

DAMN THE TORPEDOES



BRAVO
SQUADRON



DAMN THE TORPEDOES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 870.6

*"Atkinson to
Commander Young"*

*"Green cutting in -
Young's gone,
Captain: you're in
the big chair now"*

*"Okay, then, my
wingman and I are
dropping our
torploads now and -
hell: what was
that?... those
fuckers jumped
again and half of my
torps lost lock on...
oops... I've been
targeted with
something I... I've
been hit... there's a
terrible whining
noise in my cabin
and..."*

Transmission ends

*"They came out of
nowhere", said Captain
Penver (Pilot of the
Seraph C Heavy Fighter
'Inchon'). "We launched
as fast as we could but
they're incredibly fast for
such powerful craft and
they have this kind of
'jump drive' - leaping
about everywhere, you
know: and all the time
shitting these pod things
out the back - they took
out one of the rescue
shuttles".*

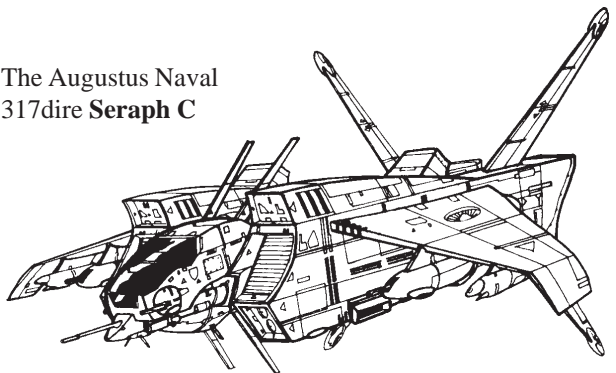
The Terran Federation lost three vessels in the attack: Commander Young's **Imperial Transtar Night Hawk**, Captain Atkinson's **Imperial Transtar Thunder Bird**, and a **Aerex SA4000 "Shryak"** Rescue Shuttle, piloted by Commander

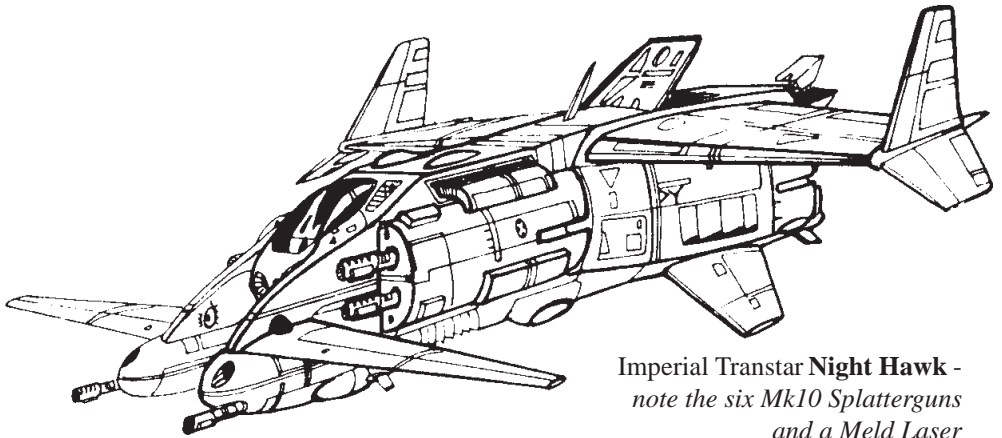
Young's brother. Another **Thunder Bird** was shot out from underneath Captain Moseley, Atkinson's wingman which begins to cast grave doubts about the fragility of these now fairly dated **Imperial Transtar** designs.

When asked for a comment, a spokesperson from **Imperial** said "You have to remember that the **Thunder Bird** is over sixteen years old and, frankly it's days as a fighter are long over. The **Terran Outer Defence Force** has sensibly bought the **H series upgrade packs** for virtually all **Thunder Bird's** in front line service meaning that they are equipped with a substantial **Torpedo load** - virtually identical with that

These were the last words of the much decorated Captain T. Atkinson of the **Nimbus Three** station. Four days ago, this station, in high orbit over **Tau Albriton IV** suffered a devastating attack from a new and powerful alien race.

The Augustus Naval
317dire **Seraph C**





Imperial Transtar **Night Hawk** -
note the six Mk10 Splatterguns
and a Meld Laser

of the much more expensive Seraph C and, against fast moving targets - as typified by these recently appeared threats - the four Barrel Pulse Laser cannon bank is infinitely superior to the Seraph C's Turbo Laser mount or Lighter Pulse Laser mount."

"In addition, they're cheaper to buy - the TODF already own plenty - and, with a crew of only one, they're cheaper to maintain. And as an offensive fighter, our Series A Night Hawk carries a wallop second to none: six Mk10 Splatterguns and a Meld Laser - it'll outgun **and** run rings around a Seraph."

In reply, a spokesperson for **Augustus Naval**, manufacturers of the Seraph said "The Naval 317dire Seraph C is a fast, powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft that

emphasises crew survivability above almost everything else. With good crew - which thankfully the TODF have - it will take on, and usually beat heavy fighters, and most gunboats short of a Beta-Fort. There isn't an MRCS to touch it, frankly"

"Sure the Night Hawk is a good ship, if rather dated, but it lacks the weapons flexibility of the Seraph and, frankly, has a poor record of crew survivability. But the Thunder Bird, even with its 'Torpedo' carrier modification - which, incidentally, is still inferior to a Seraph C (four Mk10's and a 20 are not the same as four Mk10's and a 50...) - is a slow, fragile, poorly equipped joke."

"It's pains me to have to say this", she continued, "and my heart goes out to

the families of Commander Young and Captain Atkinson, but at Nimbus 3 there were Two Seraph C's - which suffered no losses and no crew injuries, and two T Birds and two Hawks - Guess which two craft were lost? If I were in control of purchasing at the TODF, I'd re-equip with Seraph C's, but then, I would say that wouldn't I?"

