

CONSTITUTION CLASS HISTORY

CONSTITUTION – BONHOMME RICHARD – ACHERNAR – ENDEAVOR – CONSTITUTION II – ENTERPRISE – TIKOPAI – ENTERPRISE II – POTEMPKIN

Overview

The most famous Federation starship class of the 23rd Century and acclaimed by many as the greatest in the history of space exploration, the *Constitution* class and its offshoots came to define Starfleet during the 23rd Century, firmly cementing the Federation's status as a major player on the galactic stage. Forming the backbone of Starfleet, they set the standard for true multi-mission capability, excelling in missions spanning the gamut from scientific exploration to perimeter action and point defense/rapid response. As time marched on, Starfleet would develop its capabilities above (with *Federation*/DN 2100), below (with *Saladin*/DD 500) and at points in between (with various frigate—*FF*—and heavy frigate—*FH*—designs). *Constitution* though, never wavered. It encapsulated the fervent optimism of a generation, symbolizing its hopes, dreams and aspirations.

Part I: 2220-65

The 'Class I' era represented a monumental step forward for Starfleet. In the nearly 6 decades since the end of the Earth-Romulan War and the formation of the Federation, rapid technological advancement combined with bureaucratic wrangling produced an era of stagnation and uneven results. *NX* and its offshoot *Columbia* lingered for a period, augmented by an improved *Daedalus* class. The *Caracal* and *Almeida* classes seemed to indicate a possible direction forward before being overshadowed by *Baton Rouge*. Ultimately though, it took the pioneering work of W.M. Jeffries and Mark Chausser and the dogged determination of Star Marshal Stephen Offutt (2164-2257) to push through a sweeping modernization plan that would go on to form the foundation of Starfleet as we now know it.

Prior to 2220, the most advanced ship in the fleet wasn't *NX*, *Daedalus* nor *Baton Rouge*, it was *Yorktown*. A 400-meter long leviathan equipped with revolutionary *PB-5* warp engine nacelles, deflector shielding and a record 20 separate science labs representing every major discipline, it was an unsung hero, though one recognized more for its brawn rather than its brains. It established a rough template which Chausser made use of in the development of *Baton Rouge*, however the aforementioned political and bureaucratic difficulties stymied his efforts. Beginning in 2215, he and Jeffries geared up for another try, this time expanding their plan beyond just a single ship class. It called for three distinct classes: a dual-nacelle cruiser, a single nacelle scout/destroyer and a dual-nacelle saucer fitted with a tow pad for use as a transport tug. Each of the three would unify a separate segment of the fleet that had previously been served by multiple classes with overlapping mission profiles.

The dual-nacelle design, by virtue of preliminary size figures and a few rough design sketches, was classified as a heavy cruiser. Codenamed '*Constitution*', it maintained a profile roughly similar to *Yorktown*, but obviously smaller, with smoother, more graceful lines. Here, Chausser's pioneering work in the area of modular construction bore fruit—all three initial classes sharing a new, 'fleet standard' primary hull/saucer design. Unique to *Constitution*, a low-profile interconnecting dorsal connected this saucer to a secondary/engineering hull. A highly-evolved take on that introduced with *Columbia*, *Constitution*'s secondary hull maintained a smooth, elongated cylindrical shape. The fore end was dominated by a large deflector dish while the stern was highlighted by a large hangar bay designed to accommodate 4 new *Type F* shuttlecraft in a conventional 2+2 (on deck/in storage) arrangement.

