

TRINITYTM

FIELD REPORTTM

EXTRASOLAR COLONIES



A Trinity UniverseTM Update

SACRIFICE

HOPE

UNITY



TRINITY FIELD REPORT: EXTRASOLAR COLONIES

GREETINGS COLLEAGUE —

Humanity has been reaching for the stars for a long time. We took small steps at first, exploring our own Moon and the Solar System. It wasn't until 2106 that we finally took greater strides, when the teleporting Upeo wa Macho made the dream of faster-than-light travel a reality. Within a year, we established regular contact with China's Centauri colony, Khantze Lu Ge, and made first contact with our alien friends, the Qin.

Many feared that we had lost our way to the stars when the Upeo vanished in 2114. However, the hard work of many scientists, the assistance of the psi orders and the invaluable aid of our Qin allies — all coordinated by the Æon Trinity — have led us to the stars once again. In 2119, the first Tesser jump engine was perfected. Initial tests were promising. Today, the Æon Trinity has helped construct over a dozen Leviathan-class jump ships that are fully online.

As is true with any exploration, discoveries are made as soon as one sets out. Even before the jump ships were ready for service, astronomers documented a vast object approaching our Solar System at an incredible rate. The first true field test — to intercept this object — was dubiously successful. The Leviathan proved that it worked, but we all know of the ominous first contact made with the Coalition "space ark."

Now we are poised to make new discoveries. We established five colonies outside our solar system before the Upeo disappeared. Those outposts have been lost in space for five years. Now that the jump ships are fully functional, they have set out for our orphaned colonies. I know that the hopes and wishes of every Æon operative went with them. Now every man, woman and child in known space holds his breath in anticipation of what our gallant crews will find.

While none of the ships has returned as yet, we have received responses from each through an experimental means of communication. We now have initial-contact reports from four of our extrasolar colonies. Sadly, a technical malfunction has destroyed the contents of the message from Far Nyumba. Yet our information shows that all five ships have arrived at their destinations safely. The Æon Trinity has decided to release some of this news to our operatives in the field so that we may all participate in Project: Recontact.

We share this information to impress upon all of you the vital importance of our interstellar colonies. As well as offering hope for the future, these oases are essential to our efforts to aid and protect humanity. The resurgent Aberrant menace and the unknown possibilities of the encroaching Coalition space ark force us to broaden humanity's horizons beyond Earth. Our colonies and their brave pioneers offer that hope.

Ad Astra

Neville Archer

Director, Neptune Division

Æon Trinity

Hope • Sacrifice • Unity

Project: Recontact

— preliminary report, Sylvia Halsey, Head of Joint Æon/UN Operations, Neptune Division

The Mission

Five Leviathan-class jump ships were launched last month to each of the five interstellar colonies, including the embassy site on Qinshui. Each mission commander, all appointed by a special United Nations committee, was instructed to make contact with the humans on the planet, to render any needed assistance and to jump back after the Leviathans were revitalized.

As most of you know, the 1,200-meter-long Leviathans are filled almost entirely by their massive Tesser jump engines. Alone, these ships are slow, lightly armed and have small crews. Each of the ships therefore piggybacks a complement of four frigates and 12 fighters. All of these craft are well-armed in case Aberrants or other hostile beings are encountered.

Once the ships jumped, their reported journeys took an average of six days, three days longer than the previously-tested average. At the end of that time, the ships' jump engines were drained entirely — a standard result of any jump mission. A Leviathan must recharge and undergo minor maintenance before it can jump again. The minimum time to recharge is one week, although further field tests indicate the average is closer to two. The first of the ships should return before the end of the month,

unless it encounters unforeseen difficulties.

This report covers the crews' initial reports upon arriving at the colonies. Elements have been omitted for security reasons. Others were lost during — or could not be recovered after — transmission. Yet other portions were restored by Æon communications teams. The full story of what has happened at each of the colonies is forthcoming, pending the return of the lost colonists themselves. We hope to share their experiences, once the pioneers have been debriefed.

Destinations

Meroe was dispatched to Far Nyumba, the moon colony of gas giant Mgitu, in system SS1515. Two of the frigates attached were of UAN registry, another was a UN science vessel, and the third carried a contingent of Æsculapian and Orgotek personnel. A number of important researchers were assigned to the mission to learn what additional discoveries have been made in Mgitu's atmosphere since the colony was cut off. The goal of this mission was primarily scientific, although there was concern about the long-term safety of such a small colony. *Meroe* therefore carried extensive medical and technical supplies, as well as medical personnel.

Svaha was dispatched to Khantze Lu Ge, the colony established by the Chinese in Alpha Centauri. Two of the frigates sent were also Chinese, the third was a joint FSA/EC ship, and the fourth

is a Legions registry. All four frigates carried a mix of technical, medical and military personnel, as well as a wide variety of supplies for the colony. As the largest and longest-settled of Earth's interstellar colonies, little trouble was expected and the expedition was sent primarily to re-establish contact with the LuGeian people.

Ananda was dispatched to Qinshui, homeworld of our alien allies. All four frigates were of UN registry. Three of them carried Qin embassy staff who wished to return, while the remaining frigate carried diplomats, scientists and psions who would assist in re-establishing relations with Qinshui's natives.

As most of you are aware, the Qin scientists and technicians who were stranded in our solar system provided essential knowledge and expertise in the creation of the new jump ships. Most of the Qin trapped here have expressed a desire to go home. We hope that new Qin ambassadors and scientists will be assigned to our solar system when *Ananda* returns. *Ananda* is also expected to return with some of our embassy personnel currently stationed on Qinshui.

Shaka was dispatched to Karroo station at the Crab Nebula, the site of our first — and violent — encounters with the aliens dubbed the Chromatics. Two of the frigates was of joint UN/Æon Trinity registry, containing a full mix of psi order personnel, while the other two were

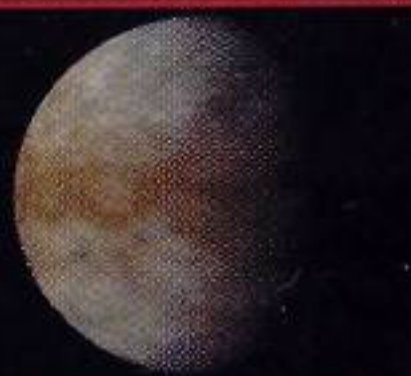


GALACTIC SPIRAL



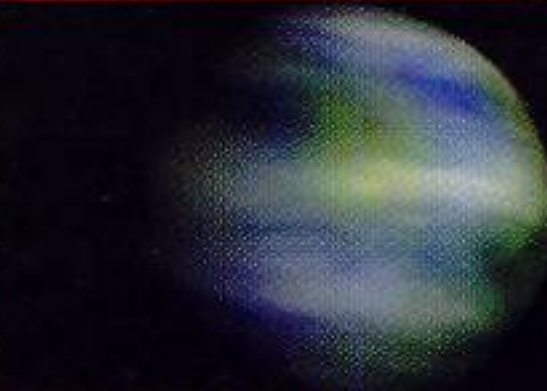
EXTRASOLAR COLONIES

ХАНТЗЕЛУГЕ



KHANTZE LU GE

ЧИНШУЙ



QINSHUI

ЗЕМЛЯ/СОЛ



EARTH/SOL

АВЕРИГУАС



AVERIGUAS

ФАР НЮМБА



FAR NYUMBA

КАРРОО



KARROO

ГЛАВНОЕ КОСМИЧЕСКОЕ АГЕНТСТВО



Making the Jump: An Inside Report

—Dika K. Flores, *The Final Frontier* © 2120

GN

Tanner Wainwright, ISRA pilot, discusses operating a Leviathan

As best I can tell, we pilots are the lucky ones — we're too busy to get jump-sick. You put on your MARS suit, climb into the ARES pod and get to work. The first step is finding the place you want to go. Unless you're doing exploratory work, you already have what we call "psi coordinates." I guess that when the Upeo and ISRA first started scanning for habitable systems, they made sensory impressions of entry points to those solar systems. Even though the teleporters are gone, we ISRAns still have those noetic coordinates. They've been plugged in the Tessers of each Leviathan, giving us jump points.

So what do you do if you're a pilot? You've got to focus on those coordinates, try to match them with your actual destination. You cast your mind out with the help of the pod. First, you see the way there in a rush of movement and a blur of sensation. It's sort of like looking through a tunnel, with your destination at the other end of a long tube. We don't actually see the planet we're headed for, though; it's more a sensation of just knowing *that's* the right spot. (We come through outside of visual range anyway — a couple hundred thousand clicks off — so we don't slam the planet with a psi backlash.)

Then the Tesser kicks in. You're headed down the tunnel, going way fast. The techies tell me the whole process is set at that point, but all the pilots I've talked to agree — we feel like our vision is keeping the ship on course. I believe it, too. I mean, you're riding subquantum waves, right? Got to make sure you don't get sucked under, and the whole ship along with you.

At this point, most folks on the ship feel like they're dreaming or drunk, but I'm as high as a kite. Sometime later, the whole thing ends. How long varies, even going to the same place (the techies haven't figured out why, but let them puzzle it out). I feel like I ran all the way there and everyone else has a hangover. I'm left exhausted, but I don't get sick. Even if I did, it would still be worth it.

from the UAN. All ships were heavily armed in expectation of encountering Chromatic forces. The ships contained a large number of military personnel, as well as many psion troops. Medicine, spare parts, technical supplies and food were also carried in the hopes that Karroo survived.

Given the ferocity of the Chromatic attacks previous to 2114, it was assumed that hostilities would continue if the station had survived. If that proves true, we must decide if it is worth resuming a war against the Chromatics when we still face the Aberrants.

Mae de Céu was dispatched to Averiguas, the Norça-built training ground located in orbit around a red-giant star, in system SS3819. Two of the frigates sent were of Brazilian registry, one was commissioned by the Æon Trinity with a small mixed cadre of psions, while the last was a UN-registry ship with supplies as well as negotiators and relief personnel on board. This colony presents the potentially touchiest political situation. Analysts predict that the Euro-American workers who rebelled against the Brazilian establishment and assumed command will still be in control five years later. We should have preliminary recommendations for how to proceed with the situation before *Mae de Céu* returns.

Technical Information

While it takes some time to recharge Leviathan jump engines after arriving at a destination, recent technological advances have allowed the ships to remain in contact with Earth, even outside our solar system. The

development of datapods allows the ships to send brief messages home or even to other Leviathans if those ships' coordinates are known.

Datapods are high-density biocomputers placed inside spherical, one-meter-diameter plastel casings. These drones are programmed with messages and are "jumped" to a destination with only a fraction of the power required for a Tesser to transport an entire Leviathan. A clairsentient pilot locks onto a datapod's desired destination. He tunes the engines so that they focus their energies only on the pod. It is thrust into the flux of "subquantum space" (often referred to as "subspace" or "psi-space") to emerge at its destination between 12 hours and two days

later. Recharging ships can therefore send messages to Earth while depleting engine power only slightly (each pod sent adds about one day to jump engines' recharge time).

