The Hull Seals

State of the Seals

3305 Report

It's been a Hell of a Year

3305 has been a wonderful year for the Seals. Not only was it our first ever year of operation, it also has been a building year for our little core. We the Admins feel that it is important for you the Seals to know what we've been up to, what the plans are for the year to come, and where we go from here.

Report of the Admins

It's been a long Road...

Gettin' from there to here…
It's been a long time…
But our time is finally near!

Well, in all seriousness, 3305 has been a great year for the Seals. As our founding year, it's hard to really have a yardstick upon which to compare ourselves, no history to look back on and nothing but the future to look forward to. Over the last year, we've taken on an impressive 1,012 Hull Seal cases and 16 Kingfisher cases, with a success rate well over 98% combined success rate, in more than 430 different systems.

We've also seen a growth in the ranks of the Seals, with over 380 registered CMDRs contributing to the mission. This past year we've also seen the Seals take the crucible of Distant Worlds II head-on, being forged in fire to perfect our procedures and processes. It's been an amazing journey thus far, and we are excited to present this report of our activities over the past year - and what's to come.

Finances

by **Rixxan (22 Nov 3305)**

Running an organization like the Seals is not cheap. And often, we might get asked, "What do you guys spend all this money on?"

The Seals, like many organizations, rely on funding from merch and donations from other Seals in order to make ends meet. In the interest of security, we can't tell you all of the details of how we collect money, but we will do our best to be as complete as possible. All prices are in US Dollars.

The Seals administration maintains a US bank account, of which Noodle and Rixxan are on. This account is a holding pool for any and all donations to the Seals or any money we have. As of the time of writing, the balance of the Seal account is $387.91. For reference, that is about 5 months of reserve funding for the server, under the best of circumstances.

However, the Seals are currently using very minimal amounts of their IT infrastructure. We only maintain a small amount of servers, in singular locations. Look for the report from the CyberSeals for more information. In the future, our operating costs will likely rise.

How we Gather Money

Almost all the money that the Seals gather comes through our donations page, which can be found at https://hullseals.space/donate. Right now, we use Stripe as our donations page backend, which allows us to accept most credit cards in US Dollars. **(Editor's Note: As of time**

of publication, this has been expanded to US Dollars, Euros, UK Pounds, Australian Dollars, and Canadian Dollars.)

Expenses

The Seals have had two major expenditures during this last year or so. The first was approval for the creation of patches, which were later sold. This netted us around 214 dollars in net gain, after paying off the cost of the patches themselves. That total later went to paying for servers.

Server costs are footed by Rixxan on his own dime, with occasional reimbursement from the Seal body. In the past two weeks, the Admins approved a reimbursement of $388.69, paying for server costs from April to September. As the Seal server settings have gotten more and more complex, the costs of the servers have slowly risen. Steps are taken to minimize costs, but the servers are not cheap to rent.

What's Ahead

We are still looking at how to better manage money, and how we can set up more than just US currency. We are also looking at more ways that we can accept donations to fund our servers. Options such as a Patreon-esque solution or other similar ideas are in the works, however, they have not yet come to fruition.

In the Future

There are a few other Seal items that sometimes need to be paid for. Usually, these are very minor however the one outstanding repeating cost is the Seal domain name - currently hosted by hover.com and DNS managed by Cloudflare (More on this later). That has a 2-year cost of $25, which is not due for another year or so

HR

by DangerDan00 **(3 Jan 3306)**

"There will be moments in life when it feels like all is lost and there is no hope. It's in those moments you must stay strong and remember that there will always be hope. For if you lose hope, you will lose everything."
- Å.F.Clark

As typical with a group that is growing from its infancy, we will have growing pains. This comes at all levels especially when we're trying to find grooves of how things work. Together we're finding new ways to find the push buttons we never knew existed. We will find fictions between each other. And the last few months have been us finding our way of how to deal with all levels of friction & consequences.

We equally try to be group that allows people to be freely expressive while also making sure that everyone feels safe. This is a difficult, but worthy task. We want all people to feel wanted, accepted & excited to be apart of our group.

