



# *Engage!*

*- A magazine for space faring mercenaries*

*Vol. 13, Issue 3, March 2250*



**Published monthly by the Conquista Corporation, Finis Prime**

# In this issue...

## From the Editor

Welcome all, whether you be merchants, mercenaries, or just wishful amateurs, to another edition of *Engage!*. In this issue, as always, we will strive to provide you with the most useful information – and the best entertainment – that a mercenary could possibly have. If you're new to the trade, we advise you to take a good, long look at all that we have to offer – it might save your life. And if you're an old hand... well, it probably already did, a few times.

So, what do we got this month? First, we travel to the Outer Rim Worlds, where we examine the recent spate of crises and the Outer Rim Worlds' plans for the future. Already more than semi-independent, the Outer Rim Worlds seem determined to push towards complete secession, and the Federation seems equally determined to pull them back into the fold. Whatever may happen, you can be sure there will be jobs aplenty for the diligent mercenary.

Following many, many letters from our readers, we then examine the newly-revamped Federation space laws. There isn't anywhere near enough space to examine them all, but we do take a look at the most important changes. Well worth reading, even if you think your operations are strictly legit – you'd be surprised how easy it is to land in jail these days!

And then we proceed to our usual sections. First, we take a closer look at what's coming out of the shipyards these days. The last year has seen many new designs appear on the market, and believe us – you do not want to ignore these babies.

Then we go on to the usual short fiction; in this issue, we take a look at life on the other side of the thin blue line of legality. If you ever wondered what it's like to be a pirate – and I know you have – don't miss this month's story. And we remind you, *anyone* can submit stories to us for publication.

Finis Prime almost always seems to have a few unemployed mercenaries hanging about, and this month is no exception. Even if you aren't looking for crewmen right now, this section is well worth checking – you never know when you might need to replace that Executive Officer...

As always, we end the issue with our very own mail order catalogue. If you are looking to upgrade your ship, look no further. I've heard many a mercenary say that our merchandise costs much more than in some shops – but when your life is on the line, you'll want to know if you can trust your equipment.

So there you have it, another edition of *Engage!*. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

1. From the Editor	p. 1
2. Life on the edge – will the Outer Rim Worlds go to war?	p. 2
3. Legal matters – following the recent constitutional changes, we take a look at some of the laws that might affect a mercenary these days.	p. 4
4. The Shipyards – a look at the latest ship designs, and some others that you might encounter these days.	p. 6
5. Short fiction – if information is silver, entertainment is gold...	p. 10
6. Classifieds – are you hiring?	p. 13
7. Mail Order Catalogue – equipment here might cost a bit more than on the street, but at least you <i>know</i> it will work...	p. 14

# Life on the edge

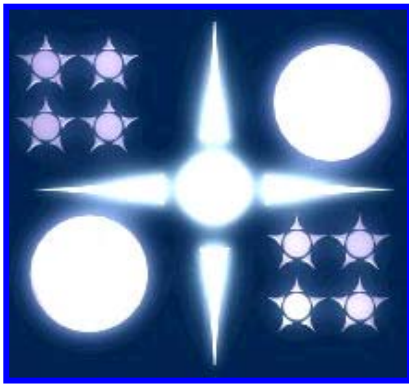
**Following a year of fruitless negotiations, it seems that there is little else to do now but to brace for war between the Outer Rim and the Federation. Janice Carpenter visits the Outer Rim for a closer look...**



*The Outer Rim Worlds' new crest*

“There is nothing they can do to change our minds now,” says Governor Gardner with a grim smile. If one didn’t notice the steely, determined glimmer in his eyes, one might be tempted to disregard this small, unimposing man.

And yet, Governor Gardner is now one of the most important people of the known galaxy – the Governor of



*The crest of the Federation*

Hyraxan VII is probably the most influential of Outer Rim leaders. When, on April 14<sup>th</sup> last year, the Outer Rim Worlds decided to secede, it was Gardner that announced the decision to the rest of the galaxy. Now, following a year of fruitless negotiations with the Federation, the decision to go to war or not will almost certainly fall on his shoulders.

“When we ask for help against pirates, they don’t send a single ship. But when we organise our own militia to make our trade routes safe – then, suddenly, the skies are swarming with Fed ships,” the Governor continues, explaining the Outer Rim’s decision to seek independence.

“The same goes for money, of course. Over the last two years before our secession, 86 per cent of our requests for additional funding were turned down by the Federation Council.”

“The other 14 per cent were requests from loyalist governors, for money to combat secessionist activity,” he adds. “Naturally, when the time came for us to pay the taxes, there was hell if even a single cent was missing.”

But if the Outer Rim complains about being treated more like inferior colonies than equal partners in the Federation, Federal officials respond by pointing out the degree of corruption and lawlessness in the Outer Rim. The Federal Second Fleet’s Admiral Kelsen has been particularly vocal about this.

“How else are we to act,” he demands, “when the people we deal with are either corrupt or incompetent? Over the last year, the Second Fleet has recorded over 200 acts of piracy in the Outer Rim – almost twice as



*Admiral Kelsen, Federation Second Fleet*



much as before their secession. And we have strong evidence that many of these acts were committed not by pirates from Tortuga, but by the Outer Rim militias themselves.”

Whatever the case may be, it seems that after a year’s of negotiations, the two sides were no nearer to a peaceful solution. Three weeks ago, following an especially frustrating meeting, the Outer Rim Worlds’ negotiators finally walked out of the negotiations, announcing that if they couldn’t gain independence peacefully, there were other means available.