Apparently, while physical distance and mass mean little in the subquantum stratum, such factors do make a difference to the Tesser (and reportedly did to teleporters as well). The device can channel only so much energy at a time compared to the physical variables involved. Distance seems to be a less important factor, but datapod testing shows that the lower the mass, at least, the faster the transit time.

Datapods can also work in two directions; there are still two jump ships in our Solar System and more under construction. Datapods can be

sent from these ships to mission craft.

Unfortunately, the communication process is not perfect. A clairsentient is not present with a datapod to guide it through the constantly-changing energy flux of sub-space, so all datapods experience some damage and degradation. Portions of each datapod message received thus far have been lost or garbled, despite Leviathan crews programming redundant files into their pods. Sending a living being in a datapod is currently impossible; the subquantum decay inflicted upon pods thus far would be lethal to organic beings.

The information presented in this file is the first sent from the extrasolar colonies by this means.



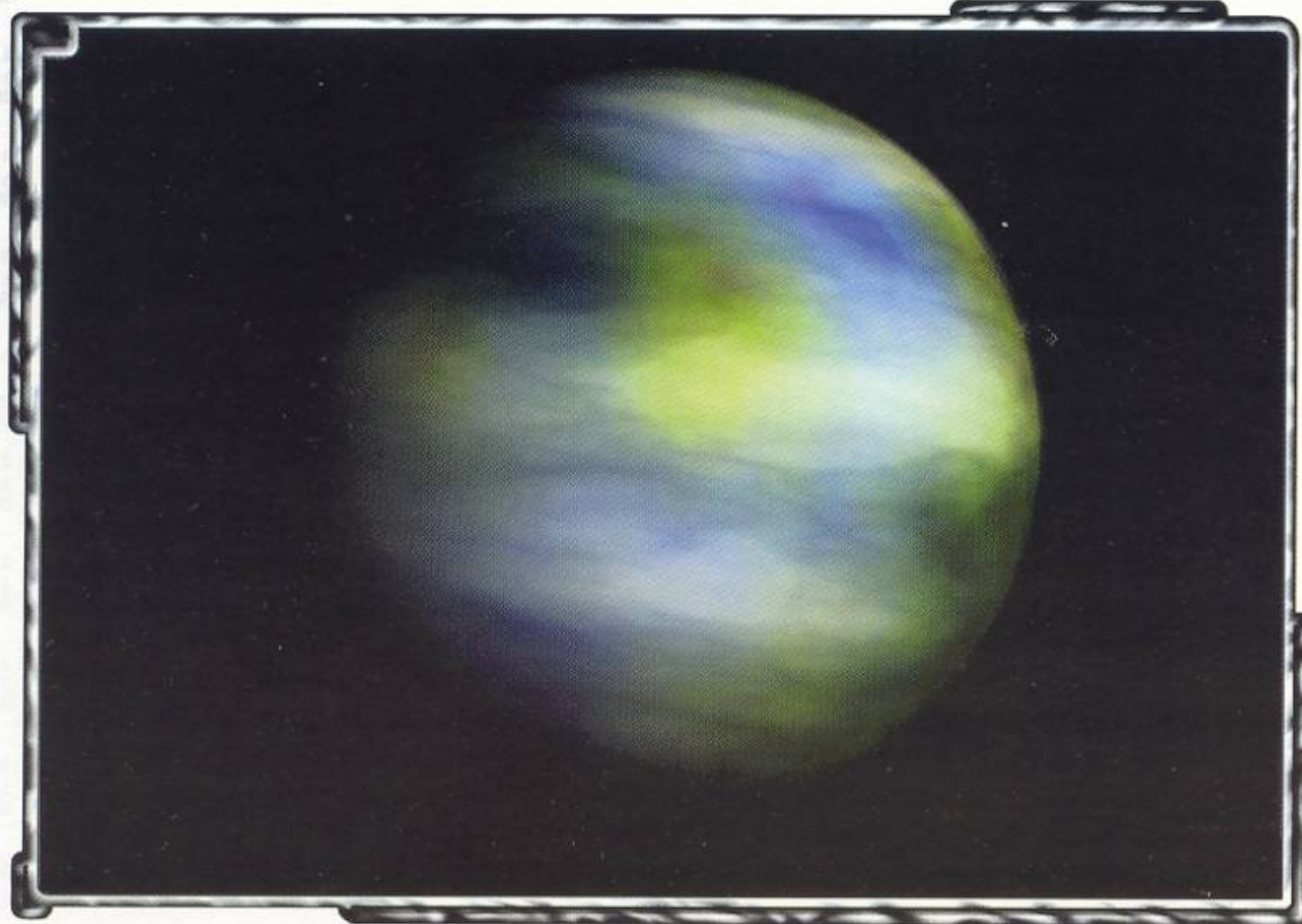
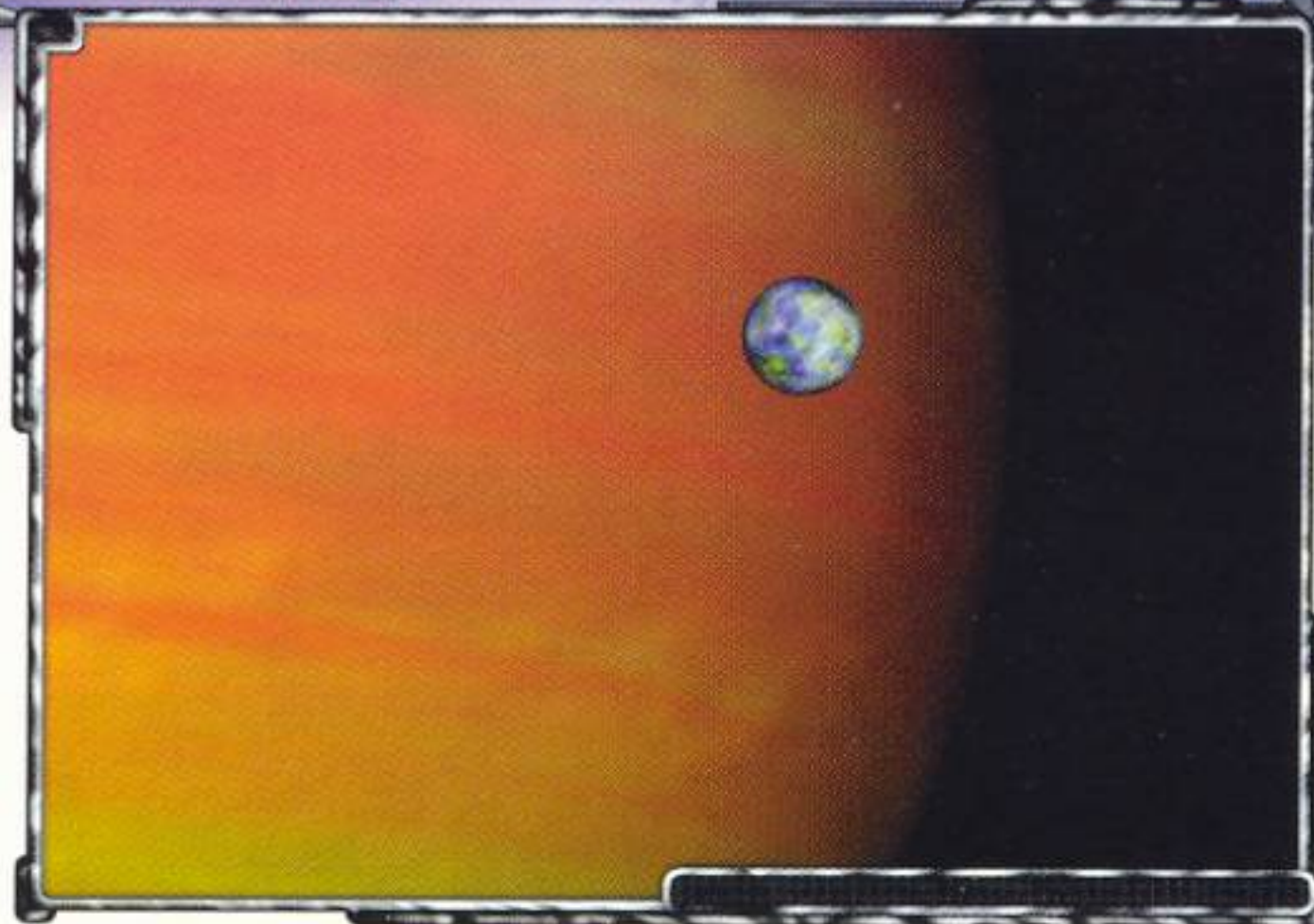
LEVIATHAN JUMP SHIP ANANDA >>> GN NEWS ARCHIVE 2119

Far Nyumba

The datapod from *Meroe* was apparently crushed during transit. Scientists who have examined it tell me that the damage seems to have been substantially more severe than ever witnessed during testing. All recorded data was destroyed, so the fate of the Far Nyumba colony is unknown at this time. The configuration of the datapod suggests that it was launched normally, so we may assume that *Meroe* ar-

rived safely in orbit around Mgitu. We have received no further pods from *Meroe* at this time. A datapod was sent to Far Nyumba, requesting a

new transmission, but no response has been received. We remain confident that no serious problems have occurred at Far Nyumba.



Qinshui

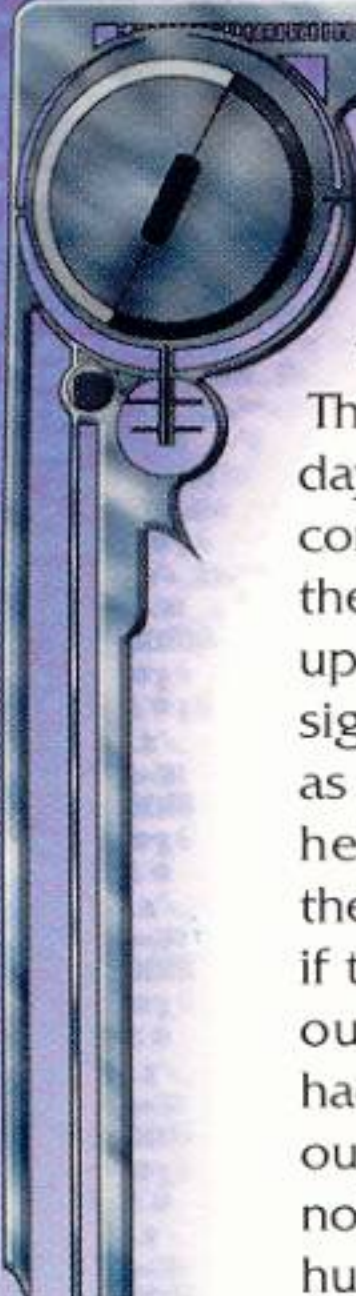
— decompressed datapod textfile, Alicia Prasong, ISRA observer

Ananda arrived in the Qinjunan system without incident and took up orbit around Qinshui. We were

contacted by Qin traffic control within minutes, and by our own embassy shortly afterward. Our ambassadors and staff are fine; they seem in good spirits and are happy that they can finally go home.

