

JUMP POINT

ISSUE: 08 08



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FROM THE COCKPIT

GREETINGS, CITIZENS!

The morning after *Star Citizen* Alpha 3.10 launched to the public, I saw (and unfortunately failed to save) a tweet that made me grin ear-to-ear: the photographer had captured several different players showing up at the same location to pick up their new Greycat ROCs, presumably for their first taste of mining on the ground. ROCs were being simultaneously loaded into a Constellation and a Freelancer and it just struck me as a wonderful moment because it was exactly the sort of thing we'd dreamed about seeing at the start of this adventure.

Which is all to say, this month we're taking a deeper look at the ROC! We introduced the buggy in last month's visual guide, but there's always an opportunity to go deeper with these things. I'm frequently asked to do more 'behind the scenes' ship articles and we haven't had a great opportunity lately because there's been so much focus in recent patches in getting existing ships online and flyable. But August is a return to form with not just one but two in-depth looks at *Star Citizen* vehicles, the already-familiar Greycat ROC and the just-announced Esperia Talon. Thank you very much to Art Director Paul Jones for walking me through the history of both vehicles and also John Crewe and the design teams for answering all of my questions.

Now to the Talon and the reveal of the second Tevarin ship to grace the 'verse. Following the development of a species' second ship is especially interesting because it's the part of the process that decides so much about what will be carried on into the future. That is to say, any individual choice made on the Prowler might have been made specifically

for that ship and its role. But now that we've worked out a second Tevarin ship, we get to see what carries over to define Tevarin design, capabilities, and aesthetics... it's very, very cool! And it should get your neurons spinning, too: what do the new materials or avian-look mean for other elements of the Tevarin yet to be determined? It all starts here! (And to think, a Talon you don't need to trade with a corrupt governor to get...)

Finally, we've got the usual assortment of lore articles for everyone interested in the nitty gritty background of *Star Citizen's* future. This month's Whitley's Guide tackles the Aegis Dynamics Gladius, *Star Citizen's* first dedicated light fighter. One of the things we established very early on was that the Gladius (and its big brother, the Retaliator bomber) are designs that go all the way back to the Tevarin War several hundred years prior to our current story. That's a long time for a spacecraft to be in service and it's a lot of fun to go back and imagine exactly what that might mean to its everyday operations. We've also got an in-universe log entry titled Sojourner Travelogue, which will have you putting together a story as you read it. Have fun!

I hope you enjoy this issue and I'd love feedback on what you prefer: straight interviews, stories like the ones this month, lore content... or something we haven't done yet? Let us know on Spectrum! In the meantime, we'll see you next month... through the **Jump Point!**

Ben

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GREYCAT INDUSTRIAL ROC

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IN THE BEGINNING...

It's a small footnote in a very large project's record that the very first time *Star Citizen's* pilots took the controls of an advanced 30th century vehicle, it wasn't to man the lasers of a Hornet space superiority fighter or to deliver cargo in a Freelancer hauler. Rather, it was to step behind the wheels of something akin to a modern golf cart: the Greycat Industrial Personal Transport Vehicle. The PTV, as its most commonly known, was the answer to a problem that had vexed the team early on: how to let players with large numbers of spacecraft visit them all in the game's first interactive mode, the Hangar Module. Chris Roberts premiered the PTV in a presentation at Gamescom 2013 on August 22 and then shared the vehicle with the world the next week when the module launched to early supporters of the game.

In the years since, the Greycat name was used very sparingly. It appeared on the Cygnus mining bots shown early on for *Squadron 42* and on the PU's Multi-Tool, but while companies like Anvil and MISC became living entities,

Greycat seemed left behind. Meanwhile, *Star Citizen's* involvement with ground gameplay multiplied a million-fold, with the construction of entire planets and moons. Other manufacturers began to introduce everything from rough-and-tumble exploration buggies to battle tanks that would take advantage of this incredible new playground, but nothing more from the team at Greycat Industrial...

LIKE A ROC

...until 2019, that is! A full six years after the Greycat PTV's sometimes-explosive antics delighted the *Star Citizen* fandom, the designers set out to build the company's second usable vehicle. As *Star Citizen's* gameplay systems had greatly expanded, so too did the need for role-specific vehicles. Chris Roberts identified immediately that ground vehicle types would follow in the same footsteps as those created for space, moving beyond combat roles and into industrial ones. With space mining functioning in-game

and a number of mining-focused spacecraft available and flying, it was an easy decision to adapt and build out these systems for use on the game's ultra-detailed planetary surfaces. Chris and Erin Roberts specifically cited the need for a small mining vehicle that could be carried by existing *Star Citizen* cargo-capable spacecraft. The task of developing Greycat's second vehicle fell to Vehicle Director John Crewe and Senior Systems Designer Stephen Hosmer, veteran of the Prowler, Mantis, and Defender. Their job was to adapt the gameplay already becoming available in ships like the Prospector to a very small vehicle that was quickly internally named the Remote Ore Collector, or ROC.

"The call for the ROC came from a desire to expand mining gameplay to a ground vehicle and to create a cheaper option for people wanting to continue on in the mining profession from hand mining," Hosmer explains. And the decision to revisit Greycat just made sense: "When designing a new vehicle, we collaborate with the Narrative Team to decide which

manufacturer it would fit with best. Greycat's history as a leading brand in mining and their creation of another ground vehicle made them the ideal choice for the ROC. We may not have made a vehicle by Greycat in the last seven years, but they have been making tools such as the Multi-Tool and mining heads for the other mining vehicles in the meantime." Crewe adds that the team was just coming off of the ARGO MOLE and was eager to explore a different industrial manufacturer in order to add more variety into the game.

Kicking off a ground vehicle is essentially the same process as a large spacecraft or installation. The team starts from the role needed, works with the Narrative Team to connect it to *Star Citizen's* detailed lore, and then specs out exactly what dimensions and components the concept artists will need to abide by when constructing the 3D design. For the ROC, Crewe says that "the key aspect was being able to let a single player mine from the comfort of a ground vehicle, so a combination of stability and visibility



from the driving seat was key, alongside the requirement to make it small enough to fit in a wide variety of vehicles." Working out these metrics fell to Hosmer: "As the ROC is a ground vehicle, it would mainly be transported by ships to get around the 'verse. Therefore, I had to figure out what size we could make it to fit into as many ships as we could. This not only applies to the physical size, but also how the player gets in and out while in a narrow space. It also applied to how the mining arm would have a good range of motion despite fitting inside of a ship."

Designers also pay special attention to what a new vehicle can reuse from systems already created, making the rollout smoother and less resource intensive. For the ROC, Hosmer points out that it "does use the same mining laser as the ones on the Prospector and MOLE, but it operates at a lower power." That doesn't mean it didn't require anything special. "We did have to create a new gathering system that collected the handheld minable objects. This new collection beam will detect the objects it is pointed at and then move them towards the head, sucking them up and adding them to the ROC's inventory." Crewe further explains that the work done on the new gathering beam isn't bespoke and will ultimately roll out to existing and future mining spacecraft. "The gathering beam used to pick up the fracture is actually an entirely different system to the other mining vehicles and physically moves the fragments rather than giving the illusion via particles. We aim to move all mining vehicles to this system over time."

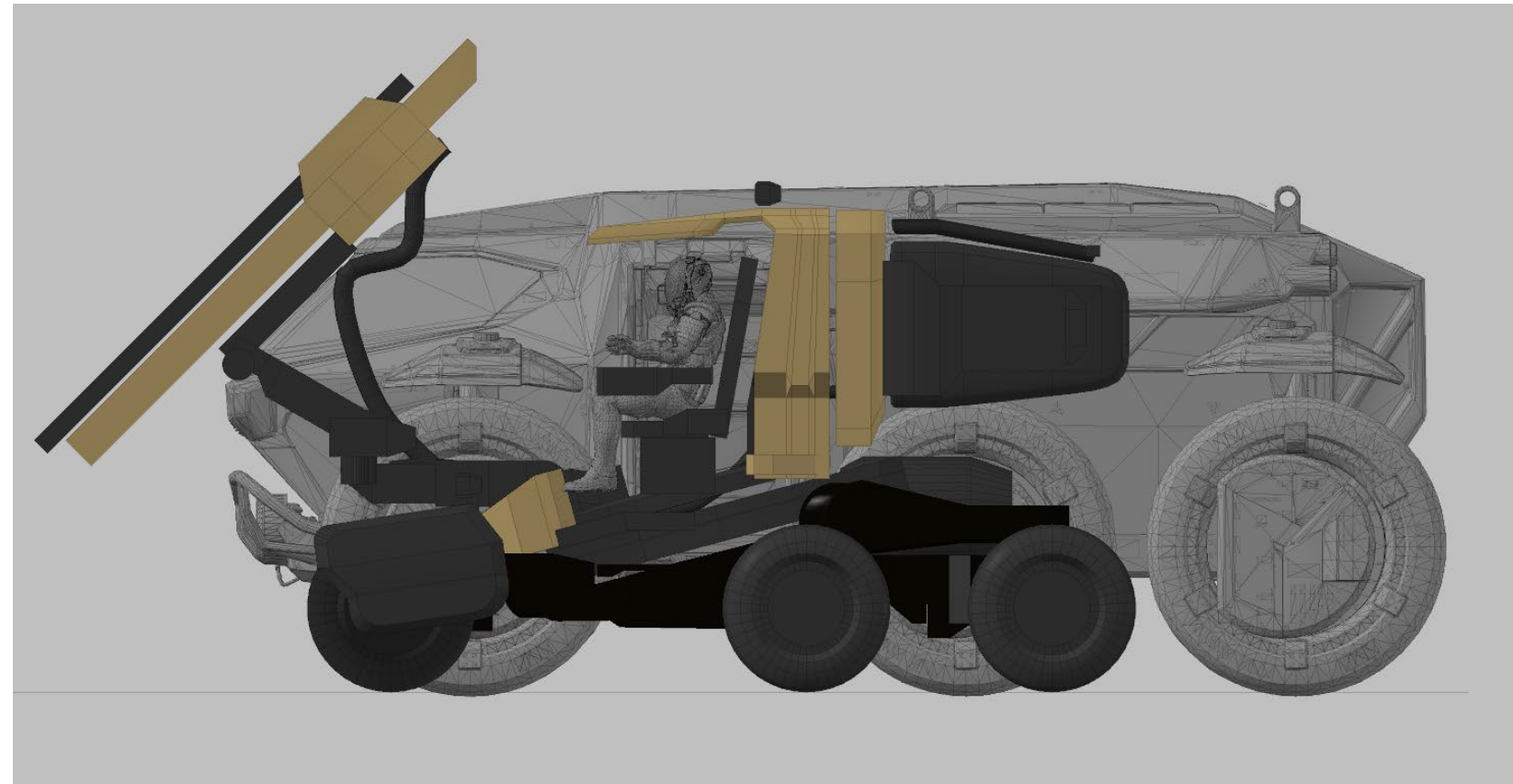
Finally, the designers also needed to consider how they envision gameplay with the ROC functioning, ensuring it's engrossing enough to keep players interested. It's especially important here to take into account not just the features of the newly designed addition itself but to very carefully plot out how it will work alongside the rest of *Star Citizen's* systems and gameplay options. Hosmer's vision for operating the miner: "There are a variety of minable objects available to players, and one ship or vehicle can't mine them all by themselves. I would like to see the ROC being used as one tool in an arsenal of a team of miners; if a Prospector comes across something the ROC could mine, or vice versa, then you could call it over to maximize your mining potential. In the future, you should also be able to access the cargo box on the ROC in order to store things you've picked up by hand or remove things to be stored in the hold of your ship. There will also be caves and other areas that you may not be able to reach with a spaceship where the ROC will come in handy." Like the increasingly larger mining spacecraft, the ROC is also part of an intentional upgrade tree where players will naturally progress to more and more complex vehicles that support the role they come to prefer. "The ROC is a great steppingstone up from FPS hand-mining," Crewe says, "it's part of the 'upgrade' tree we have in mind for vehicles where there is a natural progression for players as they go deeper into professions."



