspected of aiding and abetting the IC's cause in any capacity. Such a sweeping threat would surely cover the Institute, well known to perform countless experiments at the behest of Coalition officials.

Will GigaCorp go so far as to destroy this vital place of research? For now, no one can be sure.

And what of the Iron Coalition? Are their threats mere empty gestures? The IC has proven resilient enough to bounce back from catastrophe time and again. Should they survive this battle, will the system face a Coalition too weakened to cause any further harm? Or, one made stronger than ever, having weathered the storm, intent on exterminating the other factions? Such remains to be seen.

>>**SystemDreggs: 514141:18171:** The IC will never fall, really. The Coalition might be “defeated,” which will just mean the hardened troops will find work as mercenaries within the other factions. But IC pride will never die.

>>**BlueBaron: 71151:1091818:** Who says they'll find work? If they were so good as pilots, wouldn't they be winning this war?

>>**GromnieBreath: 4141:191817:** System doesn't need more mercs. That's a role the Belters fill, just fine.

>>**Coffeeless_One: 61:1919:11:** No, the IC will not go down, and for another reason entirely. These faction wars have seen alliances shift at the drop of a hat. If the IC looks ready to fall, the other factions will start eyeing each other, wondering when to backstab their current partners. Someone will make the first move, the alliance against the IC will fall apart, and the IC will find room to recover. Happens all the time.

Date: 03.19.2151
File: 00156
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Battle for Luna

In a bold move yesterday, Brigadier General Derek Fisk appeared on public transmission to detail the Iron Coalition's plans for the future of the system. Directing his statement at his fellow faction leaders, notably those of the BIOS, GigaCorp, and the Belters (currently embroiled in vicious warfare against the IC's lunar headquarters), Fisk responded to the looming question of the IC's potential surrender:

"Let this be said for all to hear: the Iron Coalition will never surrender its sovereign right to rule this system. Now, more than ever before, is the Coalition committed to overcoming all obstacles and promoting legal order.

"To GigaCorp CEO Mercedes Kelleher, or should I say, to the clone of Kelleher many believe was placed in power, a puppet of the executive board: GigaCorp has long been a thorn in the IC's side. Perhaps the longest, sharpest thorn of all. Following the IC's victory, all members of the board will be sent in lifepods to explore the deepest reaches of the galaxy. All others in GigaCorp will find new positions in the IC, working in the prison laundries and kitchens.

"To the BIOS ruling council (I would address this to Alistair 3-921, although I'm told his own BIOS have removed him from power): Your own actions depict you as dangerous criminals that should never be allowed back within human society. The former council members were at least agreeable to peaceful resolution, if misguided in their ultimate goals. For that, we can only blame your twisted founder, Emmet Longstreet. The new council, composed of Gen-6, Gen-7, and Gen-Theta BIOS are truly less human (as they have themselves stated) and more monster. As such, all BIOS in these generations will be confined to the IC labs of the Lunar Institute, for vivisection and study.

"And finally, to Orion Sholes of the Belters: Oddly enough, and despite your grievances with rival Simon Lennox, you have managed to lead your band of filthy mercenary scum better than any of the other factions the IC has to face. Rest assured, the Belters will be defeated. And, to both punish you and assure that no other pirates can hide in the nooks and crannies of the system, a fleet of IC destroyers will sweep the asteroid belt and demolish every rock you've hidden under there into fine, powdery dust. But such is the IC's respect for the Belters, that the survivors will then be welcomed, with open arms, into the IC's ranks. After all, there are many IC ships to polish, and many boots of IC officers to shine."

Strong words indeed, despite activity over the weekend concentrated on bombing IC targets on Luna. The conflict there has become so devastating that a halo of blasted lunar soil now obscures any clear view of the moon. A fitting metaphor, for a conflict not likely to settle any time soon. For now, though, the IC continues its stand. And, as Fisk himself would be the first to point out, the IC has yet to fall.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 71616:19181:** That Fisk is as fair as he is tough. Offering jobs to the Belters -- kind words indeed.

>>**MillerLowLife: 131:18171:11:** Ha! Most of us fled to the Belt to avoid mandatory IC recruitment drives. We'll fight this through before we ever concede to Fisk.

>>**RedQueen: 91818:10111:** Concede to Fisk? You're talking like the man has any sort of advantage here! He's one more bombing run away from complete annihilation! We'll see him threaten then -- from the afterlife.

>>**Spyder7: 6161616:11:** There's still something to admire in the way Fisk refuses to grasp reality, though. It's almost. . . touching.

Date: 03.23.2151
File: 00157
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

The Man in the Moon is Crying

Destiny Hunters Repelled

As war continues against the Iron Coalition, the combined alliance of opposing factions has taken to throwing everything it can assemble against the IC's lunar headquarters. Reports have started surfacing that the Belters, long considered the most dedicated workers of the system, have temporarily ceased all mining operations. Changing his faction from miners to full-time mercenary fighters, Orion Sholes is said to be directing his Belters to sell their muscle against the IC. Perhaps war has proven even more profitable than He3.

Of the other units flying against Luna, the most eager must surely have been the *GC Destiny Hunters*. Returning from a fifty-year exile at the hands of the Iron Coalition, the *Hunters* were re-outfitted with the latest in GigaCorp ships and sent out in battle. With fifty years of rage built up, it was assumed that the *Destiny Hunters*, do or die, would single-handedly break the IC's defenses and bring this war to a quick end.

Sadly, such was not to be the case. After fifty-years of exile, the *Hunters'* skills may have proven a tad rusty. None of the pilots were able to breach even the outermost perimeter of Luna's defenses, and those few who survived were quickly sent back to Mars. Their latest ships? Now in desperate need of repair.

Saturation

While the IC has continued to hold strong, it is obvious that the continued defense comes at a tremendous price. IC pilots are dying in droves by the hour, so who is it now flying the IC ships?

According to GigaCorp spokesman, Miguel Sanchez, IC pilots being captured in recent days are showing fewer signs of being battle-hardened veterans and more of being desperately chosen cockpit-filler. According to Sanchez:

"The most recent prisoners of war captured from Iron Coalition forces. . . have included cooks, administrative assistants, formerly retired officers, and the young sons and daughters of enlisted pilots. Clearly, the IC is sending everyone who can work a throttle to their deaths above Luna. This madness must end! The Iron Coalition must surrender now!"

In response, Brigadier General Derek Fisk issued a scathing thirty-minute diatribe airing on all transmission channels. His speech included such statements that "the Iron Coalition will never surrender even if Luna itself should be blasted from the skies."