HR is a small group, but feel free to contact the Mods or admin your most comfortable with.

So remember we are a group built around helping others in a brutal cut throat Galaxy. WE HELP PEOPLE. We help people to prevent their last dying breath. So we need to remember to help ourselves as well.

We have learned and gotten better. Through necessity and want. We will continue to learn and be even better.

In the immortal words of Bill & Ted: Be excellent to one another!
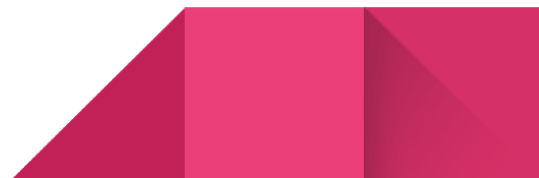
Legal Organization

by **Rixxan (22 Nov 3305)**

The Seals, when it comes to a legal sense, are in a major grey area. As such, a lot of our standing as an organization is oftentimes questionable. What we have to do, what we have to comply with.

The Seals stated goal at the beginning was admittedly to pirate our rodent brethren. Incorporate the 'business' end of the Seals outside of the realm of the actual gaming stuff as a registered nonprofit. (To see how the Rats operate, reference this webpage: https://confluence.fuelrats.com/display/FRKB/Non-Profit+Organization) Make it so that we rarely had to flash the legal card, and the rank and file Seal never saw - or cared - about the legal ending of the Seals. Unfortunately, that was not able to happen.

The Seals do not qualify in the United States as a registered nonprofit, at either the Federal or State levels. This has posed some issues finding how we fit as an organization. The reason the Rats can do things is that they are in the EU and the EU has different laws. Unlike numerous Elite: Dangerous player groups, and in fact unlike most, the Seals majority administration is in North America. (Hey, FDEV, fly us out and we'll still gladly attend anything)

As such, we've been left to our own devices somewhat. The question of what laws apply to us and in what ways are very, very convoluted. As there is no clear guidance, it's been a general practice to play as conservative as possible. This means we assume and follow the laws perhaps more strictly than we must, especially in concerns to data privacy and security. With the fines that laws like GDPR can levy, it's nebulous. Never before has any law been written so deep at the core of the digital world. That is why privacy and data security are at the core of every system the Cyberseals make. We do not let it control us - but we do keep it in mind at all times.

Often, this can admittedly cause decisions or feelings that are very, very strict and corporate-like. As individuals and volunteers, it is not worth risking financial security or

well-being for accidentally violating some law. It isn't worth the risk. The odds of anything ever happening is admittedly low, but "the odds" aren't always all there is. It takes just one disgruntled person filing the right paperwork - right or wrong - to royally screw up our lives.

But this has been a digression. Back to the topic at hand.

When it comes to the organization, in a legal sense, I live in Ohio and so I will base this section mostly on Ohio tax law. Ohio Tax Law establishes a bracket for our type of organization - like a book club or community organization. We aren't nonprofits, but we're not for profits either. It is this level that potentially puts us on the level with the "must follow laws as organization" crowd, but none of the benefits of a true NonProfit organization.

Ultimately it's our goal for the rank and file seal to see little to no interruptions to how Seals experience our services and site. We want them and you to feel safe and welcome, but at the same time, the Admins cannot risk in good conscience our necks by disregarding stuff like this.

Now, that brings up the question as to how the Seals are organized. At the moment, it is much the same as a community organization or book club or the like - The people in charge ("Board") do have an amount of liability, and at the same time do control things that make us like an organization - Banking information, tax stuff, mandatory reporting, and a responsibility to enforce and establish terms of service, privacy policies, and all the other wonderful things that make an online business or website what it is. (Our terms and privacy policy are on our website.)

The ultimate goal and the lesson here is that we don't want to ever have to flash the law card. But if we do, please trust us - there's a good reason behind it. We want your time here to be as simple and fun as it can be. And if you feel we may be creeping in too close on some issues? Speak up. Maybe we are. After all, we're only human.

Report of Nate

by MiddleNate **(2 Jan 3306)**

"I'm kind of about to go skiing"

So I can't write stuff.