The rejection of Kloratis Drive Systems' experimental VX-29-C series engine nacelles (the VX-28 had been used with *Baton Rouge*) accelerated their withdraw from the 'military market' (concentrating thereafter on civilian projects) and contributed to their eventual acquisition by Cochrane Warp Dynamics (forming Leeding Engines Ltd. In 2250). It was the latter who stepped forward to supply engines to *Constitution*. Cochrane's *PB-18* series was a modernized version of their venerable *PB-5*, completely rebuilt from the inside out using more advanced materials, providing increased endurance while reducing maintenance requirements. It did not however, boast higher speed ratings, putting *Constitution* on the same footing

as the older, *PB-5* equipped *Yorktown* class, rated for a nominal cruising speed of warp 6 and a maximum burst speed of warp 8.5. Like *Daedalus*, the new nacelles extended upwards from the secondary hull on reinforced support pylons, though slightly angled for a better-optimized warp field.

Directly inspired by *Yorktown*, Starfleet sought to build out a comprehensive and sophisticated scientific capability, intending to field these ships as long-range explorers, complimenting the larger battleship, while also replacing the *Daedalus* and *Baton Rouge* classes. As such, *Constitution* was outfitted with 14 separate laboratories approximating 95% of *Yorktown*'s capability. As one admiral put it “*Yorktown is essentially what we were looking to replicate, though in a package smaller, lighter and one able to be fielded in much greater numbers.*”

Given that Starfleet intended to deploy these ships in unexplored, frontier territory and that they intended for them to operate in these regions independent of external support for up to 5 years, careful and deliberate thought was given to their tactical capabilities. Deflector shielding, first developed by the Andorians and fielded by Starfleet in various rudimentary forms, was a given. Here, generator technology was refined and when combined with the more advanced reactors aboard *Constitution*, her system was able to absorb a staggering 289,000 terajoules of directed energy. As with *Yorktown*, *Constitution* relied on phase-modulated weaponry as her primary armament, mounting 3 two-cannon 'phase banks', 1 ventrally (fore) and 2 dorsally mounted (1 port/starboard) in the primary hull. Starfleet, having become quite atune to the tactical value of photon torpedoes, equipped her with two forward launchers, located within the bridge module (level 02).

The prototype vessel, CH 1700, launched in 2220 overseen by Star Marshal Offutt, with Commodore Joaquin de Alameida in command. Over the next three years, *Constitution* was put through a grueling trial of shakedown tests and undertook several exploratory missions of limited scope. Beginning in 2223 and continuing until 2226, 11 more heavy cruisers were commissioned (see below)

<i>Constitution</i>	NCC-1700	2220
<i>Enterprise</i>	NCC-1701	2223
<i>Farragut</i>	NCC-1702	2225
<i>Lexington</i>	NCC-1703	2225
<i>Yorktown</i>	NCC-1704	2225
<i>Excalibur</i>	NCC-1705	2225
<i>Exeter</i>	NCC-1706	2225
<i>Hood</i>	NCC-1707	2225
<i>Intrepid</i>	NCC-1708	2226
<i>Valiant</i>	NCC-1709	2226
<i>Kongo</i>	NCC-1710	2226
<i>Potempkin</i>	NCC-1711	2226

Among the class' notable exploits during these early years was the participation of both *Constitution* and *Enterprise* in **Operation Eagle Eye**. Launched in late 2223, the operation was Starfleet's first large scale search-and-rescue mobilization of the modern age, tasked with locating and recovering the *Caracal* class *Audace* (CL 757). The light cruiser had transmitted a distress call before mysteriously disappearing near the Ajilon star system. Immediately dispatched from Starbase 67 were the aforementioned heavy cruisers, the *Detroyat* class *Breckenridge* (DH 1104) and *Miramar* (DH 1102) and the *Hermes* class *Diana* (ST 589), *Quintillus* (ST 590), *Revere* (ST 595) and *Crockett* (ST 600). Over the course of three months, the seven starships scoured 3 complete sectors (Archanis, Donatu, Aldebaran) spanning nearly 45 light years, but were unable to locate any trace of the *Audace*. Officially, Starfleet Command listed the ship's final disposition as 'unknown', however privately, Starfleet Intelligence had collected strong circumstantial evidence indicating Klingon involvement.