From orbit, Qinshui remains as enigmatic as ever,

an almost featureless, murky, blue-green ball. The Qin are as elusive on their homeworld as they've been in our space. We requested landing instructions for a Qin spaceport. They denied access right away, citing something about making prepara-



tions for [the return of their ambassadors] and the arrival of our crew. They kept us in orbit for three days, giving us all kinds of incomprehensible reasons for the delays. We also picked up blips in orbit with us — signs of biotech ships (as far as our sensors could tell) that held position nearby and then were gone. I'm not sure if the landing problems and our apparent surveillance had to do with the return of our passengers or with paranoia about the arrival of more humans. Perhaps it was both.

When we finally received [permission] to land, our transports were directed to the human embassy itself instead of to a proper landing facility. Our approach revealed a landing area near the embassy, although our prior records never mentioned such a site. According to embassy staff, the Qin hastily grew the landing complex after we made contact, by using their amazing control over the planet's environment.

We landed next to our dome. The constant fog and rain obscured visibility of the surrounding area, but the few Qin towers I saw looked even more like huge termite mounds than they do on holotapes.

As per my instructions, I carefully observed the Qin ambassadors who accompanied us. After the ship landed, they stood together in a large group in the main cargo bay and wished the crew a fond farewell. It was one of their typical polite, if somewhat confusing speeches. Then they simply walked off into the mist. The group stopped out of sight of the normals and was met by native Qin who also wore the suits that we've

grown accustomed to. There were a number of soft clicks — and the chests of the welcoming party opened! I immediately projected forward to get a closer look when our former guests waved the natives off. They sealed their suits again before I could get a look at the aliens themselves. A few moments later, the group disappeared into a nearby structure.

Our embassy looks just like it did in the last holovids. The personnel are healthy. The docs stationed here, aided by some truly amazing Qin medicine, have done well for themselves. The Qin have [learned a lot about human] physiology in the last five years as well, and have apparently discovered a few medical marvels that they'd like to trade. Word has it that one of the embassy staff fell and broke her leg a while back. A Qin supposedly rubbed a substance on it and her leg set shortly afterward. The Qin described the agent as a semi-living sealant, and said it could migrate through human tissue to the site of a break. Amazing stuff....

I am sad to report that our staff has suffered five deaths during its isolation. Arthur Klien died of a heart attack two years ago. According to the report, he passed away instantly and could not be revived. Malica Gomez drowned when her boat capsized while sailing on the nearby inland sea (her body was never recovered). Laura Roberts, Maria Diaz and Jerome Sandoz all died while >>> text lost <<< The Qin government has offered to pay reparations for these last three deaths, and has instructed that visitors do not

venture into the nearby Qin city [unless accompanied by] a local guide, to prevent further problems. I've looked at records of the incidents and the deaths seem to have been accidental. The Qin are strange beings and their world is even more so; misunderstanding is still our greatest mutual danger.

Qinjunan has suffered a few Aberrant raids since we were cut off, but apparently nothing that couldn't be handled. Most of the attacks seem to have been confined to isolated bases in the system's asteroid belt. The Qin seem happy to share techniques on dealing with the Aberrants. For example, they claim to have grown the shells of bioships, powered them with simple engines, and used them as decoys during battles with Aberrants. Our alien allies say they could do the same for us >>> text lost <<<

Qin politics are as much of a mystery as ever. I've noticed features about the native Qin's appearance that are similar to those of our embassy staff — a "Roman nose," a semblance of a thin beard, an exaggerated widow's peak. It's as if Qinshui's populace has based its biosuit designs on our ambassadorial staff, because they have no other human models from which to work. The Qin who came to Earth, on the other hand, have a more "cosmopolitan" appearance — more a reflection of humanity in general. I could be wrong, but this suggests more than ever that the Qin are showing us a face that they think we want to see. I'm not sure if that's a diplomatic effort on their part

or simply an attempt to hide something.

On the other hand, our guess that Qin social divisions are functional rather than biological seems to have been accurate. I talked with Ambassador Delgado. She's identified five major Qin nations — factions, really, divided more by philosophy and social function than by geography or biology. She says there may also be more. Of course, the Qin have a truly amazing way of saying nothing when they want to, so we have yet to understand their divisions. However, Chenda, the Ministry agent attached to this mission, reported a sense of trepidation among the ambassadors we were taking home. She couldn't explain the feeling very well given the source, but suspected that our guests were worried about their response on arriving — something to do with social rivalries and power struggles.

Such politics coincides with some of the response that our team has received. It seems that one of these Qin "houses" is anti-human and blames us for the Aberant attacks on Qinshui. We're walking on egg shells around these characters, and even other Qin seem to be trying to keep them away from us. There also seems to be some tension between the Qin we returned and these antagonistic natives. I almost sense resentment, as if something has gone sour between the groups during the isolation.

I should also mention the octopus. Our Qin passengers brought a living one from Earth on their return to

Qinshui. Why, I have no idea. In the few days that we've been here, they've created a tank for it in our embassy — with its own room, no less — and have asked any staff who plan to remain to take care of the thing. They've also requested that a biologist be sent from Earth in the next ambassadorial party to see to the animal's needs. Qin — reportedly important ones — have even come to sit with the octopus!

Our resident ambassadorial staff claims the Qin are playing a joke on us, but I don't think so. There's something more going on that not even Chenda can interpret.

[Since my instructions] were to observe everything that I could on the planet, the rest of this report covers my impressions of Qinshui itself. The city where the human compound is located has been dubbed Meetpoint. It's quite large, covering several hundred square kilometers. Distances [are hard to judge] in the constant drizzle and fog, but my psionic surveys have shown that the city has a somewhat irregular, circular shape.

It's very odd to go outside. It's always wet; you think it's raining and then you realize you're mistaken, because it *really* starts to rain. The landscape and buildings meld into each other. Everything is a confusing blend of muted, pastel colors mixed with a few garish blues, greens and purples. If this place is attractive to the Qin, their eyes must be very different from ours. >>> text lost <<< from human architectural methods. The hardest thing to get used to is the complete absence of angles or flat surfaces; everything is curved and organic.

The land outside the city is one big swamp. There are dry places and mountains on the world, but the Qin appear to prefer to build their cities in lowlands. At least the city isn't muddy. The entire place is covered with a smooth, slightly soft, pebbly textured material that seems to be alive. It's moist, but either drains off or absorbs most water.

After several days, we were invited to take a tour of the local city with a guide. I was excited at the opportunity to truly see Qin for the first time. Not likely. As our ambassadors suggested, the Qin have gone to extraordinary lengths to maintain appearances for our benefit. Everyone I saw wore a biosuit like those of the attachés assigned to our ambassadors. Not even our lost colonists [have seen one] of the aliens in its natural state. They've even snuck out of the embassy dome to get a peak, but no luck. It's almost as if nature itself is at the Qin's command — rains and biotech have combined to confound ambassadors' efforts to get a better look. Downpours [have reduced] visibility to nothing and have driven would-be spies to seek shelter, and the Qin's very architecture and roads apparently have changed to confuse spies or lead them right to waiting attachés. Further attempts to catch the Qin in their natural state were abandoned for fear of straining diplomatic relations.

The streets we were shown were full of Qin, both on foot and riding in what appeared to be amazing biotech vehicles. At least, I assume they were vehicles.



HUMAN EMBASSY < QINSHUI >>> PRIVATE HOLOVID > ALICIA PRASONG

Many looked like bizarre animals — like streamlined bugs — but they had Qin riding in or on them and most had space for cargo. I asked about the vehicles' lack of standardization. Our [guide told me that] most Qin create their own vehicles and tools — and can do so in a matter of minutes or hours. (That [explains why they] could put on such a show for us in a short period of time, and might explain why they held us up in orbit.)

What I guess are Qin versions of ornithopters — oval fliers with several glowing blue exhaust ports — cruised above us. I asked how they flew. Our guide said only, "We grow them and they do," as if that's all that was required. Maybe one of our returned ambassadors will be able to better explain the propulsion and thrust systems used.

Chenda tried to probe the natives discretely, for fear of offending. She said the general atmosphere of the city was calm and orderly — a "warm buzz," as she put it. It reminded her of Beijing. Actually, it's interesting how... *Asian*... Qin culture seems. The aliens are courteous and orderly, but also focused and reclusive. I've found myself attributing Eastern rationales to them, but it's a dangerous assumption to make. We think we've known the Qin for years, but they're still aliens, and how much of their true selves have they really shown us? Not much from what I can tell here.

Most of the [buildings in the] city looked like smooth, symmetrical mounds or tubes. We couldn't physically fit into many of them; most of the corridors were one-and-a-half-meter-high ovals with curved floors — all the

more reason to suggest that the Qin are not what they seem. Furthermore, our guide wouldn't let us into some of the buildings that we *could* enter. When pressed, he asked if we show guests into the very private places of our own homes.... I didn't have much of an answer.

They also wouldn't show us any place further west than a designated region around our embassy. It's almost as if they've created a quarantine zone for us. >>> *text lost* <<< didn't say anything about it. Instead, we're steered gently toward other places that will "be more interesting to us." If I hadn't scanned the city, I wouldn't even know how much we *weren't* being shown. I can't tell anything unusual about those outlying areas, but then again, I have no idea what I'm looking at.