How you can Get Involved

by **Rixxan (2 Jan 3306)**

"What can I do to help?"

Those six words mean more to the Admins than I think anyone can know. While I cannot pretend to speak for everyone, I can hopefully put some of the broad strokes into place.

Like any organization, volunteers are the lifeblood of the Seals. Every member of staff, or that run any of our programs, are volunteers. But we are always looking for more. The easiest way that someone can pitch in is simply by being a Seal - going on repairs, spreading the Good News of Halpy, or helping out other CMDRs in any way - including in our own community, on repairs, or any other means available to CMDRs. However, if you are interested in going above and beyond, there are many things you can do!

Two of the biggest sources of work that can be done are with our Trainer corps and our Cyberseal corps. These are the most direct methods of helping the Seals, by helping to get the next wave set or helping ensure the digital landscape that we share can continue.

Frequently, jobs may be posted in the Seal Discord server in the channel #jobs-and-tasks. These often include the odd jobs that we can't dedicate time to at the moment,

but needs to be done. These jobs come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and time commitments. I encourage people to keep up to date on that channel.

Sure, things like donations are nice and are appreciated, however more important than any monetary donation is the time that you can give to this community. Any little bit helps.

Training

by △△△ **Unknown (2 Jan 3306)**

What to say about training...

… other than it is training and it is understaffed and scheduling is a pain without magical robots doing it for you.

Since the keys to training were given to me since the departure of the previous manager, we have been operating as a beta training service seeing what works and what doesn't to make the best system we can. It hasn't been easy, but it has gone fine so far, and our current new approach to teach the fundamentals, but not teach everything, has been going well. This system has been speeding up how long a pup has to be in training before becoming a full-fledged Seal.

As with many programs, we will be moving to the IRC with much better management systems in place in the future, once I have gained enough fish to pay the Cyberseals to do it for me.
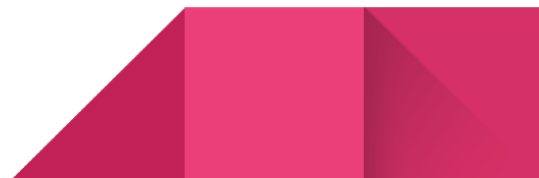
Cyberseal Report

by **Rixxan (28 Nov 3305)**

As I sit down to type this, it's currently 11:30PM on Thanksgiving night.

I have no idea or form of how I'm going to present this to you guys, so I might as well jump into it. Forgive me if I go astray.

Thanksgiving is a time of fellowship, reflection, and thankfulness for the blessings in life. I have no doubts in my mind when I say that leading up the CyberSeals and working on the project that is the Seals has been one of the most rewarding projects I have ever had a chance to work on. The drive, dedication, and commitment that I see in the wonderful Seals I get to work with cannot be understated. So before I start, I'd like to extend a personal Thank You to each of the CyberSeals, the list of who is active right now I have in front of me.

To Maldor, BrotherLizardo, SKidathor, Hack-Wizard, Nemesis Wolf, RedSpeeds, Keni, and Wolfii, and more, you have been wonderful members to work alongside, and I look forward to the future to come.

To Keni and BrotherLizardo, I owe you so much. You have taken up the role of my seconds and have pitched in so much of your time that nobody can ever repay.

Without these people, the Seals I have no doubt would not exist. Without the knowledge these people volunteer, and the code and talent these people donate, things would be so much different.

The CyberSeals began, much like this whole concept of Sealing, with an idea. An idea that we should gather together the best technical minds the Seals had to offer and built the best system we could. At the time, we were admittedly as a group full of enthusiasm and pride. We were riding high off of the success of our org after Distant Worlds 2, and it showed. We made moves quickly - snapping up the nifty domain name we have now, to slapping together the basic

format of our site. Responsive, elegant, and fit for an org as worthy as this. We made bold statements - ones that we would never know how wrong they would be.

But, you're probably not reading this for our life story as Cybers. Bear with me - it's coming. To fully appreciate what has been done, and what we do here, some context is needed.