“I had worked for our negotiating team for seven months now,” says one Outer Rim negotiator. “I can tell you that over those seven months, not once had we had a truly productive session. To have productive negotiations, you need a partner on the other side of the table, and we found that we didn’t have a partner. The Federation wasn’t negotiating for our independence, they were negotiating for our surrender.”

As hopes for a peaceful solution rapidly fade, both sides now prepare for war. Admiral Kelsen last week officially asked the Federation Council for permission to switch the Second Fleet to Wartime Alert status. Such a move would mean a significant relaxation of the rules of engagement, allowing among other things, ships from the Second Fleet to engage *potentially* hostile targets. Currently, the only time a Federal ship is allowed to engage in combat is in self-defence, or against a vessel that is known to have committed an act of piracy.

A further implication of this would be the application of the so-called Emergency Powers Act to ships of the Second Fleet, allowing them to shoot to kill upon anyone who is suspected of a criminal act and has failed to show up in court within six months of his legal notice.

The Outer Rim has not been waiting patiently either. By now, the newly-formed Outer Rim Navy has almost as many ships as the Federation’s Second Fleet, even if their ships are somewhat inferior in quality.

Both sides have also been bolstering their forces in a different manner – mercenaries. Following years of being treated as little more than pirates, mercenaries now find themselves being actively courted by both the Outer Rim and the Federation. In both cases, large profits can be gained on a per-mission basis.

The battle lines have been drawn, military bases are preparing for combat, and with every day, the chances of last-minute negotiations saving the galaxy for war diminish. And the war, when it comes, is likely to be long and bloody.

“If that’s what they want, we’ll fight them to the end. We’ll fight them in the air, we’ll fight them on the ground, we’ll fight them in the cold vacuum of space,” says Governor Gardner. “If they expect a quick surrender, they’re in for a nasty surprise. Even if it takes us an entire lifetime, we’ll still fight and we will be independent.”



*All over the galaxy, military bases are preparing for impending action*

# Legal matters

***There is little more frustrating than being punished for something you didn't realise was a crime. This month, Leung Woo-Mei takes a look at some of the most significant of the new Federation space laws.***

So, for the umpteenth time, you find yourself paying a fine for what you thought was perfectly legal. Or is it jail, this time? Either way, you are probably far, far from happy about it.

Well, there's little you can do about the past. You'll have to pay that fine, or sit out that jail term. For the future, though, it's worthwhile to study the recent changes to the Federation space laws. Forewarned is forearmed, after all.

Perhaps most importantly, we must warn you that with the re-implementation of the Emergency Powers Act, even the smallest crime can cost you dearly – if you receive a legal notice informing you that an accusation has been levelled against you, and ignore it for more than half a year, the military will be authorised to attack your ship on sight... and shoot to kill. The crime that was committed does not alter the situation in any way – whether you are running away from a murder charge or from a parking fine, you *could* be killed for it.

## Illegal Substances

Amongst the recent changes, one of the most significant is the decision to introduce prevention laws in regards to drugs and other contraband articles. This is the first time since the year 2047 that you can be punished not only for possession of contraband, but for doing anything that might constitute an attempt to obtain contraband. For example, if it can be proven in court that you attempted to contact the Syndicate, you will be punished. The punishments for this offence include:

- A fine constituting 10 per cent of your finances (first offence)
- A fine constituting 25 per cent of your finances (second offence)
- A jail term of 3 months (third offence and onwards)

Possession of illegal substances, of course, has been illegal since practically forever. However, some of the rules governing the punishment of these crimes has changed recently. The new punishments are as follows:

- A fine constituting 25 per cent of your finances (first offence)
- A jail term of 6 months (second offence and onwards)

## Violent Crimes

Since the reintroduction of piracy laws in the year 2156 (prior to that, no such laws were needed since 2046), these laws have been among the most flexible laws, at certain times even changing every year. It should be noted that these laws only apply to attacks on privately-owned, and *legal* vessels. Attacks on government-owned ships are punished with different laws, while attacking pirates is of course not considered a crime. Finally, note that even if you fail your attack, you can still be punished if your would-be victim manages to identify your ship and report you to the government. The punishments for this crime include:

- A jail term of 12 months (first offence)
- A jail term of 24 months (second offence)

- A jail term of 36 months (third offence and onwards)

One of the more interesting changes in last year's constitutional amendments was the changes to the collaboration charge. Traditionally, all attacks on government ships constituted collaborating with the enemy. From now on, however, the collaboration charge will only be used in cases of minor collaboration (petty espionage), and will therefore not be relevant to the average mercenary. As for government ships, attacking them will be punished under the charge of 'assault on government representatives'. It is notable that, like in the case of piracy, your attack's failure does *not* mean you won't be punished. There is only one kind of penalty for this crime, no matter how many times you've committed it:

- A jail term of 36 months (first offence and onwards)

When, in December last year, the pirate Maya Svenson proved audacious enough to attack and pillage a planet, the civilian casualties were significant enough that a new criminal charge had to be introduced – mass murder. Prior to this, multiple murders were dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, the case-by-case system simply wasn't sufficient for the immensities of the crime committed by Svenson, and genocide laws had been unused for so long that all were extremely out-of-date. It is for this reason that the new mass murder charge was introduced. It will be applied to all attacks, and attempted attacks, on planets or other large civilian targets such as space stations. The penalty for this crime is this:

- A jail term of 60 months (first offence and onwards)

In this article, we have of course only listed the major laws, which we believe are likely to affect the average mercenary. Naturally, this doesn't mean you are exempt from other laws – certainly, landing on your local market is likely to result in a hefty parking charge – but with this knowledge, you should be able to avoid most of the pitfalls that might otherwise force you to spend a part of your life in jail.