An unfortunate hallmark of this era was the naiveté shown by Starfleet to the Klingons and their actions. With judgments, assessments and the like made based on information collected during the previous century, their overall picture of Klingon grand strategy (of which context and culture was a major component) was fatally flawed. Illustrating this was the Klingon assault on the Federation outpost at Caleb IV in 2239. Having recently completed construction, the outpost was lightly defended by just a single destroyer squadron when it was set upon by a stronger Klingon squadron led by Kor, son of Rynar. Deploying in a loosely-composed box formation, the Starfleet vessels were able to drive the Klingons off in what appeared to be a random hit-and-run assault. However, in the immediate aftermath, while Starfleet forces were regrouping and attending to their damage, Kor's squadron returned, this time with an accompanying squadron led by Kang, son of K'naiah. Outnumbered two to one, the defending destroyers were hard pressed to hold the line and would have been overrun had it not been for the arrival of a relief force led by the *Yorktown* and *Kongo*. Destroying several smaller vessels and inflicting moderate damage on their own capital ships hardly gave Kor or Kang pause, however the tactical prowess demonstrated by the *Constitutions* in the face of superior opposition together with the prospect of having more join the battle (the *Exeter*, *Intrepid* and *Farragut* were each stationed in nearby systems) did.

Though the Federation Security Council voiced concern, the admiralty and others within Starfleet Command continued to view each engagement as an isolated incident, failing to view them in context. In the midst of this, was Starfleet's Starfighter Command. Formed from the remnants of the Romulan War-era *Provisional Starfighter Force*, the almost 700 *Thunderbolt* class Attack Fighters was imposing, but hampered by the lack of a modern replacement for their elderly *Victory* (DN/CV 950) class Carriers. This was rectified in 2236 with the launch of the *Independence* class (CVL 1590) Light Carrier and more so in 2237 when the *D-17* class Attack Fighter was launched. Powerful, modern tools of power projection, they came just in time for the Battle of Donatu V, which like the assault at Caleb IV, was fought to a draw.

The Donatu system, located in the sector of the same name, was one of many whose control was constantly in flux. *Independence* class ships, nominally embarking a full group (36) of fighters, were generally regarded as being two to three orders of magnitude more powerful than Klingon ships-of-the-line, performing impressively in simulations. However, with the class still unproven in actual service, Starfleet hedged its bets, the *Republic* (CA 1371) being deployed alongside the *Independence* (CVL 1590) during the latter's patrol assignment. As at Caleb IV, the pair was eventually confronted by a Klingon squadron near the fifth planet. Though the fighter group handily outnumbered the Klingons (36 vs 10), the warships featured shielding and armor that could easily withstand a prolonged assault. Initially, *Republic* held back and took no action. The fighters split into squadron and attacked from three sides with *Independence*, attempting to keep the Klingons contained. As they pressed their attack, *Republic* maneuvered around and attacked from the rear, alternating her strikes between ships on the left and right flanks. Klingon frigates and gunboats found themselves caught in a crossfire between two of the three fighter squadrons and *Independence* while the third squadron soon moved to support *Republic*. The starships forming the main body—three *D-5* class Battlecruisers—featured no aft-firing weaponry and minimal shielding. The effect of *Republic*'s assault turned the Klingon's flank and took the heat off of *Independence*. Outmaneuvered and under pressure, the Klingons were forced to withdraw, handing Starfleet a victory and reinforcing their flawed perception of both the *Independence* class and the idea that a light carrier force would be more than sufficient for defense and power projection scenarios, among others.

