

Vega Strike: Upon the Coldest Sea

Game Design Document

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Acknowledgements:

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Initial skeleton.

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Chapter 1

Game Overview

In this chapter, we introduce the overarching game concepts for *Vega Strike: Upon the Coldest Sea* and then go into greater detail for how these concepts will manifest in both the single and multi-player modes of the game, which are distinct from each other in various ways.

1.1 Overarching game concepts

If one had to describe our vision for *Vega Strike* in a single sentence, it would be this: “**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern** are **Elite Privateers**.” Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in that the player character’s doings revolve around the progress of events (as per the Tom Stoppard play), and not the other way around. *Elite*, in that while we want the player to enjoy flying around, we want to at least pay lip service to inertia actual space physics, as per 1984’s “*Elite*”. Finally, *Privateers*, in that 1993’s *Wing Commander: Privateer* served as a primary gaming inspiration in our more formative years.

1.1.1 Overarching Game Concept

In either single or multi-player modes, the player character (PC) will take on the role of an independent operator taking on missions and transporting people, goods, and information among star systems inhabited by humans and aliens. The player’s primary avatar will be the player’s starship. This vessel can be replaced, upgraded, and must be maintained with respect to battle damage. Player advancement is primarily through money, which can purchase parts or new ships, and the more intangible acquisition of access, which expands the set of people willing to perform such transactions.

A key aspect of the game will be that, as the universe does not revolve around your actions (excepting introductory, nursery levels), the setting will evolve whether or not the player takes action. The epic sweep of events is a backdrop, rather than a result of player actions. The player’s challenges and losses will be important to the PC and those around him, but not so much to historians. That said, the PC is subject to influence by external events and can in turn influence their outcomes. However, as the fate of mankind doesn’t rest on his shoulders, if the PC decides to turn and run because his lone cargo shuttle can’t fight an enemy armada, this isn’t a game-over event. If, on the other hand, through great skill and courage, the player, unasked, wipes out an invading task force, then that system should not be conquered (at least at that

point in time) just to satisfy some desired plot progression (if it really must be conquered, send more ships when the PC isn't there, or tweak AI priorities behind the scenes to ensure that decrease the odds that such a feat can be repeatedly performed, but avoid insulting player intelligence).

Key themes, in any playthrough of any mode of the game will include: War, loss, avarice, and what, in the presence of sufficient technology to redesign a species, it means to be Human, Aeran, Rlaan, etc.

1.1.2 Feature Set

3D first person space shooter. More here later.

1.1.3 Genres

- Space-flight simulation
- First-person
- Space-trading
- Action-adventure
- Item-RPG

1.1.4 Target Audiences

To be discussed

1.2 Single Player

VS will have a single player mode. How this will interact with the multiplayer mode is yet to be fully determined. Current inspirations include Guild Wars and Spore, but are subject to change. The single player campaign is designed to be much more story driven than multiplayer, more constrained in options, and will force exposure to important gameplay features and universe backstory. Single player mode (SP mode) may unlock rewards or features in multi-player mode (MP mode). Progress through the intro/tutorial section of single player may be required before joining multiplayer or sandbox modes. The existence of sandbox mode is still being debated.

1.2.1 Game Concept

The initial campaign will be set in the year 3762, starting just before the beginning of the Human-Aeran war. The player will take control of a particular character, Deucalion, with well-defined background. However, Deucalion is at a possible turning point in his life, having just lost Lauktk, his best friend, business partner, and "brother-in-law" (brother-in-law is inaccurate, but much shorter than "Klk'k bond-mate of his Klk'k sister, Deucalion having been adopted by Klk'k on Ktah") during a Luddite attack on their ship. During his recuperation, the Aera invade Forsaken space, and Confederation members mobilize for war. As war

becomes inevitable, the player will make early choices steering Deucalion onto one of several major “career” paths during an interstellar wake with Lauktk’s relatives, culminating in official hostilities between the Aeran Ascendancy and the Confederation actually breaking out shortly before the final memorial service back on Ktah.

Having chosen a particular primary path, Deucalion will embark on a mix of sandbox trading, fighting and bounty-hunting, including auto-generated generic mini-missions, and career-path missions. The latter will feature both new characters and characters from Deucalion’s past. Progressing through these missions will expose players to backstory information not available to the in-universe general public, garner esteem and hatred with various factions, and allow the player to build up personal, material, and financial influence. The mission particulars will vary somewhat depending on the course of the war. The war as a setting will loom large, but actual combat experience will depend heavily on career path: Rejoining the military will be very combat oriented, while taking advantage of redeployments to smuggle contraband will not be (unless you’re bad at it).

There is no winning condition, per se, but career paths do have a finite number of missions, some triggered by the state of the war. The war progresses in five acts, described later in section 4.3. Progressing through all of the career missions and surviving into the fifth act can be considered “winning”. Some side-quests will be available for all career paths, and others for subsets. Completing them should not be required.

1.2.2 Feature Set

1.2.3 Genre

1.2.4 Target Audience

1.2.5 Game Flow Summary

How does the player move through the game. Both through framing interface and the game itself.

1.2.6 Look and Feel

What is the basic look and feel of the game? What is the visual style?

1.2.7 Project Scope

A summary of the scope of the game.

Number of locations

Number of NPCs

Number of ships

Number of weapons

1.3 Multiplayer

1.3.1 Game Concept

1.3.2 Feature Set

1.3.3 Genre

1.3.4 Target Audience

1.3.5 Game Flow Summary

How does the player move through the game. Both through framing interface and the game itself.

1.3.6 Look and Feel

What is the basic look and feel of the game? What is the visual style?

1.3.7 Project Scope

A summary of the scope of the game.

Number of locations

Number of NPCs

Number of ships

Number of weapons

Chapter 2

Gameplay Mechanics

2.1 Gameplay

2.1.1 Objectives - single player

What are the objectives of the game?

2.1.2 Objectives - multiplayer

What are the objectives of the game?

2.1.3 Game Progression - single

2.1.4 Game Progression - multi

2.1.5 Mission Structure

2.1.6 Career Structure

2.1.7 Play Flow

How does the game flow for the game player

2.2 Mechanics

What are the rules to the game, both implicit and explicit. This is the model of the universe that the game works under. Think of it as a simulation of a world, how do all the pieces interact? This actually can be a very large section.

2.2.1 Physics

How does the physical universe work?

2.2.2 Movement

Normal Space

In-System FTL

Inter-System FTL

2.2.3 Objects

Cargo

Debris

Resources

Passengers

2.2.4 Actions

Docking

Picking up objects

Talking to NPCs

Ship-to-ship In-flight comms.

On base conversations Primary mission-initiation dialog, etc.

Talking to Players

Libraries

2.2.5 Combat

How is this specifically modeled?