# The Shipyards

***The number of new models churned out by shipyards over the last year or so is indeed nothing short of astounding. Join James Watts as he takes a closer look at some of the newest vessels... and some old favourites, too.***

When I first saw a Stargun-class fighter, I was sceptical – based on a Starwolf, I thought... why, what good could possibly come out of a Starwolf? You can imagine my surprise, then, when it turned out that the Stargun was indeed quite an impressive little fighter. Nothing to attack a capship with, of course, but certainly good enough for your everyday voyages. But I digress... the question is, when was the last time you checked out what's waiting in the shipyards? Take a look, you might find something you like...

## New Vessels

The cream of the crop – these are the vessels that had appeared within the last twelve months. If you don't know any of them, it's probably time to visit the shipyards and upgrade...



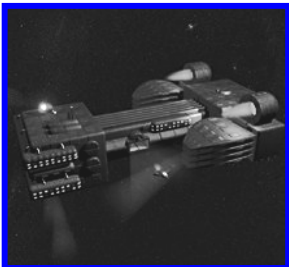
**PSF-12A Stargun** – Poseidon Corporation's Stargun-class Fighter, **\$10,000**. This ship has only been out for two months, and already it has acquired three different industry awards for its efficient design. At its heart, the Stargun is a *heavily* modified version of the ancient Starwolf design. This ship is an excellent choice for bounty hunters looking to upgrade from a Starwolf. The ship has slightly better shields than the Starwolf, as well as much-improved weapons systems, both in terms of accuracy and firepower. Merchants beware – the ship has very little in terms of cargo capacity.



**OSB-1B Bomber** – Original Systems' Bomber-class Bomber, **\$25,000**. An upgrade of the OSB-1A, the new B version of the Bomber is much improved over its bug-ridden predecessor. The ship has more akin with capital ships than fighters, and is capable of using torpedoes. It has very heavy shields for a ship of its size – nearly three times as much as the Starwolf. Its weapons array is no more powerful than that of a Starwolf (of course, the torpedoes help *a lot*), but it is a bit more accurate. In terms of cargo space, this ship is nothing to shout about – it has only 60 per cent of a Starwolf's capacity. The Bomber's speed also leaves much to be desired – it could overtake a Union-class freighter, but very little else.



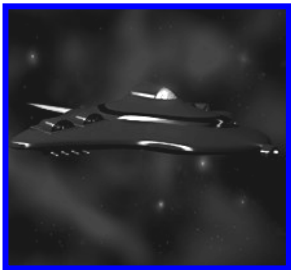
**MCC-7A Buccaneer** – Mars Corporation's Buccaneer-class Corvette, **\$200.000**. This new design from Mars Corp is in fact an overhauled Ferendar Corvette, optimised for combat and especially boarding action. In the course of its upgrades, the Buccaneer has been given a somewhat more powerful gun array than the Ferendar. Most importantly, however, the ship's crew capacity is more than twice that of a Ferendar, while the efficiency of the new computer controls of the ship allow it to be run with a bare two people. The price of all these upgrades has been the cargo hold, which is only a bit more than half of the Ferendar's... of course, that still leaves it with four times the space of a Starwolf. The Buccaneer is also twice as fast as the Ferendar, and capable of catching up with any capship.



**OSCR-3B Neptun** – Original Systems' Neptun-class Cruiser, **\$1.000.000**. The Neptun is a truly revolutionary design from Original Systems. A light but powerful vessel, it is capable of taking on almost all capital ships, except perhaps the Marauder and the Overlord. Its gun arrays are almost twice as accurate as those of a Starwolf, and somewhat more powerful than those on an Exeter-class destroyer. It is not a fast ship, with only half the speed of a Buccaneer, but its large cargo hold – capable of containing one third of the vast Union-class freighter's cargo – makes up for this. Its shields are significantly better than those of an Exeter, and only slightly inferior to those of a Marauder. The ship is capable of sustaining up to 40 crewmen, and requires at least 12 for basic operations.

## Older Vessels

Slightly older, but certainly still very powerful vessels. These are ships designed within the last ten years. While new models are coming out all the time, these are certainly still worth taking a look at.



**CCC-1C Shadowcat** – Conquista Corporation's Shadowcat-class Corvette, **\$50.000**. A favourite amongst mercenaries, this small corvette's limited stealth abilities make it uniquely suited for covert operations and blockade-running. The vessel is slower than the Starwolf, but still as fast as the Buccaneer. Its efficient control system allows it to be run with just one extra crewmen, and the ship can fit a total of four extra men. It has shields nearly twice as powerful as those of a Starwolf. Its weapon systems are also much more accurate than those of a Starwolf, as well as being slightly more powerful. Most importantly, it has three times a Starwolf's cargo space – an excellent and cheap vessel for the beginning trader.



**CCF-4A Avenger** – Conquista Corporation's Avenger-class Fighter, **\$50.000**. The Avenger is a sleek design that only marginally missed out on being placed in the 'new vessels' category. This ship is extremely powerful for a fighter, with nearly three times the shields of a Starwolf, as well as a much higher accuracy rating and relatively heavy weapons arrays. Most notable is its speed – the Avenger is capable of outrunning *any* vessel known to mankind. Too bad its cargo hold is almost non-existent...