The DTT Interviewer asked the **Augustus Naval** spokesperson what she thought could be done to fight this new foe, already being dubbed at the "Red Bug Menace" in the popular press, especially in view of one pilot's comments that he'd rather have swapped his Turbo Laser mount on his Seraph C for a Meld Laser, as fitted to the earlier Seraph A.

"We'll be working on new technology upgrades for the C and we're already planning for a D variant within a couple of years - though with current events we may have to bring that forward somewhat. But in the short term, we hope for up-rated laser systems for early next year, replacing the current Mk30 Turbo's with Mk36's with more punch, and a similar refit for the Pulse lasers."

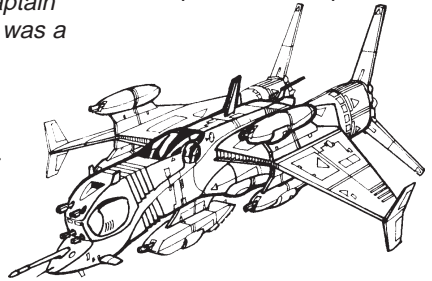
When **Arc Gotha**, the other major manufacturer in this field, who make the MMAC17b *Epping* - a gunboat noted for its lack of speed and poor offensive capability against anything except small fighters - was asked what *they* were going to do to counter this new threat, their spokesperson simply said "You should see the new *Stretched Epping*, due to be launched next month..."

Final words from one of the pilots on the day go to Pilot Green, one of the most decorated men in the sector: "Give me a *Seraph* any day - having two CO's shot from over you in one bundle is bad news, but to lose two good men like the *Commander* and *Captain Atkinson* - especially *Tim* in a piece of crap like a *Thunder Bird* - is fairly

gutting. I don't know what they hit *Atkinson* with but you should have heard the awful noise coming from his ship over the com. *Moseley* ejected just as his ship folded after it was hit with some bio weapon that attacked the crew, and my wingman *Captain Penver* caught the same grief but, as usual, *'Inchon'* just walked through it, but *Captain Moseley's T Bird* was a

write-off - he was lucky to get out alive."

18 Civilians were also killed in the attack, many of them relatives of the dead pilots, including eight in a lifeboat deliberately targeted by the aliens and 10 on board a the doomed "Shryak" Rescue Shuttle, including those from a recovered lifeboat, plus the pilot and crewperson.



Imperial Transtar
Thunder Bird,
minus torp load

DATA CAPSULE FROM THE NUMBUS III BATTLE

- These new Aliens seem to be bio engineered into their ships and have an insectoid, hive type of physiology and mentality.
- They have no Point Defence systems but have good ECM/jamming systems and can shake torps off by "jumping".
- The ships are able to jump short distances in a straight line, "blinking" in and out of normal space.
- They have no Torpedo weapons but sow bio "Mines" which have varying destructive powers and zones of control.

Recommendations

- Stay at a distance.
- Drop big Torp loads of smaller Torps rather than bigger, slower ones - replace standard Mk 50's with Mayhem R-50's, where available.

DAMN THE TORPEDOES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 870.9

"Atkinson to
Commander Green"

"Go ahead Tim"

"I've lost my Pit
Viper, Shane's gone
and I'm surrounded
- they're jumping
behind me... shitting
pods all over -
they're
everywhere..."

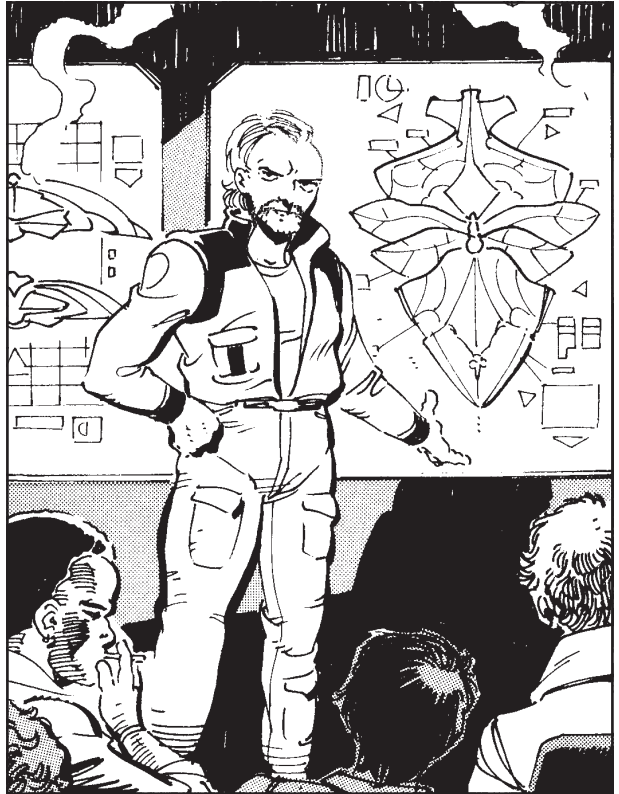
"Hell - I got
problems of my own
Atkinson I..."

"Commander? -
Atkinson calling
Green - you still
there sir? Oh no...
what's that terrible
noise in my
cabin?..."