For now, it would seem that the IC's defenses, however controversial, are capable of holding off at least a few more heated assaults. Two days ago, an IC unit, affectionately named *Fisk's Boys*, was able to beat back a combined GigaCorp and Belter assault.

Reports have started to come back, as of early this morning, that a BIOS assault team managed slightly better success last night, pounding through two IC units. Regardless, it would seem that General Fisk stands behind his promise: that the IC would rather be eliminated than surrender. If so, the faction alliance opposing them may very well be forced to do just that.

Date: 03.26.2151
File: 00158
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Imminent Surrender

Startling developments over the weekend have been hailed as sure signs the Iron Coalition may soon be surrendering.

Aggression against the IC and its lunar headquarters has continued at a steady pace ever since the bizarre return of GigaCorp's *Destiny Hunters* unit, lost for fifty years. However valiantly the IC has held out, against a combined assault composed mainly of GigaCorp, the Belters, and the BIOS, it would seem that the defense is showing signs of weakening.

On 03.24, GigaCorp, perhaps sensing a waning in the IC's strength, sent over its first delegation of corporate lawyers, looking to get IC General Derek Fisk's signature on a drafted peace treaty.

A bold, but premature move.

The lawyers were met not with open minds and waiting pens but rather the blazing guns of the IC's hardened defenses. Although the lawyers' escort, the GC *Legal Eagles* unit, managed to soften the defenses enough to make a landing, the IC was quick to respond. Two hours later, the IC *Defenders* unit managed to stage a rally, chasing the *Legal Eagles* away from Luna, with GigaCorp's lawyers and treaty papers, unsigned, along with them.

At this point, the Coalition was not quite ready to fall.

Yet on 03.25, fighting between all five factions bombarded the lunar surface. At roughly 14:00 UST, the IC's sole ally in the wars, the alien Rixian Unity, managed to tear through wave after wave of attackers. Leading the fight, Rixian wing commander, ErikMC, managed over forty enemy kills.

However, it was not to be enough.

As the battle continued throughout the day, the enemies of the IC simply overwhelmed Luna in sheer numbers. And tragedy, one many had hoped to avoid at all costs, struck. The first bombs began to fall on the cherished Lunar Institute. Scientists there worked frantically, evacuating as many of the rare species, sole survivors from Earth's destruction, as they could. Many species were simply shot into orbit in military lifepods, to be collected, by one side or another, following the end of battle. Others were shipped to Sagla-1, the artificial satellite built to orbit Luna and serve as the IC's garbage dump. One can only imagine how the animals of Earth will fare in such hostile conditions.

As fighting began to die down for the night, IC General Derek Fisk made a surprising statement on open transmissions channels. It read, in part:

“ . . . the main goal of the Iron Coalition has been, and will continue to be, the protection of all beings within our influence. Whether this protection comes from the defeat of our enemies, or from the fostering of conditions in which our enemies do not wish to cause harm to others, has become a matter of ongoing debate.”

First hints, perhaps, of discord among the IC's top brass? Is this “debate” really about whether the IC should continue to fight a war which cannot be won, or surrender and save more lives now? As always, as further news develops, we'll be sure to keep you posted.

Date: 03.30.2151
File: 00159
Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

Full Concession

On 03.27, Brigadier General Derek Fisk, commander of the Iron Coalition, issued the statement many have been expecting for the past several weeks. According to Fisk:

"It is in the best interest of this system. . . that the war no longer continue against the Iron Coalition. Countless civilians have not only been affected by the recent aggressions against the IC, but were directed to participate in them, manning ships and heavy artillery when no able soldiers were left to fight. True, such actions go against the very rules of engagement the IC pledged to follow, and for this, I accept full responsibility. Perhaps it was the realization that we were performing such actions against our own cherished beliefs, simply to win. . . at that point, I knew the Iron Coalition could no longer continue with its present course.

"This is not an admission of surrender. No unified opposition has stepped forth to negotiate a proper peace treaty. Instead, this is an admission of concession. The Iron Coalition no longer has the resources necessary to combat our enemy factions combined, and for the overall good of the system, we will remove ourselves from current hostilities.

"However, the resources of the Iron Coalition must not be scavenged by the grasping, greedy hands of factions looking to restock their armories, and continue fighting against one another. Should the weapons, the ships, and the military knowledge of the IC ever be misused, the system may yet face its greatest enemy: supreme military might in the possession of the ignorant. For that reason, while the IC concedes, we will not freely relinquish our arms until an organized party of opposition leaders comes forward with a responsible, well-thought out plan for the collection and redistribution of IC resources.

"That is all."

Although Fisk's statement has been expected, it was no less shocking. Of all factions, with the possible exception of the Rixian crusaders, the Iron Coalition has proven the most fanatical in its aim. As of 03.26, the IC even continued to hold its lunar defense in the face of overwhelming odds.

However, against the combined might of the BIOS, Belters, and GigaCorp, no defense could hold forever. In the end, the IC seems to have run out of those resources necessary to continue; not of heart, or even bullets, but simply out of pilots.

Following Fisk's concession speech, delivered exactly at midnight of 03.27, corporate spokesman Miguel Sanchez released GigaCorp's official statement of reaction:

"We applaud General Fisk for the difficult, though necessary decision he has made. Furthermore, GigaCorp is willing to grant full pardon to Fisk, and to most members of the IC's elite corps of officers, should they immediately and in good faith deliver all weapons of war into the safe possession of GigaCorp. Having led the campaign against the Iron Coalition, and now commanding authority throughout this Solar System, GigaCorp fully accepts its responsibility in this matter."

Perhaps as bold a statement as General Fisk's. According to observers, several GigaCorp supply ships were already en route to Luna at the time Sanchez's statement aired. No doubt offended that GigaCorp should assume leadership, the BIOS faction, so recently allied with the mega-corporation, launched a vicious attack on the GigaCorp ships.

It would seem that so soon after success, those factions involved in the alliance against the Iron Coalition face new challenges. Namely, each other.

Date: 04.02.2151
File: 00160
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

A Clash of Iron

Despite the Iron Coalition's professed concession, no transfer of power has yet taken place in the system. Coming together to force the IC to the very edge of extinction, those factions involved in the alliance have apparently now declared war on one another.