The people above are volunteers. Not a single one of them is paid, and not a single one of them are employees. The amazing fact about the Cybers is how genuinely good each of them is, to give us their time like this. The fact of the matter is, at any given time of the people mentioned above, only two or three have the free time to volunteer toward projects at a time. When it comes to projects, you can choose two of a triad of things. You can choose good quality, you can choose cheap, or you can choose fast. The laws of the universe themselves prevent all three from being reached. (If you know how to break this, contact me.) The Cybers have chosen to go with good quality code, and thus, our time frames are long.

Why do I tell you this? So that you understand. We are behind where we wish we were - by a long shot. We had hoped to be up months ago, however, facts have conspired to keep that from happening. Throughout this, I'll try and tell you all that we have been up to, and what we have done, and where we go from here.

After the founding of the Cybers, lines were quickly drawn. Projects started, goals established, and progress quickly started. As we focused on our goals of expanding our website, we focused on our SOPs, and how we would present them. We focused on our hosting, and how to control it. We quickly learned a few things - one, that this was more complex than any of us had thought, and two, it was fun. We moved forward swiftly, establishing our Journal reader (https://hullseals.space/journal), email accounts, Spam and DNS protection, filling out our knowledge base, and establishing site monitoring, downtime procedures, password management, donation processing, and beginning the work on our other main services, including the big one - IRC. **(Editor's Note: The Journal site is 'wonky' and not working properly right now.)**

Then, disaster hit.

I don't mean to hyperbolize this. We nearly did lose the Seals that day. Unbeknownst to the CyberSeals, throughout our establishment, we had been infiltrated by a member with hostile intentions. I won't say his name here, but he has a special place in my memory. But how could we know? Up until he found his moment, he had been a helpful, and knowledgable, member of the Cybers. He had contributed and earned his place and our trust. He had approached us with ideas on how we could keep costs low - and all he'd need was an hour or two and a user account with rather elevated permissions.

Unfortunately, not suspecting anything, we gave it to him.

In one fell swoop, this individual managed to not only destroy our servers, but to also gain access to and destroy both our local and remote backups, and almost everything the Seals had. It was played off as an accident, but the investigation quickly led us to the truth. It was an attack internally. Throughout Distant Worlds 2, the Seals had been constantly hounded by a technically inclined, but immature and basic, troll. And he appeared here.

It was a day of reckoning for the Seals. Months of progress, lost. Backups, lost. Backups of those backups, lost. It came to the inevitable conclusion that mistakes had been made with our setup - access perms too loose, and trust that had been given during DW2 and setup would need to be reevaluated.

We would rebuild. We had to. Quickly, frameworks fell back into place. One of the few places not hit in the attack was the Gitlab, so we could quickly roll new AWS instances, install the wiki software, and begin to recover... but what content had been written was lost. It hurt, and numerous changes were made.

We became stricter - we had to. I've heard it described to me as a "Lockdown" phase. If it had permissions or access, we revoked it. Access to the CyberSeals went from "anyone could join" to "we'll talk about it". Validation and verification of every line of code written, character by character, was put through. Progress slowed to a crawl. We weren't sure who we could trust, or where we went from here. It took a long time to move forward from that - and the effects are still seen today.

As I look down at that time from now, it was not the best. Decisions were made often quickly and decisively, without as much leeway as in the past. Trust and access were locked down and information on how things should be set was restricted. Eventually, like all things, we began to expand again.

Most of you know the rest of the story - and how things have changed. I'll now change gears and talk about what we do have now.

The projects, as the Seals have them, come in a variety of different levels. Some that can be seen - and more that cannot be seen. While on the surface it may at times look like nothing is done, I can recount dozens of long nights in voice calls with some of our Cybers setting up things that will - if we've done our job right - never been seen.

Here's a list of the projects that major work has gone into:

IRC, Journal Reader, Dispatch Board, Seal Management and Auth, Main Site, Servers, Donations, Backup Site, Backup procedures, GitLab Management, Translations, and Server security. I'll elaborate a bit on each one of them.