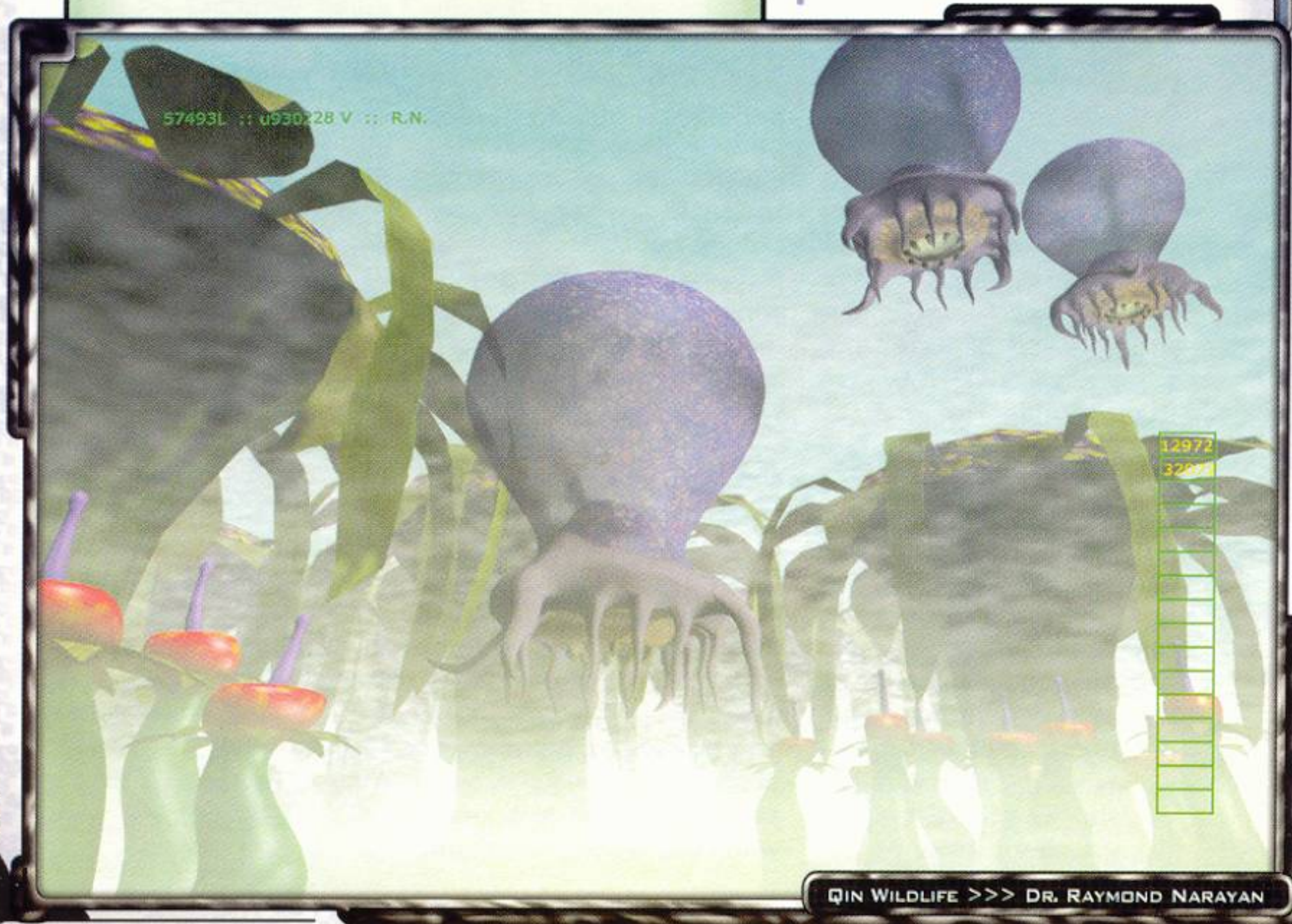
Qin Wildlife

— Dr. Raymond Narayan, Mission Xenologist

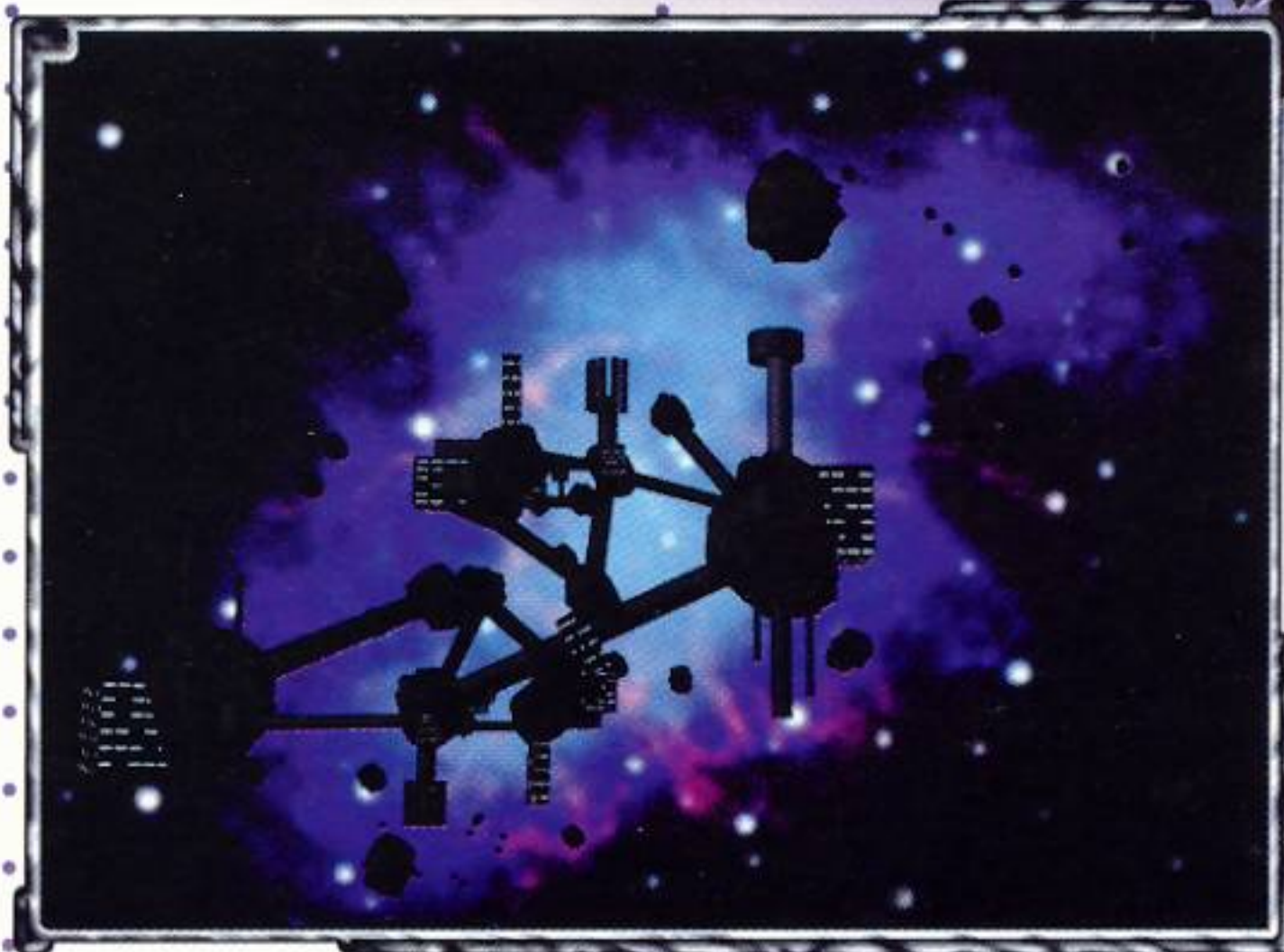
Take a look at the accompanying holos; they describe this place better than words can. It's truly amazing. Sometimes I don't know if I'm looking at plants or simply animals that rarely move. Most of the land near the city seems covered with plants that look like large, reddish-gray, rubbery, many-lobed succulents. Life abounds in these "forests." Tiny and medium-sized creatures [float through the air using] some type of gas bag for lift. Yesterday, something that looked like a tiny winged squid landed next to me, but floated away before I could study it. The land-based life is even more shy. Our embassy staff has determined that nothing on this world — that we have encountered, anyway — has an internal skeleton, and nothing larger than a house cat has an exoskeleton. The [largest creatures] appear to use hydrostatics and muscle power for locomotion. So what could this mean for the Qin themselves...?

The buildings we could enter were even stranger than the surrounding city. Just like every place else, there were no straight lines. Oval halls connected to irregular, rounded rooms through organic, curved doorways. It felt like we were inside some type of creature, and for all I know we were. I didn't have the courage to ask; I don't [think I wanted to] know. Ceilings were covered by the same blue panels that adorn the outside of buildings and that provide illumination for the city at night. The shadowless blue light that they cast made the interiors of the buildings look even more bizarre.

Strangely, we were allowed more freedom in the wilderness surrounding the city than we were in [the urban] areas. We had to take Qin vehicles and travel with



Qin pilots for "safety reasons," but they had no problems with us walking through the swamp. I've included our mission-scientist's assessment of the wildlife — it's beyond my understanding, other than that it must have been like walking through a rain forest back on Earth, before [the Aberant War. The] Qin said they've allowed human ambassadors to explore this swamp before. I wonder if this was created, too, some time ago, and that the Qin already know there's nothing dangerous — or "incriminating" — for us to learn here.



Karoo Mining Colony

— decompressed datapod textfile, Roland Thompson, Legion Commander, Phoenix Squadron

Some amazing and frightening things have happened at the Karroo mining colony since it was cut off. Pardon the impropriety, but what I've learned scares the shit out of me. I don't understand what it all means, but I'll start from

the beginning to try to make sense of things.

Day One

First off, the station's still here and holding up against the Chromatics — even though the colony seemed doomed by all accounts of 2114.

Shaka arrived in-system several hundred thousand clicks away from the target. We wanted to delay hostile response if the station had fallen, and feared that the subquantum wave created by our entry would wreak havoc on Karroo's psions if



"KARROO ATTACKED" > DAVE.A.I. > KARROO MEMORIAL, TANZANIA

it still stood. [Initial observation proved] the station to be intact.

We received a message from the colony within minutes. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised, but their response was cool at first, as if the colonists weren't convinced we were from Earth. They seemed to come around two hours later, when we docked, presumably after they scanned us thoroughly and monitored our transmissions.