50 SHADES OF GREYCAT

The *Star Citizen*-loving public received their first look at what would become the Greycat ROC during Citizencon 2949's 'Ship Talk' panel, where it was identified only as 'Vehicle 1' alongside two other potential silhouettes for a future ground mining vehicle. These proposed vehicles were the work of Art Director Paul Jones and concept artist

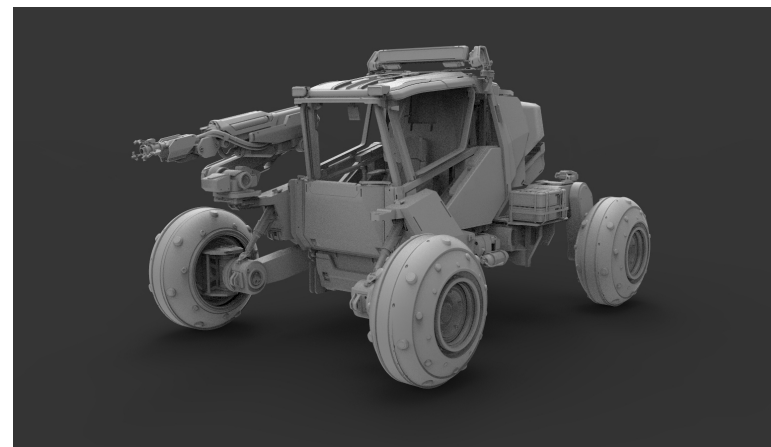
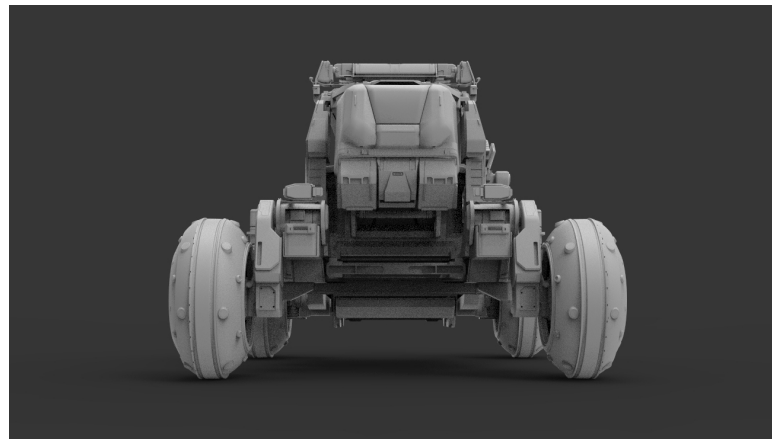
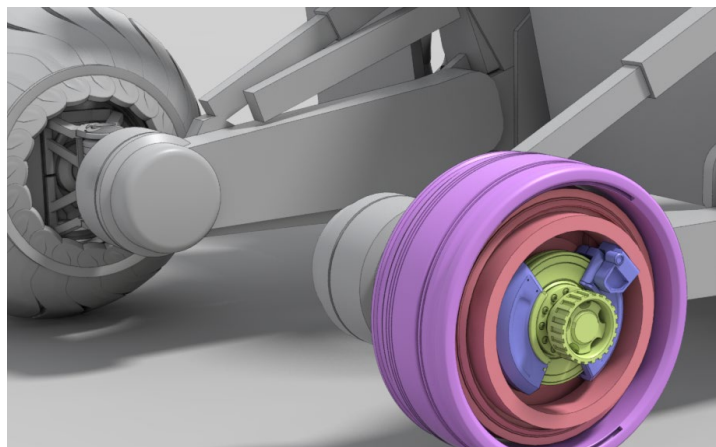
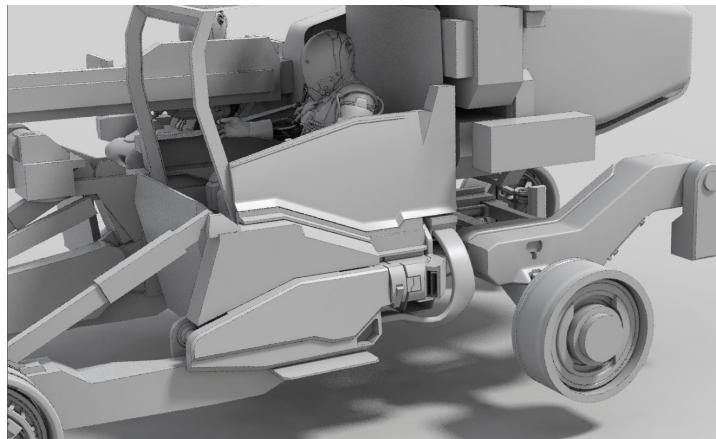
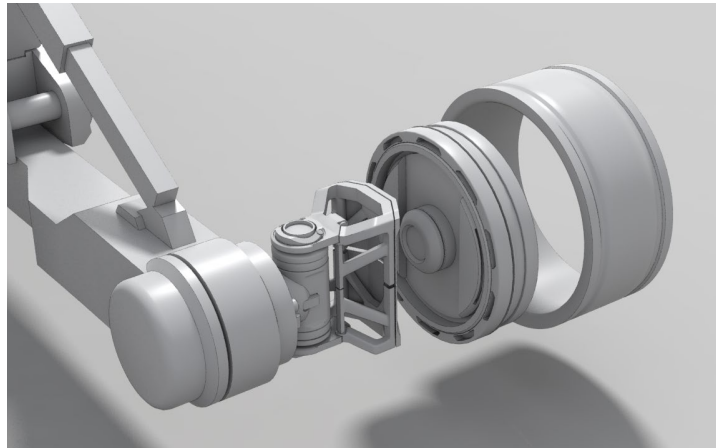
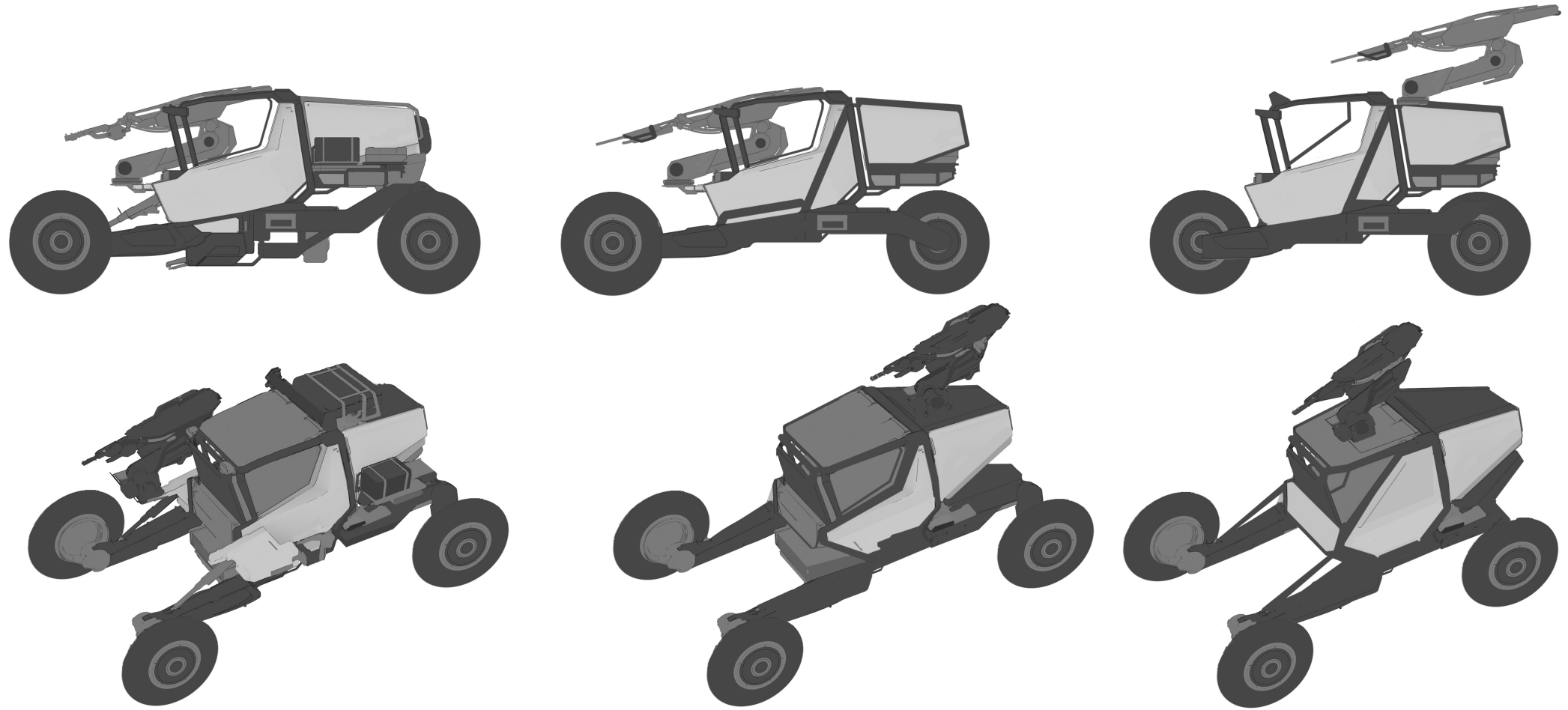
Aleksandras Akstinas, working to Crewe and Hosmer's brief and Chris and Erin Roberts' initial request. The options presented at CitizenCon included a variant with two massive treads, one with four smaller treads, and one wheeled type roughly resembling what the final ROC would become.



From the start, Jones and Akstinas primarily referenced modern day construction equipment (in addition to Greycat's PTV, mining spider, and omnitool). They quickly locked on the asymmetrical feel of real-world mining machinery as something to echo in the ship's design. From there, the big trick was developing unique directions that would also fit into the very specific metrics

provided by the designers that would allow the ROC to fit into the back of various existing vehicles. "We always knew it was going to be a tight fit," Jones explains, as the size requirement did not at all change the fact that it needed to incorporate the same variety of built-out systems as any *Star Citizen* spacecraft: batteries, computers, scanners, and the like.

The pair looked at cables and soft covering to increase the industrial vibe, seeking something similar to the mining bag on the Cygnus. Jones explains that another circular bag on the ROC would look too cartoonish but that they still wanted to reference the design. Of the directions seen at CitizenCon, Jones' feedback was that he felt the tracked version didn't work as it would read as too slow. However, the first pass at wheels also felt too traditional, leading to additional work to make it more futuristic. Again, the Cygnus was referenced for its modular chassis with legs hanging off, something carried over into the ROC's suspension system. A variety of experiments were conducted with non-traditional wheels. The result of all this thinking was a ROC which features different 'legs' compared to a traditional vehicle, a mining bag, and an off-centered mining tool inspired by modern construction equipment. Jones was proud of the design, which immediately read as highly functional while maintaining visual lineage to the PTV.





The small, single-person nature of the ROC meant that there was no need to concept a complex interior area. Jones and Akstinas planned for a front entrance to make life easier for future animators who would be integrating the ship into the game and they also developed out the mining tool. Jones notes that the tool began life as something like a tablet pen and was ultimately fleshed out into a manipulator arm with three rotating prongs referencing the mining tools on ships like the Prospector. With space for a single driver, an arm that worked to the game's mining system specifications, and then an area to transport ores, there was not a great deal of additional work needed to flesh out the design!

When the initial art came back to design, an error was found. Hosmer notes: "When we got the art in, an unforeseen problem with the enter and exit animations was discovered. When the player exited the vehicle, they would end the animation standing on a piece of the vehicle that would then close back into itself. This meant that if the player didn't move immediately, they would become swallowed up by the vehicle as the doors closed. To solve this, we had to add an option in the doors so they would not close automatically and the player would not become trapped."





