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Strategy paper: Project Mercury

Since the Return of the Thargoids has been confirmed, in June 3303, the galaxy will never be the same. The role of *homo sapiens* in the galaxy is fundamentally changing. Without a doubt, we are not only not the only sentient species in the galaxy, it is also abundantly clear that, in our lifetime, we have to share this galaxy with another race, whose significantly superior technology poses a potential threat to our species, as a whole. The Thargoids are here, and the initial encounters between their scout ships and our fleets have not always ended peacefully. In a few lucky instances, both sides parted ways without mutual communications. In most cases, unfortunately, they ended in total annihilation of human ships.

The Cold War between Federation and Empire has come to an abrupt halt, as the leaders of all factions re-evaluate their internal conflict in the light of these new revelations. Also, more and more details come to the surface, which indicate that the Return of the Thargoids has been anticipated long ago. Recent discoveries show that the long-gone institution of GalCop expected the Thargoids. Also, decades ago unknown forces seem to have had initiated a search for possible alternative regions of space – e.g. in the Formidine Rift – for humans to flee to, in case the anticipated war with the Thargoids would go the inevitable route of our defeat, including the destruction of our home worlds.

The newly-formed cooperative AEGIS is doing its best to develop weapons which are supposed to give us a fighting chance in the assumed conflict. The destruction of few Thargoid Scout ships has been confirmed now. However, it is unclear whether the new weapons will be our salvation: not only have we already seen the Thargoid Scout ships adapt to our new capabilities. We also must assume that we have not yet encountered actual fighting, or even capital ships of the Thargoid fleet.

The scientific community, including notable individuals like Prof. Palin, attempts to investigate and assess the new threat, using various methods. Courageous Commanders have retrieved tissue samples from the Scout ships for scientific research, often risking, and not rarely paying with, their own lives.

Both the military and the scientific efforts are invaluable, and indispensable. However, they have to be accompanied by another, equally necessary approach, which has been neglected so far: communication.

We have to establish communications with the Thargoids

The aim has to be clear: We need to try and talk to the Thargoids. In Earth's history, we more than once faced the danger of total mutual annihilation of large superpowers. It was always communication between those adversaries, which has ultimately led to preventing such a catastrophic scenario. There is no reason to believe that the situation with the Thargoids would be any different.

In fact, there are at least three reasons why we believe that this route has the potential to successfully prevent a full-scale war between our two races, which would certainly cost uncountable lives, at least on our side.

- So far, the Thargoids have not intrinsically reacted in a hostile way

During the first confirmed encounters between Thargoids and human vessels, as early as January 3303, no shots were fired. Rather, the Scout ships were simply investigating human vessels, without endangering human pilots. The first confirmed destroyed human vessels were a Federation fleet of warships, discovered in July 3303. It would be consistent to assume that the fleet was destroyed by Thargoid vessels which defended itself against human aggressors. Later, Imperial warships destroyed by Thargoids have been found as well, in the Non-human signal sources around the Pleiades Nebula. In all of those cases, the actual fight itself was not being recorded. In particular, civilian vessels such as passenger transports were curiously absent among the destroyed vessels. Given the military nature of both Federation and Empire, as well as the existence of many trigger-happy individual pilots, we do not necessarily have to assume the Thargoids themselves are intrinsically hostile towards us. It is conceivable that they acted in self-defense. While it was observed that the Thargoids collect Escape Pods, for unknown purposes, it has to be noted that that began around the same time as Human pilots began extracting tissue samples from peaceful Thargoid ships. By now, after the development of Thargoid-weaponry by AEGIS, the first Thargoid Ships have been reported destroyed. It was only around that time that Thargoid ships reportedly intercepted peaceful human vessels, and acted hostile towards them.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the Thargoids have only done to us, what we have done to them. From the behaviour observed so far, we do not have to assume that they are intrinsically hostile towards us.

If this is the case, then communication with the Thargoids is key: we need to get across that we are not interested in a conflict, and regret any hostilities that have taken place so far. If the Thargoids are not primarily interested in conflict with us, then there is hope that we could avoid a full-scale war between our two races.

- The internal politics of the Thargoids could work in our way

Reports from the companions of the late Senator Kahina Loren have indicated that there are, in fact, two different sub-species of Thargoids, the Klaxians and the Oresians. These two seem to be at war with each other. In particular, it was claimed that the Oresians are being slowly displaced by the Klaxians, which is why they have appeared on the boundary of the human-inhabited bubble.

Unfortunately, there is no independent confirmation of these assertions, but if true, it would indicate that primarily, the Thargoids are embroiled in their own conflict, and any intentions towards humans are of secondary nature. The observations made in the first point (see above) seem to at least not contradict this possibility. Being able to communicate with the Thargoids might open up the possibility for us of either getting across the message that we do not intend to participate in this conflict. On the other hand, communications might allow us to use the Thargoid-internal conflict to our own advantages: In case there is no way to avoid conflict, we could ally ourselves with one side and trade a cease-fire for support against the other side. While certainly not preferable to a peaceful solution to the conflict between our two races, having this opportunity would increase the chances of our survival in this interstellar war. We need the possibility to talk to the Thargoids, however, if we want to have those kinds of options at all.