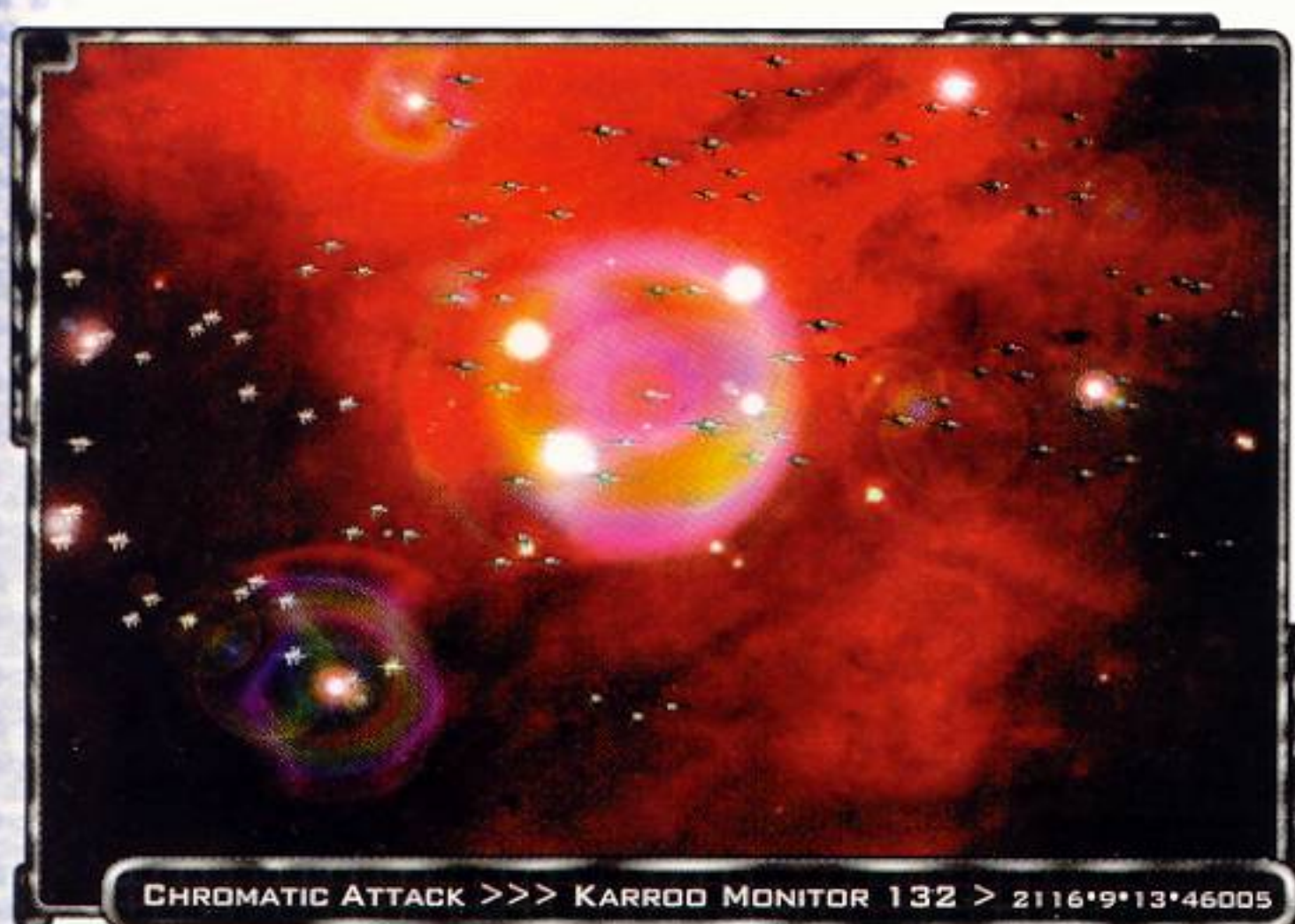
Morale is high here under the circumstances. Chromatic attacks have diminished

We questioned the colonists on everything they knew about Upeo activities over the past six years. They couldn't say much — and weren't too surprised when we told them the teleporters disappeared from Earth long ago. Apparently the Upeo have been cagey to downright mysterious with the colonists. The jumpers' disappearance from Earth [explained why the] colonists lost contact with home, but didn't answer any questions they themselves had about the Upeo.

It seems that the teleporters made unannounced appearances aboard the station as late as 2116. They would come one at a time bearing supplies — clothes, food, even weapons. They supposedly refused to carry out missions or carry messages back to Earth, and refused to say what was going on back home. The only thing [they would say was that the colony was] on its own, that the Upeo were here to help as best they could and that everything was in hand.

Resident ISRAns tried to anticipate Upeo appearances, but failed to track them. [That made it tough for resident] Ministry agents to be in the right place at the right time to scan arriving teleporters. Apparently the only telepath who made contact with an Upeo read a complete blank — like the subject's mind was protected somehow or simply "not there." Efforts to restrain any jumpers failed — they simply blinked away and left any supplies they'd brought.

Chromatic attacks reportedly increased through-



to skirmishes and raids; the Chromatics seem to have lost the spirit for a fight. It's the reasons behind the apparent change that frighten me.

I've only [been able to piece together] some of what seems to have happened. When the teleporters disappeared in 2114, we lost contact with Karroo and the colonists lost contact with Earth. We knew *something* happened to the Upeo, but the colonists had no idea. Why should they? They've been in contact with the teleporters since *after* 2114!



out that time, as the colony's defenses weakened without Earth's support. The aliens seemingly sensed the station's weakness and prepared to destroy it [completely. A massive Chromatic] fleet finally closed upon the station in September 2116. The colonists arrayed every ship and weapon they had for a last stand.

Apparently that's when "it" happened. Three Upeo — an unprecedented number — appeared at the colony. Mayor N'gamba (yes, mayor — I'll explain later) told them that the

I don't claim to understand all this. What were the Upeo wa Macho doing out here? Where have they gone? Why help at Karroo and not come home? And who are these "friends"? The colonists [couldn't answer these] questions either.

The story checks out. There have been dozens of witnesses to teleporter appearances over the years. Hundreds of military personnel and civilians witnessed the "flash" that eliminated the Chromatic attack fleet. Colony clairsentients have offered little more [insight into that]

event; they seem to be holding back, as if they sensed something about what happened and are scared by it — even today. I recommend that the clears here be held accountable for what they know and reveal it to the orders and UN as a whole.

There's more, though. Apparently Chromatic attacks stopped [altogether after the attack] fleet "disappeared." The colonists had already determined that the aliens had bases on a series of planetoids millions of clicks away. A scout fleet investigated the enemy's situation. Where previous reconnaissance ships were destroyed or driven off before they could get a good look at the enemy position, these ships approached unmolested.

Scans indicated where a major facility had been located, but it was now in ruins. Whole portions of it were gone, along with the rock around them, as if some massive hand had simply scooped them up. It seemed that some [Chromatics remained in] the region, though; enemy ships from outlying asteroids reacted



whole place was about to go to hell. According to reports, the Upeo claimed the situation was under control — that they would handle it! Just as fighting was about to break out, a blinding light reportedly appeared along the Chromatic approach vector. When it had passed, the enemy was gone — all of them! The Upeo themselves [remained only moments] longer, apparently stating that they had "friends" out here — and that the colonists did too. The three then vanished before they had to explain any further.



cautiously to the incursion. They closed, fired and ran, as if afraid, as if they believed the colonists had destroyed their fleet and base.

Unfortunately, all that occurred four years ago. The remaining Chromatics grew bold again when it appeared that the colonists weren't capable of another such counterattack. The aliens have been fighting a guerrilla war with the station ever since — striking in small groups, without warning and breaking off as soon as the defenders organize. The patterns of >>> text lost <<< The heavy coilguns installed just before we lost contact have supposedly been instrumental to keeping the Chromatics at a distance. Given their limited resources, the colonists' responses on remaining Chromatic bases have been similar.

The teleporters haven't been [seen since they] intervened in the colony's last stand. There's no telling where they are now or what they're up to. We need more clairsentients and telepaths out here to search for them.

However, scientists and techs out here do have a great deal of new data on the Chromatics. The aliens' ships look >>> text lost <<< and while these spacecraft seem as maneuverable as formatted biotech fighters, the Chromies appear to be inferior pilots. A variety of tried-and-true maneuvers and tricks have been used [effectively against] them. Damn good thing too, or there'd be a lot more rubble here.

The couple of diplomats we brought on this mission are cooling their heels. Our

• TRITON ARCHIVE •

Technical Report on the Karroo Mining Colony

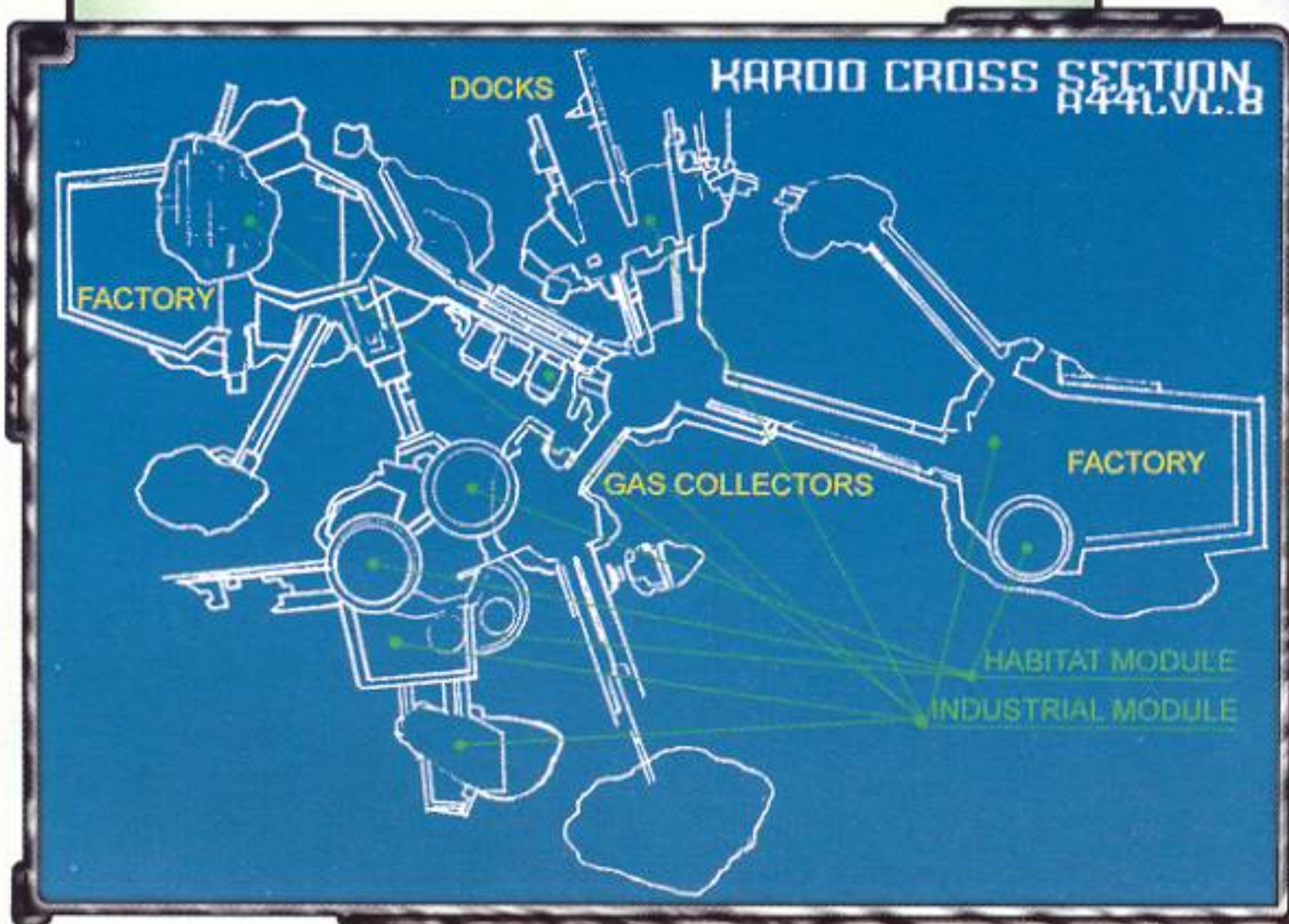
Number of separate modules: 32

Total volume of station: 8.1 million cubic meters

Total floor area of station: 2.7 million square meters

Total population: 87,000

Karoo station is currently made up of 17 habitat modules and 15 industrial modules. Each of the habitation modules is a cylinder 200 meters long and 40 meters in diameter. Thirteen floors run lengthwise through each one. The industrial modules have a wide [variety of shapes] and sizes. All habitat modules are outfitted with gravity grids and some industrial modules are equally equipped, while others are left in zero-g. All modules are connected in a semi-regular grid pattern. Each habitation module is named after an African river or body of water, while each industrial module is named after an African mountain. In addition to the habitat and industrial modules, Karroo also has a collection of small hydroponics "parks" and recreation modules. These units, named after African animals and historical figures respectively, help bring life and color to the colony.



techs and telepaths have tried to make contact with the Chromatics, but without success. Enemies who can create laser beams out of thin air have proved dangerous prisoners; none have been captured alive. Tels here have probed some during attacks and have learned a bit about how they think. Problem is, none of the Chromies seem to [want to communicate] with us. Apparently they're all "hate, kill, hate."