2.2.6 Economy

What is the economy of the game? How does it work?

2.3 User Interfaces

2.3.1 Screen Flow Chart

A graphical description of how each screen is related to every other

2.3.2 Screen Descriptions

What is the purpose of each screen?

Main Menu Screen

Options Screen

In-Flight HUD

Base interface

Trade screen

Upgrade screen

2.4 Game Options

What are the options and how do they affect game play and mechanics?

2.5 Replaying, Saving, and Death - single player

2.6 Replaying, Saving, and Death - multiplayer

2.7 Cheats and Easter Eggs

Chapter 3

Setting, Story, and Characters

3.1 Story and Narrative

Specific details like scripts and cut scenes may not be in this document but be in the Story Bible.

3.1.1 Back story

3.1.2 Plot Elements

3.1.3 Game Progression

3.1.4 Cut Scenes

Cut scene #1

Actors

Description

Storyboard

Script

3.2 Game World

3.2.1 General look and feel of world

3.2.2 Map

Sector

General Description

Physical Characteristics

RBL-1	RBL-2	RBL-3	Eeyenjylk	RBL-4	RBL-5	RBL-6	RBL-7
<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>
RBL-8	Gohthuhthuh	Uulmm	Aeneth	Uumghemm	Eeruu	RBL-9	RBL-10
<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>AeraHome</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>	<i>Aera</i>
RBL-11	Alleethuh	Ouulneh	Gohallruu	Mahgoh	Thuhtmaah	RBL-12	RBL-13
		<i>BzbrHome</i>					
RBL-14	Iyn	Maeell	Eilthut	Eilgohall	Miyeeldah	Ibzazz	Zzyqqh
<i>Forsaken</i>	<i>Aera</i>						
Thanatos	Rust	Solace	Redemption	Ingatwa	Ahbz	Pzzaztahber	Bzseen
<i>Forsaken</i>	<i>Forsaken</i>	<i>PurthHome</i>	<i>Shmrn</i>	<i>UlnHome</i>			
Diaspora	Torkelsen	Magellan	Crucible	Bribztkaber	Bztutpt	Aantlbzz	Aantutpt
<i>Forsaken</i>	<i>MishtaliHome</i>		<i>Klk'kHome</i>	<i>Rlaan</i>		<i>RlaanHome</i>	
Vormund	Vega	Sol	Beckett	Izzptipt	Bzzahbtktk	Ibpzez	Ahbzeentk
		<i>HumanHome</i>	<i>DgnHome</i>	<i>Rlaan</i>			
Rhubarb	Plymouth	Baja	Caldera	Tutbzzaz	Eebzpt	Ohzzz	Ailzzptpt

Table 3.1: Sector Grid

3.2.3 Key Systems

Kubernan

General Description

Physical Characteristics

Missions that use area

Connections to other areas

Sol

Bifrost

Aeneth

Ktah

Bantam

3.3 Characters

3.3.1 Deucalion

Back story

Personality

Look

Physical characteristics

Animations

3.3.2 Special Abilities

3.3.3 Relevance to game story

Player character in single-player mode. May be encountered/heard about in multi-player mode.

3.3.4 Relationship to other characters

3.3.5 Statistics

3.3.6 Miranda

3.3.7 Lauktk

3.3.8 Mai

Chapter 4

Divisions of Action

4.1 Training Levels

4.1.1 Purpose

4.1.2 Training level 0: Base interfaces

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.1.3 Training level 1: Basic flight operations

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.1.4 Training level 2: Docking and retrieval

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.1.5 Training level 3: In-system FTL

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.1.6 Training level 4: Combat operations

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.1.7 Training level 5: Repair and maintenance

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.2 Standalone Missions: “Historical Battles” and Hypothetical scenarios

4.2.1 Purpose

4.2.2 Unlocks

Battles happening during the timeline of the UtCS campaigns will be unlocked when they are in at least one Player Character’s past.

4.2.3 Small-scale Combat Trainer

Synopsis

Flexible scenario wherein the player has limited control over the number and type of both allied and enemy flightgroups. Maximum number of capital elements on each side is fixed at a low number, although type is selectable. Likewise for strike elements, except with much higher cap. Setting parameters (system, fleet starting locations, neutral elements) are fixed.

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.4 Blooding of the Purth

Synopsis

The space portion of the first battle in which Purth troops were deployed.

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.5 Then versus now

Synopsis

Series of small-scale battles starting with old model opponents and moving toward newer, more expensive models.

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.6 Velociraptor: Culling of the Shadowless

Synopsis

Non-serious quasi-arcade scenario. Flying as a super-ship (Type A Ancient drone) try to maximize the tonnage of ships from the extant races that you can destroy before either they destroy you or time runs out.

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.7 Key battles of the Rlaan-Aeran war #1 (names TBD later)

Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.8 Fruit of the Hephaestus Forge

Synopsis

Large scale fleet engagement with the player on the side of either the Grandchildren or the Aera. Must be unlocked (existence of Grandchildren is a spoiler).

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Closing Material

4.2.9 SEVERAL MORE TO BE ADDED

4.3 Single Player

4.3.1 Prologue

Wide-angle Synopsis

While Deucalion is unconscious, recovering from injuries sustained in his crash-landing to evade a flock of Luddite pursuers, the long-feared hostilities between Aeran and Human polities erupt as the Aera invade the Union of Dispossessed Settlers (Forsaken).

Player-view Synopsis

Player character is introduced to player, along with context relating to Deucalion's injuries, the death of Lauktk, and the coming conflict.

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.3.2 Act 1: Hiroshima (mon ami)

Give me Christ or give me Hiroshima.

Leonard Cohen - The Future

Wide-angle Synopsis

The Aera have invaded the Union of Dispossessed Settlers seeking to carve a path through human space to the coreward regions of the jump network. The Confederation of Inhabited Worlds lends increasingly direct aid while the Forsaken are driven further and further back in what are clearly little more than delaying actions against the far superior Aeran forces.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.3.3 Act 2: As the sea begins to free them

*Mourn, England, mourn and complain
For the brave Lord Nelson's men
That died upon the main*

Wide-angle Synopsis

An official state of war is reached between the Confederation and the Aeran Ascendancy. The Aeran-Human border is ablaze with combat, and many Human border worlds are lost or compromised as the Aera strike first. Shmrn space is invaded, and the Andolian 9th fleet, sent to aid the Shmrn, is cut off. Victories by the Andolian 6th fleet, and Confederation 4th fleet blunt the Aeran advance on the Spinward front, but at significant cost in men and materiel. Aeran forces penetrate deeply on the center front, while much of the anti-spinward front is pushed to near collapse, save for pockets of bypassed Forsaken worlds. Confederation forces resort to scorched earth policies in many systems still belonging to the LIHW or Union of Dispossessed Settlers, completely abandoning the Diaspora sector, and regroup in more sustainable positions. Confederation fleets engage the Aerans in skirmishes and strikes throughout the center front, with profound carnage on both sides. Andolian counter-attacks all but eject the Aera from Shmrn space, reestablishing direct communications with the UIn. Andolian forces begin a methodical incursion into Aeran space on the spinward front, relieving some pressure from the anti-spinward front as the Aera redistribute

their forces. The Rlaan watch intently, hoping to be able to avoid intervening, while putting significant effort into expanding their coreward possessions while humanity is busy fighting the Aera.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.3.4 Act 3: Children of an unconstructed god

Gaudete, gaudete! Liber est natus ex machina sapiens, gaudete!
Gaudete, gaudete! Liber est natus ex post-homo paternus, gaudete!