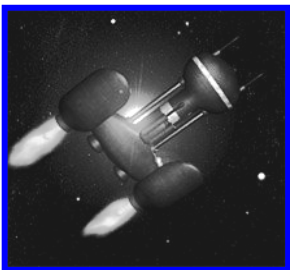




**PSDL-2A Fang** – Poseidon Corporation’s Fang-class Light Destroyer, **\$100.000**. This light, fast destroyer is mainly used for escort duties and light spearhead assaults behind enemy lines. It has no more cargo space than a Shadowcat-class Corvette, and its weapon systems are only slightly more powerful than those of an Avenger, though more accurate. Its shields are much better than any fighter or corvette, though, and the ship is more than capable of interdicting enemy cargo traffic. You will need at least 6 crewmen to run it, however, and its maximum of 16 crewmen will make it very difficult to board anything more powerful than a Ferendar.



**MCC-6C Ferendar** – Mars Corporation’s Ferendar-class Corvette, **\$100.000**. The Ferendar corvette is optimised for cargo-hauling. It has a sizeable cargo hold, which can contain more than twice the cargo capacity of a Shadowcat-class Corvette. It is, however, slower and requires more crew – at least 4 men. Its shields are inferior to those of a Fang. Furthermore, while its weapons are quite accurate, they are no more powerful than those of a Shadowcat. Combat-thirsty mercenaries are advised to stay away.



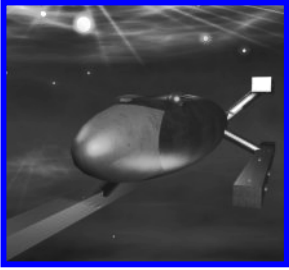
**CCD-3F Exeter** – Conquista Corporation’s Exeter-class Destroyer, **\$500.000**. The Exeter-class is a mainstay of the Federation fleet. This all-purpose destroyer is used for, well, everything from blockade-building to blockade-running, and above all, pirate-hunting. It has very accurate weapons, which are also more powerful than those of a Dragon-class light cruiser. The ship is amongst the fastest of capital ships, and still manages to hold more cargo than a Shadowcat-class Corvette. Its shields are also quite effective, being slightly more powerful than those of a Ferendar. However, you will need at least 8 men to run this vessel, and the maximum of 25 will make boarding actions somewhat difficult.



**MCF-19E Union** – Mars Corporation’s Union-class Freighter, **\$1.000.000**. The Union-class is the biggest freighter currently available, and it has a cargo hold bigger than that of any other vessel, bar none. It does not, of course, have especially powerful weapons, though it remains powerful and accurate enough to make short work of any foolish Starwolf. Its shields are very powerful for a freighter, surpassing those of an Exeter-class destroyer. Its speed, however, is quite poor, and its crew requirements sizeable – at least 12 men are needed for this ship. You will, however, want to have the maximum possible (30 men), in case you run into pirates.



**OSCRL-4A Dragon** – Original Systems’ Dragon-class Light Cruiser, **\$800.000**. The Dragon is the primary vessel of the Federation Marine Corps. It is not an especially powerful warship, being inferior in both accuracy and firepower to the Exeter-class destroyer. Its speed also leaves much to be desired – it is amongst the slowest of capital ships. Fortunately, its shields equal those of a Union, and its cargo hold surpasses that of a Ferendar-class corvette. The ship does not require more than 12 men to run it. It is desirable, however, to get as close as possible to the maximum (60 men) in order to use this ship for what it does best – boarding actions.



**MCBB-6C Overlord** – Mars Corporation’s Overlord-class Battleship, **\$5,000,000**. The Overlord is the biggest ship design ever conceived, bar none. It is the most powerful combat vessel available, and probably the only one truly capable of planetary raids. It does, however, require 30 crewmen to even get it off the ground. Curiously, despite its incredible size, the Overlord still has a smaller cargo hold than the Union-class freighter. Its other drawback is its speed – the Overlord is the slowest capital ship currently available. It takes a skilled navigator to lose a pursuer, in this ship... but then again, why run, when you’re invincible?

## Obsolete Vessels

Vessels older than ten years. Although we have labelled them as obsolete, don’t think for a moment that these can be ignored. They are still quite powerful, especially the Marauder... they just happen to be getting on in years, that’s all.



**PSF-11F Starwolf** – Poseidon Corporation’s Starwolf-class Fighter, **\$5,000**. The oldest fighter currently available, the Starwolf also happens to be the most commonly encountered ship in the known galaxy. Its main benefit, of course, is its low price. However, most captains will soon feel the need to upgrade – the Starwolf is neither powerful in combat, nor well-suited for cargo-hauling. Nonetheless, its small cargo hold will be sufficient for a start, and with several equipment upgrades, the ship may still be capable of downing a Shadowcat or a Stargun.



**OSCR-14D Marauder** – Original Systems’ Marauder-class Cruiser, **\$2,000,000**. The Marauder is certainly an old design, but it is still very powerful. Only now, with the release of the Neptun, have ship designers been able to produce a more efficient destroyer. The Marauder is superior to the Neptun in every way, except the price. Indeed, this ship will be capable of downing any other vessel, except for the Overlord-class battleship. Its only problem is its speed – or rather, lack of it. Note, however, that the ship requires a massive 22 crewmen for basic operations.

# Short Fiction

***Ever wondered what it would be like to live as a pirate? This week's story will show you. And you know it's realistic, because the writer, Juni Etrés, has only just finished her jail term for piracy.***

"God damn it!" Jason swore as he stared at the computer screen. What bad luck! Just when he thought they would make it, too. He pounded the screen with his fist. A Federation Fang was guarding the jump point.