The installation that was destroyed seems to have been an outpost, not any kind of homeworld. That [means we can expect to see] more of these aliens and there's no telling when or where. As more ships return to Karroo, we should send observation drones and survey teams to the destroyed base. It should tell us more about what happened and who we're up >>>

text lost <<<

Day Two

We're settled in and are getting a sense for the station's layout. They've put us up in Nile sector, the best they've got, I think. The decks in this habitat module are the [standard three] meters wide, and yet it's claustrophobic here, as if the years of isolation are almost palpable. It doesn't help that the elevators rattle or shake, either.

I'm enclosing updated schematics of the place. In spite of all the troubles and shortages the colonists have suffered, they've been able to expand. The habitation module that was under construction when the Chromatics first attacked has been completed. It houses the 3,600 children who have been born here in the last five

years (casualties in the war have been about 3,000).

Necessity has turned the colonists into soldiers and optimists. When long-range sensors suggest low Chromatic activity, the people [return to the] old ways, mining, researching and carrying out their lives — like when I first visited here on routine patrols. Yet there's an air of uncertainty, as if these people are waiting for the other shoe to drop. I suspect that they thought we were it at first.

Now that the locals seem to have accepted that we're from Earth, they're getting along well [with our crew.] UAN troops are helping with routine patrols and are learning to use the station's jury-rigged defenses and sensors.

Meanwhile, my gang is teaching the local psions about the newest biotech and are flying >>> text lost <<< we brought. The coilguns and short-range plasma cannons on these babies should take the Chromies by surprise.

The government here is run by Mayor N'gamba. Hard to believe that old Susan from the UAN made good. Apparently, she became a hero in

the first major [battle after Karroo was cut] off. The previous mayor had been killed in a hull breach and the people elected N'gamba to replace him. She turned over military command to Stalaski and [has been running the] station ever since. N'gamba seems to be doing a good job.

In addition to the mayor, representatives from each of the station's 17 habitat modules form a sort of senate. Apparently, the only internal problem this government [has faced is miners] bristling under "military rule." They're demanding greater representation and more attention on non-military concerns. I guess that's what happens

TRITON ARCHIVE

Psychological Conditions in Karroo Station

— Dr. Alexia Alamir, Æsculapian Order

It's all endless corridors here. Nowhere in known space have people had to live in a place that's so cramped and uniform, with so little hope for escape. [Parts of this station] are worse than Olympus' Downside. People here have spent five years living in identical rooms and three-meter-wide corridors. They gather in the industrial pods just for a change of pace.

The colonists are also highly paranoid. I attribute this in part to their isolation, but also to the subconscious impact the Upeo wa Macho seem to have had in their dealings here. These [people] seem to believe that there's a tangible force greater than themselves at work in the universe, and that it's only a matter of time before it claims them.

when Chromatics aren't constantly blazing away outside. Sounds like there are a few radicals among the miners who merit watching.

Life here is better than we expected, but there are signs that tensions are mounting. The miners' complaints are probably just symptomatic of dwindling food, supplies, weapons and medicine. After the teleporters stopped appearing, the [colonists had to rely] solely on their own resources. Basic systems are in good repair — they still have lights, gravity and limited hydroponics — but everyday equipment is wearing out. Peoples' clothes look like they've been through the sonics a hundred times too many. Apparently there was talk of shortages in the next few months.

Permanently closed bulkheads and hull patches in Niger sector are a reminder of just how close things got here. Faded signs over the shops — closed when some civilians left in the first evacuations — give the commercial sectors the same desperate feeling as in Europe and the FSA.

Everyone is incredibly grateful for the new equipment we've brought. The food and new hydroponics pods will make a big difference. The new fusion reactors and other engineering supplies should allow colonists to repair battle damage and maybe even expand further.

Amazingly, few colonists are interested in leaving now that we've returned. When the Chromies aren't around, the mining is as rich as ever

and scientists are still gathering data from the nebula. These people mean to stay and I think they can do it. This is home and they're not going to give it up.

Day Three

The Chromatics staged a raid today. They must have seen us arrive. They didn't show [up in force] and retreated rapidly. I believe they used the attack as an opportunity to examine *Shaka* and gauge our strength. Karroo's assessment of the enemy's piloting seems accurate. Our crews and new fighters out-flew and out-gunned them.

Unfortunately, we suffered some losses: two pilots were injured, one fatally.

In closing, I would like to say that the people here have performed exceptionally well under the circumstances. Given the information they have accumulated about the Chromatics, [it seems likely that we can rid] the Crab Nebula of the enemy and restore this colony to full industrial productivity. The mystery of the teleporters remains, though, and is beyond my position or imagination to assess.



Khantze Lu Ge

— decompressed datapod textfile, Lian Yih, Ministry Representative

I am most sad to report that the situation on this world is not at all as we expected or hoped. A little less than two years ago, this world was invaded by a large group of Aberrants. Fortunately, they [hold] only the northern polar city of Kuan; the rest of the world is still independent, if embattled.

When *Svaha* emerged from jump, we were greeted by an automated beacon warning of the invasion. The ship went on immediate alert status. We moved [out to assume] a one-million-kilometer orbit while the frigate *Zheng He* advanced with full fighter cover. Close orbital survey revealed moderate damage in and around the northern city of Kuan. Sensor readings indicated extensive Aberrant activity all around the north polar region. Scans of [several other cities, aided] by remote viewing by several ISRA operatives,



"SALVATION" > P'ENG-LAI CAPITOL BUILDING

CONFIDENTIAL

Aberrant Forces — Initial Estimates

— ISRA representative Ali
Jamal

Except for a few scouting parties and individuals actively engaged in battle, the Aberrants on Khantze Lu Ge seem to be in the vicinity of Kuan. I estimate >>> text lost <<< indicates that very few of them have warp capability. Preliminary scans indicate that while humans in the occupied areas oppose the Aberrants, some are cooperating and there is... gruesome... evidence of Aberrant cults.

confirmed that the cities of P'eng-lai, Neu Berlin and Lu Yen were free of any visible Aberrant presence. We initiated tight-beam radio broadcasts to P'eng-lai. Upon receiving a response on standard emergency frequencies, the fleet moved to a lower altitude and I supplemented our conversation with telepathic communication.

According to unsubstantiated reports, the Aberrants first arrived near the north pole [and assembled their forces in] glacial caves. They took over Kuan in a surprise attack shortly thereafter.

Reports from refugees and resistance fighters indicate that the settlement's population has been enslaved in a manner similar to the occupation of Olympus by the Space Brigade, although this is a less benevolent group.

Since that attack, there has been an on-going battle between Aberrant and human forces on this once-peaceful world. The invaders seem to be engaged in a campaign of slow and gradual conquests. Other small settlements near Kuan fell within six months of the initial invasion. Kuan radio [stations have been broadcasting pro-Aberrant] propaganda over the entire planet, and frequent raids have been staged on military sites in other cities, presumably to weaken targets. The Aberrants here seem quite

insane, but are far from stupid. I suspect they believed they had as much time as needed to defeat the colonists and decided to proceed slowly with their conquest, to minimize the effectiveness of resistance forces.

The Aberrants also seem to have spent a great deal of time ensuring that humans in [captured regions are] put to work. Kuan and other captured towns are patrolled by Aberrants and their human allies. Attempts to escape are severely punished and the populace lives in constant fear. Apparently, the only way to lead a safe and moderately comfortable existence is to cooperate fully with the Aberrants, obeying their insane whims without question and turning fellow humans in for "crimes" against the Ab-

errant regime. Reports from a few refugees indicate that Kuan is a totalitarian state run by monstrous madmen.

The liberated regions of the world have put up a valiant fight, but have only been able to slow the conquest, not stop it. They claim a dozen Aberrant kills, but more than 6,000 humans [are known to have died] in the fighting. If we had not returned, the conclusion of this war would have been inevitable. Indeed, a combination of low morale and Aberrant propaganda has caused some people to surrender. Our arrival offers the colonists hope, [but we must act rapidly, with] success and with vision if we are to keep these peoples' trust.