Late last week, Brigadier General Derek Fisk announced that while the IC no longer had the pilots necessary to combat the alliance, the IC would only surrender its ships and munitions to the alliance's officially designated leader. According to corporate mouthpiece Miguel Sanchez, that leader was, of course, GigaCorp. And perhaps this statement was indeed true -- at one point in time. GigaCorp, long-standing rival of the Iron Coalition, did seem to lead the charge against Luna. And the mega-corporation's coffers no doubt went a long way toward purchasing the otherwise fleeting support of both the BIOS and the Belter mercenaries.

However, GigaCorp cargo ships en route to Luna to begin the collection of surrendered IC munitions were immediately and brutally set upon by BIOS fighters.

With their common enemy defeated, the alliance had apparently ended. A new war was declared, with each faction's purpose made clear: to be the sole owners of the IC supplies. The time for cooperation had indeed ended.

Oddly enough, among the first units to renew the fighting were those of the Iron Coalition itself. According to reports made by younger pilots within the IC ranks, not everyone has been willing to agree with General Fisk's commands since ordering his once-loyal warriors to lay down their arms. A coup, against the IC's formerly exalted leaders, may very well be taking place within the burning corridors of the IC's lunar headquarters.

It should be recalled that General Fisk first came to power following the defeat of IC General Eglin, killed in ambush by uprising lunar forces. Perhaps history looks to repeat itself once again.

A surprising turn of events. At one time, the other factions considered the rise of General Fisk to be their worst fears realized; and indeed during his long and illustrious career, Fisk has done all he originally pledged to do: to bring a degree of order to the otherwise omnipotent mega-corporations. His faction now defeated, the General may be cast out, not by the megacorp execs, but rather his own disillusioned troops.

Of course, as further news develops, we'll be sure to keep you posted!

>>**Podkiller_Phil: 161616:1019:11:** The fall of the Iron Coalition? As much as I despise the guys, I'll believe it when I see it.

>>**MotesArt: 98997:06:16:** Precisely. After all, has Fisk declared defeat? No. Has he been dragged before a system court, to be tried for his crimes against humanity? No. However, I disagree with Phil insofar as I believe these things will come to pass, in due time.

>>**Alexander-716: 1817:1018187:** Due time? The Iron Coalition has sought the extinction of the BIOS people since its inception. The time to exterminate these fascist killers is NOW!

>>**RedQueen: 15151:1918171:11:** Yes, but not because of what the IC has done. All's fair, gentle BIOS. But Fisk and the IC must be destroyed for what they might still do. The IC remains a threat to us all. Mark my words.

Date: 04.06.2151

File: 00161

Report filed by: "RumorMonger"

A message from the editor

In the interest of maintaining journalistic neutrality, the DataNet reminds readers that the opinions of contributing authors, including RumorMonger, may not necessarily reflect those held by the DataNet itself.

Animals Unleashed

The animals have been unleashed upon the system, and for once, we're not talking about the bloodthirsty pilots of the Iron Coalition.

In fact, complete failing on the part of these self-proclaimed bastions of stellar authority is principally what gave rise to the recent tragedy. During the successful campaign against the IC's lunar headquarters, severe damage was done to the Lunar Institute -- home to many specimens of plants and animals to be found nowhere else in the system. As scientists raced to save the animals, many were jettisoned into space, to indefinitely occupy lifepods. A terrible fate, yet perhaps one more desirous than life in the IC's cages (a fate occasionally shared by both these lab animals and DataNet reporters alike).

If the ultimate goal was to later recollect these pods, the IC, yet again, failed miserably. It would seem that GigaCorp, ever pragmatic and business minded, rushed in. To save the animals from slow suffocation as their pods began to fail? Hardly. To stockpile their own genetic labs, I imagine.

Or even better (and more in line with true GigaCorp thinking), to stockpile the animals for sale. Judging from the frantic efforts by all factions to collect these pods, only two possibilities can be concluded. First, that the best interest of the animals is on everyone's minds. Or second, that the factions realize the animals' incredible monetary value. I'll leave it to you to decide which is the real determining factor here.

GigaCorp, ever wise to system economics, has just cornered the animal market, and I can imagine the auctions about to take place. Lunar researchers, eager to replenish their missing labs, will pay any ransom GigaCorp demands. The Belters, ever the oddities in style, will be interested in owning the last dog, the last weasel, the last known bird in existence. Even the BIOS may decide to purchase animals with desirable characteristics in order to add their genetics to the BIOS line.

The potential is endless, and the new currency of the system may just shift, from the useful fuel of He3 to the rare and exotic animal. Yet whatever the currency, GigaCorp has just proven the richer.

>>**Aunt_Sam: 1615:1018:1181:** I won't even begin to contradict this guy's burbling insanities. All I know is that RumorMonger should be the one jettisoned into space. Lifepod or not.

>>**RedQueen: 661514:109181:** Yes, damage done to the Lunar Institute by GigaCorp bombs was regrettable, but also unavoidable. In any war, there is always some amount of collateral damage.

>>**Lt. Rock: 4352652:10:11:** Collateral? Unavoidable? GigaCorp purposely aimed for the Institute! Everyone knew the IC performed wartime experiments there, but that's no excuse for destroying countless irreplaceable organisms!

>>**QuarterLife: 4343:14141:11:** Yeah, well, it is. The IC knew the price of keeping their eggs in one basket. The rest of the system knew the price of aiming for the place. War is hard, but these things need to be done to win.

>>**Lt. Rock: 4352652:10:11:** That's pathetic. People will still be mourning for these animals long after I wipe you from existence, QuarterLife.

>>**QuarterLife: 4343:14141:11:** Bring it.

Date: 04.09.2151
File: 00162
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Remove the Mask

A new system order appears to be taking shape, following the fall of the Iron Coalition. Already many of the other factions have sought to bolster their ranks, hiring on as many of the former IC pilots as their payrolls will allow. And judging from recent combat, these pilots have proven as good a purchase as any investment in recent years.

GigaCorp, broadcasting daily transmissions of its believed newfound sovereign right to rule the system, has perhaps hired on more of the IC pilots than any other faction. An ironic outcome, seeing as how the two remained the most bitter rivals throughout the majority of these stellar wars. Yet GigaCorp coffers are known to run deep -- and for other factions to gain these IC pilots, knowledgeable in the ways and means to combat GigaCorp, would clearly equate to a potential error the mega-corporation cannot afford to make.

The Belters, ever the system's mercenaries, have also looked to fill their ranks with the former IC pilots. Even the Rixian Unity, always on the lookout for potential human converts, has enlisted its fair share; some would argue, however, that such was the cost of the Rixians' alliance with the IC during the siege of Luna.