When his scanners had reported an incoming ship, he had hoped – prayed – for a weak, cargo-laden freighter, and not a bloody Fed capship! His old, battered Shadowcat-class corvette was barely able to take out a Ferendar. And a Fang? That was simply asking too much.

But dammit, this was the only way! He already had two counts of piracy, and an assault on a Federal Starwolf hanging over his head. Prison was not an option, it simply wasn't. Not this time, not again.

That was why he had decided to make a run for Rocks Paradise – for Tortuga – after taking out the Fed Starwolf that had pursued him across half the Finis system. And it had been going well so far – the jump point into Warfield had been unguarded. When they emerged on the other side of the jump point and charged across the Warfield system at full speed, everything seemed to indicate that they'd be able to make it to the Rocks Paradise jump point. And of course, once the jump was made... well, there was only Tortuga on the other side. The pirates there knew him well, and he'd be safe... but... his eyes returned to the Fed starship on his scanner.

No, retreat was not an option. The only way was through the jump point. And if they had to fight the damned Fang, so be it.

"Tanya," he said to his co-pilot. "Can you go defrost the others?"

She blinked, stretching out her arms. She had been taking a nap before the alarm, and she still wasn't fully awake. "Jason," she started, pointing at the scanner. "We don't..."

"We don't have a choice, Tanya." He cut her off. "We simply don't."

"We could try to hide in the asteroids for a while... they'll stop searching eventually..."

Jason smiled grimly. "Not this time, love. We've been a thorn in their side for much too long."

She sighed, and got up. They both knew how low their chances were. Still, they couldn't just give up. Hell, a Fang wasn't that big a ship... there was *always* a chance.

Jason watched the girl as she walked out of the cockpit. He didn't mind dying, himself. It was her he was worried about. He grimaced. A pirate, caring about someone? Most people thought that wasn't possible.

As the Fed starship got closer and closer, he pressed the red alert button. Not that it changed much, but the noise of the siren would at least help Tanya wake up the others. To save precious food and water, they had spent the nearly year-long trip in freeze chambers. A cheap solution, and undoubtedly far more comfortable than living for a year inside a spaceship as cramped as the Shadowcat-class was. The downside, of course, was waking up – it took time to wake up from the freeze-induced stupor, and time was something they didn't have right now.

A few minutes later, Tanya finally returned, followed by their two crewmates. Tim and Yousuf were both still groggy from the freeze-sleep, and they moved with the stiffness of limbs unused for many months.

“There’s a Fang guarding the jump point, guys. It’s possible that they’re just a routine patrol, but it’s far more likely that they were sent here to intercept us. Besides, even a routine patrol would be suspicious of a ship trying to jump into Rocks Paradise.”

“If they board, Jason, we’re dead meat,” Yousuf told him.

“We’re dead meat if they don’t board, too,” Jason replied. “But first, we’re going to try to run past them. We just might be able to jump before they do too much damage. Man your battlestations, people.”

“Aye, captain!”

His three companions took their places at the various consoles in the cockpit. Just like old times, he thought with a slight smile. Well, it might work...

“Systems check!”

“Weapon systems, check,” Yousuf replied.

“Scanner check, damage control, check,” said Tim.

“Shields check, jump drive check,” Tanya added.

“And navigation, check,” Jason finished. Everything ship-shape. The Scrap Tiger was an old ship, but a well-kept one, and everything worked... well, most of the time. “Hey, who knows,” Jason said with a forced laugh. “Maybe this evening we’ll have our very own Fang.”

The others grinned. None of them really believed his words, of course. Still, they were used to bad situations, and knew how to laugh in the face of death. That was the life of a pirate. One day, you’re swimming in gold, and the next – in your own blood.

Time passed. Jason scratched his beard. He didn’t remember when he last bothered to shave properly. A year ago, maybe?

The computer emitted a small beep. Incoming comm transmission. “Incoming Shadowcat, Federal starship FSS York here. Incoming Shadowcat, you are hereby ordered to heave to and prepare to be boarded.”

He exchanged glances with his crew. Here we go, he thought.

“Incoming Shadowcat, do you copy?”

“I’m switching to full speed,” Jason said. “Shields, activate all systems. Weapons, be ready to fire.”

“Aye, captain,” Tanya replied. “Shields, complying.”

“Weapons ready,” Yousuf added.

“Incoming Shadowcat, you must heave to or we will commence f...” the system went quiet as Jason shut it down.

They were only a few hundred metres away from the Fang now, and only a few kilometres from the jump point itself. Maybe, Jason told himself. Maybe...

Suddenly, two bright points appeared near the FSS York. “They’ve fired torpedoes, captain,” Tim announced.

“Ignore them, dammit! Activate ECM, and let’s stay at full speed!”

“ECM active...” Tim replied. “Oh, damn it! They’re not falling for it. Torps staying on course.”

“We’re not changing course! No evasive manoeuvres, we can’t afford to slow down!”

“Brace for impact!” Tim yelled. “Impact in five... four... three... two... one...”

Suddenly, the ship went spinning, kicked in the side by two vast explosions. All around the cabin, Jason heard alarms... and then nothing. The lights went dark, and so did all the computer screens.

“God damn!” Jason exclaimed. “I don’t believe this. And where’s the emergency system?”

As if to answer his question, the computer screens lit back up. Dim red lights were activated around the cabin, allowing them to at least see each other’s outlines in the murky darkness.

“Damage control?”



“We’ve lost an engine and one of the generators,” Tim said. “We’ll be fine if we don’t take any more... oh crap! They’ve changed course... they’re going to board us!”