ORE, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

The Greycat Industries ROC launched on August 6, 2020 alongside *Star Citizen* Alpha 3.10, making a new type of mining available for players who were eager to set out in the new vehicle. Like many of *Star Citizen*'s recent ships, the ROC was not offered to the community as a concept beyond the suggestive silhouette shown at CitizenCon almost a year prior. Still, rumors of the new mining vehicle predated the release and a large number of players were extremely eager to get their first experience behind the wheels of a new Greycat design.

With the launch, the developers have joined in the fun of experiencing their work alongside players. Systems Designer Stephen Hosmer details his process: "I like to spawn a ROC at an outpost on the surface of one of the moons. From there I load it up on to a ship such as the Cutlass or Valkyrie. Then I fly around using my scanner in order to locate the appropriate mineable rocks. Once located, I unload the ROC and proceed to mine the rocks that I've found. Repeat this process until the inventory of the ROC is full, and then proceed to the nearest outpost to sell the things that I've mined." The designers have been watching the reaction

to their work in real time, too. "I've seen a few streams and videos of people using the ROC," Hosmer continues. "The mining process seems to be playing out as intended, but there is definitely room for improvement on the user experience. We'd love to hear more feedback and see what other creative uses players can find for the ROC." Vehicle Director John Crewe even notes that the ROC's soft launch allowed the team to quickly put into place a patch for a previously undiscovered issue: "There was a nasty bug we found late in the Alpha 3.10 release cycle where the gathering beam wasn't successfully extracting all fragments, but this has been fixed for Alpha 3.10.1."

No one is able to share specifics quite yet, but it's clear the ROC won't be the last job-focused ground vehicle to be introduced in the 'verse. Hosmer explains: "I'd love to create more role-specific vehicles going forward. When more systems come online, we will always be considering how we can take advantage of them with new vehicles. As we try to create a living and breathing world for players to explore, if a vehicle would make sense filling a specific role, we're going to want to build it."

VEHICLE PAGE

<https://robertsspaceindustries.com/pledge/ships/roc/Greycat-Industrial-ROC>

VEHICLE PRESENTATION

<https://robertsspaceindustries.com/comm-link/transmission/17661-Greycat-Industrial-ROC>



WORK IN PROGRESS... ESPERIA TALON



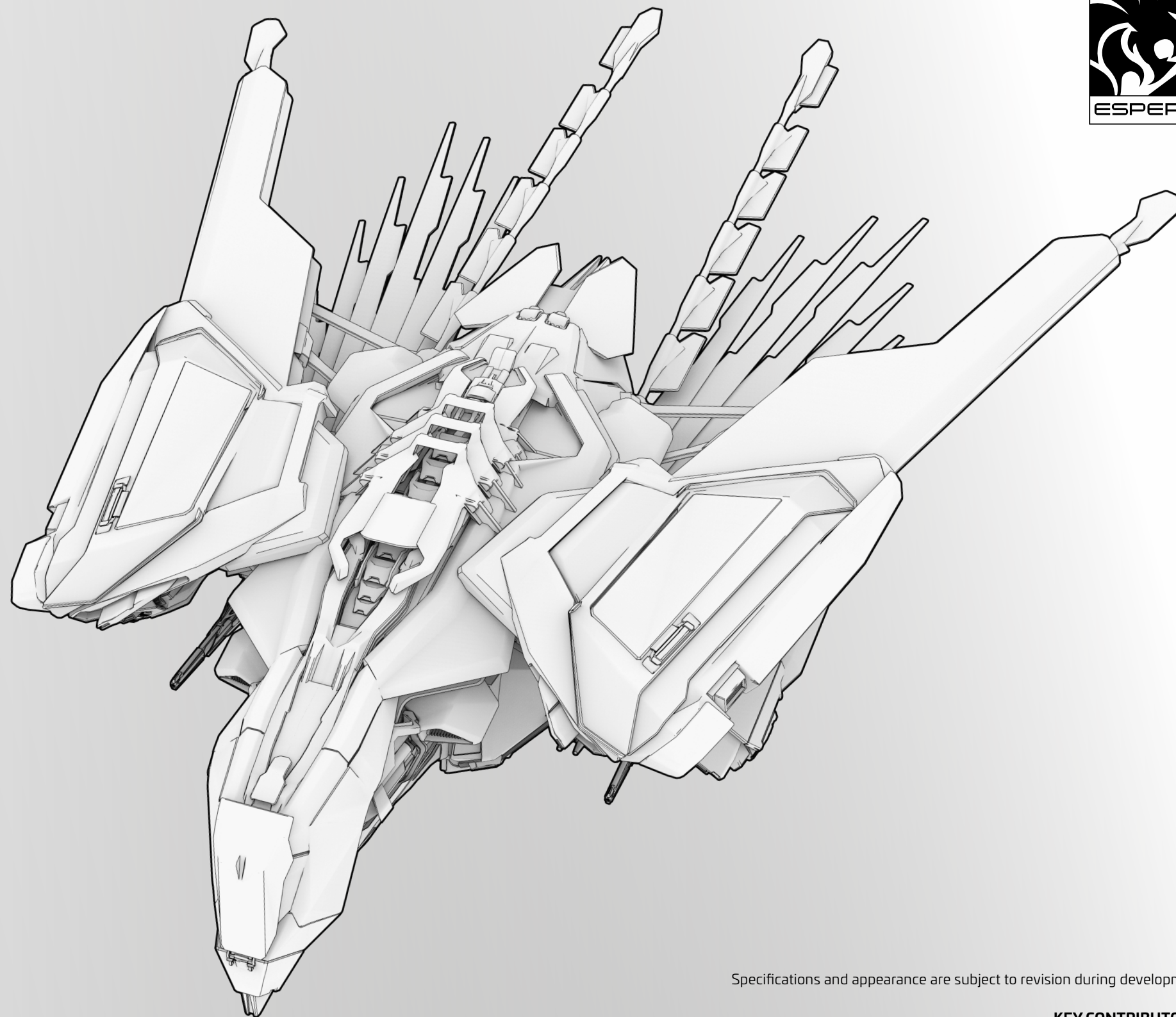
AIMS

- This ship is an Esperia recreation of a Tevarin small fighter. It is the Tevarin equivalent of the Aegis Gladius or Vanduul Blade; a single-seat combat ship. This small fighter typifies Tevarin space warfare, which utilizes maneuverable ships with powerful 'Phalanx' shields but weak physical armor. The Tevarin way of war was to strike first and strike hard before using the Phalanx shields to cover their escape.

AESTHETIC

- The Tevarin are defence oriented and minimalist. This should be reflected in the design. The canopy glass must be one-way glass. The Tevarin specialize in shields; they use air shields instead of airlocks, and their shield emitters are much more prominent than those on human ships. Tevarin ships also have a unique control system: a single joystick controls all six axes of movement with no throttle or pedals.

Length	20m
Width	18m
Height	5m
Mass	28,000kg
Max Speed	250m/s
Max Crew	1
Ejector Seat	1
Weapons	TALON: 2x S3 Tevarin Ballistic Cannon(Gimballed) SHRIKE: 2x S1 Tevarin Ballistic Cannon (Gimballed)
Missiles	TALON: 2x S3 racks(2x S2 Tevarin Missiles per rack) SHRIKE: 2x Bespoke internal racks (12x S3 Missiles per rack)
Thrusters	12x Mav Thrusters 2x Retro Thrusters 4x Main Thrusters
Quantum Drive	1x Small
Life Support	1x Small
Armor	1x Light
Shield Generator	2x Small Tevarin Shield
Battery	2x Small
Jump Drive	1 x Small



Specifications and appearance are subject to revision during development.

KEY CONTRIBUTORS :
 DESIGNERS - JOHN CREWE, ADAM PARKER
 CONCEPT ART - GAVIN ROTHERY
 ART DIRECTOR - PAUL JONES

A SLOW BURN

In September 2012, a month-long reveal of future artifacts and documents unveiled the details of the next millennium of Human history to a rapt audience. On September 23, the *Star Citizen* website unveiled a future painting called Tears of Fire with a description that revealed Humanity's prior war with a new alien race. The first race fought by Humanity as part of its transition into the modern United Empire of Earth, the Tevarin race was intended to be a conquered people no longer running its own worlds or producing its own spacecraft. But like much of *Star Citizen's* lore, it quickly became apparent that further developing that history and culture would be essential to building out the 'verse.

With entire modern fleets needing to be built for the 2940s, how would *Star Citizen* find a reason to apply its expected level of detail to a race that stopped making spacecraft three centuries earlier? The ultimate answer was simple: replica spacecraft manufacturer Esperia would begin offering modernized ships inspired by classic Tevarin designs and, in the process, provide a great deal of work as to the designs and aesthetics of the conquered species' past. In 2016, *Star Citizen's* concept artists developed the first ever Tevarin ship, the truly alien Prowler landing craft. Said to be a successful weapon of the Tevarin wars, the Prowler looked as much like a striking bird as a high-tech spacecraft. With that work complete, players and developers could now start to imagine what the great Tevarin Sovereignty looked like at its height.

EXPANDING THE ALIEN ARMORY

As the saying goes, two make a pattern. While the Prowler was the first Tevarin ship ever developed, it would be the sequel that made hard choices about what elements of the original ship would carry forward and confirm defining elements of Tevarin design. In 2020, the decision was to make the leap and further fill out the Tevarin fleet with another recreated design from Esperia. This time, the ship in question would be a light fighter, something that players could easily adapt into the existing game world. First referred to only as "Tevarin Small Fighter," it would go toe-to-toe with the Aegis Gladius (see the Whitley's Guide this issue!) and the Vanduul Blade.

The job of deciding exactly what that meant would go to Vehicle Director John Crewe and Designer Adam Parker, who were assigned responsibility for creating the initial brief. As with other 'back-filled' lighter ships like the Origin 100 and the Anvil Arrow, the task would be more complex than it would seem; they would need to create a small ship that still expressed a great deal about the unique alien race and one that would both fit in line with existing fast combat ships.

Crewe identified the need for additional Tevarin ships as the key element in the decision to create another light fighter. "While we do have a small assortment of light fighters in the game, we also have a lack of Tevarin ships, so that was the key instigator in its creation; we want all manufacturers to be well represented in the 'verse." But how to balance such a ship alongside the already well-established collection of maneuvering-focused light fighters available to play today?





above its weight class - a veritable glass cannon with armor that can truly be described as paper thin! The two variants are truly ships to deal an impressive alpha strike and they high tail it off before they are caught."

TO EXPLORE STRANGE NEW TEXTURES

If designing a standard-setting Tevarin ship was no walk in the park, then concepting its ultimate look was a true challenge. To meet the challenge, Art Director Paul Jones assigned outsourced- Concept-Artist Gavin Rothery, veteran of everything from the Terrapin to the Valkyrie, working closely with him to try and make decisions that would have a long term impact on all sorts of future Tevarin elements. Chris Roberts would also make a special point of closely commenting on the Talon's development.