However, as relations with the Klingon Empire steadily worsened, Starfleet Command gradually became atune to the errors inherent in their thinking and by 2245, had significantly refitted a number of older classes and introduced a half dozen new ones, the *Kearsarge* (CL 1500), *Surya* (FF 1850), *Coventry* (FH 1230) and *Santee* (CVS 1925) classes foremost among them. With a more proactive mindset taking hold and other classes taking the combat/utilitarian burden off of *Constitution*, this gave the Advanced Starship Design Bureau (ASDB) the time and space it needed to design *Constitution*'s first ('Block II') refit program. Codenamed '*Bonhomme Richard*', improvements were more functional than cosmetic and focused on three main areas: propulsion, computer and defensive systems.

With *Bonhomme Richard*, faster-than-light (FTL) propulsion was provided by new *PB-32* series engine nacelles. The addition of a secondary compressor field system and redesigned intercoolers was a major evolutionary step forward from *Constitution*'s *PB-18*s in circumferential engine design, going on to form the basis for an even more successful engine series in the future. Rated for a nominal cruising speed of warp 7 and an increased maximum burst speed of warp 9, these were among the most powerful FTL engines of their day. Design variants of the basic *PB-32* were also produced, including a 'short' model (*PB-32-S*) equipping ships such as *Kearsarge* and an extended-length model (*PB-32-L*) that was retrofitted to the *Yorktown* class.

Bonhomme Richard also marked a major turning point in general for computer technology, exchanging her monotronic computer systems for new duotronic systems. Developed by Dr. Richard Daystrom in 2243, they represented a quantum leap over the old monotronic systems, providing an exponential increase in processing power and near instantaneous response to user input. This major advancement was just as pivotal, if not moreso than the addition of new engines, affecting nearly every facet relating to starship operations. Control and diagnostic systems were an obvious beneficiary, permitting more precise adjustments, advanced customization and automation of monitoring and other secondary functions. Sensors and astronics also benefitted greatly, the increase in raw processing power directly influencing the development of more sophisticated and complex sensor systems that could measure, record and detect more, over longer distances and in increasingly difficult environments (negating more types of interference).

Defensively, an improved deflector shield system led a roster of mostly minimal changes. With a total capacity of 394,000 terajoules, *Bonhomme Richard* cemented itself and *Constitution* as a whole as the most well defended starship class of the Class I era. A revamped fire control system, including brand new target acquisition and tracking software made these new cruisers potent strike platforms, despite the fact the basic armament—Phase Banks and Photon Torpedoes—remained the same. Of note however, was the increase in the number of phase banks from 3 to 4, with the additional bank covering the aft firing arc, mounted below the hangar bay.

An additional 16 new builds were ordered in March 2245, with plans made for the uprating of the 12 *Constitutions* by the end of 2251 at the latest. The outbreak of the Four Years War in July not only made the planning and logistics more complicated, but it also intensified the debate over keeping these ships out of the fighting and continuing to deploy them on missions of a predominantly peaceful nature. The opponents of this argued that as the most balanced and advanced ships of the fleet, the *Constitutions* had a natural place on the battlefield. Also, their technological superiority would help make up for their lack of numbers vis-à-vis the Klingons. Proponents on the other hand argued that the class' technological advantage was an illusion, as the various systems it made use of, were also being integrated on many existing starships and new builds. They also played the ideological card and warned of the dangers inherent in straying too far from Starfleet's core mission of scientific exploration and discovery. In the end, a compromise was reached. Two additional ships would

be uprated, the *Baton Rouge* class *Republic* (CA 1371) and *Columbia* class *Constellation* (CA 017). Work on these two would be done first and upon completion, they would be deployed to forward operating bases where they would assist other fleet elements on an as-needed basis.