Khantze Lu Ge might have even fallen to the Aberrants by now if not for an

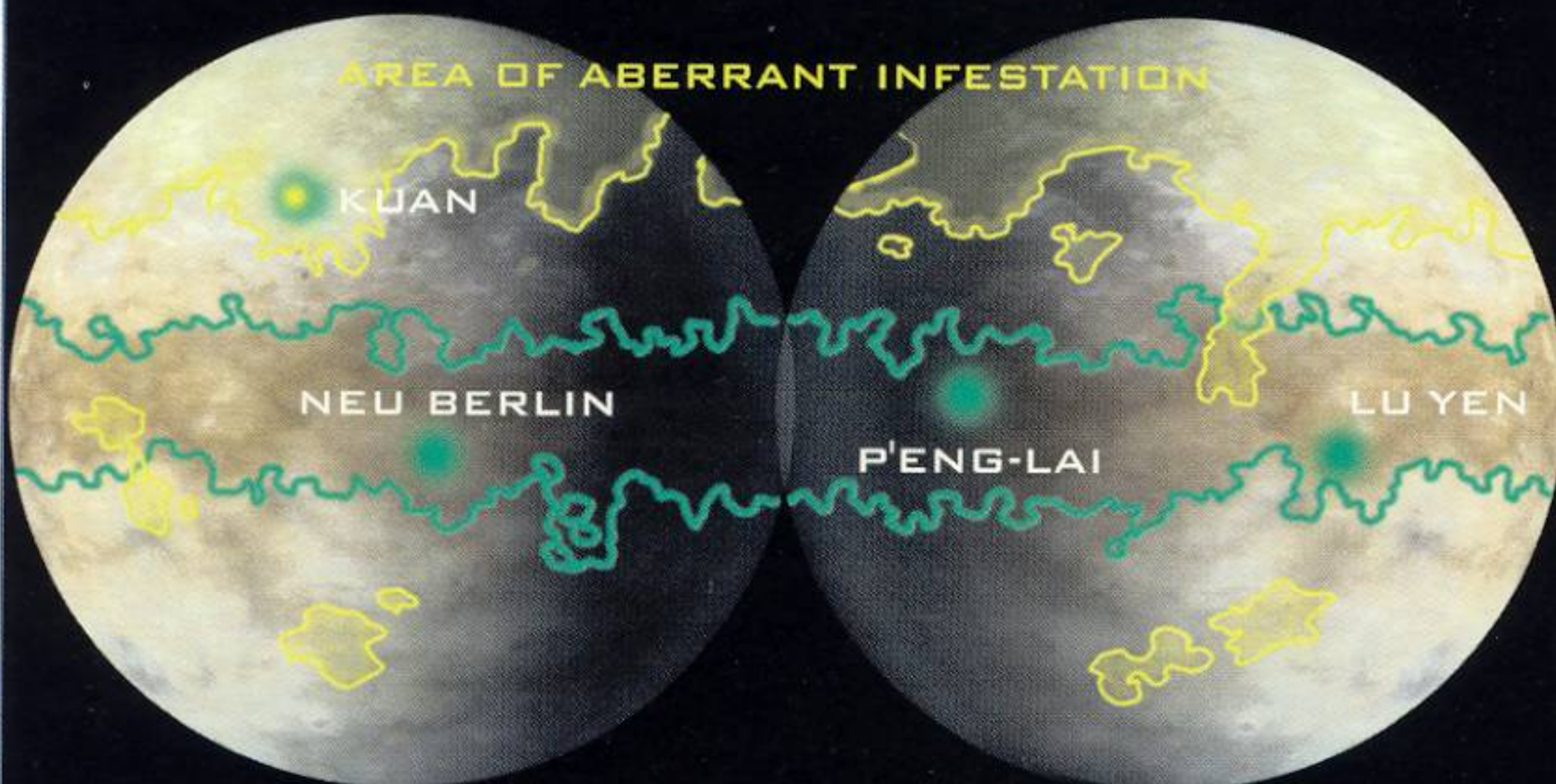
unexplained phenomenon: A rift formed between two Aberrant camps approximately one year ago. The sides have been fighting each other and the colonists ever since. Aberrant propaganda has even originated from two separate sources, each broadcasting appeals to humans to join one faction over the other. Refugees report that at the beginning of this struggle, the two camps

>>> text lost <<<

The dispute seems [be a power struggle between the invaders' original] leader, known as Kali, and a rival who calls itself Yog-Death. The progress of Aberrant conquests has slowed dramatically since the feud broke out. However, it seems reasonable to assume that the factions will unite now that they have a greater com-

NOZT# 70V47 ±C#C47

AREA OF ABERRANT INFESTATION



504T# 70V47 ±C#C47

KHANTZE LU GE >>> 7TH LEGION HOLOVID >>> MORANT

mon enemy — us.

I have just completed a patrol of P'eng-lai before filing my report. This is a harsh world. The air is thin and cold. The light is dim. There is little water and the small seas are full of dangerous mineral salts and toxic microbes. Even the gravity, only slightly greater than Earth's, is uncomfortable.

Yet my people have settled here. P'eng-lai alone is home to 350,000. Shops sell everything from pastries to children's toys. They held a parade for us in the main square, with fireworks and banners. I would not choose to live here, but I am proud of those who do. We must deal with the Aberrant menace and allow these people to make a home again.

It is therefore with a heavy heart that I make my recommendation. The only advantage we have over the Aberrants is their current fractiousness. If they unite, Khantze Lu Ge is doomed. Even [our presence merely] offers the LuGeians a fighting chance; victory is not assured. The Aberrant War proved that we cannot win by conventional means when the enemy is numerous and concentrated. We cannot afford such a war here, even with all of Earth's support.

However, a jump ship loaded with fusion warheads could end this war. If we strike now, without warning, we will destroy the single largest colony of Aberrants in known space. It would mean the sacrifice of fallen cities and their surviving humans, but for humanity's greater good.

Supplemental Report — Jason Haldane, Taisa [Captain] of the frigate Morant, Legion's Phoenix Squadron

Well, it's bad, but not as bad as it could be. The damn things are here and this is the largest, most self-sufficient colony we have. I hope this is the only one they've found.

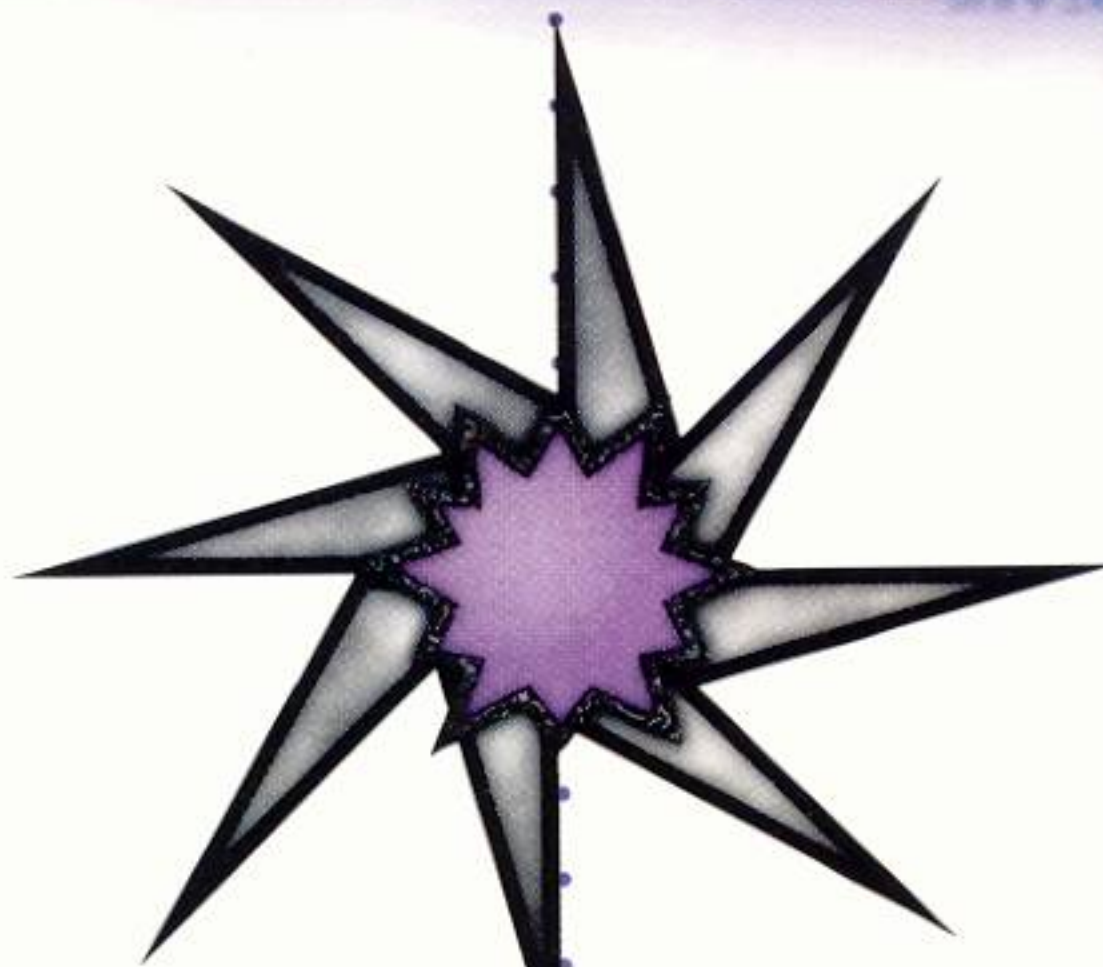
While I can corroborate the facts in agent Yih's reports, I strongly disagree with her recommendation. There are over 400,000 humans in Aberrant-occupied territory. Fusion-bombing [the region would] be the single largest mass murder this century. Sure, it would solve the Aberrant problem, but so would blowing up the whole bloody planet! Aside from the Asians, there are people from Australia, the EC and the FSA here — our people. Any decisions on this front can't be left to the Chinese alone. Unfortunately, the fact that the UN's supposed to [be in charge of] things doesn't seem to be carrying much weight right now.

The Aberrants here are mad and wrapped up in some kind of power struggle. Let's hit them fast and hard with as many troops as we can. I think we can kill most

of them and drive off the rest. Three of our frigates — *Zheng He*, *Morant* and *Quebec* — should stay behind to keep a lid on things while *Lao Tzu* returns with *Svaha*.

Regardless of the plan you folks decide on, it's imperative that every [free jump ship be sent] here as soon as possible, with as much hardware and as many troops as we can commit. If we give them too much time, they'll forget their differences — or they might decide that they'll lose and torch as many cities as they can before we strike. This is the first large Aberrant colony we've found. If we eliminate most of them, we may be able to contain the Aberrant threat as a whole.

They attacked *Svaha* earlier today. My guess [is that they wanted] to take a look at what we had. They didn't commit any of their warp-capable forces. Several dozen of the damn mutants flew at us through space — without suits! We scrambled the fighters immediately. None of the bastards got within 300 kilometers of *Svaha*. *Lao Tzu* sustained structural damage from some type of energy beam, and we



lost two fighters. One of *Morant's* fusion warheads sent a couple of the things straight to Hell. The rest of the force fled. We didn't [pursue in case] it was a trap.