In fact, the only faction not to hire on a single IC squad has been the BIOS. Desperately feuding with GigaCorp for control of both the Iron Coalition's former resources and for control of the system itself, it would seem that the BIOS council would be the first to recruit the able-bodied warriors of the Iron Coalition, in order to add their genetics to the BIOS pool. Or perhaps the IC pilots have simply not made themselves available to this one faction, fearful of losing the humanity they fought so hard to protect.

As for the Iron Coalition, General Derek Fisk, still very much alive -- and fighting -- has stubbornly refused to sign any official declaration of surrender. Nor has he allowed any faction to land on the platforms of the IC's lunar headquarters. Over the weekend, a scattered war party of GigaCorp and Belter scavengers tried just that, only to be repelled by the few remaining units loyal to General Fisk and his cause.

The only faction not to accept the IC's defeat, then, is the IC itself.

>>Aunt_Sam: 1615:1018:1181: Defeat? The IC was not defeated! They conceded! And not the war -- only to the one alliance against them. Not the whole war!

>>Podkiller_Phil: 6151:119181: The alliance against them amounted to the whole war. The IC fell, and that's all she wrote. War's over, so far as Fisk's boys are concerned.

>>Lt. Rock: 4352652:10:11: Over? Over? NOTHING is over, until we say it is!

>>RedQueen: 0398:19181: Give it a rest. The Iron Coalition has one task left: to sit there and rust, while professionals go put the affairs of the system in order.

Date: 04.13.2151
File: 00163
Report filed by: "Mouth of Issa"

Bathe in the Light of Truth!

The light of truth is, assuredly, the light of Issa Rix, savior to us all. Can any doubt this, knowing that the hand of Issa Rix did dispose of the Saalvshok ignorance? Or, that the same hand, once open to accept those of this solar system, has now clenched into an angry fist?

Human readers, we at the DataNet have observed your curious system for many years now. Arriving from the one true jewel of the heavens -- the beloved mother world of Lapi -- we sought to enter quietly into your affairs, to observe, to lend a word of guidance or perhaps alter a minor event or two.

We were there to observe your open-eyed awe at our fellow Rixians' entrance to the system. At first, our ships sought to launch an impressive start to the next crusade, aiming to sweep away all those who would dare oppose them. And, can it be denied that the first initial encounters fell heavily to the Rixians' favor? Only those who would deny the motion of the stars themselves or even the golden aura of Issa Rix could also deny such a thing.

But we who had come first, cloaked within the guise of the DataNet, warned our brethren of the dangers of their actions. We -- who quietly arrived after the confusion of your home world's destruction -- we knew that there were few examples of humanity left save those factions who made war on one another. We warned our brethren that to destroy the warships of the infidels would be to annihilate the entire infidel population. There would be no living humans left to convert. This same mistake, this same heavy hand which destroyed the Saalvshok, should not likewise destroy humanity. Best to stay the hand.

And, our brethren listened. Can it not be denied that in the following weeks, the Rixian ships held back, winning ever fewer battles? Even when the factions of humanity joined in bloodthirsty allegiance to attack Lapi itself, the heavy hand was stayed. Then, we Rixians allowed you humans to vent your petty aggressions. Did you really believe that Lapi had been brought to its knees? Subjugated by the unenlightened? Laughable. No, our clever play simply continued through another act.

Reinforcements came, constructing our temple at the edge of the system, weathering constant attack. Should the temple have fallen, would our cause have collapsed as well? Ludicrous thinking, feeble-minded humans. The temple was always but a lightning rod, directing your aggressions away from the true soul of our crusade. The DataNet.

Later events did nearly lead to the complete revelation of the DataNet's true purpose. Reporters were captured by the crude hands of the Iron Coalition. Identities were revealed. And deals struck. The DataNet would continue broadcasting its supposed hatred of the Iron Coalition, while secretly the Rixians and the IC would begin to work together.

The alliance of other factions against the IC almost led to the unraveling of our master plan. Luna was assaulted, the IC on the brink of destruction. We Rixians offered what support we could, but it seemed too little, too late. By all accounts, the IC conceded, selling its pilots into the service of the other factions. Again, mere aspects of the plan, mere scenes of the play.

By now, the system knows that the Iron Coalition has not fallen, nor ever will. Its pilots, sold into service, have begun the rebellious assault against their new employers. And the Rixians Unity renews its grand crusade.

We have been watching.

Date: 04.16.2151
File: 00164
Report filed by: "Mouth of Issa"

The Common Code

Humans: Are there any among you who still doubt the one true path this system must follow? Are there nonbelievers still residing within your ranks that, somehow, through some inexplicable fault of logical thinking, continue to deny the Rixian Code?

Ardent followers of the DataNet, it saddens me -- it saddens the face of Issa Rix himself -- to report that such doubters do exist. We of the Rixian Unity cannot explain how such contrary thinking is able to persist, except that constant exposure to the radiation of this system's G-class star may have addled human thinking beyond repair.

However, we can state with certainty that the actions of our noble crusade continue to guide humanity toward its proper course.

To single out but a few soldiers within our chosen ranks is not to downplay the efforts of all. Yet those pilots of the *Rix Eruta* and *Rix Jurubai* units have, in their efforts to correct human thinking, advanced themselves one step closer to Enlightenment. How proud their families back on Lapi must be, knowing that their sons and daughters are doing their part to eradicate brutish ignorance from yet another corner of the universe. We congratulate them on their military successes of the past few days.

Yes, we Rixians of the DataNet continue to watch the ongoing success of our beloved Unity's crusade with great interest. And this despite the laughable storm of protest following the revelation of our true identities. In fact, those delusional beings running the supposed mega-corporation known as GigaCorp took the time to broadcast the following threat:

"During these times of stellar conflict, it seems that no bastion of humanity is safe. First, the Iron Coalition bombed its own Lunar Institute, destroying countless and irreplaceable specimens of biology, attempting to pin the blame solely on the shoulders of GigaCorp. Now even the concept of free press has been threatened. The tyrannical hand of the Iron Coalition, coupled with the religious fanaticism of the Rixian Unity, have conspired to arrest and impersonate the DataNet spokesman.