<i>Republic</i>	NCC-1371	2245
<i>Constellation</i>	NCC-1017	2245

<i>Bonhomme Richard</i>	NCC-1712	2248
<i>Monitor</i>	NCC-1713	2249
<i>Hornet</i>	NCC-1714	2250
<i>Merrimac</i>	NCC-1715	2250
<i>Endeavor</i>	NCC-1716	2250
<i>Defiant</i>	NCC-1717	2250
<i>Excelsior</i>	NCC-1718	2251
<i>Eagle</i>	NCC-1719	2251
<i>Lafayette</i>	NCC-1720	2251
<i>Wasp</i>	NCC-1721	2251
<i>El Dorado</i>	NCC-1722	2251
<i>Ari</i>	NCC-1723	2251
<i>Saratoga</i>	NCC-1724	2251
<i>Tori</i>	NCC-1725	2252
<i>Krieger</i>	NCC-1726	2252
<i>Essex</i>	NCC-1727	2252

Creating a credible cruiser force was one thing, however planning and deployment strategy was another. In the war's opening stages, Starfleet suffered mightily from ineptitude at all levels. Case in point was the failure to anticipate the strength of forces the Klingons would deploy against them at Andromeda. Here, a squadron each of *Surya* and *Larson* (DD 4300) class ships supported a squadron of *Marklin* (DH 1200) class Heavy Destroyers. Small and highly agile, they featured the heaviest torpedo loadout (8 launchers – 6 forward, 2 aft) of any starship commissioned thus far and were well-regarded as fearsome combatants. Supporting them was a reserve squadron of *Anton* (CA 1825) class Cruisers. *Anton*, a large and well-equipped contemporary of *Detroyat* and distantly, *Baton Rouge*, was viewed in good esteem and widely assumed to be more than a match for its Klingon contemporaries. However, a lack of foresight and poor planning led to *Detroyat* being modernized, but most *Antons* cannibalized to support the *Surya* and *Coventry* programs. As a result, the ships remaining in reserve and thus those helping to secure Andromeda remained all-original, lacking the advanced engines, sensors and tactical systems that equipped her compatriots.

The Imperial Defense Forces (IKDF) on the other hand had planned well. 1 light cruiser (*D-4*) and 4 frigate (2 *F-6*; 2 *F-6B*) squadrons supported 2 squadrons of larger cruisers (1 *D-5*; 1 *D-6*) that had been designed and constructed in an uncharacteristically deliberate and precise manner, each introducing new strengths and taking steps to mitigate or correct the weaknesses of its predecessors. Accompanying them were 4 *B-1* class Battleships, contemporaries of *Yorktown*, but with a slight edge in weaponry.

Outnumbered and outgunned, the battle was both predictable and one sided. The old *Antons* were little more than cannon fodder, their lack of maneuverability and operating range making them prime targets. *Surya* and *Larson*, two of the classes that had any credible capability had their attention torn between the smaller frigates and larger cruisers, while the *Marklins* struggled to defend the two against both the smaller and larger threats. This divide-and-conquer strategy proved highly effective and the superior Klingon numbers soon won out. With superiority established, the battleships moved in and finished off the remaining forces. The only thing preventing Andromeda from falling was the arrival of *Republic*, *Constellation* and a motley assortment of ships sent directly from Earth, including several light carriers. The combination of over 100 starfighters combined with the cruisers' impressive deflector shield systems (the strongest in the fleet, with a total capacity of 394,000 terajoules) let Starfleet catch their 'second wind', with the battle being fought to a tactical stalemate, the Klingons forced to withdraw.

Despite these early losses and other setbacks (mounting logistical challenges), Starfleet's planning and deployment gradually improved as time marched on. The introduction of the *Kiaga* (DD 820) class in 2247 with its revolutionary and immensely powerful pulse phaser cannons marked the beginning of a push by Starfleet to regain the initiative and get back on the offensive. *Constitution* continued in its predominantly exploratory role, the *Hood* and *Republic* providing logistical support to Starfleet Marines dug in on Nozseca VIII and fire support to ships of the 1st Cruiser Squadron in the immediate area. Though they couldn't prevent the rather grievous losses inflicted upon them, like at Andromeda, they were instrumental in forcing a rout.