I've discussed various options with my staff. Yih's plan is too horrific, and we

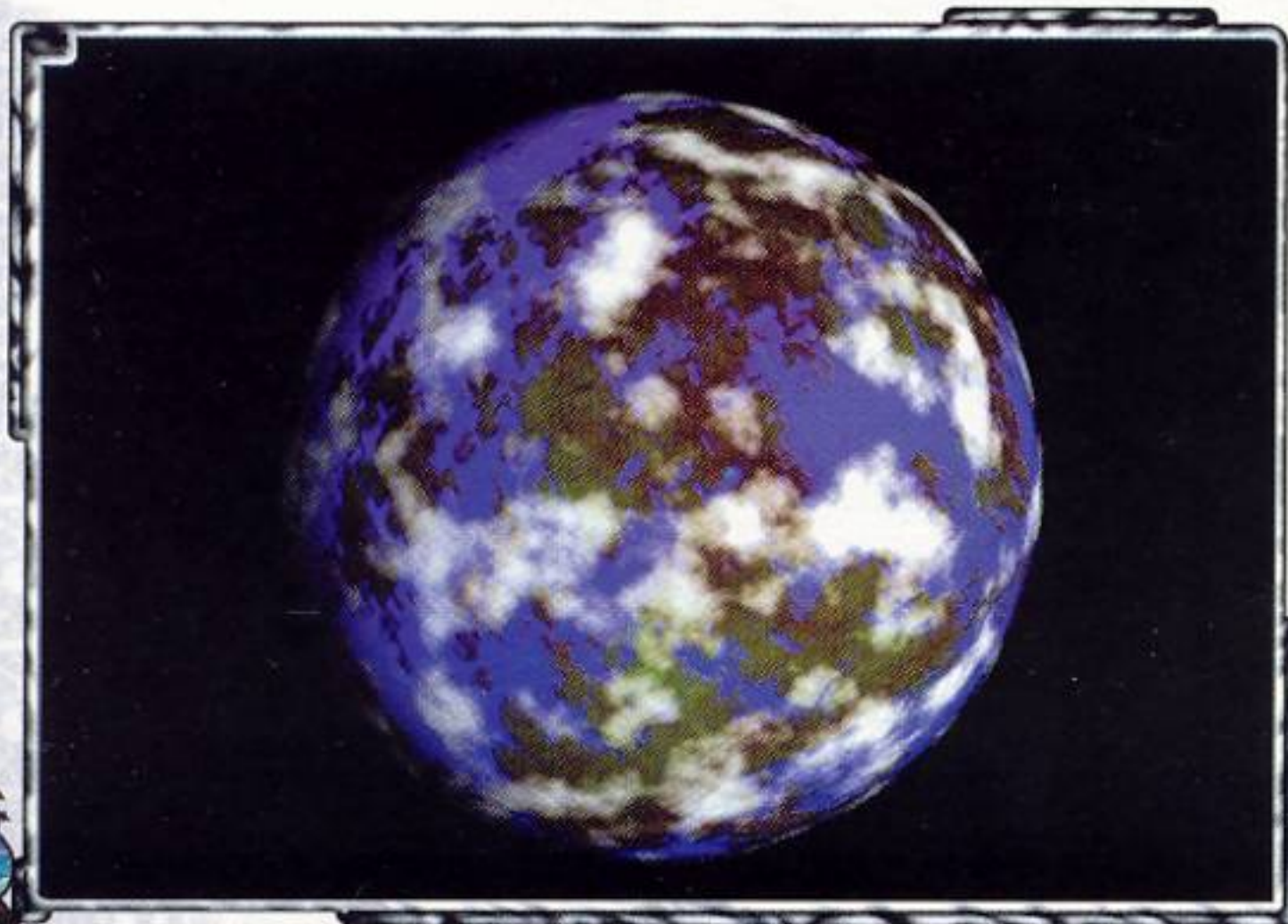
simply cannot evacuate millions of civilians in the presence of an active Aberrant threat. Our only option is to attack these monsters until they flee or die. Unlike the previous war, we [have better] tech and we have psions now. A Legion or Orgotek trooper in a bioVARG is of-

ten a match for a rank-and-file Aberrant. It won't be easy and it won't be cheap, but we can win this war without losing our souls. Send reinforcements as soon as you can. I'll keep things together until then.

Tell Rachel I love her.



ABERRANT CLEANSING >>> LOA TZU FIGHTER 29 COCKPIT RECORDER2265#78



SPACE

Averiguas

— decompressed datapod textfile, Dr. Jeannette Sauvriere, Æsculapian Medical Relief Group

They're still alive here and things are relatively stable, but it looks like the calm before the storm. Anyway, let's be formal about this....

Mae de Céu arrived without incident. They weren't kidding about jump-sickness; it took some work to get everyone on

Averiguas Survey

— Dr. Laura Hanson, UN Planetological Survey

Stellar flares have increased by 4% since our last measurements in 2114. There has been a [corresponding increase in] the severity of storms and other unstable weather conditions on Averiguas. There is currently no evidence that the white dwarf will go supernova in less than 500 years, but the planet could be rendered uninhabitable in much [less time if certain theories are correct.] No one knows if the five-year increase in stellar activity is part of a natural cycle or is a sign of continuous increase. Current stellar activity does not pose a threat to human life, but we are unsure how long this relative safety will persist.

their feet again. Major Vargas hailed the colony shortly after we arrived. The folks down there didn't seem too thrilled to hear a Brazilian accent. I'm not sure myself the UN's wisdom in appointing a Sudamerican — hell, an actual *Norça* — the mission commander.

Our frigate, the supply ship and *De Gama* all landed at the Amazon Spaceport. Bit of a pompous name for a cleared slab of plasticrete with a blockhouse at one corner. Half the town turned out to see us land. Lots of grim faces. The rebels and their allies were all standing close to the ship, while some of the Brazilians stranded here pulled up in a couple of trucks as we landed.

Vargas refused to discuss policy or strategies in advance. He talked about meeting with local leaders to negotiate a peaceful transfer of authority. If there's a gene for tact, Vargas didn't get it. Of course, with 83 other *Norça* standing around him, the [locals had] little choice but to be polite and agree to a meeting. I don't know if the whole landing team consisted of actual psions — 83 is

a damn huge bunch considering the order's small numbers — but they were an impressive group.

The planet is a grim place, worse than the old holos suggested. Lichen is the national flower, and the gravity really gets to you after a while. The main town was renamed New Hope and looks more like a shanty town than a military base. The locals seem to have kept things in good repair, but the prefab buildings definitely show wear.

The interesting news is [that a number of colonist *Norça*] seem to have joined the rebel workers. Vargas wasn't happy to learn that. Apparently the reinforcements that the Brazilians called in from Earth surren-

dered once ships stopped arriving after 2114. The rebels and anyone who agreed to their terms remained in New Hope, while everyone who couldn't deal with that was ostracized to a scientific outpost about 50 kilometers away. Only about 2,100 people were condemned to the outpost, most of them military officers, political types, the troops sent in to put down the revolt, and about half the *Norça* stranded here. The rest of [the folks either] didn't care who was in charge or decided to join the winning team.

It's difficult to learn any real details out here, beyond the "party-line" facts. The locals aren't terribly inclined to talk to any of us. They believe we're in league with the Brazilians. They talk to me a bit since I'm a doctor, but they're a pretty suspicious bunch. I can't really blame them.

It looks like things have been pretty quiet since Earth ships stopped arriving. They realized they were on their own and decided to make the best of it. There has been trade between the two [communities, but also some fist] fights, vandalism and petty theft — nothing serious, other than some suicides and one guy who supposedly went on a killing spree two years ago.

Now, it's all changed. Here only two days and there've already been numerous brawls between the workers and old military personnel. Anti-Brazilian graffiti has appeared all over town. We may be in for a whole lot of trouble here, especially if Vargas gets his way.

On a positive note >>> text lost <<< Bringing fresh fruit and frozen food was an excellent idea. Distributing 25,000 oranges was actually fun. If we had more, they'd become the new currency. The colonists are also happy with the new trucks and hydroponics units. Things were pretty marginal here when they lost contact. They avoided severe starvation, but I've treated a number of cases of malnutrition.

>>>

<<<

Later....

Negotiations are not going well. Vargas insists that [the colony be returned to Brazilian] rule. He is willing to make concessions for the loss of contact. He's also will-

ing to grant amnesty to the rebels, but only if they promise to fulfill the remainder of their contracts — not including the time since the uprising. Most workers would have to spend at another five years on this rock meeting those terms. Needless to say, the locals are far from pleased.

A number of the local Norça are arguing the workers' cause. They seem to have some influence over Vargas, but there's no love lost among the sympathetic Norça and the biokinetics whom we brought. There have already been several fights between the psions. Injuries from shifter fights are a mess to treat.

The workers are [demanding total] freedom from their contracts. Most of them want to settle freely on this wretched rock. I guess any place becomes home if you live there long enough. A [few want transport] back to Earth. I'm authorized to take back anyone in need of medical treatment. I plan to be liberal in my assessment of "need" if a person wants to go. As for the rest, unless we can get some objective UN intervention, it's [up to Vargas. If] he keeps going like he has, this place is going to explode. We can't let another revolt develop, especially not among people who have lived like this for so long.

"THIS WORLD CANNOT EXIST
HALF SLAVE AND HALF FREE"



REBEL POSTER >>> AMAZON SPACEPORT



Supplemental Report — Major Rodrigo Vargas, Norça Com- mander and Mission Leader

The planet itself is much as we left it. I am still reminded of the Andean highlands, except that the storms here are worse and the only life is hideous purple lichens. It is a hard world, and not beautiful at all, but it is still striking — a suitable place for our soldiers to train and live. The people here have survived well. Most are thin, but their health appears to be good and their spirits are unbroken.

They have pitted [themselves against this] forbidding world and have won. The prefab barracks and plasticrete work [centers have been supplemented and] in some cases replaced by buildings made from the native rock, held together with locally made mortar. The training fields are larger and the population has grown by 2,300. They call the main base New Hope. It has taverns, churches and a sports field. I am told they sometimes perform plays in the town hall. They also make their own beer; it's better than you would expect. I admire these people, but I have not forgotten my mission.

The political situation is most troubling. The rebels [were in charge as] we expected, but relations between our forces and theirs has become amicable over the past five years. Only half of our



people here are still loyal to our cause, including [most of the Norça] who were stationed here. In part, I can understand how our people have become... misguided. They were isolated on a harsh world. They had to work together to survive. It's only natural that they would develop mutual respect. However, now [that we have returned to] bring this lost world back into the fold, some of our own reject us.

I must thank *Pai de Norça* himself for giving me authority to settle this situation as I see fit. It will not be easy. Imprisoning or fining the workers for a five-year-old revolt would serve only to make us hated. I rejected that option as soon as I took a careful look at this place. The rebels have wholly unreasonable, but entirely understandable demands. Most want to stay and make this hard world their home. The rest want to go home. Dr. Sauviere has great sympathy for [the rebels and will] fill out the appropriate paperwork to send any who are in poor health home, along, I suspect, with a number who are healthy. I am disinclined to stop her. Our efforts have no place for those who simply give up.

Ultimately, the Norça position is clear. [We need a] military base here; these people want to make this world their home. Most of them have four or five years left on their contracts. I will

propose that contracts be doubled in duration, but that work hours be halved, to give the workers purpose and freedom, simultaneously. In [their spare time, these] people can use their skills and any equipment that is not needed for official purposes to develop non-military regions as they will. At the end of their terms, they will receive grants of land on this world — or if they serve well, military commissions and postings here.

If the star makes the world uninhabitable, everyone under contract could be resettled at no cost to continue work on a safer world. I have not made this offer yet; I have been waiting for the locals to adjust to our return. The rebels resent us. There have been brawls and other incidents. Nothing serious, so I have not brought charges against anyone. But if [this is not settled] soon, there could be war once again.

I am military commander here, but I do not wish to fight our own troops, especially not other Norça. I know several of these people personally. Tomorrow I talk to the Norça who were stranded here to convince them to work with us. Be wary of reports from Dr. Sauviere; she remains silent about her views, but is not my ally. If I run into difficulty, I fear she will try to make this a Trinity matter. We cannot allow >>> text lost <<<

Credits

Author: John Snead

Developers: Andrew Bates and Ken Cliffe

Concept Suggested by: Mikko Rautalahti

Editor: Carl Bowen

Graphics: Richard Thomas

Cover Art: Shaggy

Artists: Jon Carroll, Rob Dixon, Jeff Holt, Matt Milberger, Christopher Moeller, David Robyn Seeley, Richard Thomas



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, GA 30021
USA

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