While GigaCorp has its own list of grievances with the DataNet, the system's last source of free expression, we have always been appreciative of the fact that this source has existed. The IC's base actions will not go unpunished. Let it be known that CEO Mercedes Kelleher, Security Chief Jonathan Markham, and myself, spokesman Miguel Sanchez of GigaCorp will not rest until the DataNet reporters are freed -- or, until truly objective reporters from within GigaCorp's sterling ranks are asked to take their place."

GigaCorp: a collection of grasping fools who dare call themselves a mega-corporation. Are they so blind to the light of Issa Rix that they do not realize there is but one true corporation operating for the bettering of humanity? And that corporation is the Rixian Unity; its handbook, the Rixian Code; its retirement plan, true Enlightenment?

Again, sadly, many do not realize these unassailable truths. We cannot explain how this can be. We can only promise: They shall be purged.

Date: 04.20.2151
File: 00165
Report filed by: "Mouth of Issa"

Courtship

Oh, the disgrace of watching you humans fumble your way along the path of evolution. What was meant to be a gift, bestowed upon those of the most deserving nature, you see as a competition: bloody, brutal, and decisive.

When we of the Rixian Unity look to the troubled souls of the BIOS, we can only shake our heads, saddened at what could have been. Here was the one faction of your system with an inkling of a clue, though still desiring to advance their genetic line at any cost, using any science. A noble, if misguided, aspiration. But Issa Rix saw the potential in the soldiers of the BIOS, and offered to lead them the rest of the way. What their science would ultimately fail to achieve -- evolution to a higher level of existence -- the Rixian Code could provide. Have you humans not studied Rixian history? Do you not know of the ascension of those who first traveled through the Alephs? Have you not studied the Code at all?

Alas, the BIOS chose to wallow in filthy ignorance. We could not, cannot, understand. For a faction claiming to have reached the apex of the human species, the BIOS have yet to learn a single fundamental truth of the universe. Gladly, the Rixian crusade shall soon achieve total victory, and learning of the Code will become mandatory. If only you infidels knew of what lies ahead. How truly joyous you would feel in your grossly oversized hearts.

Elsewhere in your system, similar efforts to deny the Code continue. In the filth-strewn arena of the Belters (a sub-class of humanity we feel more closely likened to the lower primates), a battle for territory within the asteroids has erupted once more. Why anyone should fight for this floating ring of debris is beyond the comprehension of more sophisticated minds. Perhaps even more puzzling is the fact that the heathen Belters have managed to fend off attacks from both the BIOS and our necessary allies, the Iron Coalition. Then again, there are such dangerous things living in the crevices of Lapi that even the most stalwart Rixian will not enter their lairs. So it is with the Belters. Let them have their decrepit belt.

And then there is the continued thorn of GigaCorp. Not a particularly deep nor dangerous thorn, but one likely to be around for far too long than is welcome. These days, the petty squabbling between CEO Mercedes Kelleher and her hired thug Jonathan Markham seems to have come to its long overdue end. The two, after working countless years together, have finally realized the necessity of combing their talents and working together. Granted, two GigaCorp brains combined still pales in intellectual capacity to a single Rixian mind, but at least GigaCorp has decided to present the Unity with a more compelling enemy to destroy.

Already GigaCorp has made gains in the asteroid belt, and has even dared to send probing attacks against this very DataNet broadcasting station -- hidden no longer, but guarded by the finest soldiers beloved Lapi has to offer. The danger is minimal, though we may need to consider moving these facilities to a more secure area. The temple perhaps? Nevertheless, these enduring transmissions shall continue for as long as our noble crusade strives to bring truth into your backward system.

Date: 04.23.2151
File: 00166
Report filed by: "Arm of Lapi"

Welcome the Crusade

As you vapor-headed humans of this system are well aware, the might of Issa Rix and the Unity cannot be denied. Do you quake and tremble at the thought of our forces assembled at the edge of the system? Do you cower at the thought of Rixian gunships belittling your planetary bases? Of dragging your faction leaders from their bunkers into the burning purity of the light?

Events of the past few days would indicate that, despite all logical reasoning known to higher minds, you humans do not exhibit a reasonable degree of fear toward your own impending doom. Amazing. The spacecraft you have developed, though crude in almost every sense, would indicate your society as having achieved an advanced level of technology -- one of the signs that drew us Rixians to your system in the first place. But not to respect the harbingers of your own demise? Signs of sheer idiocy. Or madness. Perhaps the development of spacecraft was but a fluke. Perhaps a gift from a truly advanced species. Rogue Unity priests? Doubtful. Desperate Saalvshok emissaries, looking for allies in the days before they were purged from existence? A more likely possibility. Those loathsome Saalvshok infidels. . .

In any event, the Rixian crusade pushes on. You will be converted. You will walk the proper path, even if we must cull every third human along the way. Do not doubt the Unity. We have exterminated entire systems before. We will surely master yours.

Already our promised recruits from the Iron Coalition have begun to fill our ranks. Thousands of strong, healthy pilots -- our price for aiding the IC in its time of greatest need. Fortunately, we do not require these recruits to do much heavy thinking. Simply heavy fighting. Prepare for their coming when the vanguard waves of our welcomed crusade begin to flood the inner planets. Your days of unenlightened worthlessness are numbered.

Even those armed thorns of GigaCorp will be brought before the light and forced to bow before the loving presence of Issa Rix. Over the past few days, heathen GigaCorp ritual saw the marriage of CEO Mercedes Kelleher and security chief Jonathan Markham. Whether designed as an effort to combine talents, or a desperate attempt to gather morale, it makes no difference. GigaCorp, too, shall fall. Its increasingly reckless attacks against the DataNet have all come to naught. We control all lines of communication. GigaCorp's pathetic effort to announce its new joint-leadership? Bounced back as "uninitialized." Know this as unequivocal proof of our domination.

Soon you humans will recognize your true masters. Issa Rix. The Unity. And the Code. The crusade begins. Be wise and welcome it.

Date: 04.27.2151

File: 00167

Report filed by: "Epiq Sal: the Breath of Truth"

To Walk the Path

Above all else, one thing must be made clear to your human minds. The path toward true enlightenment is not an easy one to follow. We of the Rixian Unity have all started down this path at an early age, and yet do not expect to reach its end for many more years to come.

Although many of you humans may gawk and throw yourselves in supplication at our feet (and those who don't might consider doing so), one incredible fact remains: not one of the Rixians having invaded your system has yet to achieve enlightenment. A startling revelation, I know, but true. Not the valiant pilots even now sweeping through the devastated remains of your planetary bases, not the wizened commanders studiously plotting stratagems in our temple outpost, not even we Unity priests, cloaked in our glowing auras of perfection. In fact, only by completing this crusade against your kind may we advance that much closer toward the ultimate goal.