Wide-angle Synopsis

The Andolians and the A.I. Quorum unveil the Grandchildren, the fruit of decades of research and material investment. A new class of thinking machines, designed explicitly with military application in mind (indeed, it is generally assumed by all other parties that they were originally designed for use against or for leverage with the other human polities), vast multitudes of Grandchildren, in the form of a veritable armada, issue forth from inside the hollows of Hephaestus, and begin an all out invasion of Aeran space. Taking advantage of wartime powers granted by the Confederation Senate in unintended fashion, the Andolians allow their Special Forces operatives to wage an unrestricted campaign against the Interstellar Church of True Form's Return without fear of Purist legal entanglement. The major Confederation powers play king-maker among the less than reputable and less than legal organizations, bringing in from the cold those entities willing to assist the war effort, and removing from existence any competitors less eager to be of service, such as the Order of the Dynast Shrub. Some of these actions deeply anger various Ulnish clans, but the proximity of several fleets to Uln space deters overt action, and retribution takes the form of Uln relaying of intelligence to the Aera. The Simons are employed in overthrowing the corrupt, and externally funded leadership of the ISO as a precursor to instigating coordinated guerrilla actions from the pockets of Forsaken worlds behind the Aeran lines. Shaper forces make their first real impact of the war, as troopships full of Shaper Hulks are dispatched alongside Mechanist and Purth forces to reclaim worlds fallen to the Aera. The initial engagements by the Grandchildren are stunning victories, greatly demoralizing the Aeran forces, and disrupting their efforts to concentrate their fleets.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.3.5 Act 4: The sea on fire

... [it] will not start a chain-reaction in the water converting it all to gas and letting the ships on all the oceans drop down to the bottom. It will not blow out the bottom of the sea and let all the water run down the hole. It will not destroy gravity ...

Admiral William Blandy on Ivy Mike

Wide-angle Synopsis

As the Grandchildren produce an increasingly impressive set of victories from the Spinward front and ever deeper into Aeran space, the progress on the other fronts is much slower. Aeran raiding parties continue to harass and impede. The Forsaken guerrilla attacks, while marvelous as a delaying tactic, can no longer be sustained, as the Aeran response has destroyed all remaining Forsaken colonies behind the front. Especially troubling, an unexpected Confederation defeat, due more to distrust and negligent communication than individual incompetence, coupled with the deployment of the Ascendancy's Leonidas class dreadnought reserves, has opened up Vega sector to Aeran assault, and many long developed worlds have been raided, threatened, and attacked. With the devastation being wrought by the Grandchildren, the Aera are increasingly desperate to either lure the Confederation into ill-planned action via destruction of ancestral worlds, or to construct a deep enough corridor that a spread of colony convoys may be launched in a last-ditch attempt to bypass Human space primarily via SPEC, retreading the waters that started the Rlaan-Aeran war. Fighting on the front becomes especially fierce, as both sides commit themselves deeply to each fray. Domestic Confederation politics boils and froths as assorted scandals are rooted out when entities are no longer capable of focusing the attention necessary to hide them, and the Andolian Protectorate woos the Shapers into their fold.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.3.6 Act 5: Sailing on embers

And all that remains is the faces and the names of the wives and the sons and the daughters

Gordon Lightfoot - The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

Wide-angle Synopsis

With the Grandchildren winning some key decisive victories in Aeran space, and the incursion into Vega Sector blunted, the long term outcome for the war seems increasingly likely to be an Aeran defeat. However, the cataclysms of combat have quieted somewhat as both sides have exhausted themselves, and any final closure is surely years, if not decades away, leaving much time for potential reversals. The Rlaan are the obvious short-term beneficiaries, but it is clear that they are somewhat uneasy about the Grandchildren, having been taken by surprise by the revelation of their existence. On the domestic front, the Confederation is undergoing profound political upheavals. The Highborn have been cowed into silent disgrace as a slew of rumors about their involvement in illegal activities in Forsaken space issues forth following an orchestrated series of information leaks. With the Grandchildren firmly in their camp, the Andolians have finally found the trump card in their long contest with the Shapers as to who would helm the march to post-humanism. With the Shapers now aligned with the Andolians and their traditional allies, the post-human agenda now dominates the policy-making bodies of the Confederation. The Forsaken, once again dispossessed, are scheduled to once again be relocated, but this time will remain under the auspices of the Confederation, with semi-autonomous status, sharing in the opportunities available to other humans. As humanity adjusts to both life during wartime, and the possibility that humanity's children may be much further on their way to surpassing them than expected, the first trickle of Aera who have come to believe that the future of their species may rest in siding with humanity lest they be erased by it journey to Uln space to conduct the first of a series of clandestine meetings with Andolian and, later, Confederation agents.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.4 Multiplayer

4.4.1 Character generation

Wide-angle Synopsis

Will probably take place during time-period represented in Acts 2-4 in single player mode.

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

4.4.2 Milestone 1: Bringing home the bacon

Wide-angle Synopsis

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

4.4.3 Milestone 2: Owning your own ship

Wide-angle Synopsis

Player-view Synopsis

Introductory Material

(Cut scene? Mission briefing?)

Objectives

Map

Encounters

Critical Paths

Level Walkthroughs

Closing Material

Chapter 5

Flight Interface

5.1 Visual System

5.1.1 HUD

- What controls

5.1.2 Menus

5.1.3 Rendering System

5.1.4 Camera

5.1.5 Lighting Models

5.2 Control System

How does the game player control the game? What are the specific commands?

5.3 Audio

5.3.1 Music

5.3.2 Sound Effects

5.4 Help System

Chapter 6

Base Interface

6.1 Visual System

6.1.1 HUD

- What controls

6.1.2 Menus

6.1.3 Rendering System

6.1.4 Camera

6.1.5 Lighting Models

6.2 Control System

How does the game player control the game? What are the specific commands?