Transmission ends

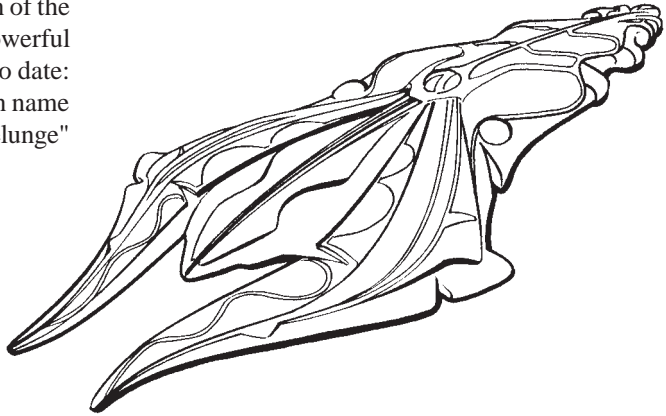
These were the last words of the much decorated Captain T. Atkinson II of the Bravo Squadron (out of **Nimbus Three** station). Bravo Squadron had, apparently, been equipped for a deep penetration mission to try to discover one of the Hatchling breeding worlds.

Information is sketchy as no one has - as yet - reported back from this mission. The only data recovered was from the flight log recorder and gun cameras of a Seraph C heavy fighter piloted by Captain Andy Flood. As yet, Flood, an experienced pilot, has not been



The late Captain Sharville (right), Pilot of a Sorenson, briefing his colleagues shortly before his untimely death during a "successful" training mission two weeks before the Fateful encounter of Bravo Squadron.

Artists impression of the biggest and most powerful Hatchling fighter seen to date:
TODF recognition name "Muskelunge"



recovered although the recorder states that he did try to eject. His family have been informed that he is missing.

It seems that the Terran command, after trying a "successful" training exercise using "live" targets some 14 days before, sent Bravo Squadron on the mission with some new "experimental" ships. Some of the best gunners in the fleet were lined up to fly in what a spokesperson from the

Ministry of Information has described as an "all gunboat" squadron. The same unconfirmed source said that the fleet was "heavily armed" with five gunboats plus "substantial" fighter cover.

It can be revealed exclusively in this august magazine that the so called "substantial fighter cover" was, in fact, **one** Seraph with an experimental weapons fit that slowed it down by almost 40%, plus three pilot-less drone fighters -

Pit Viper 3ts - remote controlled by the gunner positions in three **Arc Gotha**, MMAC17b *Eppings*. This was supplemented by two of the newer B20 *Stretched Eppings*, also by **Arc Gotha**.

A spokesperson for **Augustus Naval**, manufacturers of the *Seraph* said "*The Naval 317dire Seraph C is a fast, powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft that emphasises crew survivability above almost*



everything else. With good crew it will take on, and usually beat any heavy fighter, and most gunboats short of a..." At this point we interrupted her and pointed out that this was what she always said and asked what her opinion was of the **Arc Gotha** MMAC17b Eppings and B20 Stretched Eppings...

"Well", she continued, "I think that they're a piece of useless, out of date, over weight, undergunned, fragile, slow, poorly armoured shit - and that's the B20's - I daren't tell you what I think of the standard Eppings - they're the worst gunboats still on the books. Bearing in mind how our Seraph C 'X Pack' fared..." [the

Below: Extract from Captain Flood's gun camera aboard his Seraph shows a "Muskelunge" taking fire during the battle

Augustus Naval name for the adaptations made to the standard Seraph] " - it was the last ship to survive, apparently, and the only one to give the pilot a chance to escape - I think that the authorities should realise that they simply have no choice but to re-equip with Seraphs, now before we have to put the prices up."

Later, we spoke to the **Arc Gotha** spokesperson: "Well", he said, "you have to understand that the Epping MMAC17b was - and always has been - an experimental exercise in ship design. The MMAC15, forerunner of the MMAC17b was, as everyone will know, a faster and more agile ship, classed as a Heavy Fighter, not a Gun Boat. The reason that we have the Epping in its current guise - a slow, and granted not overly robust, vessel - is that the military forced us several years

ago to up armour a perfectly good fighter - the MMAC15 - and turn it into a gunboat. Now, this is a reversible process and - since the problems with Bravo Squadron's mission - it seems likely that we will be asked by the TODF to reverse the Eppings' "upgrade" to gunboats and turn them back into heavy fighters. However, let no one be in any doubt that the original decision to upgrade the Epping was not ours but the TODF's.

"In the light of this recent news, and if we are so instructed by the military, you may well see us recalling the 17b Eppings back to the yards and stripping out the extra armour. This may well reduce the damage reduction a little, but what it ought to do is return the Epping to the role it was best suited to: a missile fighter. The 17b - as a fighter - is an ideal



weapons platform for missile work: stable, on account of it not being too fast, but more manoeuvrable. And, with the pioneering work we tried out during this engagement of running remote drone ships from the gunnery positions, the Epping will, we feel, prove itself to be a better fighter than many."

DTT asked the **Arc Gotha** spokesperson for more information about the remote piloting experiment and asked what - if any - its limitations were. "Well, with vehicles like the Pit Viper and Pit Viper 3t, we have a range limitation because of a difference in coms link protocols. However, with a fighter actually made by **Arc Gotha** - for example a superlative light fighter like the Pit Cobra, the vehicle that, after all is said and done, **Imperial Transtar** (designers of the Pit Cobra) ripped off -

we should increase the control range by at least 50% and the number of fighters controlled can probably be increased to three without problems. We see squadrons of B20 Stretched Epping Gunboats supported by lightened Epping heavy fighters, each with three Pit Cobras under remote as the way to go against the Bug Threat."

When the TODF was asked to comment, a spokesperson said "I'm not sure we actually have any Pit Cobras left out of 'mothballs'...er... we'd have to check on that one - are they serious? - we haven't used the Pit Cobra in front line service for several years."

When asked for a comment, a spokesperson from **Imperial** said "What's wrong with Thunder Bird's?."