Jason grimaced. Well, maybe the complex manoeuvres required for boarding would at least keep them too busy to fire any more torps.

“Going into evasives,” he announced. “Still keeping the general direction of the jump point.”

Docking two spaceships when one of them didn’t want to dock, was an operation of almost incredible complexity, and any sort of evasives would at least slow down, if not totally disrupt, the procedure. In the meantime, however, the evasive manoeuvres had greatly slowed down their own progress towards the jump point.

Just keep calm, Jason told himself. Stay calm, you’re almost there.

“How’s everyone doing?” He asked. “Tanya?”

“I’m fine, Jason. I’m still here, anyway.”

“I don’t know about you guys, but I’d sure be better off on the other side of that jump point,” Yousuf added with a grin.

“Heh...” Jason smiled. “Tim, distance?”

“Two kilometres. But *they* are only ninety metres away, and they ain’t giving up!”

“Too bad, dammit. We ain’t giving up either! Not when we’re this close.”

“Wait...hold on...” Tim continued. “Sir, they’re slowing down. It looks like they’ve aborted the boarding... they’re firing their guns!”

They all felt the impact of a hundred small explosions across the ship. An illusion, Jason thought. It feels like the ship is being ripped apart... but in fact, the enemy’s guns had hit the shields. Had they struck the hull, there would be no time to feel anything.

“Shields?”

“Still holding,” Tanya told him. “But they won’t take more than two or three volleys like that!”

“Distance?”

“Seven hundred metres, captain. Time to start heating up the jump drive.”

“You heard him, Tanya.”

“Yes, sir!” The girl replied happily as she flicked a switch to activate the jump drive. “Jump in fifteen... fourteen...”

“They’re firing again!”

“Thirteen... twelve... eleven...”

Again, they all felt the impact as hundreds of gunshots splattered across the shields. They held... barely.

“Ten... nine... eight...”

Come on, damn it! We’re this close, Jason thought. We’re gonna make it!

“Seven... six... five... four...”

“Here comes another wave!” Tim exclaimed. “And they’re firing torpedoes, too!”

“Three... two...”

The ship lurched under the impact of gunfire. The shields crackled, and faded out. They had held off enough of the impact, though, that the little corvette managed to survive the firestorm.

“Torp impact in four...”

“One! Jumping!” Tanya exclaimed. Outside the front window, the stars faded into a bizarre show of multi-coloured lights – the inside of a jump tunnel.

“We made it!” Jason exclaimed, jumping up from his seat. He seized Tanya’s hand, pulling her up, and pressing her against him. “We made it.”

# Classifieds

Lost your crew somewhere? Need replacements, or maybe just expanding your operations? Either way, you've come to the right place – if you're hiring, any of these folks will gladly join up. If you yourself are looking for a new job, don't turn away either – this month, we've got two great offers here!

<p><b>Officer</b> looking for stable post, preferably as Junior Bossman or higher, with commensurate pay. Capable in self-defence and experienced in combat command. <i>If you your men run away at the first sight of the enemy, you need me!</i> Call me at <b>0901 3990 3964 8465</b>, or email me at <b>navyboy283@coldmail.com.finis</b></p>	<p><b>Twelve experienced crewmen</b>, looking for new job due to previous boss' bankruptcy. Can be hired as a group or individually. Looking for a modest income. <i>Just bought a bigger ship, have you? Need new pilots, or a navigator or two? An engineer, maybe? Call us!</i> Can be reached at the Sunny Fish Bar, <b>0901 3990 3920 5413</b>. Ask for Frank, please.</p>
<p>Seven battle-hardened mercenaries looking for work. Capable of killing anything, anytime, anywhere – if the price is right, of course. <i>Heading to the Outer Rim? You'll need skilled soldiers in case you're boarded...</i> Call us at the Finis Prime Mercenary Agency, <b>0901 3990 3920 1902</b>, or email us at <b>killersforhire@finismerc.com.finis</b></p>	<p><b>Federation Space Marine</b> looking for a more profitable job. Extremely skilled in hand-to-hand combat, broad range of experience with the Small Arms 56 series, and Hyd-Fluorine Laser hand weaponry. Expert in use of 244mm calibre Mounted Miniguns, will bring her own equipment. <i>Who could possibly be a better fighter than someone who has spent the last ten years fighting professionally? You know you need me!</i> Call me at <b>0901 3990 3985 1029</b>, or email me at <b>minigunner@coldmail.com.finis</b></p>
<p><b>Experienced ship captain</b> looking for crew for newly-purchased Ferendar-class freighter, on trading route to Sirius. Good pay, combat highly unlikely. Crewmen with a criminal past need not apply. Call me at <b>0901 3990 3984 9871</b>, or email me at <b>jhouston@coldmail.com.finis</b></p>	<p><b>Reformed pirate</b> looking for decent work. Capable of pilotage, navigation, engineering, and all other ordinary chores. Also skilled in hand-to-hand combat, especially with the Small Arms 54 series. Will require timely payments. <i>Give an old pirate a chance! Who knows, my... past experience... might save your ship in battle?</i> Call me at the Red Dog Tavern, <b>0901 3990 3920 5392</b>. Ask for Brenda.</p>
<p><b>Ex-pirate officer</b> looking for honest work. Lots of battle experience, both in command and in hand-to-hand combat. <i>Your men running away from battle? If you hire me, they'll charge any enemy – I guarantee it!</i> Call me at <b>0901 3990 3985 1020</b>, or email me at <b>ljsilver@argh.com.finis</b></p>	<p><b>Need a new job?</b> Skilled in combat? The Federation wants YOU! Apply now! Criminal background does not matter, as long as there are no outstanding charges. Call us now – it won't be just a job, it will be an adventure! Call your local Federation Recruitment Office today, or call the Federation Navy HQ, Finis Prime, at <b>1 800 0001 0004 1241</b>. For more information, you may also email us at <b>recruitment@federationnavy.def.finis</b></p>

