

## **From the Afterword to *Pillars of Hell: The Birth of the Republic of Terra Navy, 2030-2080.***

The Terran Navy was born in a hundred desperate orbital battles, fought by a handful of national wet navies that had been hastily converted into spacefaring (barely) vessels. The first crews took to Earth orbit and fought using clumsy copies of captured, half-understood technologies; and they mostly died. The ships that did survive were the ones whose captains were mad enough and lucky enough to get their ships within visual range of the enemy, using reckless speed and ignoring all thoughts of safety as a matter of course.

This tactic worked. Not ‘worked better than anyone could have expected it to:’ it simply worked. Nobody in the Galaxy voluntarily fought ship battles at that range, and the swarming planetary looters who were Humanity’s first spacefaring enemy were swept from control of Earth orbit (at terrible cost) before the invaders could change their tactics. And once Earth controlled its own high ground again, the end was inevitable. The nascent Terran Navy had the resources of a planet backing it up, and in that campaign their enemy did not.

But ever since then, the Terran Navy has been trying, and failing, to erase from its collective memory the first lessons that it learned. Because it rarely is a good idea to take your ship so dangerously close to the enemy. The cadets at Fleet Academy are told this, over and over and over again, and they dutifully repeat the admonition. And then they walk past the accumulated battle honors of the Navy, most of which were granted after a ship captain or admiral found a time where it was a good idea to close with the enemy. The Admiralty understands the conflicting messages. They just don't know how to resolve the paradox.

Of course, by now the rest of the Galaxy knows damned well not to wait until they see the whites of the Terrans' eyes. It's rare that a Terran ship is allowed to fight its way so close. But when it does happen -- typically by subterfuge or surprise -- the results are memorable.

- MacLaurence, Sir Edward. *Pillars of Hell: The Birth of the Republic of Terra Navy, 2030-2080*, page 453.. Baen Military Press, 2157 AD.

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