**===About EVE=====**

Inflation can be a headache for any central banker. But it takes a certain type of economist to know what to do when a belligerent spaceship fleet attacks an interstellar trading post, causing mineral prices to surge across the galaxy.

Eyjólfur Guðmundsson is just that economist. Working for the Icelandic company CCP Games, he oversees the virtual economy of the massively multiplayer video game [Eve Online](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/09/28/the-economics-of-video-games/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve_Online). Within this world, players build their own spaceships and traverse a galaxy of 7,500 star systems. They buy and sell raw materials, creating their own fluctuating markets. They speculate on commodities. They form trade coalitions and banks.

It’s a sprawling economy, with more than 400,000 players participating in its virtual market — more people, in fact, than live in Iceland. Inflation, deflation and even recessions can occur. Which is why, from his office in Reyjkjavik, Guðmundsson leads a team of eight analysts poring over reams of data to make sure everything in Eve Online is running smoothly. His job bears more than a passing resemblance to that of Ben Bernanke, who oversees the U.S. economy from the Federal Reserve.

“For all intents and purposes, this is an economy that has activity equal to a small country in real life,” Guðmundsson says. “There’s nothing ‘virtual’ about this world.”

Nowadays, many massively multiplayer online video games have become so complex that game companies are turning to economists for help. Without oversight, the games’ economies can go badly awry — as when a gambling ban[triggered a virtual bank run](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120104351064608025.html) in the online world of Second Life in 2007, with one bank alone costing players $750,000 in real-life money.