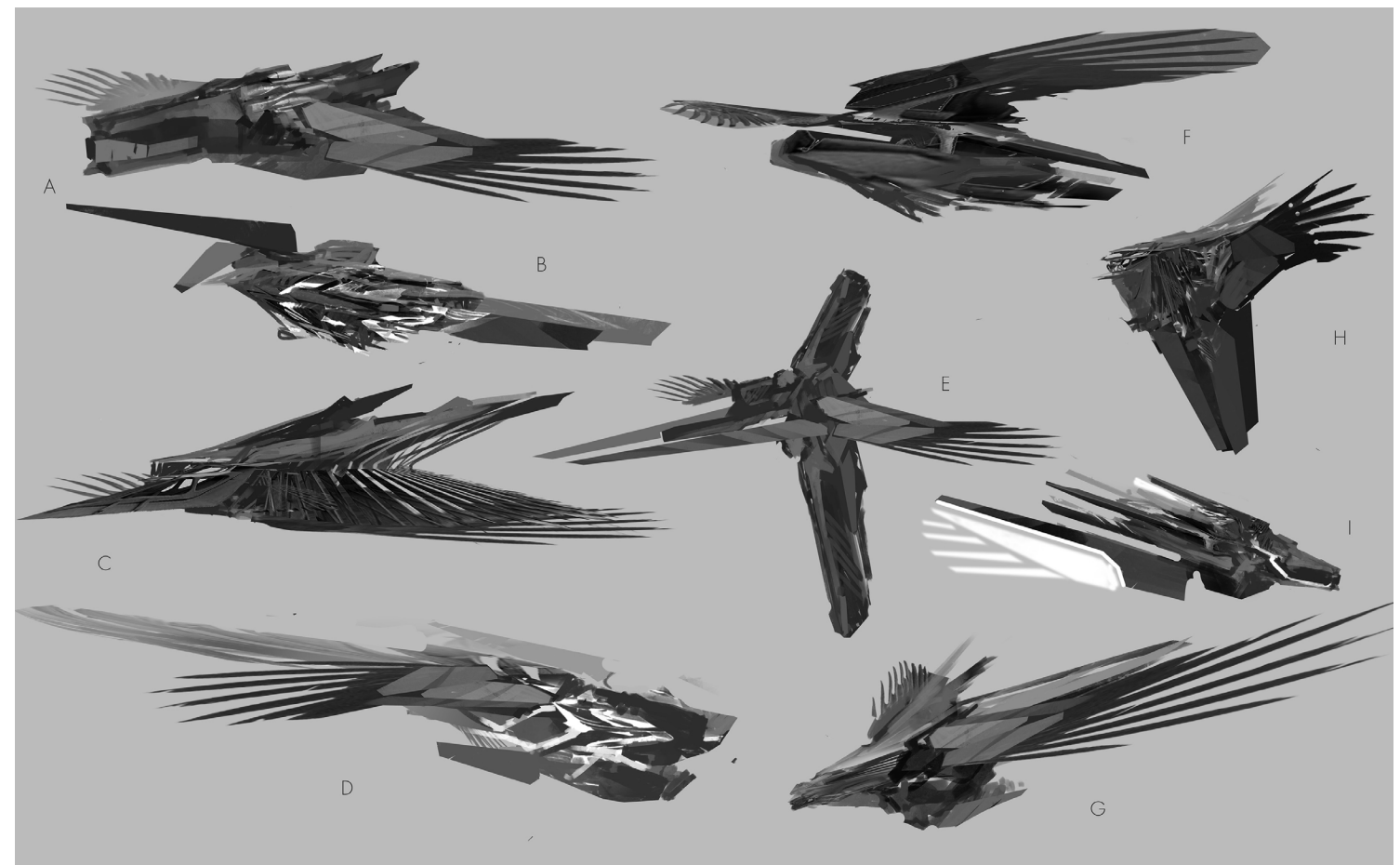
The most obvious reference in creating a look for the Talon was, of course, the Prowler. The pair studied the ship extensively, focusing not only on the bird-like shape but also elements like the visible internal/external system of physical supports that acts as sort of a 'nest' frame supplementing the overall look. Knowing that the Talon should again reference a bird-like design, references of birds of prey, exotic and iridescent birds, and more alien-seeming creatures like pterodactyls were also the order of the day. Rejected artwork once developed for the Prowler was also brought back into contention because it had once been eliminated for being too fighter-like... and now it would inform a new Tevarin fighter!

"It's always tricky in such a crowded category as 'combat' ships," he explains, "but there are a few strings we can pull on each ship to provide a nice balance of pros and cons. The Talon and Shrike both excel in the offensive with the 2xS4 mounts (gimballed S3 as stock) and the 24 S3 missiles in the Shrike, but where they fall down is their durability. They'll be one of the most fragile hulls, so if you manage to hit the thing, it's going to crumble quickly."

A number of names were discussed for the new ship, which largely focused on the bird aesthetic decided for the Prowler, with Falcon and Vex being popular options. Work was also done at this early stage to make sure that the design of the ship, eventually named Talon, was distinctly Tevarin. This, too, would play into how gameplay with the Talon might be distinct from that of a UEE or civilian light fighter. "The visual design of the ship follows a lot of the established Tevarin style - the gameplay side of it tallies up by being slightly stealthy, a reliance on shields due to their weak hull, and the big initial damage strike." Crewe and his team also needed to work closely with *Star Citizen's* Narrative Team to make sure the ship fit the established history and idea of the Tevarin species. "There's often a bit more dialogue between Narrative and Design over alien ships, purely because some of the manufacturer

(or race) details aren't as fleshed out or proven in-game compared to, say, Aegis Dynamics. The ejecting cockpit was the result of discussions between Art, Design, and Narrative about how the Tevarin always want to have a final strike even when all seems lost." The final pitch introduces the ship in simple terms: "This is a recreation of the Tevarin Talon by Esperia. The Talon is the Tevarin equivalent to the Aegis Gladius or Vanduul Blade; a single-seat combat ship. The Talon is the perfect example of the Tevarin way of building a spaceship: maneuverable with powerful shields but weak physical armor, as the Tevarin way of war was to strike first and strike hard, before using their shields to cover their escape."

Parker and Crewe also went on to spec out a unique variant for the Talon, the Shrike, which would later be made available during the concept presentation. The Shrike carries a much larger number of missiles at the cost of a reduction in size of its primary guns, offering an option for players who prefer seeking weapons to traditional gunnery. The team was excited about the amount of development they were able to do with such a small ship and eager to see what the Concept Team in the UK would do with their specifications. Crewe summarizes the Talon thusly, "To hit all the classic tropes in one, the Talon is truly a ship that punches