Finally, the spokesperson for **Augustus Naval** said

"The Naval 317dire Seraph C is a fast, powerful, Multi-Role Combat..." we skipped the next part. She continued "We don't think that, in the long term, the X pack is the way to go with the Seraph C - it slows it down to much - the D model will be faster and have better weapons anyway, so obviating the need for this particular upgrade although we may retain some of the features. However, in the wings we have the Seraph II which, we are sure, will outclass anything the Bugs can hit us with and, at the same time, fly rings around anything made by other manufacturers and offer greater crew survivability than any other vessel."

Martin-Baker, manufacturers of crew escape pods of the type used by Captain Flood aboard his Seraph C were unavailable for comment last night.

...DATA CAPSULE RECOVERED FROM THE BRAVO SQUADRON ENGAGEMENT... DATA CAPSULE RE..

STOP PRESS - Information has just been received confirming the deaths of Commander Green G., Captains Dallimore S. II, Dallimore K., Atkinson T. II, Reed M. II, and Flood A. Regards to their families and all awarded the Star Cluster with bar, Posthumously

DAMN THE TORPES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 871.2

*"Atkinson to
Commander
Penver"*

"Go ahead Tim"

*"I've got a problem
skip - I'm in the
queue on deck six
for a new ship and
the underbelly
camouflage colour
on the Seraph I've
been given clashes
with my trousers..."*

*"Green cutting in:
Hell we all got
problems, Atkinson
here - swap with my
ship for chrissakes
and... hey; Atkinson
there's something
wrong with the
audio control
systems on this
ship you've just
given me... oh no...
what's that terrible
noise in my
cabin?..."*

Transmission
excerpt from crew
log.

GOOD NEWS AT LAST VICTORY FROM THE FRONT!

These were the first words of the recently decorated Captain T. Atkinson III of the Bravo Squadron (yet again out of **Nimbus Three** station). However, don't let that fool you! On a second mission to hunt for Hatchling breeding worlds Bravo's new lads, under the redoubtable leadership of that old hand Commander Penver (pilot of *Inchon*, one of the most famous ships in the fleet, and surely one of the nicest painted) fought an outstanding battle against alien forces too vast to count. Well, actually there were six of them.

On a mission sponsored, in a new move, by **Augustus Naval**, Commander Penver flying a Seraph B-dr, led six other Seraphs, including a new Mine Sweeper variant flown by Cpt Dallimore K II, a Seraph B-plus (Cpt Green G II), a Seraph D-xp (Cpt Atkinson A III), and three more Seraphs and Seraph 2's flown by Captains Flood A II; Reed M III; and Dallimore S III.

Mine clearance went well with the new anti-mine pod and this choice of ship was fortunate as a new Hatchling Mine Laying ship was encountered: called by the TODF recognition

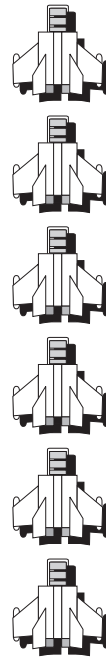
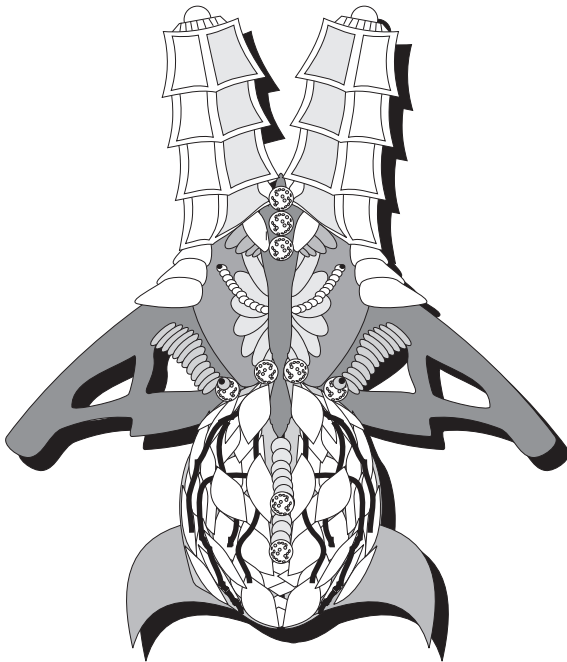
name *Big Walnut*, this very large gunboat is bigger than anything of its class in Terran fleets and packs an enormous punch.

We asked a spokesperson for **Augustus Naval**, manufacturers of the *Seraph* and sponsors for the recent mission what they thought of this new ship. They said

"The Naval 317dire Seraph C is a fast, powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft that emphasises crew survivability above almost everything else. With good ..." At this point we interrupted her pointing out that this was what she always said and probed her further about her company's opinions on this new Hatchling terror weapon.

"Well, it's certainly big..." she added, emphasising its proportions with her hands and proffering some schematics that her company had prepared, *"... bigger, in fact, than any of the gun boats or even heavy gunboats that the TODF currently employs. Analysis of the remains of the Big Walnut, which was entirely destroyed by our*

BIG WALNUT vs SERAPH SIZE COMPARRISON CHART



CONFIDENTIAL: Augustus Naval Sales Estimate Comparison Chart.
For each "Big Walnut" that appears accounts estimate that we can sell up to six Seraph C's or D's to the TODF."

Seraph Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft - did I mention that? - analysis shows that if it were a TODF vessel it would probably run a crew of ten or so - it's probably 30% longer and 300% more massive than even an XL5 or Sherwood, previously amongst the largest of Terran heavy gunboats."

We asked her whether Bravo squadron's excellent performance indicated any flaws in the alien technology or whether it simply spoke of superior training and tactics on the part of the crew. For example, we cited, Commander Penver, when caught, damaged and virtually immobile in the forward arc of a greatly feared Muskelunge heavy fighter, sensibly ejected, thereby saving himself from almost certain death and his ship from destruction - the Bug ship swapped targets rather than fire on a non-threatening, crewless ship. Was better Terran tactics the key?