The IRC is, of course, the big one. It's what people see, it's what people ask about. But IRC is a lot more than just a single "software as a service" product. It is a collection of dozens of smaller modules, configuring and tying into over a half-dozen other Seal services. It is the ultimate, it is the mecha, it is life.

A few days ago from the perspective of me writing this, I had written a statement on the status of the IRC. I'll copy most of it here, with some omissions.

At the minute, here is where we stand. We have the IRC core set up and are working on the associated required services. The current biggest issue is NickServ. With the NickServ, we need a method to associate Seals with their Roles and keep them safe. We have an auth solution chosen and are currently trying to get NickServ to talk to it. With the method of password hashing (A process to keep passwords secure and not stored in plain text, like asdjkfa;sdjfiojwy instead of passwords123) is not playing nice with the IRC, SQL, or PHP. We are currently talking with the developers to find a method around this. Again, however, we can only

put an hour or two a week into this project, as there are very limited numbers of hours our CS can put into each project.

Next, there are several "Nice to Have" services we want to set up. These include Vhosts (Ex, User@Seal.hullseals.space instead of user@[your encoded IP address here]. We also are trying to link several Discord channels to the IRC, so that chatter and general sealiousness can go across both. This is not easy either.

Beyond that, there are several other projects that are being worked on by the CS, all important. My time is split between most of the projects.

If the server was "Mostly" mission ready, we'd be moved there a long time ago. But the IRC is constantly restarted, fuddled with, and generally not set up to go. So while the server has existed in various stages for around two months or more, it is not ready for us.

Next, we also have to set the appropriate mod permissions. We need to get set up the Voiced, Half Op, Full Op, NetAdmin, and other associated permissions to keep our process clean and safe. This all takes time.

It is indeed true that I wish we could have been on IRC a long time ago. I had hoped and statements were made that that was our goal.

Unfortunately, with no more than two people working an hour a week on any given project, it is nigh impossible for us to have met the goals of a mid-summer launch.

When it is set up, you have my word that it will be a thing of beauty, as much as IRC can be. But until then, the road ahead is long and painful.

Next on the block is the Journal reader. This project was simple - but at the same time complex. It is our method of retrieving Journal data from Frontier, and checking things like a Client's location and status, or the number of materials on hand. It was the first tasks the Cybers took on - our proof of concept that we could do this.

I know this is getting long, so I'll do my best to condense a few things. If you're reading this far down - congrats! You win a free cookie.

There are a lot of things that you can't see from a user perspective. After the attack, my philosophy and energies were diverted into the aforementioned lockdown mode. I am not ashamed to admit, and the same went for our web server and domain hosting - something that hours of NIST documentation and procedures have been read and applied as we could. Servers are complex beasts, there is no denying it.

The next biggest thing you cannot see is our SQL database. The database, and setting it up correctly, has been a massive task. We are lucky to have a great SQL developer on our team - in the form of Keni. Setting up the database has been a process in progress for months, one that is still being developed as we expand. While it is mostly stable, there is still work that goes into it almost every week.

In the future, the grounds have been laid for numerous additional services that we hope to have up and running. Our Interactive Dispatch board has begun its development, as has to translate our Standard Operating Procedures into a variety of languages that we will eventually use in our rescues, including Russian, Spanish, German, and French. The beginnings of our Authentication and User management system have also begun to go into the works, which one day will allow us to better manage access and track rescues of Seals. All of this the average seal will never see - but is key to run a successful operation. When things look like they don't go anywhere - odds are work is being done behind the scenes. Recently we've loaded all of our stats from DW2 into the database, and have rolled out a new stats board. If you haven't seen it yet, take a look. (https://hullseals.space/statistics) Additionally, in a similar vein, small but needed progress has been done by establishing paperwork forms internally (https://hullseals.space/paperwork) and saving Seal identities and details through the auth solution.

Ultimately, though, what does this mean for you? Well, a few things.