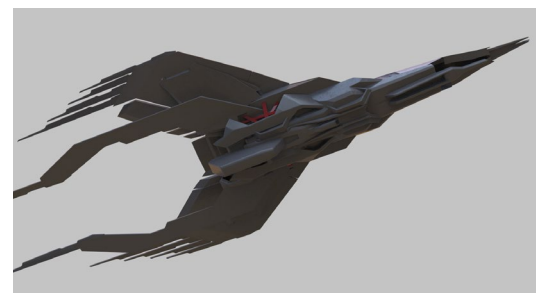
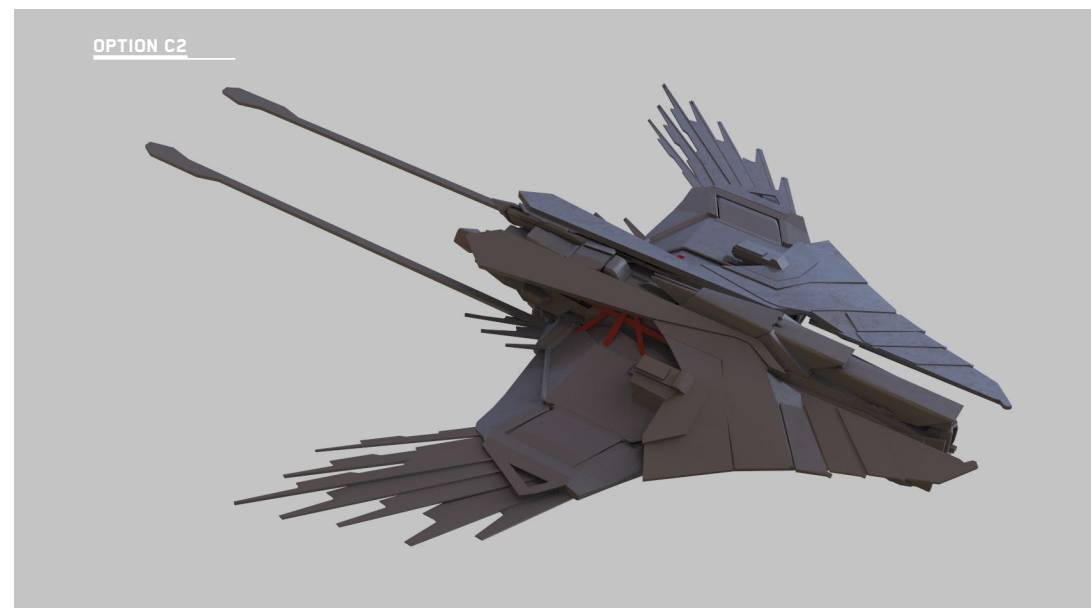
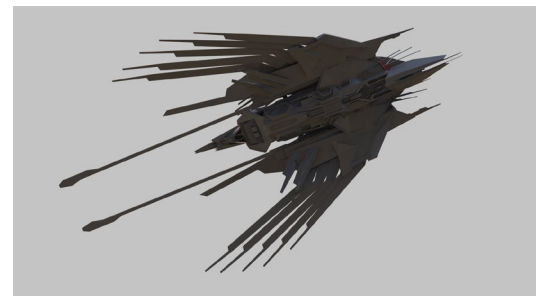
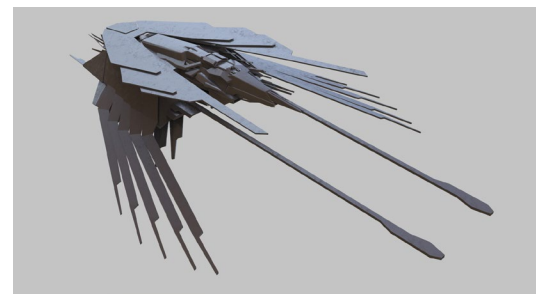
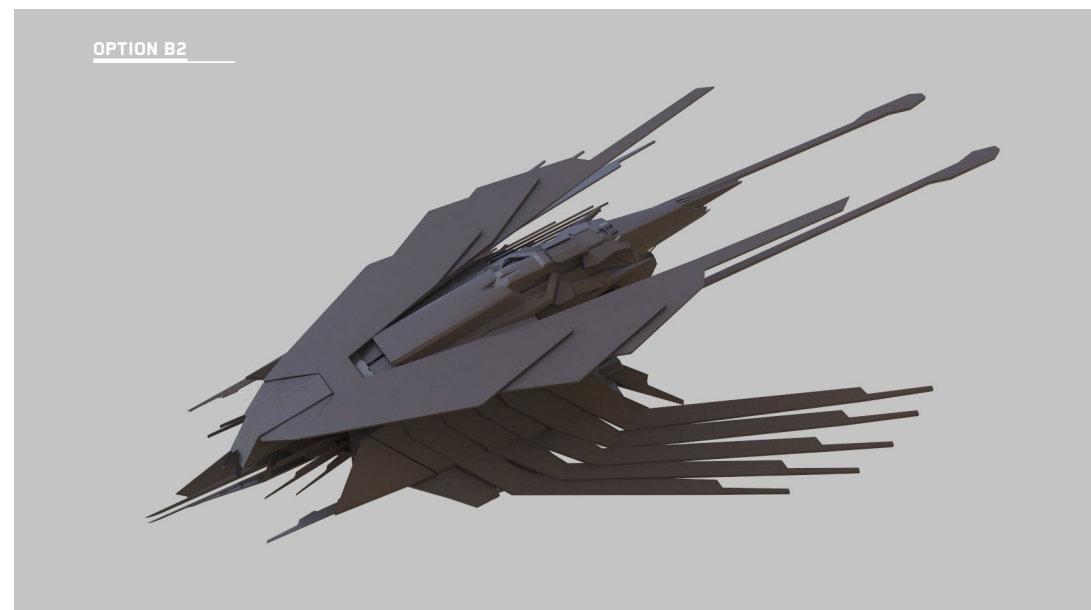
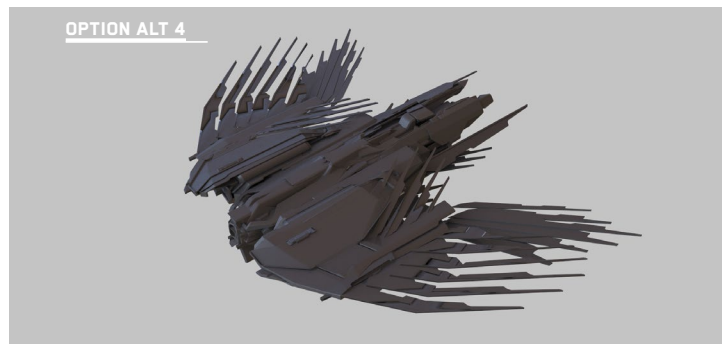
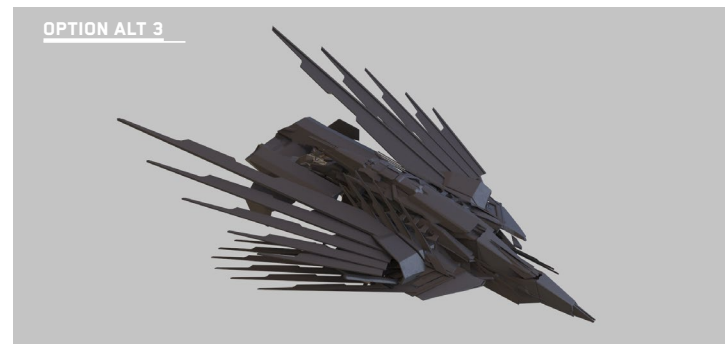
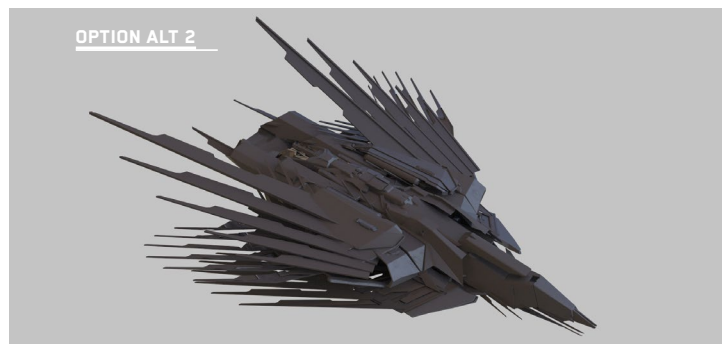
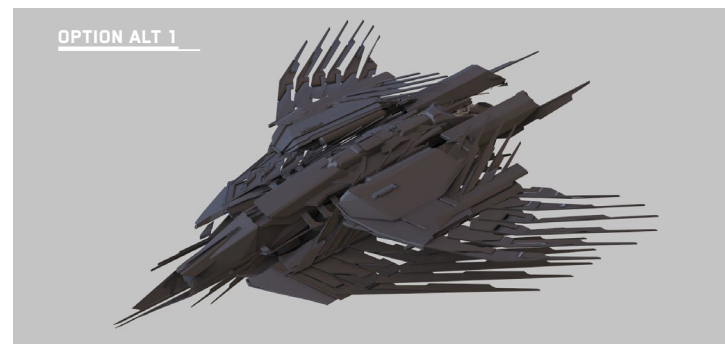
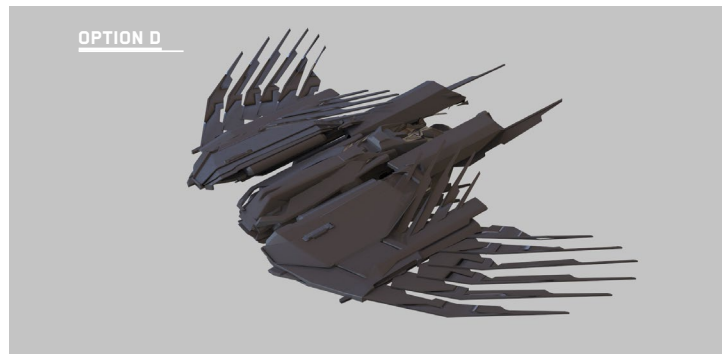
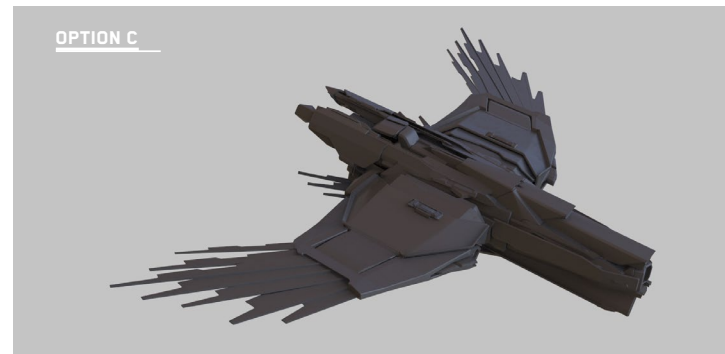
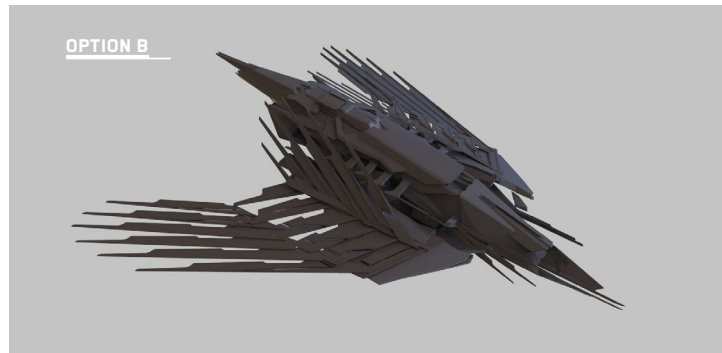
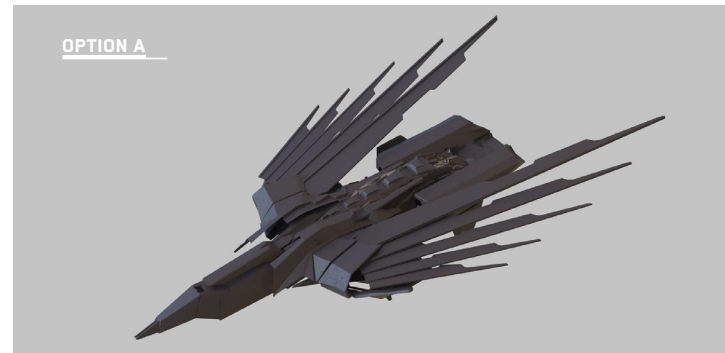


The team developed a set of eight initial sketches following the available reference work combined with what they felt was a brutalist Tevarin aesthetic. Rothery adapted them into 3D to study the overall vibe and silhouette of the early ideas. The result was a variety of winged, feathered spacecraft that ran the gamut from bird to insect-inspired that also seemed, in some cases, to be heavy fighters instead of the needed light design. Jones liked options B and C and further developed them with a dedicated sketchover. He notes that he

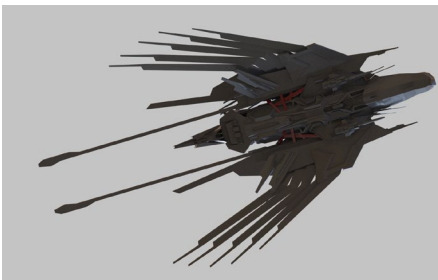
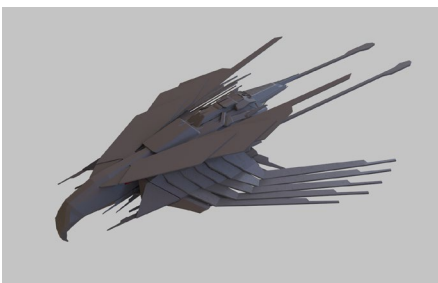
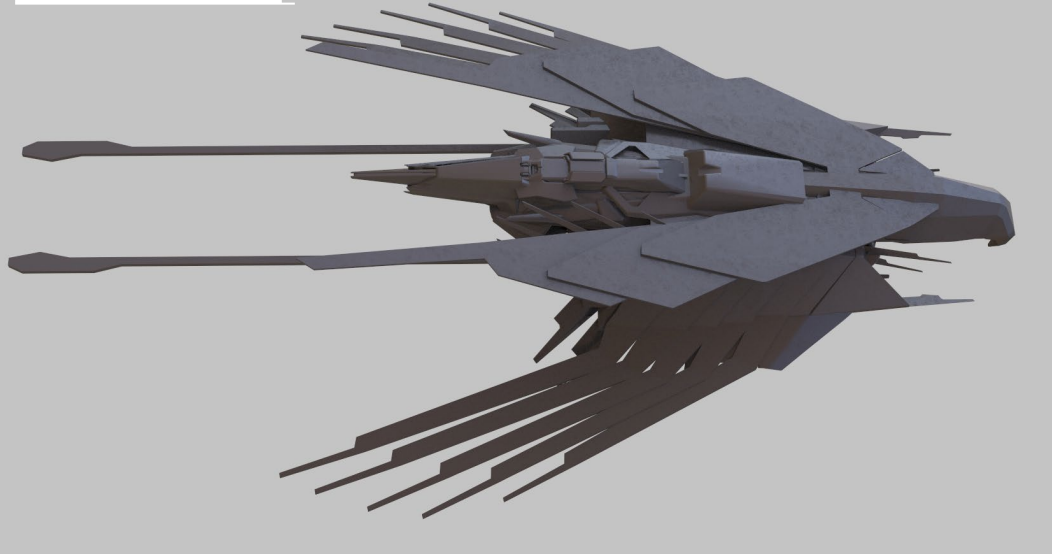
and Rothery have become so good at working together on projects that they have a great, regular routine: Rothery does the heavy lifting and then Paul helps to highlight and define the direction.

Jones' sketchovers adapted the red 'bird's nest' trellis of the Prowler, thinking at this point that it might be used as moving hydraulics. His rework of option C pushed more on the brutalist, slab-tech look and added a bird of paradise tail to further reinforce the organic

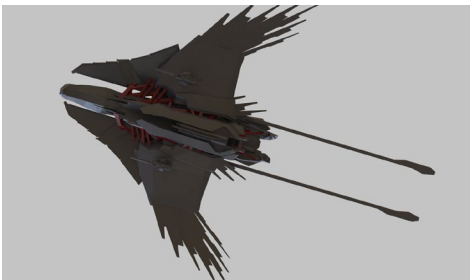
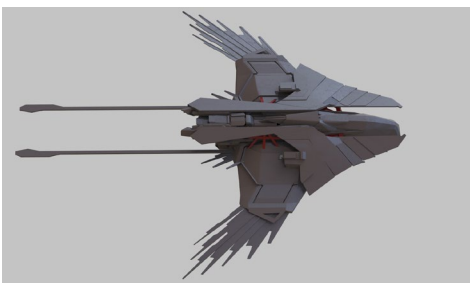
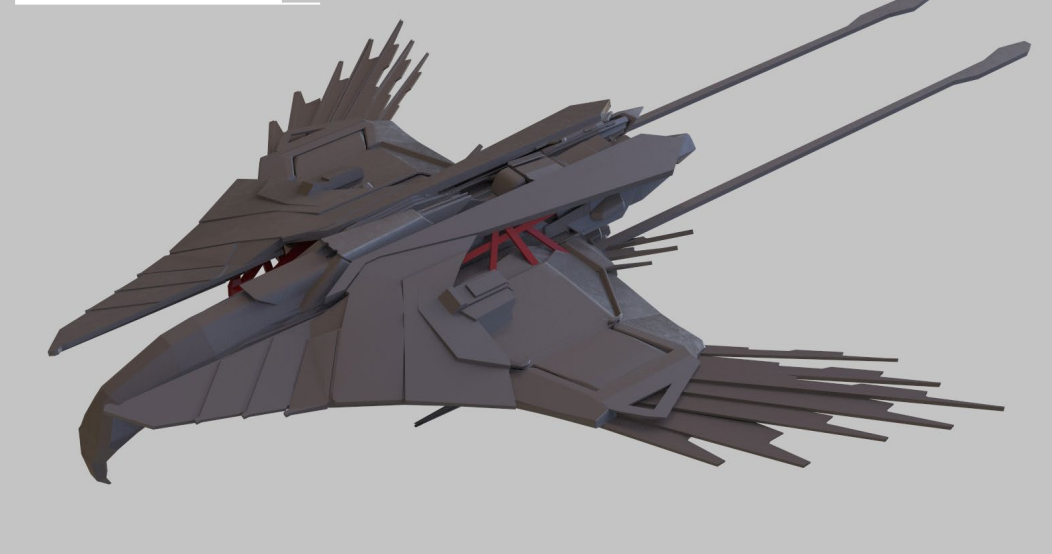
avian element. Rothery then translated those changes back into 3D, where he found that Option E didn't quite work, looking more like a frog's legs than a bird of prey. Jones was quick to end development on that path, knowing that they could get bogged down indefinitely trying to make an idea work when there were other more positive directions available. The baton then passed back to Jones for the remaining models, allowing him to develop animation showing how it might open up and how the wings might compact during landing.