I, Epiq Sal, high priest of this system's temple, have been asked to explain some of these matters surely confounding your basic human mentalities. After all, we who are about to subjugate your system would do wise do reveal the future you humans will shortly face. A glorious future, should you willing surrender yourselves.

But as I have said, being set on the path to enlightenment does not equate achieving enlightenment. Consider the recruits freshly delivered from the ranks of the Iron Coalition -- our price for aiding General Fisk in his time of need. Although they are now full members of this blessed Rixian faction, not all will reach the end of their new chosen course. No, the wheat must be separated from the chaff. For that reason, the first enemies these recruits faced were, out of necessity, each other. Deployed to an empty sector and told that only one-third their number would be recaptured by the transport ships seemed a harsh fate to some. But only our strongest members are required in this crusade. Already, the wretched BIOS have begun to assemble in opposition, and the guns of GigaCorp have yet to cease their relentless bombardment of our temple, not to mention this very transmission station.

Perhaps it is your own petty confusions about truth itself that has meant your confounded resistance. However, I implore you now to surrender. And rest assured, once the Rixians gain full charge of this system, though worthless it may be in the larger scheme of the universe, all humans will be given the chance to walk the same path, however difficult it will be for you to complete.

>>Spawn of Issa: 01010:1001:11:1: It must be comforting for the crude natives of this system to know that the Rixian Unity is here for them. Hope must have dwindled for them almost to nothing -- their homeworld destroyed, and but the feeble light of a pathetic G-class star to warm them.

>>Aunt_Sam: 7161:101911:116161: Yes, by all means deliver me -- from your twisted alien sermons, Rixian filth! I don't care if the IC had to rely on you freaks to even up the sides in this fight. That alliance is over!

>>RedQueen: 176161:1019181: Patience, system, patience. GigaCorp is days away from taking back the DataNet. Already, our transmissions are starting to get through. Soon, our shock troops will follow.

>>Arm of Issa: 0101:100101:11: Confused humans. Such talk will not help you complete the path. Surrender with dignity.

Date: 04.30.2151
File: 00168
Report filed by: "Miguel Sanchez"

Rixian Crusade

Throughout the system these past days, the Rixian Unity has managed to spread terror and destruction. . . everywhere except these sacred corridors of the DataNet.

Thankfully, the valiant troops of this system's greatest corporate entity, GigaCorp, have managed to re-take the DataNet transmission centers. Temporarily lost to Rixian hands, the system was inundated with the Unity's unique brand of lies -- including the preposterous fiction that it was the Rixian Unity in control of the DataNet from its conception. No one, from the most common consumer on up to CEO Mercedes Kelleher herself, would ever fall prey to such psychological tricks of these twisted alien beings. However, while the original DataNet reporters, including *I*, *Horus* and *Kronkite_NOW*, remain missing and unaccounted for, surely the worst is feared. No doubt they now inhabit some larder of the Unity's temple. . . if they haven't been consumed, bones and all, already.

Until these reporters are found, GigaCorp is dedicated to broadcasting the latest news and events -- along with welcomed updates of the very latest in affordable GigaCorp products. Many of you familiar with our fine corporation may even have heard earlier statements from myself, humble corporate spokesman Miguel Sanchez.

As mentioned, while daring GigaCorp commandoes were able to finally raid the central "brain station" of the DataNet, the Rixian Unity wrecked havoc throughout the rest of the human occupied space. Led by their *Lar Bashar*, *Rapture*, and *Luminaries* units, the Rixians proved a virtually unstoppable force over the weekend. Not even the blazing guns of GigaCorp's finest could prevent the Unity's crusaders rampaging from their temple at the edge of the system, entirely through the BIOS's territory, and up to the outskirts of Martian orbit itself. The fear on many minds is that should the Rixians meet up with their allies in the Iron Coalition, this entire war may very well be lost -- and the system plunged into an era of joint alien/fascist rule.

At this time, we would like to remind all DataNet followers that it's not too late to talk with your local GigaCorp recruiters. As a further reminder, CEO Kelleher has announced that in no way has the suspected energy cell leak in GigaCorp's X-11 cockpit accounted for the crippling deaths of pilots logging in more than 60 flight hours/week. Rather, GigaCorp technicians have noted, such radiation deaths most likely derived from pilots flying too close to the system's sun. What's needed, they say, is more training, not -- repeat: not -- more shielding.

>>RedQueen: 17161:1019198:11: Miguel, I thought we discussed this. There was to be no mention of the X-11's leakage, cover story or not.

>>Aunt_Sam: 7161:101911:116161: GigaCorp in the DataNet's helm? Oh man, this is worse than when the Rixians ran the place!

>>Starkiller_1: 61551:19111: No kidding. At some point the IC will take over the DataNet. And then the truth will out.

>>Arm of Issa: 0101:100101:11: The crusade is nearly complete. Why not comply with the wishes of the enlightened and surrender now? Really, it is the only way. Must you even doubt Fate?

Date: 05.04.2151
File: 00169
Report filed by: "Miguel Sanchez"

BIOS Generations

Few things are looked forward to with as much excitement as the next release of GigaCorp technology. Months earlier, every faction eagerly awaited the final development of GC's most advanced targeting gear yet devised, to the point where corporate gunships were required to safeguard the initial shipments. More recently, not a single pilot flying GC fighters hasn't already preordered the new patch to the X-11 cockpit system, devised to increase shield efficiency and reduce the puzzling incidents of radiation poisoning.

It's not surprising that other factions have looked to release product lines of their own; most notably, the BIOS. However, while GigaCorp continues to lead the way in technological advances benefiting all humanity, the BIOS have chosen a path dedicated to the betterment of their army alone. It has come to the attention of the GC executive board that recent BIOS activities indicate the completion of their latest generation of soldiers. A generation about to be unleashed upon us all. The executive board has determined that this information holds such wide importance as to make it publicly known -- proving yet again that the best interest of the system is held closest to CEO Mercedes Kelleher's heart.

Ironically, the latest BIOS generation is thought to be composed of those soldiers of an earlier generation. Gen-4 members, once expelled from the BIOS ruling council, have seemed to return to (or been "collected" by) their parent faction. What plans do the BIOS have in store for Sarah 4-1602 and the rest of her generation? Certainly not reinstatement in leadership roles; perhaps instead to be re-outfitted with advanced armament and sent back out to the front lines of fighting. Are the BIOS so short of recruits they must recycle ones they once cast aside? Apparently so.