6.3 Audio

6.3.1 Music

6.3.2 Sound Effects

6.4 Help System

Chapter 7

AI

7.1 Support Functionality

7.1.1 Target detection

7.1.2 Collision detection

7.1.3 Pathing

1.

7.2 Strategic AIs

Make fleet movement decisions.

7.3 Tactical AI

7.3.1 Enemy AI

Mobs

7.3.2 Friendlies

7.3.3 Wingmen

7.3.4 Drones

Chapter 8

Technical Considerations

8.1 Target Hardware

8.2 Development hardware and software

8.3 Development procedures and standards

8.4 Game Engine

8.5 Network

8.6 Scripting Language

8.7 MORE-AS-NEEDED

Chapter 9

Art

Likely abbreviated at the moment, with content gradually added, or collected into a separate document or appendix and referenced from here.

9.1 Style Guides

9.2 Concept Art

9.2.1 Characters

9.2.2 Environments

9.2.3 Equipment

9.3 Cut scenes

9.4 Miscellaneous

Chapter 10

Tools

10.1 Model Editor

10.2 System Editor

10.3 Map Editor

10.4 Scenario/Scripting Editor

10.5 Dialog Editor

10.6 AI Tuner

10.6.1 Strategic

10.6.2 Tactical

10.7 Installer

10.8 Update Manager

Chapter 11

Management

11.1 Detailed Schedule

11.2 Budget

If there ever is one to speak of, we'll fill this section out.

11.3 Risk Analysis

Mostly time, turnover related

11.4 Localization Plans

Stop embedding the text files in the scripts :-P

11.5 Milestone Versions/Partial Feature Sets

11.6 Testing Approach

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Asset List

Appendix B: Aeran Style Guide

B.1 Aeran Style Guide

OVERVIEW:

PARTS:

* **ENGINES** (propulsion) o Engines (Strike) o Engines (Shuttle) o Engines (Subcapital) o Engines (Freight) o Engines (Capital) o Overdrive

Aeran engines tend to be centrally mounted along the forward-rear axis, except in some smaller craft. Only the exhaust vents tend to be visible, the rest of the engine being internal. The exhaust vent calderas can be very large, with several actual exhaust exit points within one caldera. Overdrive units exist only for strike craft. These modify the engine to handle a greater quantity of exhaust at the cost of decreased fuel efficiency and increased engine wear.

* **THRUSTERS** (maneuvering and attitude control) o Thrusters (Strike) o Thrusters (Shuttle) o Thrusters (Subcapital) o Thrusters (Freight) o Thrusters (Capital)

Aeran thrusters protrude only slightly above the surface of the ship. They are compact, and roughly cylindrical, with a wider exhaust head than body. Larger classes of thruster emplacement do not scale beyond Subcapital. Beyond subcapital, a thruster emplacement simply has MORE thruster heads, and a ship has more thruster emplacements. They look similar to the below:

* **REACTORS** o Reactors (Strike) o Reactors (Shuttle) o Reactors (Subcapital) o Reactors (Capital) o Reactor (Starbase)

Aeran reactors are fusion reactors. Their building blocks are toroidal (donut) in shape. Standard design features a stack of two alternating radii of toroids. Larger reactors within a subclassstrike, shuttle, etc. have more toroids. Larger subclasses have larger toroids. Larger ships have several reactors of possibly varying size. Shuttle reactors are lower performance, but lower maintenance. Strike craft will have either 1 or 2 reactors. Reactors are covered with coolant plumbing and electromagnetic plasma guides/stabilizers. The following is a (very) rough sketch of the basic toroids:

* **SENSORS** o Sensors (Active) "Gravitic" - should look somehow related to shields. Probably spiny. LIDAR/RADAR - Spinning parabolic dishes, radar domes, or fixed arrays of other similar emitters.

o Sensors (Passive) Radar domes Optical pickups - flat, dark hexagonal patches with darker spherical protrusion. Radio receivers (looks like antennae – mix of 2-D embedded, like in back of car window, and spiny transceiver style radio tower) "Gravitic pickups" - should look related to shields. Oddly shaped.

* **TURRETS** o Turrets (Strike) o Turrets (Subcapital) o Turrets (Capital) o Turrets (Starbase) o Turrets (Point-defense)

All Aeran Point-Defense turrets are laser turrets. Most Capital turrets have either a Sarissa or a Xiphos. No strike craft have strike turrets. The smallest Aeran craft with (anti-)strike turrets is a corvette. The Dory is the most common weapon in a sub-capital turret. The largest Aeran military starbases may mount unique turreted laser weapons. Others just mount modified versions of capital turrets. Aeran turrets are heavily armored, even to the point of increasing tracking time. Larger turrets will be exclusively specialized for either energy weapons (massive cooling) or projectile weapons (massive ammo feed/supply). Smaller turrets are generalists, mounting fixed standard weapons and then pivoting them.

* SHIELDS o GEM Shield (Strike/Shuttle) o GEM Shield (Subcapital/Freight) o GEM Shield (Capital)
o GEM Shield (Starbase)

Look vaguely like sowbugs.

* CARGO/SUPPLY PODS/TANKS o Internal Cargo Pods o External Cargo Pods o Fuel Tanks (Internal)
o Fuel Tanks (External) o Coolant tanks (internal) o Coolant tanks (external)

To be added

* WEAPON MOUNTS o Internal Hardpoints Weapons slot into hexagonal openings. Weapon bay heavily armored. Expected weapon sizes are long and skinny. Slightly skinnier and slightly longer compared to human equivalents.

o External Hardpoints

Are commonly positioned on the outer face of a rose-thorn projection like below:

o Ammo feeders To be added o Ammunition reserves To be added

o Missile Bays (Rocket/Missile/Bomb) Are specifically purposed for missiles, but can be upgraded to hold different types. Missile packs tend to be tightly packed groups of hexagonal tubes. o Missile Bays (Torpedo) Are usually intrinsic either to the chassis or to the torpedo turret. o Missile Bays (Capital) Are so large that they are always part of the main chassis design. o Spinal Weaponry (strike) Are rather variable. o Spinal Weaponry (Subcapital) As the center is occupied by the engine, Aeraan spinals tend to be radially arranged around the main armored tube, or are built into the hammerheads. o Spinal Weaponry (Capital) As the center is occupied by the engine, Capital spinal mounts are radially arranged around the main armored tube. o Intrinsic Weaponry (Starbase) High-end Aeraan military starbases may have massive internal turret-mounted laser generators. The laser generator itself is safe and unseen within the bowels of the station, but the fixed emitters can still be destroyed. The truly lucky may fire down the ruins of an emitter tube to damage the actual laser.

* CAPACITORS o Capacitors (Weapons) o Capacitors (FTL)

Are rarely visible from the outside of a vessel. Similar physics and function makes them very similar to human constructed banks of capacitors.