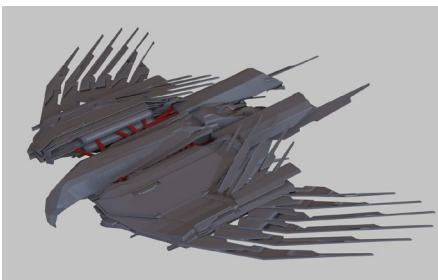
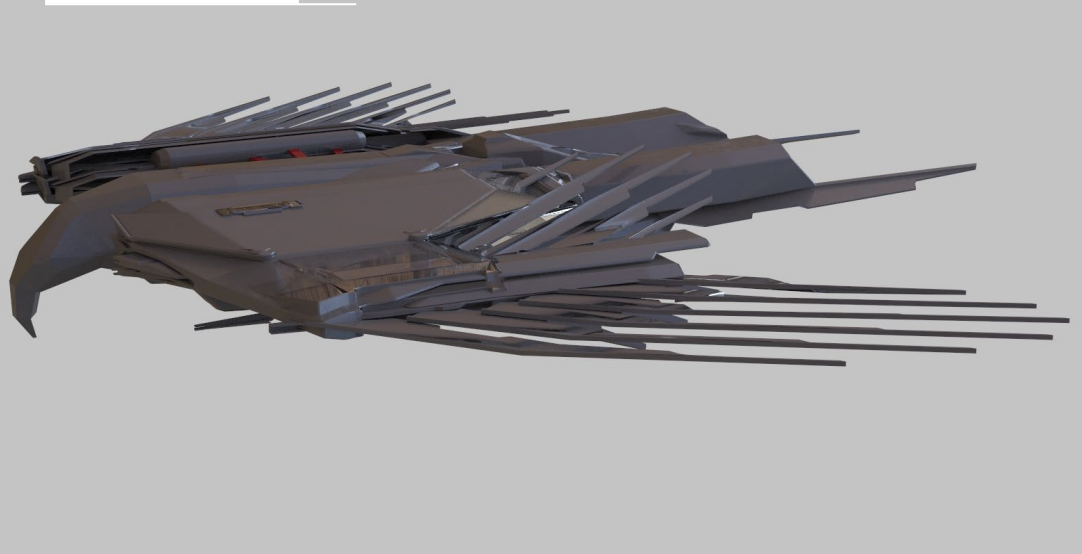
OPTION B2 (EAGLE HEAD)



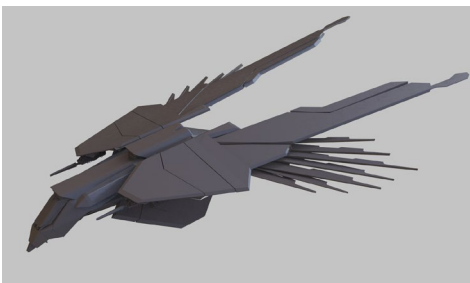
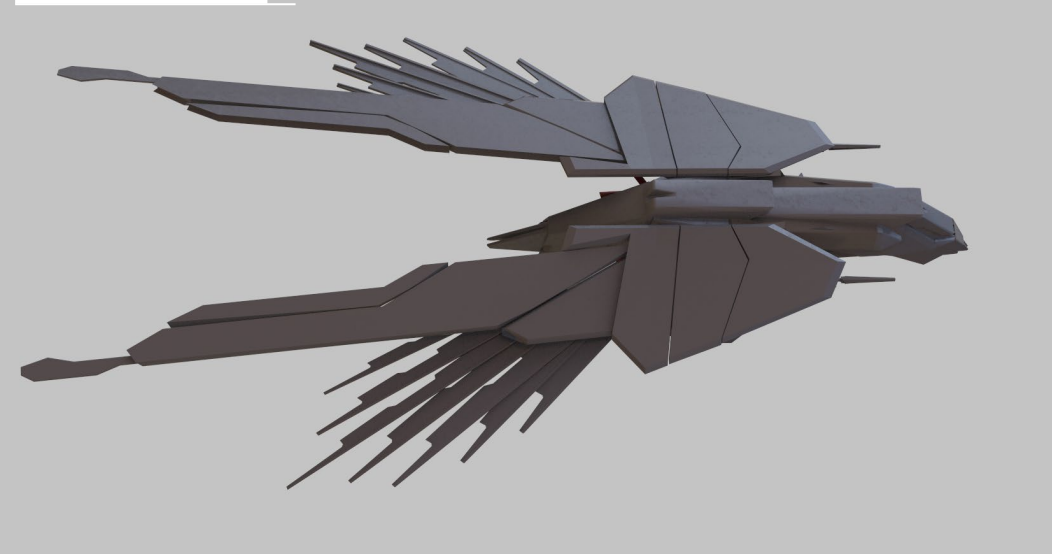
OPTION C2 (EAGLE HEAD)



OPTION D (EAGLE HEAD)



OPTION F (EAGLE HEAD)



At this stage, one major element that would stick with the Talon through launch was introduced: the ejection pod. The artists presented their work to Roberts, who said that he would like more of a nod to an eagle's head. Rothery and Jones then worked on building out a number of new options for Chris, again writing off some (like version D) because they seemed to be heavier fighters than needed. It became clear that the desire was to increase the bird connection without being too obvious, so work was done to further update the appearance of the ejection pod and the 'feathers' on the hull. "Time is the enemy here," Jones explains, "you have to figure out how to do this quickly or you could take weeks to explore." Finally, Jones hit on adding a sort of claw to the bottom of the ship which Chris was happy with.



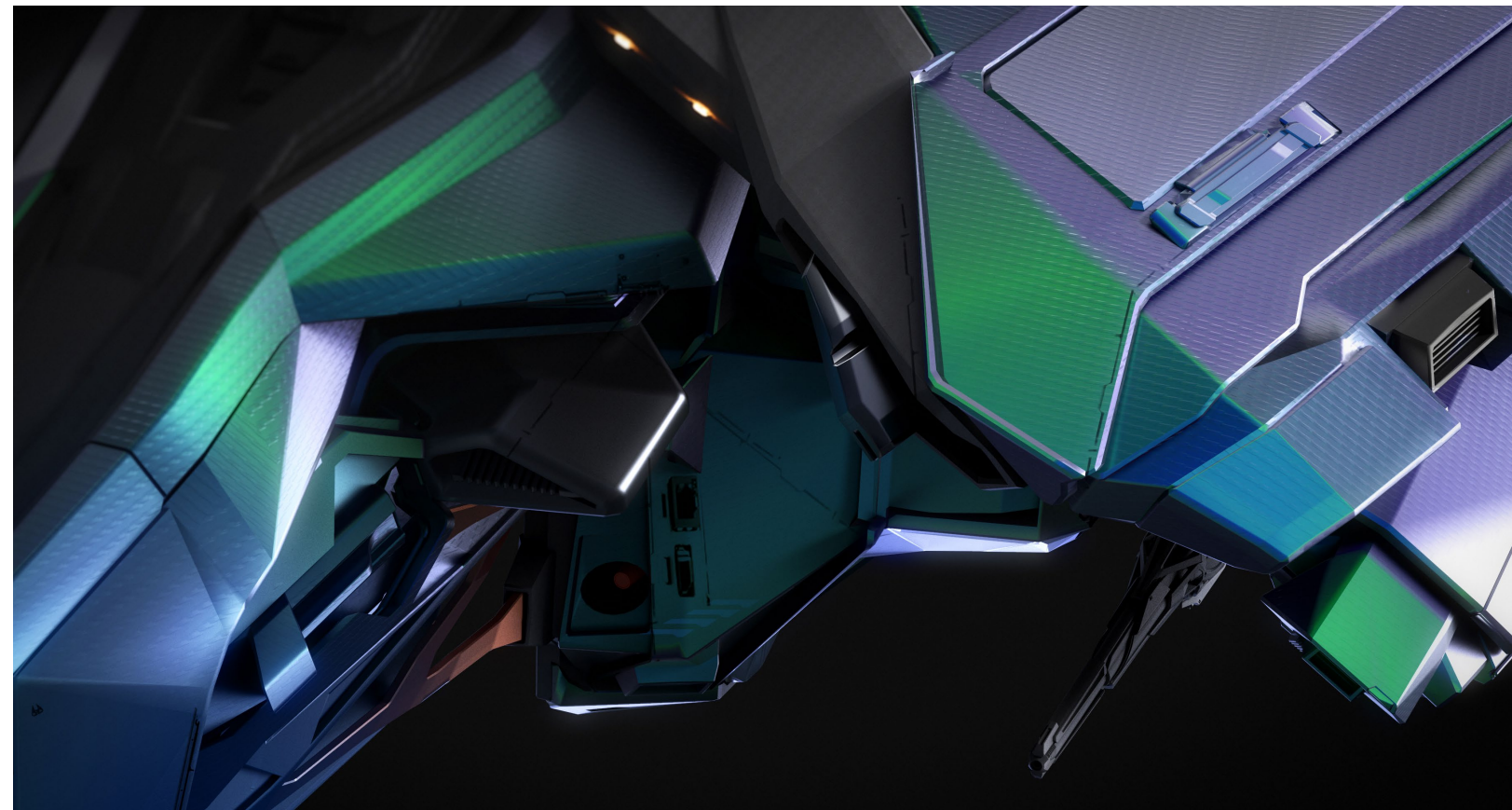
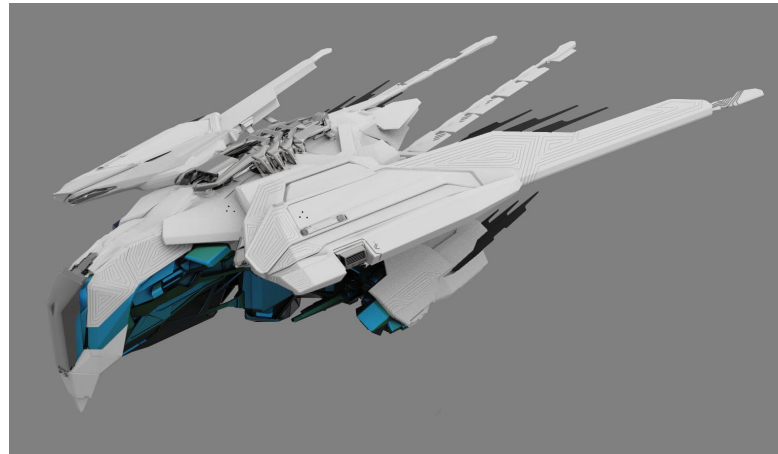