# Mail Order Catalogue

Every month, we guarantee you only the best quality merchandise, with delivery right to the door of your office or vessel. Interplanetary delivery also possible, at an extra charge. Please note that the prices listed here apply only to the Starwolf-class vessel. Other vessels require equipment of larger size, and will therefore cost more. The exception to this rule are torpedoes, which cannot be used by the Starwolf or any other fighters. In their case, the prices quoted are those for a Bomber-class vessel. For further information, please call us at **0901 3990 1920 4256**, or e-mail us at **mailorder@conquistacorp.com.finis**.

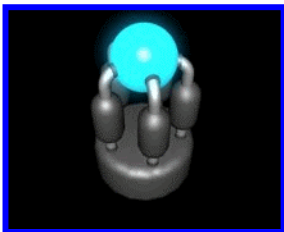
## Engines



**PCI04** – Poseidon Corporation’s Interplanetary engine Mark 4. **\$166**. This engine is a classic design from 2243. While incapable of jumping between systems, it is more than sufficient for interplanetary flight.

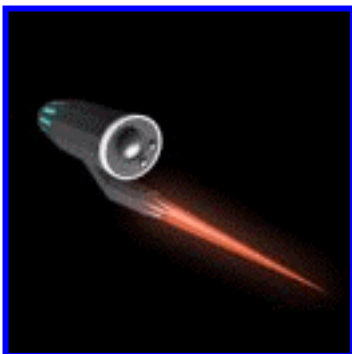


**OSSJ02** – Original Systems’ Standard Jump design Mark 2. **\$10.333**. A great improvement over OSSJ01, this engine has seen consistently high sales since its introduction in 2240.



**MCMG07** – Mars Corporation’s Military Grade engine Mark 7. **\$51.000**. Introduced onto the market only last year, this design is the best there is in the known galaxy. Using award-winning PlutonPlus technology, this engine allows the user to make jumps at speeds vastly superior to ordinary engines.

## Guns



**OSOL12B** – Original Systems’ Optical Laser cannon Mark 12B, **\$166**. Original Systems have always been best known for the quality of their laser weaponry, and this model does not disappoint. The OSOL12B offers a cheap, reliable weapon for anyone who cannot afford a more powerful one.



**OSXL01** – Original Systems' X-Ray Laser cannon Mark 1, **\$26.000**. The biggest innovation of this year is surely Original Systems' X-Ray Laser, which, utilising the exceedingly powerful GammaTRON technology (patent pending) allows the user to wreak havoc amongst enemy crews while causing only about as much damage to the ship's hull than would a standard laser weapon.



**OSAOL03** – Original Systems' Automatic Optical Laser cannon Mark 3, **2.833\$**. While slightly less accurate than last year's Mark 2, this weapon still provides a much-increased firing speed than conventional lasers. The loss of accuracy is well compensated by the fast rate of fire supported by the fully automatic targeting mode.

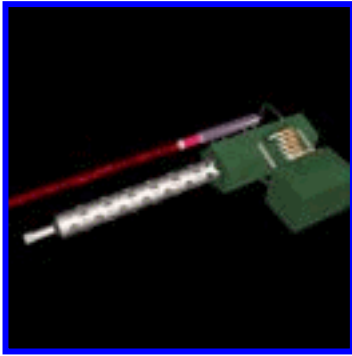


**MCP02** – Mars Corporation's Plasma cannon Mark 2, **\$25.666**. The Plasma cannon Mark 1, when released two years ago, was almost immediately pulled from the shelves when a number of weapons of this time exploded in use. It would appear, however, that Mars Corp have learned their lesson well – our own tests have shown that out of 100 guns, only 3 exploded during firing. This ratio is comparable to the 2.8 per 100 average ratio obtained during last year's OSOL12B tests. The newly-released MCP Mark 2 is an efficient gun with a damage potential far surpassing that of the ordinary laser cannon.



**MCHP01X** – Mars Corporation's Heavy Plasma cannon Mark 1X, **\$101.333**. While Original Systems stunned us this year with the innovativeness of their X-Ray Laser, Mars Corp stunned us equally when, a week after the release of the Plasma cannon Mark 2, they released onto the market the first experimental version of a heavy plasma weapon. This cannon is the most powerful weapon currently on the market, and it seems that it will probably remain so for an indefinite period of time. While its price may be frightening, we can assure you that this gun is well worth having!



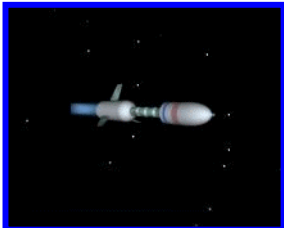


**CCF06** – Conquista Corporation’s Flechette cannon Mark 6, **\$15.500**. And of course, where would our catalogue be without our own range of Flechette Cannons? The Mark 6, now in its second year of existence, is a fast-firing and accurate weapon with a very large spread of fire. While this spread causes the overall damage to be slightly lower than that of a standard optical laser weapon, the device’s amazing rate of accuracy is more than enough to make up the damage in the long run.