* FTL o In-system FTL

Almost never seen from the outside of any vessel, especially an Aeraan one. Internal system, connected internally to shield emitters. Most species FTL drives look a bit like a cross between a metal and plastic bird's nest and what an automobile looks like when it's been through a scrapyard car-crusher. While this is true for the Aeraan as well, their device looks cleaner and more elegant than human models. Upgraded FTL systems look like they've had new parts glued on.

o Jump Drive

Looks very similar to the in-system drive, but is larger, and has 2 distinct nodes at front and rear. It is likewise internal, and not directly seen. Jump drive models scale very little among ship sizes. Externally visible due to additional short, stubby projections with miniature shield-emitters on them being placed at the fore and rear of a vessel. Larger vessels will have more stubby projections, and these projections will be larger (but still quite small in proportion to the vessel)

* SURFACE SYSTEMS o Aesthetic fluff (Decals/Paintjob/etc.) o Radiators Are usually present on hammerheads and rosethorn projections on larger ships Are large and mostly flat. Radiators are present both

as intrinsic (rosethorn/hammerhead) and distinct, modular components for strike-craft. Radiators will glow a dull red when active. Augmented reality may depict them more strongly, as below:

- o Armor

- * MINOR SYSTEMS / UPGRADES
 - o Damage Control (Strike/Shuttle)
 - o Damage Control (Subcapital)
 - o Damage Control (Freight)
 - o Damage Control (Capital)
 - o Damage Control (Starbase)
 - o Passenger Cabins
 - o Life Support
 - o Escape Pods

To be added

- * ELECTRONICS/ELECTRONIC WARFARE
 - o ECM
 - o ECCM
 - o HUD Visualizations

To be added

- * STANDARD WEAPONS
 - o Projectile + Makhaira Are artillery pieces that fire a warhead at moderate velocity. The primary damage vector is the detonation of the warhead on contact with an enemy shield. The barrels are fairly modest, ~10 meters long, as they do not rely a kinetic damage vector. They are very sturdily constructed, and most of their innards are obscured behind an armored covering. The Makhaira is not turreted on strike craft. On larger craft, it is used as a turreted anti-strike weapon. In these emplacements, the armor shroud may be elided, with the armor of the turret instead providing protection. They look much like the below:

- + Xiphos Capital scaled version of the Makhaira. At this size, they begin to bear some resemblance to the guns on a WWII battleship. The Xiphos is almost always seen turreted.
- + Kopis Capital scale linear accelerator, usually ~ 1 Km long. See below:

- o Laser + Hoplon Point defense laser, always turreted. Red-laser with ball-mirror turret in hexagonal socket. Fires very short bursts. The Thermopylae system uses several hoplon in a tight cluster.
- + Dory Light assault laser primarily found in Areus and corvette class vessels. Usually deployed for maximum efficiency sans turret, i.e. aiming the ship, not the laser.
- + Sarissa Capital scale lasers. Usually mounted at end of rosethorn tips. Lighter models use a multi-phase turreting system with shallow angles of deflection over several points and multiple fixed lenses. The highest end Sarissas, (UV and X) are either turreted to move the entire laser assembly, or mounted in a fixed position, depending on the size of the vessel in question. Some of the high-end UV Sarissa mounts are internal turrets - where the laser generator moves within a sphere in the center of the ship, firing down a wide, empty path to one of several semi-fixed lenses (these were only built during the Aeran-Rlaan war, however).

- o Missile + Missile + Torpedo + Capital Missile + Capital Kinetic

- * UNIQUE WEAPONS
 - o Oxybeles An enormously upscaled Kopis, unique to the Leonidas class. Approximately 7Km in length, running the length of the entire vessel.

- * COMMON SHIP FEATURES

- o Teardrop hammerhead (Aeran) (see center) c

- o Rosethorn spire (Aeran) (see upper right)

- o Central armored tube (Aeran) (see middle and bottom)

- o Molded cosmetic shells (Aeran)

Aeran hulls often appear to be constructed from a single piece as if they were carved from a large block of alloy into their final shape. In reality this is not true but they do like to hide this fact. Aeran hulls have a layered effect.



Figure B-1: Aeran Style Guide - page 1

o Track lighting (Aeran)

Aeran craft feature strips of cyan-colored track lighting to not only show off their craftsmanship but also to light logical pathways to service hatches and such. (See below for shell and lighting)

o Hierarchical hexagonal prism cargo pod rings (Aeran Merchant) Aeran cargo containers are hexagonal prisms.

o Access bay for reactor torus-stack (Aeran) See section above on reactors.

o Docking spar (Aeran)

Docking spars allow vessels to transfer cargo, munitions, equipment, supplies, and personnel between each other or space stations while maintaining a safe standoff distance to avoid collisions.