She said *"To be, honest we put it down mostly to the vehicles that Bravo Squadron were flying. The Naval 317dire Seraph D is an even faster, more powerful, Multi-Role..."*. We interrupted at this point and told her to keep to the fucking point. "Oh

yes, she said... tactics... hmm. Well Bravo Squadron did employ their minesweeper well, and used the manoeuvrability of the Ser.. [the interviewer glared at the spokes person at this point] ... and, ah... well there is also the fact that, big a ship as the Big Walnut seemed to be, it didn't seem to be hugely well protected or well equipped. It seemed that its weapons operated in restricted arcs - mostly forward - which, with a Heavy Gunboat - a class not noted for their manoeuvrability - appears to be a big disadvantage. But it does chuck an awful lot of mines out of the back in a wide strip and, with its jump pods, can cover large distances. Not a vessel to be sniffed at, even in a Seraph D-Xp which, at the price we're charging is..."

Other good news was that a Muskelunge class Heavy fighter and a Ramora class medium fighter were captured mostly intact by Bravo Squadron. These have now been delivered to **Arc Gotha**, manufacturers of the MMAC17b Epping and B20 Stretched Eppings.

DTT asked an **Arc Gotha** spokesperson what they thought of these vessels. "Well, the superior technologies that the Aliens have employed are quite something. However, er, in actual fact most of these two vessels have been pretty badly smashed up, despite what you may have been led to believe from elsewhere, and we'll be very lucky to learn anything of commercial... I mean military advantage from either of them..."

When DTT mentioned to the AG spokesperson that the initial crew reports seemed to indicate that these vessels were perhaps as much as 50% intact, they became evasive and, when pressed, eventually handed us a leaflet bizarrely entitled "Eppings: the New Firing Range Target Tug for the TODF".

Martin-Baker, manufacturers of crew escape pods of the type used by Commander Penver aboard his Seraph B-Dr were said to be "very pleased" last night after learning of Mick Penver's successful escape.



DAMN THE TORPES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 871.8

*"Atkinson to
Commander Green -
sorry I'm late..."*

*"Never mind that,
Tim - just stop
you're whining and
get in that ship: we
got company."*

*"No problem - that
sound you can hear
is my engines
powering up as I
taxi my mighty
Epping fighter into
the launch area..."*

*"Well, you could've
fooled me"*

Transmission
excerpt from crew
log.

** Except for surviving
members of the Dallimore
family*

GOOD NEWS* ANOTHER VICTORY FROM THE FRONT!

These were the first words of the (yet again) decorated Captain T. Atkinson III of the Bravo Squadron. Whilst planning a third major incursion into Bug Space to hunt for the Hatchling breeding worlds the **Bravo** squadron found themselves on the receiving end of an alien invasion into **TODF** territory. The squadron were, unfortunately understaffed through crew being on R&R and Squadron Commander Penver (pilot, of course, of *Inchon*, that sexy *Seraph* so renowned from news vids) was on a training mission (more of which elsewhere in this issue).

First off of the launch pad was Captain Green II, flying a new **Augustus Naval, Seraph II** and Captain Dallimore S III flying one of the new *Epping Fighters* with three drone fighters (*Darts*), as mentioned in the last issue of DTT.

They were up against the usual alien riffraff in the shape of a couple of dozen Mantas and Muskellunges (apparently, just off or the edge of the sensor screen) with just a pair of ships willing to show their cowardly faces whilst trying to sow mines around the *Nimbus 3 Station*.

Having launched to attack, Captain Dallimore S III's *Epping* then suffered what **Arc Gotha** (manufacturers of the MMAC15f *Epping fighter* and the MMAC17b *Epping* and B20 *Stretched Eppings* gunboats) described as "an unfortunate and unusual technical and financial failure...". Incredibly the ship, after just one burst of fire (probably "Y *Beams*", as they are called by the TODF's top scientists) simply disintegrated without warning, leaving the **Imperial Transtar Darts** powering off, no longer under control, at an impressive turn of speed towards the Deneb system.

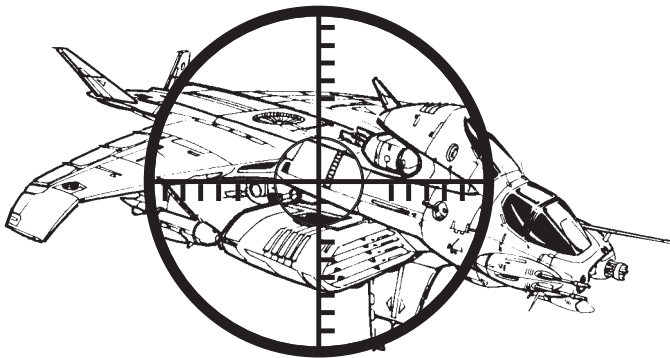
Meanwhile, replacement crews had arrived in the shape of the ever flexible Captain Jenkins A (more usually found in the "Aliens Simulator Suite" at the *Amstrad Computer Tactical Simulator* helping our brave lads understand the finer points of anti Bug Flying [motto: *Forget the Hun in the Sun, concentrate on the Bugs on your Windshield*]) flying a Seraph C-MS Mine sweeper and Captain Dallimore's brother Captain Dallimore S IV flying yet another MMAC15f *Epping fighter* (perhaps it runs in the family...).

Their mission was further complicated by the arrival of another of the Bug's new terror weapon ("... *sure to have grave financial*

ramifications..." says the spokesperson for **Augustus Naval**) *The Big Walnut*. The Aliens have been, it has been speculated, capturing Terran ships for our superior technology and this was in evidence during this battle as one of the first things that the *Big Walnut* did was launch a batch of very Terran like Mk 10 (or equivalent) torpedoes, though to little effect against our brave boys from Bravo squadron.