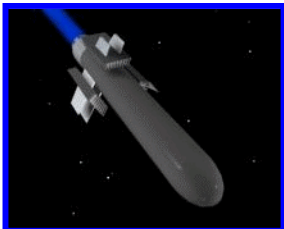


**CCAF01** – Conquista Corporation’s Automated Flechette cannon Mark 1, **\$51.000**. Our own innovation this year is the brand new, automatic version of the Flechette Cannon. This weapon has a similar damage and accuracy rating to the CCF06, but its fully automatic mode allows the user to fire much faster.

## Torpedoes



**PCHS18** – Poseidon Corporation’s Heat-Seeker torpedo Mark 18, **\$1.666**. Following last month’s cancellation by Mars Corporation of the launch of their MCIR range, and last year’s retirement of Original Systems’ OSHS Mark 47 with no plans of a Mark 48, the PCHS18 seems to be virtually the only option for the budget-conscious torpedo buyer. While much slower than conventional guns, these weapons cause a massive amount of damage. Note that their slow locking speed prevents you from firing them upon small fighters.

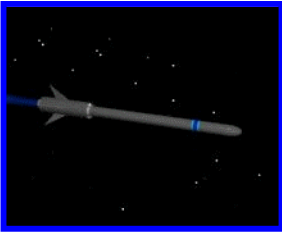


**PCMG01** – Poseidon Corporation’s Military-Grade torpedo Mark 1, **\$55.000**. This brand new range of military-grade weapons is sure to please any buyer interested more in efficiency than affordability. While extremely expensive compared to the PCHS18, this weapon is capable of a truly amazing degree of destruction. Note that its slow locking speed prevents you from firing them upon small fighters.

## Missiles

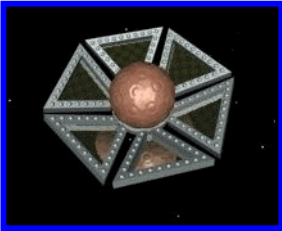


**PCFFM07** – Poseidon Corporation’s Friend-or-Foe Missile Mark 7, **\$333**. Revolutionary when released three years ago, the Mark 7 is showing signs of aging, but still remains the cheapest missile available to fighter pilots. A key element in Poseidon Corporation’s choke-hold on what’s left of the collapsing missile industry, and well worth buying. Note, however, that these missiles are totally incapable of penetrating the shields of a capital ship.

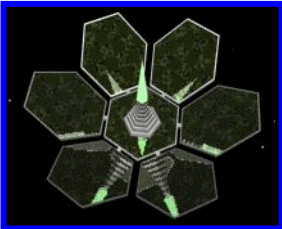


**PCMGFFM03** – Poseidon Corporation’s Military Grade Friend-or-Foe Missile Mark 3, **\$26.000**. The Mark 3 was only released seven months ago, and is still by far the most efficient missile that can be equipped by fighter pilots. If you need an extra ace-in-the-hole for that Starwolf of yours, you can’t go wrong with the PCMGFF03 – if you can afford it. Note, however, that these missiles are totally incapable of penetrating the shields of a capital ship.

## Electronic Counter-Measure Systems

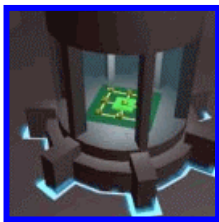


**PCECM07** – Poseidon Corporation’s Electronic Counter-Measure Mark 7, **\$333**. Following the recent collapse of the missile industry, most companies have stopped producing their offerings of ECM technology. Poseidon Corporation, however, is faithfully sticking by the customer with this affordable counter-measure system. The PCECM07 offers a reasonable rate of protection against missiles and torpedoes for a low, low price.

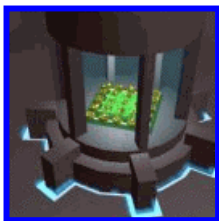


**PCMGECM03** – Poseidon Corporation’s Military-Grade Electronic Counter-Measure Mark 3, **\$51.000**. Believed by many to be the cause of the collapse of the missile industry, this device is indeed so efficient and capable that your enemies will simply have to give up on missiles and torpedoes!

## Targeting Systems



**CCST04** – Conquista Corporation’s Standard Targeting system Mark 4, **\$166**. This efficient little device enables you to target enemy targets far more accurately than with the unaided human eye. Now in its fourth year of existence, the Mark 4 has perhaps been surpassed in efficiency and capabilities by other, newer targeting systems, but it has certainly not been surpassed in affordability!



**CCSTP01** – Conquista Corporation’s Standard Targeting Plus system Mark 1, **\$5.333**. Originally to be released as CCST05, it soon became obvious that the advances between the CCST04 and this system were so vast that they warranted the creation of a new brand. The CCSTP01 offers a much higher degree of accuracy than the CCST04, while remaining far more affordable than the MCMGT03.



**MCMGT03** – Mars Corporation’s Military Grade Targeting system Mark 3, **\$51.000**. Released just two months ago, the Mark 3 is a great step forward from the Mark 2. A very accurate system that has been adopted by the Federation Navy as its primary system. Its price, however, is likely to frighten off most beginning mercenaries – this system is definitely for vets only.



**OSST01** – Original Systems’ Sniper System Mark 1, **\$202.667**. It would seem that this year has been one of great advances at Original Systems. This targeting system was released just a week after their release of the highly innovative x-ray laser, and the OSST01 is certainly no less innovative. This system offers a special targeting mode in which you can attain accuracy far beyond that of any other targeting system. If you can afford it, buy it!

**Engage!**

**© Copyright 2236-2250 Conquista Corporation**

**All rights reserved.**

Copyright infringements may result in a price being placed on your head.