On a related note, GigaCorp would like to remind DataNet followers of its ongoing recruitment drive. And for those who sign-up within the first thirty days, GigaCorp is offering the X-11 patch -- as standard issue! Now there's a deal that simply can't be passed up.

GigaCorp. A name you can trust. Defending the system for all.

>>PodkillerPhil: 1115:19181871: What's that nonsense about the best interest of the system close to Kelleher's heart? Has the DataNet just degenerated into a mammoth GigaCommercial?

>>Lt. Rock: 81771:10191817: Of course it's nonsense. Everyone knows Kelleher doesn't have a heart. Just ask those troops sent out equipped with the X-11. Like flying a leaky bathtub.

>>DeChumbee: 716161:118181: So far as I remember, the other factions didn't exactly line up to buy the GigaCorp's targeting system, either. I seem to recall the Belters assaulted the supply line and made off with the entire shipment.

>>D_Generate: 731515:191:181:1: Only they couldn't use the stuff. That targeting gear never worked. Plugging it in to a ship resulted in a complete meltdown of the electric system. Go figure.

Date: 05.07.2151
File: 00170
Report filed by: "Miguel Sanchez"

Release of Gen: Retro

It's a sad day -- truly sad -- when the system's sole outlet for truth is compelled to spout the misguided notions of an enemy faction. Nevertheless, I, Miguel Sanchez, last voice of the DataNet, am literally being forced at gunpoint to send this transmission.

Contrary to the overly optimistic wishes of CEO Mercedes Kelleher, I can no longer project the image of GigaCorp as the one faction to guide and rule us all. That opportunity has been squandered fighting against the totalitarianism of the Iron Coalition and the alien presence of the Rixian Unity. But the system's true enemy has always been the killers of the BIOS faction.

The BIOS have unleashed their latest generations upon us, and I have no doubt now that they will overcome all defenses thrown against them. They are relentless killers. Murdering machines that cannot die. Look at the fate of Gen-3 and Gen-4, the older BIOS of generations ago: When they grew too old and weak, they may have been evicted from power, but not completely thrown out. Instead, their bodies were regenerated into Gen: Retro.

The BIOS cannot be beaten.

And now, the guns of this mutant faction have conquered the DataNet. Two of their Gen: Retro members stand behind me now, and believe me when I say there is no fear in their eyes. If only the same were true for me as well. These may very well be this public servant's final words to the system; the BIOS now demand their say.

"It is known that the BIOS were once infested with that same longing for peace as inflicts many lower forms of human life. I myself was formerly known as Alisdair 3-921, a crusader for peaceful resolution to these wars.

"Yet the weaker BIOS elements have already been purged. I can only look back on my past philosophical beliefs in scorn. Now, I too realize: There can be no peace. The BIOS have set themselves on a path toward total conquest, and we will not be denied. The Iron Coalition is shattered, its lunar base looted and burning. GigaCorp and the Rixian Unity -- mere paper tigers. Even the laughable Belters bicker amongst themselves, searching for leadership. It will be a pleasure when the system is rid of your feeble kind.

"Prepare yourselves. The Rixians offered you enlightenment. We offer a more deserving fate. This is your one warning, sapiens, to flee through the Alephs while you still can."

Date: 05.11.2151
File: 00171
Report filed by: "I, Horus"

Demise of the System

I'm not entirely certain that this transmission will escape censure. The BIOS have taken over the main DataNet transmission center, having either ousted or executed GigaCorp spokesman Miguel Sanchez. Knowing the BIOS, I can only assume the latter. However, the BIOS seem less inclined to broadcast their own reports than to prevent all other factions from communicating; however, we reporters of the DataNet have always maintained more than one transmission center in the event of such a takeover.

For those who have been following our plight, the DataNet reporters are indeed alive and well, having originally escaped the clutches of the Rixian Unity. The first faction to assume control of the DataNet, the Rixians attempted to portray themselves as the original reporters all along. As the system well knows, the Rixians are tricksters of the highest order, and none of their statements could be further from the human conception of truth.

Having managed to evade detection thus far -- hiding out amongst the Belters during their struggle to decide new leadership -- we have managed to bring our secondary transmission center online. We could not have gotten this far without aid from individual Belters groups, each promising us further protection should they come to lead the developing Belters council. It would seem that their anarchistic ways somehow mesh well with the discord sworn by the DataNet's ever truthful reporting. The transmission center itself resides deep within one of their earlier mining sites in the asteroids, dug by Belter hands.

Whatever may come of the Belters council, however, I fear it is all for naught. The BIOS continue to make good on their promise to wipe the system clean, though faction leaders have so far proven blind to the BIOS threat.

Months earlier, the system held its breath as the preserved remains of an alien artifact were discovered and removed from the outer reaches of the system. The He3 Golem. Not made by human or Rixian hands, the artifact was believed related to those beings thought responsible for the creation of the Aleph portals. A theory, of course, as the Alephs may simply be the result of cosmic forces beyond our realm of scientific knowledge. Yet the existence of this artifact was indisputable, and the Rixian Unity, looking to prevent any loss of interest in their own alien culture, assaulted the excavation site, destroying the Golem. The majority of its pieces went on to the Lunar Institute, itself later bombed by the alliance formed against the Iron Coalition. Countless specimens of Earth's former plants and animals, not to mention reams of scientific discoveries, were destroyed. Including, it was believed, the remains of the He3 Golem.

Then again, it looks increasingly like the BIOS managed to claim the artifact's remains just before the destruction of Luna. What knowledge have they gleaned from these fractured pieces? A source close to the BIOS faction, a Gen-4 soldier claiming his recent personality upgrade was not properly ingrained, sent the following statement:

"The rumors are true. The BIOS have perfected the device to generate an Aleph phenomenon. The first test is scheduled to take place sometime next week, aiming to produce an Aleph in the heart of the very sun. According to all laboratory findings, the resulting effects should not only produce an Aleph, but simultaneously cause the sun to go supernova. Alisdair's one warning to the system was indeed just that. The BIOS have always promoted the evolution of our species, and this must be the ruling council's final statement: Humanity must evolve beyond this broken system, or forever perish. The BIOS, for one, will be leaving. I recommend all other factions to do the same."

A clever ploy by the BIOS to rid the system of all other factions? Or a threat to be taken seriously?