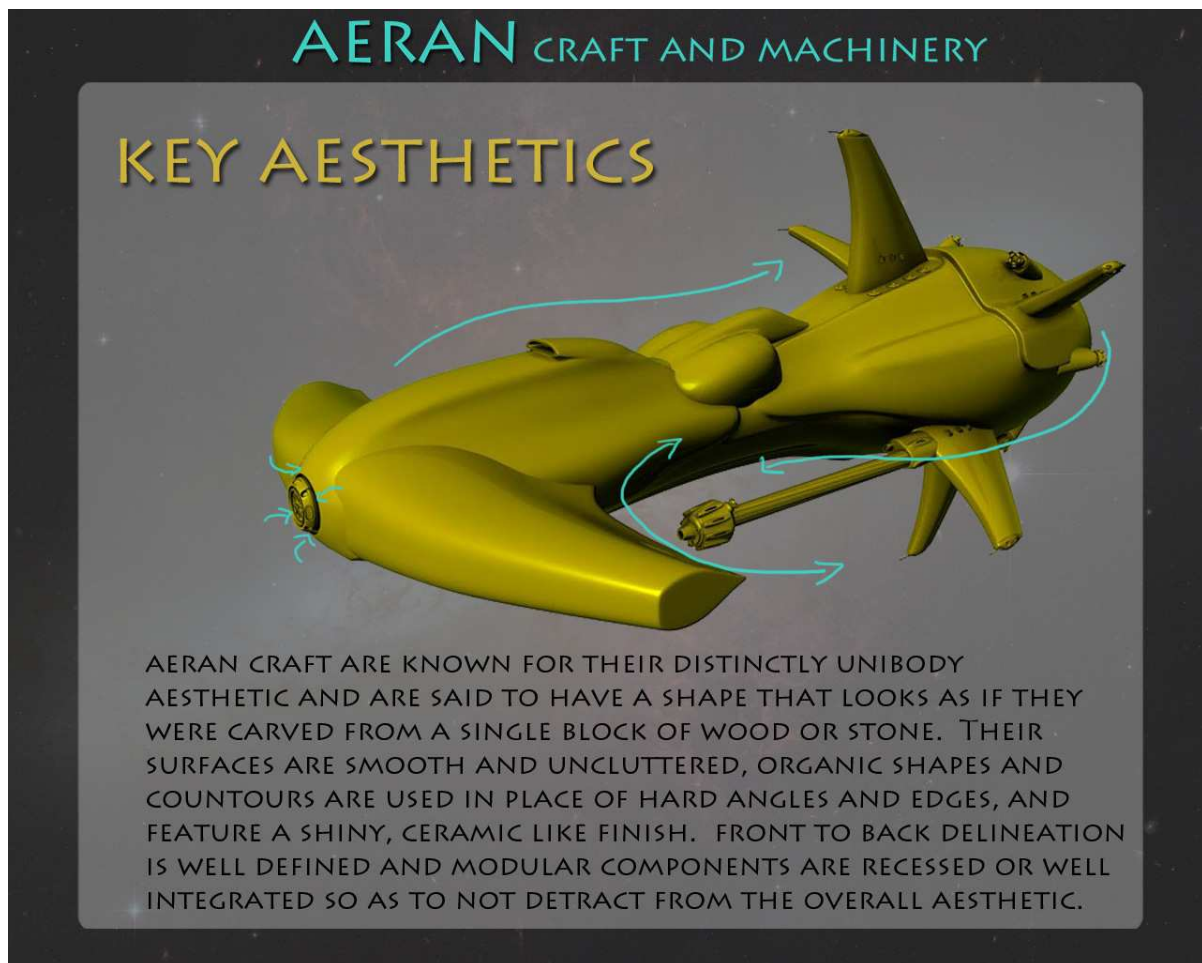


Figure B-2: Aeran Style Guide - page 2

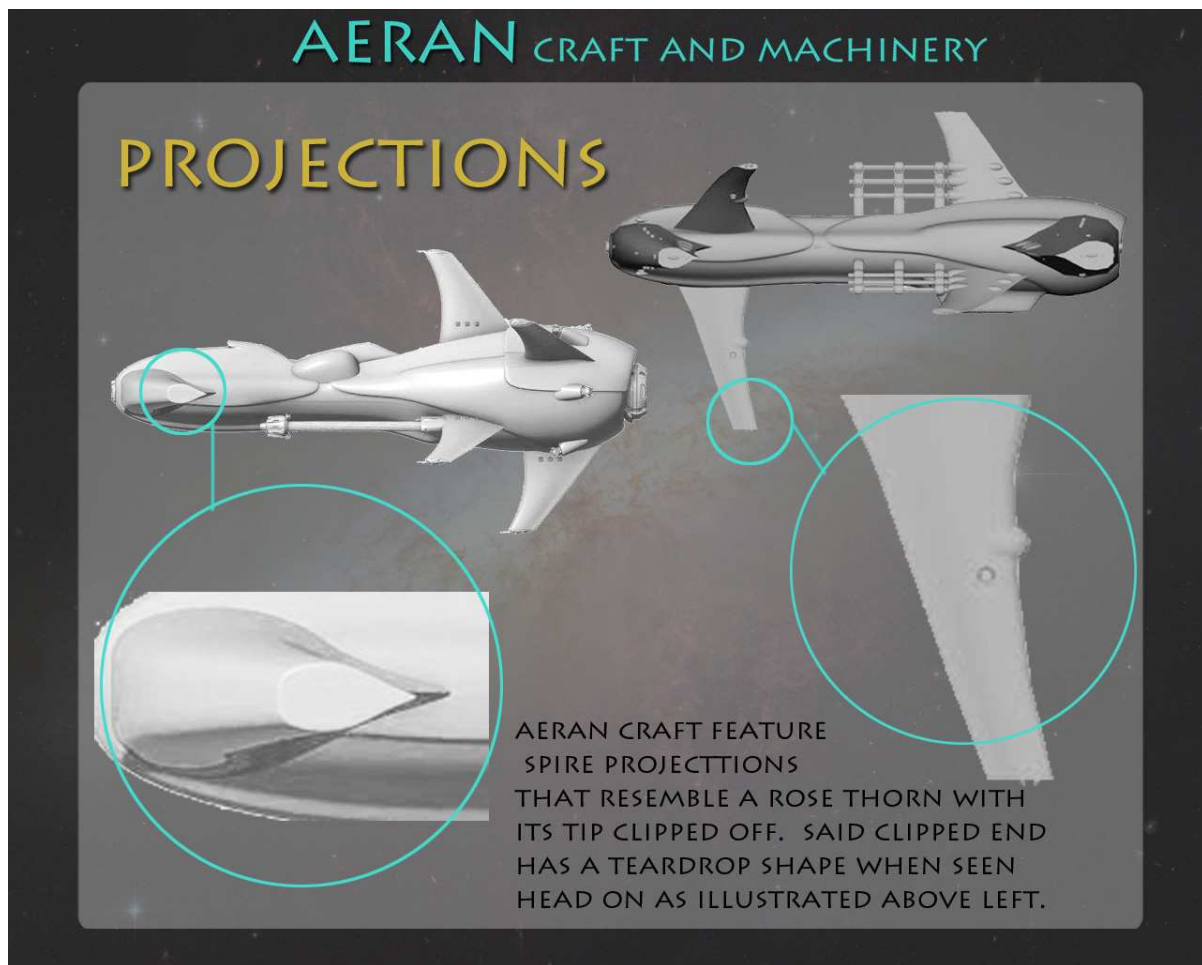


Figure B-3: Aeran Style Guide - page 3



Figure B-4: Aeran Style Guide - page 4



Figure B-5: Aeran Style Guide - page 5



Figure B-6: Aeran Style Guide - page 6

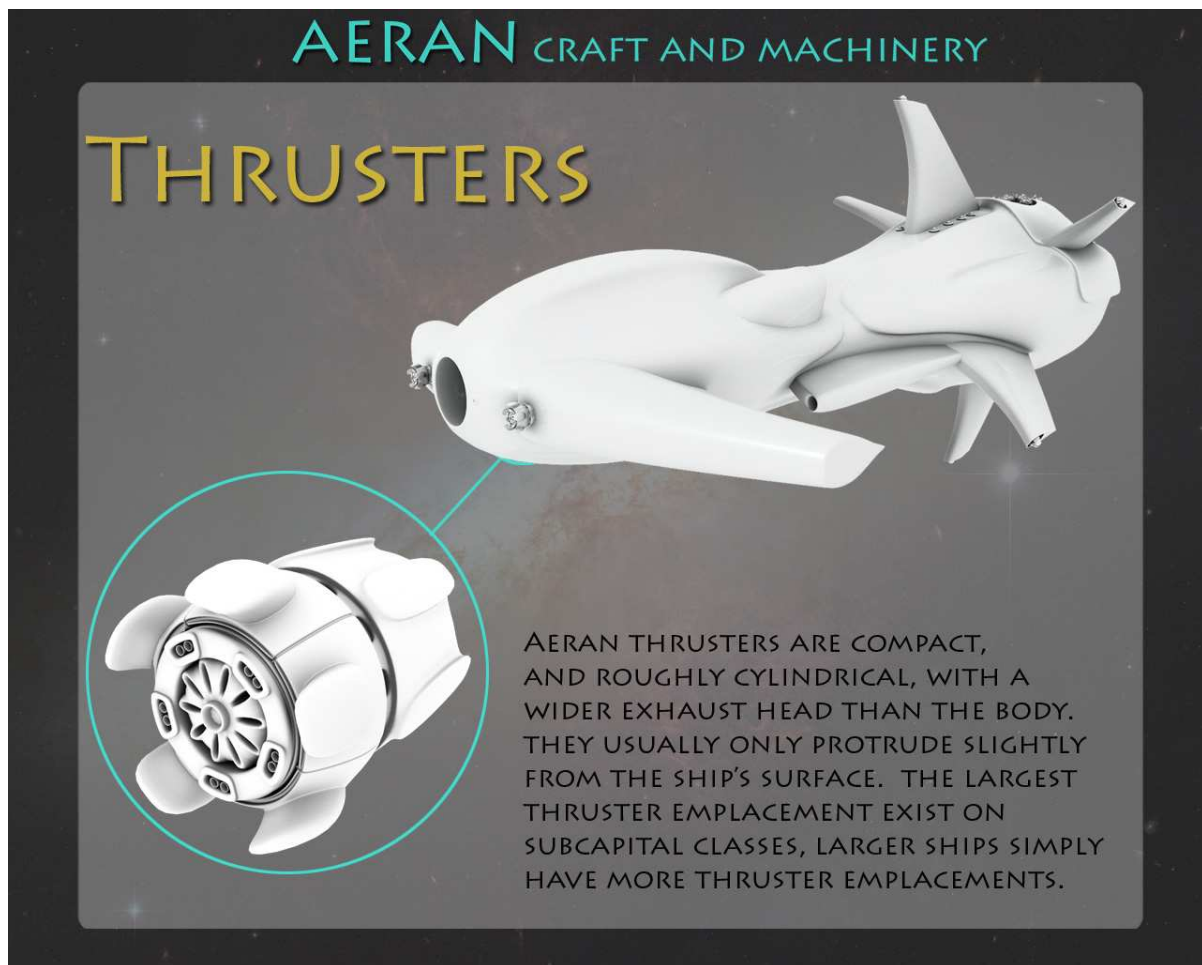


Figure B-7: Aeran Style Guide - page 7

Appendix C: Rlaan Style Guide

C.1 Rlaan Style Guide

OVERVIEW:

PARTS:

- * ENGINES (propulsion) o Engines (Strike) o Engines (Shuttle) o Engines (Subcapital) o Engines (Freight) o Engines (Capital) o Overdrive

- * THRUSTERS (maneuvering and attitude control) o Thrusters (Strike) o Thrusters (Shuttle) o Thrusters (Subcapital) o Thrusters (Freight) o Thrusters (Capital)

- * REACTORS o Reactors (Strike) o Reactors (Shuttle) o Reactors (Subcapital) o Reactors (Capital) o Reactor (Starbase)

- * SENSORS o Sensors (Active) "Gravitic" - should look somehow related to shields. Probably spiny. LIDAR/RADAR - o Sensors (Passive) Radar domes Optical pickups - Radio receivers (looks like antennae – mix of 2-D embedded, like in back of car window, and spiny transceiver style radio tower) "Gravitic pickups" - should look related to shields. Oddly shaped.

- * TURRETS o Turrets (Strike) o Turrets (Subcapital) o Turrets (Capital) o Turrets (Starbase) o Turrets (Point-defense)

- * SHIELD-ENGINES o GEM Shield-Engine (Strike/Shuttle) o GEM Shield-Engine (Subcapital/Freight) o GEM Shield-Engine (Capital) o GEM Shield-Engine (Starbase)

Look vaguely like sowbugs.

- * CARGO/SUPPLY PODS/TANKS o Internal Cargo Pods o External Cargo Pods o Fuel Tanks (Internal) o Fuel Tanks (External) o Coolant tanks (internal) o Coolant tanks (external)