Mine clearance - with the new anti-mine pod - again went well, proving the veracity of this design, however, Captain Jenkins was lost due to enemy action during the course

Hey Pilots - it's ship recognition time
Do you know what this is?



**It's the last view a Bug has of an
Arc Gotha Epping**

Buy Augustus Naval - you know it makes sence

of the engagement, as was Captain Dallimore S IV, in fact his young nephew - Captain Dallimore S V - was just launching in a last remaining Seraph when the Aliens beat a hasty retreat in front of overwhelming losses (Captain Atkinson dealt a final blow to the *Big Walnut*, which had been pre softened for his *Epping* "nut-crackers" by Captain Green).

And so the second battle of *Nimbus Three* was over.

We asked a spokesperson for **Augustus Naval**, manufacturers of the *Seraph* B, C and D and the new *Seraph II* what they thought of their new ship's performance on only its second combat outing. They said "*The Naval 346dire Seraph II is a faster, more-powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft that emphasises crew survivability above almost everything else - except perhaps for 360 turrets and going like stink. With good ...*" At this point we

interrupted her pointing out that this was, with a few pretty weary additions, very much what she always said. We asked her what she thought of the new "retro" look *Epping Fighter*.

"*Well, it's crap, isn't it?...*" she added, adding emphasis by pointing to a model she had on her desk of an *Epping* which had been painted in the colourful pink and purple livery of the **Haul U Like - Budget Garbage Removal Company**. "*... it's still slow, weak, fragile, undergunned and a sitting duck.*"

DTT asked an **Arc Gotha** spokesperson what they thought of their vessel's performance - two *Epping* fighters lost, with crew (the Dallimore brothers). "*Well, there has to be an assimilation period where the crews report back - well, those that make it back anyway - on their shake down first voyage experience. We'll obviously look into any shortcomings that turn up from the repts and then we'll see what extra items - if any - we can usefully fit to the Epping, withing the agreed TODF budget restrictions, of course.*"

What, like bigger Skips, with a tarpaulin over the top to make sure nothing falls off of the back?, DTT asked provocatively (after glancing at the zeros on the cheque that the **Augustus Naval** spokesperson had made out to us only hours before).

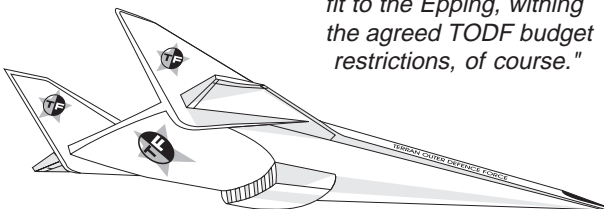
"*Certainly not,*" said the **Arc Gotha** spokesperson, becoming agitated - "*you want to you see our new ship with the Alien Tecn.. oops: perhaps we could end the interview there...?*"

At this point the **Arc Gotha** spokesperson handed us a leaflet intriguingly entitled "*Eppings: the Luxury Executive Transport Craft for the TODF*".

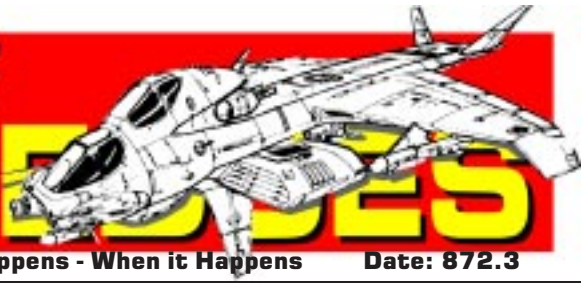
LATE NEWS

Commander Penver (Inchon) recently returned from Training on *Seran VII* in an **Augustus Naval "Swordfish" Shuttle (Pictured left)** where he received atmosphere flying training.

When asked how the training went, he said "*A piece of piss*" and then fell down the gang way burping "*Now is the winter of or discontent*" before collapsing into the luggage carousel.



DAMN THE TORPEDOES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 872.3

DARING RESCUE SAVES VITAL NEW SECRET SHIP*

"Atkinson to Stewardess..... look - I'm like, a hero of the TODF, right, and I, like really hate this green salad crap. Bring me some proper airline food with meat in it, and lots of pasta, and stick a decent movie on the in flight entertainment, for chrissakes, but not one with, like, too much suspense, right. And phooooog.... this isn't real ale - I asked for Dog Bolter. And don't you have any napkins? I shot down a huge ship, you know, like a great big Walnut, it was. In fact, if it had been any more massive, the drive rating of my... Hang on: Where's my extra cushion and..."

*"Tim - just shut up.**"*

"No problem."

Once again **Bravo Squadron** were in the thick of the Anti-Bug Wars.

As these alien hordes sweep almost inexorably towards Earth, heart (of course) of the **TODF**, our brave boys launched on a secret mission: to investigate the sudden loss of communication with an **Arc Gotha** "Black Ops" research establishment.

Situated just beyond the Centauri System, 'The Stonk Works' - as it is known amongst the **Arc Gotha** personnel - has been rumoured to have been creating a new ship based upon Alien Technology. DTT spoke to a contract shuttle driver at the plant. To protect his identity he will be known simply by the initials J.R.

and, on audio versions of this issue, a fake "comedy" accent has been added to disguise his identity...

"Well, obviously, like, yoo know, these pallies at the, yoo know, Stonk Works, have been building a new Sooper ship, fitted with squillions of torpedoes, like... well, better than everybody else's, like..."

DTT pointed out that Torpedoes were distinctly Terran style weapons - "Surely," we asked, "an alien technology demonstrator would use Drones or Jump Pods?"

"Well, obviously yeah... but yer cannae say what those bastards will do next eh? Am I right Pal? Well anyway, I can't say because I haven't actually been involved since my early days in the TODF

* Probably. ** Say all the other passengers: members of **Bravo Squadron** returning from a difficult mission - see main text...

flying a **Covenanter** - during the '**Big Whinge**' campaign, as we used to call it. In those days, I was Smudger's wingman, like the time when Catweasel went down in a huge hail of Torpedo-missile-thingies... fookin zillions of them there w..."