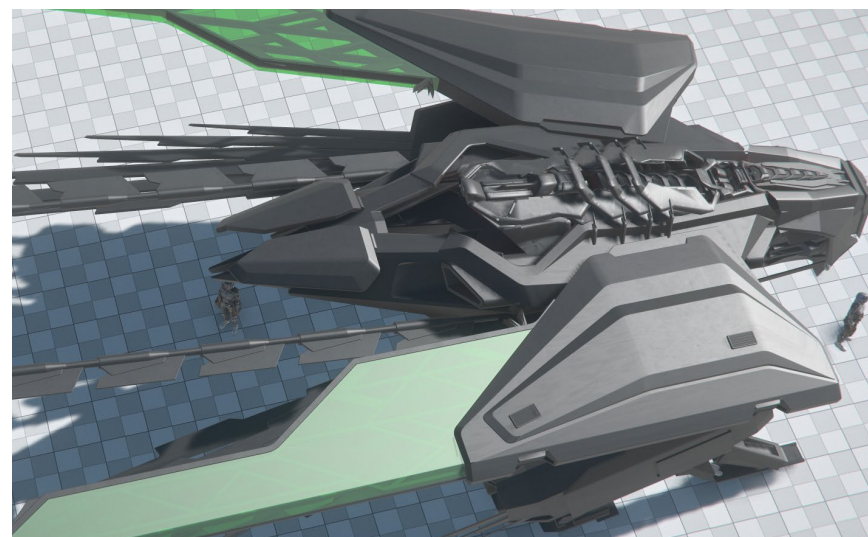
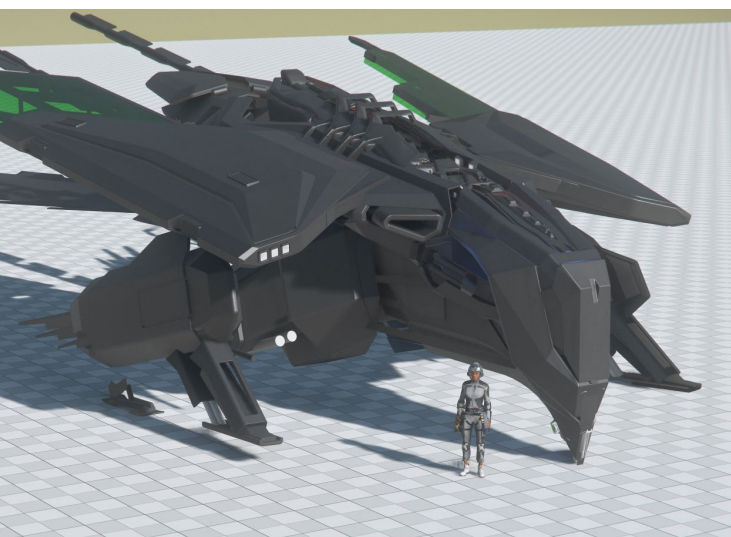
From this point on, the team was happy with the overall shape and the art process could focus on refinement. Jones had already experimented with animations of different flight modes and the ejection system, providing a great deal of assistance as Rothery continued the refinement. He continued to look for opportunities to push the ship forward, taking shape language and materials from the Prowler while also looking for ways to keep it fresh. Something, Jones figured, still hadn't clicked.

But what? The team experimented with a bowing animation for landing, with three different potential stances. They decided that was overly complex and went with a middle-ground option with just landed and flying forms. Work also began on the internals, taking cues again from the Prowler. Jones explained that he saw the Tevarin as functioning differently from Humans. Where Humans need to change their internals from ship to ship to make them distinct, the Tevarins do not have that concept at all. By July, the cockpit fitting was well underway and technology like the one-way glass from the Prowler had been carried over. Weapon placement for the base model (and later the Shrike) came next and was followed by a full review.



The review was positive, but matching Jones' feedback, reflected that the design still lacked something. The artists were instructed to try and make the ejected portion look more brutalist and to refine the bird's nest interior. Jones began developing a proper paint scheme for the ship, first trying a traditional look that he nicknamed the robin because of its red belly. Roberts asked for a more interesting paint scheme, something less Human, realizing the material work here would be the way to solve the last missing element. Jones notes that it had been a while since he sweated a challenge. He sat down and worked hard to think outside the box, producing paint scheme after paint scheme to try and fit the alien nature of the ship. Finally, he hit on the idea of making the textures more alien, constructing a sort of iridescent membrane around the cockpit. Other ideas included a contrasting look (black Prowler's escorted by white Talons), a copper metallic appearance, microtextured blue bump maps, a dark steel with iridescent blue highlights, and even one inspired by the dazzle paint schemes used on early 20th century warships. Finally, he hit on a darker iridescent look that he felt really defined it as an alien spacecraft. Roberts agreed that was the right direction and asked the artists to continue along their path. They went back to referencing bird patterns and iridescent animals and offered another variety of schemes that included war paint, a tribal look with a red cockpit, one with bright flashes of color, and even one actually colored like an eagle's beak. Finally, a breakthrough: full iridescence with black accents. Jones hit on using a special clear polymer that had never appeared on a *Star Citizen* ship before, truly selling the idea. 'Microfeathers' were developed for the body, blended together to create a type of hard-shell camo. With all the new material work, Jones made certain to develop comprehensive reference material for the Implementation Team, who would later bring the ship into *Star Citizen's* engine.





BIRD IS THE WORD

The Esperia Talon and Esperia Talon Shrike were revealed to the community in a concept presentation in August 2020, with plans to introduce the ship in a future patch. To support the concept presentation, Paul Jones' team developed a number of concept images showing the Talon in flight and fighting, while the Narrative Team developed a brand new Esperia brochure presenting the ship as an in-universe recreation

of a classic warbird and providing new details about both its capabilities and its connection to Tevarin culture. In the days since the launch, work has been ongoing on the final implementation of the ship, which will use the same team of expert animators, sound designers, and artists who have already brought everything from the Constellation to the Prowler to life.

ESPERIA TALON SHIP PAGE

<https://robertsspaceindustries.com/pledge/ships/talon/Esperia-Talon>

SHIP PRESENTATION

<https://robertsspaceindustries.com/comm-link/transmission/17565-Esperia-Talon>



THE
AEGIS DYNAMICS
GLADIUS

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY



SPACECRAFT DEVELOPMENT

In 2879, the Aegis Dynamics medium spacecraft factory at Davien played host to an unusual milestone: a formal event celebrating the 300th anniversary of a still-serving spacecraft design. On hand were the thousands of engineers currently working on the Gladius, hundreds of veteran Gladius pilots representing every conflict in living memory, and the descendants of the original team that first developed the fighter at the height of a very different era. An array of military and civilian dignitaries spoke at the event, praising a spacecraft that had long outlived its intended lifespan and which had a nearly immeasurable impact on modern space conflict doctrine.

To a modern fighter pilot, the naval strategy of the 26th century would seem incomprehensible: fleet operations were built entirely around the ability of large, armored warships to bring heavy weapons to bear against one another and heavily protected planetary installations and orbital platforms. Fighters and interceptors would seem like something of an afterthought, carried aboard battleships and cruisers primarily to increase their scouting abilities. A Gladius pilot in the 2580s was responsible for reconnaissance first and then a variety of less common missions that centered mostly around providing escort coverage for pinpoint strike bombers and landing craft.

Modern pilots would also be hard pressed to identify what was considered a fighter before the Gladius. The Gladius was initially requested as a nominal replacement for the Stiletto-class interceptor, a dedicated light fighter then entering its fifth decade of service. Most fighters (or "parasite ships" as they were referred) were intended for space operations only and their design lineage called up the modular rockets that powered humanity's initial space expansion as much as they did military hardware and especially anything aviation-related. The Stiletto, a sort of fast, weaponed tube with a variety of potential technical mounting points amidship, embodied these principles exactly. Aegis' premiere of the Gladius in 2589 shattered this image by moving to a light fighter that could not only operate within an atmosphere, but could be launched from existing ground facilities. Where the Stiletto was found only aboard warships, Gladius units could be assigned anywhere and everywhere.

Coming just thirty years after the end of the First Tevarin War, the first model Gladius represented Aegis' integration of all the lessons now thoroughly studied from that war. The project was called Wildcat during its development, but the production model of the ship was renamed Gladius at the last minute by request of the Imperator's administration. The Messers, then consolidating their power, were frequent users of Ancient Roman

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY



imagery in their propaganda and saw a benefit in presenting the new type of fighter as being the common 'sword of the people.' The growing United Empire of Earth's Navy designated the new spacecraft the P5G (the fifth pursuit craft developed to the production prototype stage by Aegis).

MILITARY SERVICE

The Messer administration put production of the Gladius on a war footing almost immediately after its launch, seeking to have the ultramodern fighter design emphasize its powerful overhaul of the human military. The gladius scored its first space-to-space kill in 2591 in an engagement with a pirate freighter, but primarily spent its first years serving in propaganda efforts. The Gladius was particularly commonplace in recruiting efforts, where the opportunity to fly one of the spectacular ships was seen as a good way to entice the increased numbers of bodies needed to outfit the growing navy. The Gladius' appearance proved equal to its abilities in 2603 during the Second Tevarin War, where the spacecraft proved effective both dogfighting against the contemporary Tevarin Talon fighters, striking landing craft, support ships, and even corvette-sized capital assets. The Gladius quickly made itself an effective case study for the modern space naval doctrine that the war would establish. For the first time, dedicated fleet carriers capable of operating multiple squadrons of fighters at a time were constructed and made the centerpieces of battlegroups.

Throughout its lifespan, Aegis Dynamics has continued to modernize the

Gladius. While the design itself has remained visually similar, massive changes to both the frame and systems have been made dozens of times over the centuries, with the latest total rework of the internal control systems happening in 2945. In 2720, the Gladius logged another major first as it became the first military fighter to carry a short-range jump drive as part of production. Intended to support long-range search and rescue and reconnaissance missions, the addition of the jump drive to the Gladius is often cited as a particularly important decision in its impact on other spacecraft development.

Rumors of the Gladius' retirement have circulated for at least the past century although there has been no formal plan announced by the UEEN. When Anvil launched the Hornet fighter and a number of frontline squadrons transitioned, many saw this as evidence of the Gladius' obsolescence. But as the Hornet itself is now replaced by the Lightning, Gladius squadrons continue to operate throughout the Empire with excellent results. In 2936, Gladius watchers became increasingly concerned as Anvil Aerospace premiered a new carrier-based plane: the Gladiator. Aerospace media initially treated this as proof positive that the UEEN was preparing to permanently delist the Gladius based only on the belief that the names were too similar to operate together. It was ultimately revealed that the similarity in names was planned from the start, part of a psychological warfare effort intended to help further obscure the entire capacity of the fleet aerospace arm (similar efforts were made to disguise spacecraft designations around this same time).



Regardless of rumors of its impending demise, the Gladius continues to serve extensively in modern conflicts. In the hands of a properly trained pilot, the Gladius has remained effective in battle against Vanduul raiders, with the current model being roughly equivalent to the Vanduul Blade light fighter in arms and defenses. The UEEN has also developed a set of 'run and gun' tactics for Gladius wingman pairs to help counter the superior abilities of Scythe and Glaive space superiority fighters. As of the FY2951 budget, production of the Gladius will actually increase by 15% and Aegis continues to invest in upgrade packages and next-generation variants of the design.