To be added

- * WEAPON MOUNTS o Internal Hardpoints o External Hardpoints o Ammo feeders Not Applicable o Ammunition reserves Not Applicable o Missile Bays (Rocket/Missile/Bomb) NEVER USED o Missile Bays (Torpedo) NEVER USED o Missile Bays (Capital) NEVER USED o Spinal Weaponry (strike)

- o Spinal Weaponry (Subcapital)

- o Spinal Weaponry (Capital) o Intrinsic Weaponry (Starbase)

- * CAPACITORS o Capacitors (Weapons) o Capacitors (FTL)

Are rarely visible from the outside of a vessel. Similar physics and function makes them very similar to human constructed banks of capacitors.

- * FTL o In-system FTL

- o Jump Drive

- * SURFACE SYSTEMS o Aesthetic fluff (Decals/Paintjob/etc.) o Radiators

- o Armor

- * MINOR SYSTEMS / UPGRADES o Damage Control (Strike/Shuttle) o Damage Control (Subcapital) o Damage Control (Freight) o Damage Control (Capital) o Damage Control (Starbase) o Passenger Cabins o Life Support o Escape Pods

To be added

- * ELECTRONICS/ELECTRONIC WARFARE o ECM o ECCM o HUD Visualizations

To be added

- * STANDARD WEAPONS o Projectile o Laser

- o Missile

- * UNIQUE WEAPONS

- * COMMON SHIP FEATURES

RLAAN

- COLOR: DEEP REDS, PURPLES
GOLD FOR SOME TRIM.
- RIPPED ARMOR LIKE A SHELL-
FISH OR INSECT.
- THEY HAVE A COAT OF THICK
RESINOUS SUBSTANCE THAT
COVERS THEIR SHIPS FOR
ADDED PROTECTION.
- COCKPIT IS BURIED IN THE SHIP
THEY DONT USE WINDOWS
ONLY MONITORS FOR SEEING.

Figure C-1: Rlaan Style Guide - page 1



Figure C-2: Rlaan Style Guide - page 2

RLAAN

SHEILD EMITTERS

THESE ARE THE DEFENSE
OF THE RLAAN SHIP.
THEY SHOULD LITTER
THE SHIPS. THEY ARE
MADE OF A
GLASS-LIKE PEARL
MATERIAL AND
EMIT A FAINT
PURPLE GLOW.