DTT asked again: what about this new Arc Gotha Ship?

"Well, it was one of them sooper Epping Gunboat B52 jobbies, I think: 40 Alien Mines - the big ones, mind - and sixty Torpedoes, plus all them alien rays: Yobba Rays, Zob beams and..."

At this point DTT terminated the interview

(to shouts from our informant of "Hang on I haven't told you about the time that me and Buster MacCrabbe flew a pair of Pit Vipers to Mars... don't you wanna see my war wound?...") and went to find somebody more reliable.

Unfortunately, we found Commander Tim "Nut Cracker" Atkinson III who had just returned from the mission. he said "Who? DTT? - whoa, I can't talk to the press, man - hey everybody knows you're in league with the secret service and put wire taps in peoples ears. Just bug my e-mail - oh you probably are already - then ..."

We interrupted this blatant attack of paranoia to ask

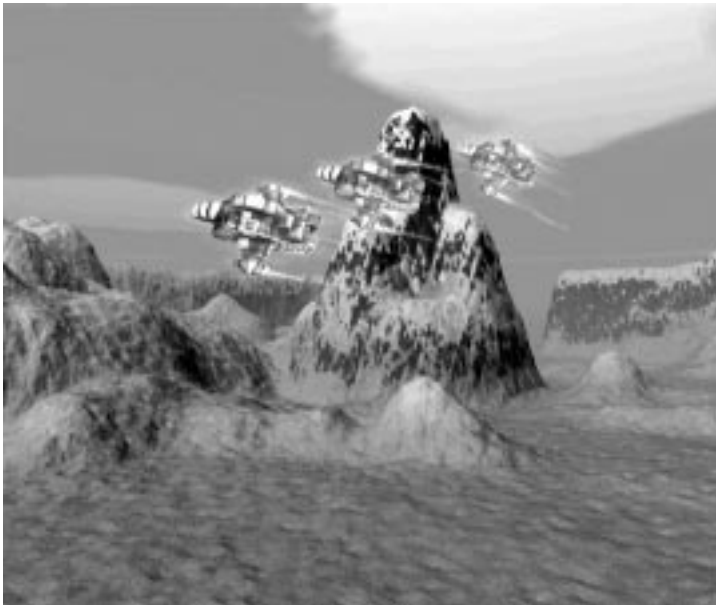
him the question that's been on everyone's lips since the mission was completed: *what truth is their in the rumour that Mick Penver ("Inchon"), squadron commander, much decorated and only Bravo Squadron survivor since the campaign began, ordered his own troops to open fire on the Ship - the Arc Gotha Technology Demonstrator?.*

"Er... '**No Comment**' has to be my comment, I guess," said Atkinson, "I can't possibly say, I mean, we got the ship back didn't we? I mean it wasn't my fault, right... we just didn't have the technology to beat the..."

At this point another Bravo Squadron pilot - Captain

Green - butted into the conversation: "Shut up, Atkinson - listen, bud," he addressed the DTT reporter, "all we know is that brave men went in and came out - in the teeth of some pretty harsh fire from a large number of Bug Ships, and we got out again with the Epping with all of them alien gizmos on it: end of story."

We asked an **Arc Gotha** spokesperson



Seraphs fly atmosphere training over Greenland on Earth (Terra III)



ARC GOTHA MMAC17B
EPPING

what they thought of the mission.

*"We told you," he said, "we **told** you - nee nar na noo nar... erm. Sorry about that... er yes the Mission? - the Mission: right. Well we thought it went well... We sent some ships in with a spare pilot to get our new test ship - the **X26 Epping TDS** - out as our base had been surrounded by Alien ships. Our people had destroyed hundreds of Bug craft by the time the **TODF** eventually turned up but were running out of munitions and so had to begin to abandon the base."*

*"Unfortunately the Seraphs sent to help us by the **TODF** were too slow to get the spare pilot that we had arranged to be sent into action - fortunately, one of our own people managed to escape in the valuable demonstrator ship. The Seraph is, I guess, typical of **Augustus Naval** products, really - 'too few, too late, too bad'..."*

We asked an **Augustus Naval** spokesperson what they thought of their crafts' performance on this mission. She said *"The Naval 346dire Seraph II is a faster, more-powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft that emphasises crew*

survivability above almost everything else - except perhaps for 360 turrets and going like stink. With good ..."

SHUT UP, we implored. *What about the mission?*

*"Well..." she added, "No Seraphs lost, loads of bugs destroyed, useless, pile of **Arc Gotha's** arse pulled from the fire yet again, what more do you want me to say?"*

It is understood that, if Commander Penver ("**Inchon**") makes it back to **TODF** head quarters, there may be a court of enquiry to investigate the allegations of irregular orders given during this mission.

DAMN THE TORPES



News from the Frontier: As it Happens - When it Happens

Date: 872.6

THE FINAL CONFLICT

"Is that the TODF Earth Defence Force? Gosh am I glad to see you: Governor Clark here from the Centauri System. Can I have some cover as my shuttle comes in? I've got bugs right behind me - they've swept clean through the neighbouring systems and now they're coming for Earth."

"Governor Clark, this is EDF Central - our fighters are in orbit to escort you to the L3 station but we note that you have two Sorensons as escort. Please confirm."

"EDF this is Clark: I have no - repeat NO - escort. If there's anybody behind me they're NOT friendlies. Do you under.."

"This is Commander Penver, EDF leader in red sector three cutting in: we are under attack, repeat we're under

attack from the Governor Clark's Sorenson escorts. Do we have permission to engage, EDF?"