- We have intercepted and decoded Thargoid communications

In the past, we have come across many Thargoid artefacts, and our scientific community was key in

deciphering and decoding the information hidden within. The first were the Thargoid Sensors (formally Unknown Artefacts, UAs). These scanned human ships, and gathered technical data about them, including their exterior shape. The second were the Thargoid Probe (formally Unknown Probes, UPs), which we reacted towards certain sensor impulses, and transmitted signals whose spectrogram contained what is believed to be a map to a planet in the Col 70 Sector. The latest were the Thargoid Links (formally Unknown Links, ULs), which were activated at the Thargoid bases, and indicated positions to other sites of this kind, by triangulation.

All of these findings were remarkable, and they seem to indicate the following:

1. The Thargoids possess spatial reasoning, and the ability to understand physical objects, including their shapes.
2. They are able to distinguish planets by features like temperature, pressure, distance to the main star, etc., and are able to assign special meaning to some planets over others.
3. They possess spatial reasoning also over galactic distances, and have a good understanding of different regions of the galaxy, as opposed to others.

All of these are not self-evident, as should be pointed out, since the Thargoids appear to be mostly present in hyperspace, and are even conjectured to originate from there. But it seems that, wherever they do come from originally, they understand the physical concepts of our universe well. Also, they do use concepts from our universe (em signals, sound, visual, logical, as well as pictorial elements) as means of communication. This fosters hope that communication is not impossible, even though our two species seem to be remarkable different in much of their respective make up.

All of this leads us to the following conclusions:

1. The Thargoids are dangerous, but not necessarily hostile
2. They possess the ability to wipe us out, and so far we have little means to oppose them
3. Given there are many trigger-happy Commanders, we will descend into war if we do nothing
4. We therefore need to establish communications with the Thargoids, to prevent a full-blown war

Given these findings, we propose to initiate **Project Mercury**. Its primary goal is to attempt to establish communications with the Thargoids, and attempt to learn their language.

In appendix A, we demonstrate an attempt for communicating with the Thargoids. These build on reverse-engineering the means of the UA. We have researched enough of these to manipulate them in such a way that we could use them to send the Thargoids a message.

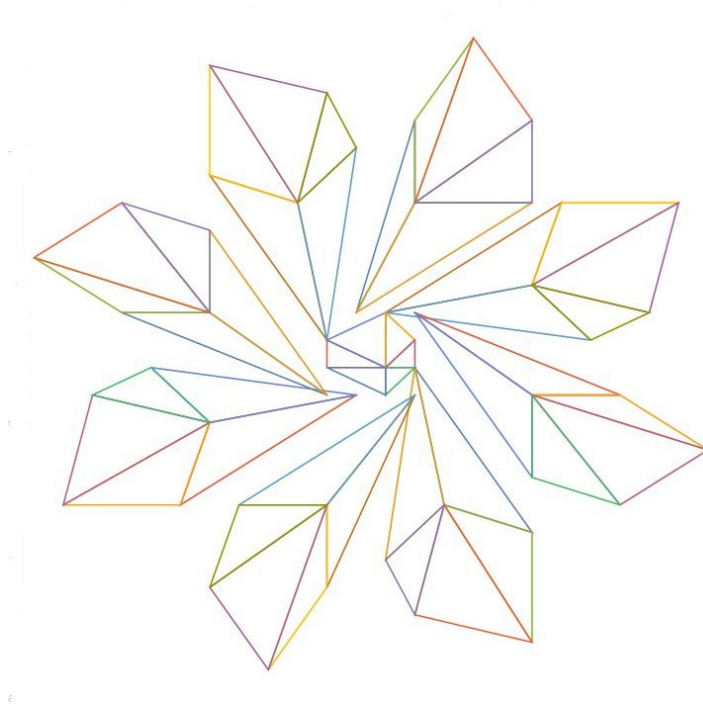
We propose to send this message to the Thargoids in a reverse-engineered UA, as a means to say “Hello” to them, and initiate contact.

For the sake of humanity, we need to talk to them!

Appendix A: Model of a message to the Thargoids

The UAs have been decoded by many CMDRs, most notably CMDRs JManis, Rizal and Mike Juliett Kilo in October 3301. They, and many others, have amassed a large amount of data, which was indispensable to decode the Thargoid signals in the UAs/TPs.

Image of a Thargoid Interceptor:



The same image, coded into sextuplets of letters:

MLOEOH, MLOHSH, OEOHQB, OHQBSE, OHSESH, NLTHSK, NLSKUM, THSKXH,
SKXHWL, SKWLUM, OLVOSO, OLSOSR, VOSOYQ, SOYQVS, SOVSSR, ONSTPS,
ONPSNU, STPSSX, PSSXOW, PSOWNU, OOLVLS, OOL SIS, LVLSJY, LSJYHV, LSHVIS,
MOGSHP, MOHPFN, GSHPCS, HPCS DO, HPDOFN, LOELHL, LOHLHI, ELHLBJ, HLBJEH,
HLEHHI, LMHGKH, LMKHMF, HGKHC, KHHCLD, KHLDMF, NNLMLN, NNLMNL,
NNNLOM, NNOMON, NNONNO, NNNOLN

A program to convert the data to images:

<https://unwantedusername.github.io/eliteMorseDraw/>

The data, converted into UA sound signal:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/omh0xykm40fjgzq/AAB4IkVyU5tpVGNBkgOhoEcKa?dl=0>