>>**Aunt_Sam: 71616:1019181:** Whether the BIOS detonate this entire system or not, I for one am staying put. So the sun goes supernova? So what? I've got my ship's life-support system. I'm set.

>>**Podkiller_Phil: 81717:1011771:** Well, wherever Sam is, that's not the place to be. Looks like Phil's gonna be packing his bags and staking his claim on some distant -- and quiet -- sector.

>>**RedQueen: 099100:10191:** Utter nonsense. No one has the technology to produce Alephs. If the GigaCorp hasn't invented it, it hasn't been invented yet. Mark my words. Bunk.

>>**Light_of_Issa: 11:1001:100101:11:** Only the truth of the Rixian Code can save this system from itself. Join us now. The BIOS threaten your lives. Failing to join the Unity threatens your very souls.

A HISTORY OF THE ALLEGIANCE UNIVERSE: PART 2

Date: 05.14.2151

File: 00172

Report filed by: "Kronkite_NOW"

2150

The Allegiance Wars, the collection of battles waged by key factions of the system, continues with no known end in site. Principal armies remain Brigadier General Derek Fisk's Iron Coalition and CEO Mercedes Kelleher's mega-corporation GigaCorp; the secondary armies of the mutant BIOS and mercenary Belter miners continue to shift their alliance from one side to the other, ensuring a perpetuation of faction hostilities.

06.2150

A scientific finding akin to the discovery of the Alephs hits the system as humanity makes its first encounter within intelligent alien life: the Rixian Unity. While diplomatic gestures are made by several factions (though most are simply looking to enlist the Rixians to their side of the war), the alien Rix quickly prove that they come with an agenda all their own. Deploying the nearly unstoppable technology of their deadly gun-pods, the Rixians tear through the system, looking to simultaneously enlighten, and conquer, humanity. At first, it seems, all is nearly lost. Yet in a rare showing of solidarity, the various human factions manage to briefly come together, launching a raid on the Rixian homeworld of Lapi and forcing the Unity leaders to sign a crippling peace treaty.

As soon as the treaty is signed and its common enemy defeated, the human alliance quickly disintegrates. As war continues once more, the Rixians play one side against the other, allowing the Unity to break the treaty and establish a temple outpost on the edge of the solar system.

09.2150

Responding to the destruction of its starship, *The Indefatigable*, the Iron Coalition mounts a full-scale invasion of GigaCorp's Martian headquarters. In the days to come, DataNet reporters prove that the Ares Movement, a terrorist group held responsible for the starship's destruction, were not trained and armed by GigaCorp, but instead the Iron Coalition looking for an excuse to invade. Its ploy discovered, the IC arrests one DataNet reporter, confining him to an underground cell of the Omega Center super-prison. Joint faction efforts succeed in driving IC forces from Martian soil.

Iron Coalition aggression will continue, however, through the following months. Educated by DataNet reports, other factions are quick to condemn such IC actions as placing bounties against enemy ace pilots and waging experiments to utilize robotic or BIOS-cloned soldiers. Frustrated with the IC's heavy hand, an informal anti-IC alliance manages to launch a devastating strike against the Omega Center, freeing countless political prisoners. The IC, however, uses the situation to its own advantage, sending innumerable war parties into faction territories on supposed missions to recapture the prisoners at large.

01.2151

A new year begins. Anger continues against the Iron Coalition, especially against its attempt to remove an alien artifact, the He3Golem, from a distant asteroid belt. The artifact, believed linked to the mysterious creators of the Alephs, is never fully recovered as Rixian warships destroy it in transit. Faction leaders blame the IC for failing to take proper precautions as well as for refusing to allow scientists outside the IC's Lunar Institute to examine the artifact's remains.

Chaos plaguing the upper management of GigaCorp brings the mega-corporation to the brink of extinction. Security Chief Jonathan Markham makes his bid for corporate leadership by refusing to protect CEO Kelleher's site visits, resulting in her ambush and disappearance. The Iron Coalition sees GigaCorp's infighting as the ideal moment to rid itself of its fiercest rival. An all-out assault is launched.

03.2151

As Iron Coalition forces descend on Mars, GigaCorp manages to swing system support firmly to its side -- sparked by the return of its long-lost colony, the *Destiny Hunters*. Missing for fifty years, the surviving *Hunters* blame Iron Coalition attack ships as the cause of their disappearance. Around the same time, CEO Kelleher finally returns to GigaCorp, although many maintain that this Kelleher is nothing less than a clone, concocted in GC labs and now under Markham's complete control. Nevertheless, with renewed leadership and backed by system support, GigaCorp drives the IC attackers home to Luna.

In the following weeks, the GigaCorp-led alliance pounds Luna into oblivion, going so far as to bomb the Lunar Institute, final home to countless species of Old Earth. While the Iron Coalition does not surrender, General Fisk signs a treaty of concession, stating that the IC no longer has the means to wage war against its enemies.

05.2151

The Allegiance Wars take their toll on the remains of the system. Following a year of relentless fighting, total system conquest seems nigh on hand -- though the identity of the final conqueror shifts almost daily. The Rixian Unity, supplemented with IC soldiers paid for protecting Luna against complete destruction, renews its crusade. Among its first targets is the DataNet transmission center, discovered at last. As the DataNet reporters escape, the Rixians assume their identities, continuing transmissions on their own. Days later, the center is taken by GigaCorp forces interested in spreading pro-corporation propaganda. GC spokesman Miguel Sanchez lasts only long enough to welcome the center's latest controllers, the mutant killers of the BIOS Retro generation.

Announcing their will to destroy all "lower forms of human life," the BIOS give one warning -- for all to free the system or be destroyed. Making good on this threat, BIOS forces unleash their ultimate weapon: a previously unknown device capable of generating an Aleph phenomenon. On 05.11, a BIOS informant makes a fatal announcement: the Aleph generator is to be directed into the core of the sun, provoking the solar body to go prematurely supernova. A frantic countdown, and mass exodus, begins.

A final message from the DataNet:

On behalf of my fellow reports -- I, Horus, Conscious_1, Grand_Pa, and countless others who have contributed their efforts to promote truth in the system at the risk of their lives and livelihoods -- I can only express my deepest wish that we all safely arrive at our destinations. Having observed events for the past year, there is no doubt in my mind that these faction wars will continue, no longer concentrated in the solar system we commonly derived from, but now spread across the vast reaches of the universe.

Best of luck to all soldiers fighting for the cause they believe in.

-- *Kronkite_NOW*