If you think that we do nothing, or are unhappy that we don't have our services fully up yet, I can't blame you. But I ask patience - We are two people at maybe four hours a week working on the IRC project. At the time of writing, only around a half-dozen of our Cybers are actively working on projects. If you want to poke around and see what you can find on the site or gitlab, be my guest. (https://dev.hullseals.space and https://gitlab.com/hull-seals-cyberseals/)

If you like what you have read or see here, and want to join? Send me a message. We are always looking for new techs to work on our existing projects or to suggest and work on new projects. After all, to borrow from the immortal words of Lawrence Bernstein, "It's only an hour a week*"

<div align="right">* Per Seal.</div>

If you look at this and have no idea what I'm talking about or what is going on - that's OK! Without you here, the Cybers would have no purpose toward working, and no reason to do what we do. We do this for you because you are what makes the Elite universe so diverse and amazing.

If you have questions or suggestions - ask them. We will do our best to explain what we do or answer your questions.

And finally, if you ever see myself come into the chats and say "Hey, I need some volunteers", step up. Likely I need people to read something or test a new feature to make sure that it is working as intended. Find things. Break things. Make suggestions, and report bugs.

I'll sign off here with a personal note - I came into this knowing nothing about how this would turn out or the level of complicated work that went into this. When we started, I could barely tell a PHP comment from an SQL statement. The Cybers, through working with them, have opened many doors for me and helped me grow as both a person and a coder. Don't think just because you don't know it now you can't learn - we have projects that people can learn or experiment on, and hey if I can do it? So can you.

01010100 01101000 01100001 01101110 01101011 01110011,

Rixxan

Lead Cyberseal/"Fabricator-General"

rixxan@hullseals.space

(Editor's Note: This was written several months ago. As such, some statuses of some projects have advanced. For a more up-to-date breakdown, please email Rixxan)

Merchandising

by West-Tek **(3 Jan 3306)**

"The merchandising is where the real profits are made" -David Nicholson

As co-department head of merchandising along with Drebin Omega, it falls upon us to deliver the latest reports regarding the relentless commoditization and commercialization that occurs in the merchandising department.

It's been a wild year for the Hull Seals as a whole, and we never imagined that our little group would ever expand past DW2 and become the organization it is today. And we never imagined that we would ever get the opportunity to be able to create physical, Hull Seals merchandising, but here we are! Many of you may have already gotten their flippers on the amazing patches created by Drebin in the mail. All proceeds and profits from the sale goes towards covering the cost of production and towards the maintenance of our web servers, and this applies to all merchandise sales in the future as well. To those who were unable to get one during the first run, don't worry! We still have a number of patches available, so just send me or Drebin a DM and we'll work on getting you one as soon as possible.

As we move into 2020, the Merchandising Department already has a bunch of plans for the year. We're hard at work designing a new batch of products for future release; hopefully, you can look forward to Hull Seals hoodies, mugs, and dog-tags soon™. In addition, thanks to the hard work of the Cyberseals, our storefront page on the Hull Seals website will be operational soon, meaning that it will be much easier to order and track merchandise in the future.

We'll continue to notify the rest of the Seals as more information and updates becomes available, and if anybody has any questions for us, feel free to leave either me or Drebin a message.

-West-Tek, Merchandising Department Co-head

The Year Ahead

Per Aspera Ad Astra

The next year holds many exciting things in store for the Hull Seals. It will be a defining year of the Seals, and a test of our true long-term prospects.

As we step into this new year, we are looking forward to the eventual launch of our organization truly galaxy wide. While no defining date is set, due to the variable nature of the work to be done, we are looking forward to an early launch of the IRC network and all of our services galaxywide.

More than any service or piece of technology for the Seals, we are looking forward to taking the Seals to a greater purpose in the galaxy. Expeditions, events, and tasks within the sandbox will present themselves, and we are looking forward to exploring them together - with you. It's a this point we could throw out buzzwords like "recruitment" or "expanding horizons". While these things are indeed the goal, it'd feel sort of silly to rabble on this sort of thing with talk instead of doing what the Seals have always done - jump in head first.

Let's see what's out there, CMDRs. To 3306!

Thank you for reading. We always welcome comments, questions, and concerns. Please reach out to us with anything you have, and as always, fly safely CMDRS.