CIVILIAN USE

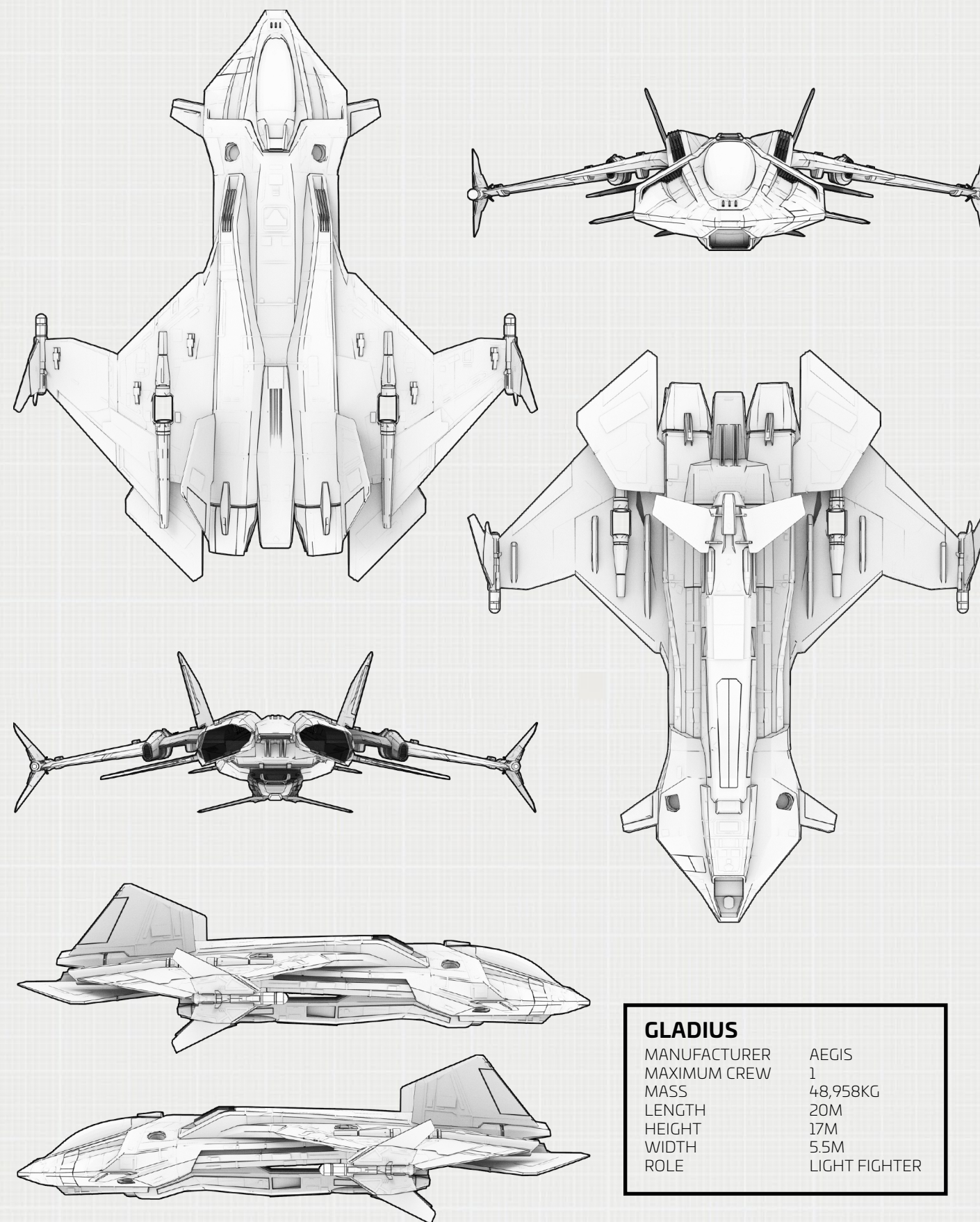
The first military Gladius models were rated for 12,000 hours of flight time before retirement, which equates to roughly twenty years of peacetime service per frame. That number has increased to 35,000 hours with the latest models, but it still means that boneyards around the Empire have been decommissioning the design by the thousands for hundreds of years. For the first fifty years of its service, the UEEN considered the Gladius so highly classified that the retired examples needed to be rendered completely flightless. As the Navy settled into an extended period of peacetime and civilian spacecraft advanced during the 27th century, stripped Gladiuses began to become available on the civilian market.

The first civilian Gladius owners were primarily hobbyist racers who would adapt civilian technology to re-equip the stripped ex-military ships. These Gladiuses would take on unusual silhouettes and be painted garish

colors to assist those viewing races from the ground. The ranks of these pilots typically included retired military Gladius pilots seeking to recapture the thrill of their earlier careers. Gladius racing gave rise to a brief period of interest in the use of the ships for stunt flying, with several groups of hobbyists forming "flying circuses" to put on aerospace displays for adoring crowds. While stunt flying has never regained the popularity it achieved in the 2650s, Gladiuses are still used for demonstration purposes today (typically with much more reliable original parts).

Over the past two centuries, additional civilian roles for surplus Gladius equipment have developed. In addition to typical mercenary operations, Gladiuses have been used for fast courier missions, as flight trainers (when equipped with a rear seat) and even adapted as crop dusters. Some Gladiuses have been outfitted by pirates for raiding purposes, although their numbers are believed to be insignificant compared to the number of outlaws operating repurposed civilian designs.

In 2944, the UEEN officially acknowledged civilian Gladius ownership and began selling decommissioned Gladiuses directly to qualified buyers with the intention of outfitting home defense squadrons that would help delay Vanduul raids where stronger naval coverage was not available. These ships are allowed to retain almost all of their military equipment, being sold with their weapons, thrusters, and a purpose-built declassified version of their standard control systems. The sale of surplus Gladiuses has been seen as unique among similar military spacecraft sales because of the number of spacecraft it has put back into service and because they have been available to a more widespread portion of the population.



GLADIUS	
MANUFACTURER	AEGIS
MAXIMUM CREW	1
MASS	48,958KG
LENGTH	20M
HEIGHT	17M
WIDTH	5.5M
ROLE	LIGHT FIGHTER

SOJOURNER TRAVELOGUE

BEGIN RECORDS:

2950.08.03_21:48 SET

The subject of today's lesson was "enjoy that which is set before you." I needed to learn this one. Glad it found its way to me.

A bit of a recap. Last night, I headed over to the Twyn's stand right as they were setting out a fresh batch of merguez, so dinner wasn't all bad. Those definitely go down as one of my favorites on long hauls. Caught the stall cashier giving me a long look and got self-conscious about my arm, even though it was covered. Didn't think much of it when I went back to the same broken chairs in the Covalex hub to catch some sleep.

I woke up this morning to find another Twyn's sandwich next to my rucksack. There was a note written across the packaging:

Keep an eye out for the *Ithaca*, CapEzura

Spent the morning on the observation deck and was about to give up when I saw a Reclaimer tagged *Ithaca* come in true and smooth. Made my way to arrivals as the ship's crew exited an elevator and spread across the station. I followed the one heading to the TDD and eavesdropped on his conversation. He seemed nice and polite, so I staked up outside. He took one look at me and immediately asked if I was Church of the Journey. Said I was and he introduced himself as Captain Ezura. Didn't even flinch when he shook my cybernetic.

He invited me aboard *Ithaca* and made introductions. The crew was welcoming and seemed used to having sojourners aboard because they didn't ask the usual barrage of questions, like where I was going or question why it was called a 'church' when it's really just a set of beliefs, etc. They just accepted that I was along for the ride, wherever it took us. All of 'em had been with the Captain for a while, which is usually a good sign. I offered to help with dinner, but Captain Ezura (everyone onboard calls him "Cap") said it was his turn to cook. After, I began cleaning dishes but was ordered to get some rest. I almost protested, but orders

are orders and it's been awhile since I've slept in a bed.

Feeling thankful my Journey has brought me here.

2950.08.04_19:33 SET

Today's lesson was "home is where the Journey takes you."

I'm exhausted, but still buzzing about everything that happened. I'm thankful Cap is ok and the rest of us, including this big, damn ship are all in one piece.

I piloted today. It's so strange to say that. Didn't think the first time since the crash would be like this, but the Journey sets its own course, right?

I'm getting ahead of myself though. First, *Ithaca's* beds are surprisingly comfortable. Way better than what I had on *Vigny*. Don't know how long

I slept, but I awoke to the crew helping Captain Ezura onto a nearby bunk. He looked sick and couldn't keep anything down. They gave him an injection of hydrogel and put him to bed. Everyone hoped it was food poisoning and not something contagious.

The crew held a meeting and let me sit in. We'd traveled to Pyro while I was asleep. Cap got a tip that some kind of fight went down and there was scrap to be found. The debris field was massive and the pickings good. Only problem was *Ithaca* now sat smack dab in the middle of it, with no one excited to fly us out.

Bakka was the usual co-pilot but left technical flying in tight spaces to Cap. Got the sense Cap liked flying through scrap and Bakka liked collecting it. From across the table, I could see Bakka's sweaty hands at the thought of having to fly out of here. Devadiga wanted out of Pyro fast. Even though the scrap was fresh, she'd seen signs that someone else might have started salvaging the claim. She was convinced that whoever it was would be back any second, and this being Pyro, there



was a good chance they wouldn't be friendly. Taisei, the engineer, wanted to leave, but knew that damaging the ship would make things worse.

They debated a bit and, I don't know what made me do it, I mentioned I used to be a pilot. Talked about my time with *Vigny* and some of our more memorable hauls. Didn't mention the crash and all it took from me.

Crew put it to a vote and decided to give me a shot. Even though none of 'em are members of the Church, they seemed convinced the Journey had brought me here for a reason. If I could navigate out of the wreckage, then we could safely leave Pyro and see about getting Cap some help. That's when I started to get nervous, but it was too late to explain that I hadn't flown since getting my new arm.

A shiver ran up my back when I first grabbed the sticks. It was strange. The cybernetic made it feel like it always did, but it was somehow new. Could sense the crew watching anxiously, so I started slow and steady. Captain Ezura had left *Ithaca* in a tight space between hunks of a Merchantman and a Hammerhead.

I held my breath as I brought the throttle up. There wasn't much room for error with my first few moves. Thankfully, Devadiga helped by calling out crucial adjustments from the scanning station. This thing is so much bigger than *Vigny*, but I started getting used to it. Somehow I navigated away from those massive pieces without damaging the ship. Soon I was making accurate adjustments and picking up steam. Everything felt good and normal, like it used to be.

I wanted to say that I didn't think about you during it, that what happened was out of my mind, but I couldn't stop remembering. I never would have thought it, but I think that's what kept me focused.

After clearing the field, I relinquished control to Bakka. Felt drained both physically and mentally, forgot how much that can take out of you. Came down here and checked on Cap. He's sleeping now.

Gonna get some sleep then check on Bakka. See if he needs me to take over.

2950.08.05_16:51 SET

Well... I knew it would happen eventually, but not sure I'm ready for this.

While I slept, Bakka brought us to Prime. Guess Cap and Taisei are from here, so it was an ideal spot to rest and sell scrap. Cap's feeling better already. He thanked me for stepping in, even offered me a cut of his take, but I politely declined. Could use the credits but it didn't feel right. Told him his ship and crew had already given me more than he'd ever know. He didn't press me on what that meant. Just told me I was always welcome aboard *Ithaca* and that they'd be launching in two days. Part of me wanted to stay aboard to see where they go next, but I know the Journey brought me here for a reason, like how it delivered me to that ship. Before I disembarked, Cap made sure I had details on how to reach him directly.

Now I'm sitting in the spaceport lounge debating if any of the crews here would take me with them to somewhere far away, even though I know I should stay and deliver your personal effects to your family. It's what I should've done months ago but I'm still scared. Scared of what they'll think of me, the person who failed to bring you home safely. Scared that I won't be able to keep my shit together when I talk about you.

This is the stop I've been fearing the most. Part of me even hoped the Journey would somehow avoid it. But here I am, building up my courage to do what's right and telling myself that "one must reflect on where the Journey has brought you and how the path has changed along the way."

Think I've done enough reflecting for now. It's time to visit your parents. Not sure if this sojourn was all about bringing me here or helping me figure out what comes next. Guess there's only one way to find out.

PRACTICAL MEETS TACTICAL



The Kastak Arms Sawtooth is forged with an aggressive edge to stab, slice, and saw your way through life's toughest problems. The special Element Edition comes in three distinct colors to make this combat blade even more eye-catching.