SHIZU

Figure C-3: Rlaan Style Guide - page 3



Figure C-4: Rlaan Style Guide - page 4

RLAAN

ARMOR

THICK PANNELS THAT ARE RIBBED TOGETHER. THEY LOOK VERY INSECT LIKE. NO BOLTS OR SCREWS VISABLE. THEY PREFER ROUNDED EDGES, WITH SHARP SPINE LIKE PROTRUSIONS.



SHIZU

Figure C-5: Rlaan Style Guide - page 5

RLAAN

REACTOR

IT'S A BULBOUS PEICE OF THE SHIP. SURROUNDED IN METAL PANNELS FOR PROTECTION. IT USSUALLY ALWAYS HAS THE MAIN THRUSTER CONNECTED STRAIGHT TO IT FOR POWER. IT HAS SOME OF THE LARGEST EMITTERS ON IT AS WELL.



SHIZU

Figure C-6: Rlaan Style Guide - page 6

RLAAN

MAIN THRUSTER EMITTER

IT IS THE MAIN POWER TO MOVEMENT. ALMOST ALWAYS CONNECTED TO REACTOR. EVEN THOUGH ALL EMITTERS CAN GIVE OFF SOME TYPE OF THRUST THEY ARE MENT TO STEER, WHILE THE MAIN THRUSTER IS THE PUSH AND SPEED. THE RINGS ARE A WAY TO REGULATE ALL THE ENERGY IN THE THRUSTER.



SHIZU

Figure C-7: Rlaan Style Guide - page 7



Figure C-8: Rlaan Style Guide - page 8



Figure C-9: Rlaan Style Guide - page 9

References

- [1] M. Baldwin. Game design document outline. *<http://baldwinconsulting.org>*, October 2005.

Glossary

Aera

One of the primary VSU sentient species

Alphan

Of or concerning the first known species to achieve interstellar spaceflight in the post-Ancient era

Amakakt

Klk’k martial art featuring the Tklatl

Andolian

Human meme-group, primarily composed of Pluralis variants

Anthrophilic

Pleasantly disposed towards humans or human culture.

APSWAK

The Andolian Protectorate Space Warfare Academy, Ktah

Beckett’s Murky Venture

The homeworld of the ancestral Dgn. Reference to a joint Lightbearer-Shaper exploratory mission

Betan

Of or concerning the primary rivals to the Alphans

Bifrost

Shaper homeworld

Bzbr

A client species of the Aera

CMT

Cherryh Mercantile Trust. Precursor to the ISMG

Coreward

In the direction of the galactic core

Cryoship

A sub-light colony vessel relying on cryogenic storage of its passengers or their genetic material as the primary means of carrying colonists.

Deucalion

The player character in UtCS

Dgn

Sentient species in the VSU. Shaper uplift of pre-sapient from Beckett's Murky Venture

Fraternal War

War primarily between the Lightbearers and the Andolians, circa 2988-2994 CE. First large-scale interstellar conflict between human factions post invention of SPEC drive

FTL

Faster Than Light

Ingatwa

Name associated with the Ulnish aristocracy

ISMG

Interstellar Shipping and Mercantile Guild

Kleptocracy

Literally, rule by thieves. Generally, an ostensible government that exists primarily to extend the personal wealth and power of the ruling class at the, often direct, expense of the population.

Klk'k

Vaguely anthropoid sentient species from Ktah. Autonomous clients of the Andolian Protectorate

Kt'totha

A large aquatic predator native to Ktah, once prized for its hide

Ktah

Klk'k homeworld.

Kubernan

The Andolian homeworld

Lightbearers

Human meme group composed of Suprahomo variants. Cultural memes extinguished and gene-pool nearly exterminated as a result of Fraternal War

LIHW

League of Independent Human Worlds. A political umbrella group for assorted minor human meme-groups

Lmpl

Client species of the Rlaan. Oxygen breathers, generally deployed as planetside laborers

Mechanist

Human meme-group, primarily composed of Cyberis variants

Meme**Meme-group****Memetic**

Of or relating to memes

Mishtali

A client species of the Unadorned. The first sentient species to be encountered by humanity.

Nanite

An independent machine constructed and manipulating matter at nanometer scales. Not to be substituted for the broader field of nanotechnology, which deals with all operations and construction occurring at similar scales, not just nanites.

Nano-plague

The somewhat inaccurately named phenomenon of the activated immuno-defense systems left over from the fall of the TWHON disassembling nanites. Alternately, the immuno-defense systems themselves

Nanotechnology

The study, practice, and implementation of technology dealing with with construction and manipulation of structures at nanometer scales.

Nuhln

Client species of the Rlaan. Environmentally compatible with the Rlaan

Oolak'kl

A Klk'k beverage analogous to beer.

PAI

Pseudo-AI. A near-AI construct that performs complicated tasks and interactions while lacking actual sentience.

Purth

Massive, cybernetically enhanced uplifts developed by the Andolian Protectorate. Subservient clients of the Andolian Protectorate

Rimward

Generally, in the direction of the galactic rim. Alternately, away from the galactic core. The latter definition is more sensible when considering directions relative to extra-galactic locations.

Rlaan

One of the primary sentient species of the VSU. Ammonia-blooded methane breathers

Rlaan-Briin

An anthropilic movement of the Rlaan

Saahasayaay

Client species of the Rlaan.

Sheltersky

Homeworld of House Blythe

Shmrn

Sentient species in the VSU. Descendants of the Lightbearer derived variants of the ancestral Dgn.

Simons (the)

A paramilitary group operating with the tacit approval of the Andolian Protectorate, self-tasked with oversight of the remaining Lightbearer populations and the tracking and pursuit of war criminals and known terrorists.

Sofono

Emilio Sofono, inventor of the human variant of the SPEC drive. Alternately, any human produced SPEC drive (as 'Sofono drive'), or a class of Andolian warships named in his honor (as 'Sofono class').

Sul-Gatwa

The current and long ruling Uln dynasty

Terraforming

The process of transforming a planet in a manner that renders it more Earth-like

Tklatl

A body-length stick with bladed ends used in the traditional Klk'k martial art of Amakakt

TWHON

Acronym for "Those Who Have Only Names"

Uln

One of the VSU sentient species

UniServe

Andolian Universal Service requirement

UtCS

Upon the Coldest Sea. A time period in the VSU starting around 3276 CE. Also, a game using the Vega Strike engine set in said time period.

VSU

Vega Strike Universe

Xenocide

The deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an alien group

Xenolinguistics

The study of alien languages.

Index

DUMMY ENTRY, [39](#)