"Commander Penver, this is Governor Clark. My shuttle is firing on the lead ship, I suggest you do the same..."

"This is Green, Commander - we've got company: I got a good twenty blips appearing from a Jump point in front of me its... here they are: that's the biggest Alien fleet I've seen."

"What are you flying Green?"

"Pit-viper 3T with four ready and waiting."

"Well let 'em fly Green and get out of there... This is Commander Penver: Who have I got with me for the last waltz?"

"Dallimore S. reporting... Atkinson sir... Reed M..."

Flood A, commander... Young here... Merritt P, sir - in the Orion Shuttle engaging enemy now..."

"Merritt in an Orion ? - christ we are scraping the barrel for Pilots and ships. Green you still there. Green. Green?..."

This is an extract from the log of the late Commander M. J Penver the first, lost at the Battle for Earth 872.6

The battle started when, as Penver's log implies, one of the shuttles coming in from the outlying systems was pursued by two captured - and heavily converted - Sorenson IIIs.

Behind them, having gained the element of surprise, came a large Alien fleet: huge and deadly *Muskelunges*, *Squiges*, four *Larvas*, perhaps four large *Mantas*, *Remoras* including a new and more powerful type, dubbed the 'Eagle Head' *Remora*,



some new, ludicrously powerful small ships called 'Grubs' boasting Terran style cannon and, last but not least, an improved version of the *Big Walnut* - dubbed the *Super Walnut* by the TODF - with large, multi weapon turrets and torpedoes.

Their objective, it was deduced, was to lay mines in low earth orbit - inside the atmosphere, in fact - with the objective, of destroying earth's biosphere by poisoning the air.

Wave after wave of fighters were launched as new pilots volunteered for this, the final battle for earth, and as fire raged in the skies and the heavens were rent asunder, we asked an **Augustus Naval** spokesperson what they thought of their crafts' performance in this battle. She said "*The Naval 317dire Seraph C is a fast, powerful, Multi-Role Combat Spacecraft*

that emphasises crew survivability above almost everything else. Trouble is we haven't got any left... We've been launching those poor boys in anything and everything today, from shuttles to Sentries; from Seraphs to Salamanders and frankly we've nothing left. I've seen people go up in total crates. I saw one pilot simply ram a field of mines and then eject - Governor Clark's shuttle went the same way: flew straight into a line of mines in the atmosphere."

Arc Gotha said "*We've sent everything up: The last of our B20 Stretched Eppings, even though a gunboat is hardly the best vehicle in an atmosphere against bugs. I saw that ship launch every single torpedo and most of its missiles before being vaporised - but then I saw one poor pilot in an*

The Super Walnut

old Celtic Industries

Cuchulainn not even clear the atmosphere when the big Alien flag ship gutted it. It went up with all hands. I've seen Hamilcars up, a Halifax, a Pharsi II... We even sent our only Alien Technology demonstrator up, piloted by chief test pilot Tim "Sonic" Atkinson. That was destroyed in combat with four bug fighters."

There were some notable 'ejection successes' - Captain Reed, for example was recovered safely after his *Seraph II* was wrecked by alien *Drive Leeches* (a rarely seen device) and then 'sucked apart' by the bug ships in order to replenish their fiendish terror weapons.

But despite a surfeit of excellent quality Martin Baker ejector seats there were still the inevitable deaths on the day: Peter Merritt, a pilot who came

out of early retirement to fight, died trying to eject from a damaged *Orion Shuttle*; members of the Green family died, as did the Dallimores and Atkinsons... in fact most of the families involved in what has become a very personal conflict lost a favourite son (or at least some wrong-side-of-the-blanket upstart if nothing else), however this loss was felt nowhere more poignantly than in the Penver household.

Commander Penver had risen through the ranks to be the most experienced,

the most highly decorated, the best trained and the longest lived pilot the **TODF** had. After taking up a *Sentry* early on in the conflict - and having it shot away from under him - Commander Penver was (literally) flying a *Blinder* - an old Torpedo Bomber - when, having been badly raked by enemy fire, a hit rendered him temporarily unconscious.

Whilst out cold, his ship took yet more damage and, before the ship was engulfed, the auto eject system tried to launch his capsule. Sadly, although

the capsule left the ship it misfired and, instead of homing in on the largest body in the system - Earth - it aimed it's nose for deep space. Hopefully the auto-stasis unit kicked in, however - in reality - the chances are that Commander Penver, leader of Bravo Squadron is dead. At any rate his ship - the famous *Inchon* - is to be preserved at the Interplanetary All Services Museum.



Bear Heavy Torpedo Bomber - out moded, out classed but not out fought

The Last Gasp

'Eagle Head' Remora, climbing fast.

The Alien forces made their final attacks laying swathes of mines which, drifting ever ground-wards, poured their unearthly corruption onto the civilian population below. In a last ditch effort, after what seemed like days of fighting, and with the Terran ship yards virtually empty, the tables were turned.

Some of the last ships launched included a *Bear*, a *Blinder* an old *Pit Cobra* but, as the atmosphere reached 95% of maximum damage - the point beyond which it became irreparable and all of Earth's innocents were condemned to a searing death - an old *XL5 Missile Gunboat* was hauled up into the lower atmosphere. With a *Teal Hawk* and several other ships in tow it destroyed the *Super Walnut* flagship and blew up the last of the deadly spores.

The world was free from menace and its people could - literally - breath easy once again.

Until the next time...

Postscript

Many thanks to all those who took part in the campaign: Steve, Graham, Pete, Tim, Mick, Mik, Andy and Shane, plus, occasionally, Paul Sharville and Tony "Somewhere Abroad" Mosely.

And many, many thanks to Kevin Dallimore and Adam Jenkins for their huge amounts of work and - for the most part - unbounded enthusiasm.

Until the next time (indeed...)

JT