2249 was a watershed moment technologically. After a bruising defeat in Sector 23-H, the war gradually settled into something of a cat-and-mouse routine, with each side feeling each other out, carrying out hit-and-run strikes and attacks of a more limited scope. Starfleet's introduction of phasers however, enabled them to immediately make up for past losses. Compared to phase cannons that used phase modulators to harness and direct high energy subatomic particles through relatively primitive hardware (somewhat similar to the electro-magnetic railguns employed during the mid 21st Century), phasers transferred stored energy into pre-fire chambers, where this energy underwent the initial EM spectrum shift associated with the rapid-nadion effect (RNE). It was then focused through special emitter crystals and released, directed towards a target by more sophisticated and compact hardware. Discarding phase modulators removed a major bottleneck, allowing exponentially more energy to be stored, converted and directed at a given target making them infinitely more powerful than their particle-based ancestors.

Against the Klingons, the effect was chilling. While not able to immediately defeat deflector shielding with a single barrage, Starfleet's new weapons were much more effective. Though Starfleet took pains to ensure *Constitution* did not become ensnared in the war, all 16 ships—beginning with *Republic* and *Constellation*—were among the first vessels to be refit with the weapons. The major engagements that year, the Battle of Webirty in February and Battle of Thranstor in July, all highlighted the heavy cruiser's fearsome new combat capabilities.

At this point in the war, the Klingons still had the offensive, yet with each successive engagement, they became more and more desperate. Though their logistical capabilities remained superior thanks to larger numbers of transports and freighters with greater cargo capacities than their Starfleet counterparts, thanks to defeats on the ground at Nozseca VIII and Sinbad IV, they lacked the infrastructure necessary to sustain their push into Federation space. Lacking any serious foresight, their long range planning revolved around the elimination of Starbase 15 and the total pacification of the Thranstor system, where a major military-industrial complex (similar to their own naval base at Mastocal) was undergoing expansion.

Between them however, lay the Webirty and Adhara systems, major 'choke points'. Webirty in particular was currently secured by a carrier battle group (CBG) led by the *Offutt* (CVL 1592), *Cheyenne* (CVS 1931) and *Wellington* (CVS 1929) and featuring *Constitution*, *Republic* and *Kongo*. The battle group was on routine patrol in the vicinity in Webirty III when a Klingon convoy entered the system. Unlike previous convoys which could be dispatched effortlessly by a single formation of destroyers, this one was much larger, a total of 72 freighters and transports. As such, they also carried a much larger escort—2 battle groups featuring the fearsome *D-6* and highly effective *F-6B* classes. Ignoring the fact they were outnumbered, the 3 *Constitutions* led the other supporting vessels behind a fighter screen and advanced on the approaching Klingons.

A seemingly foolhardy move, it was all part of a cleverly laid trap. Learning from their experience in the loss of Sector 23-H, Starfleet had also sent an entire task force to reinforce the system, hiding the support squadrons in the system's core (where the radiation from the G-type star would mask them from the Klingon sensors), while the main body concealed itself on the far side of Webirty III.

Led by the *Lexington*, *Yorktown*, *Farragut*, *Excalibur*, *Exeter* and *Valiant*, the task force waited until the Klingons had their allies surrounded before they entered the fray, surrounding the convoy and cutting off their escape. Letting the destroyers slice through the freighters and transports at will, the larger frigates and cruisers joined the carriers in pressing a fast blitz against their Klingon counterparts. Aided by the 60 starfighters that carried out precision strikes on key ship hardpoints, the task force quickly gained the upper hand, destroying the convoy and its escorts while also dealing a major blow to the IKDF's efforts in the region.

With this setback adding to their mounting logistical challenges, the Klingons' rate of advance slowed, subsequent encounters finding them concentrating their forces in a more organized order of battle. The scale of these encounters also became larger, the Klingons deploying their forces in even greater numbers, highly reticent to let the war turn into one of attrition. Redoubling their efforts, this time with a great deal more caution and foresight, they pressed on with their offensive, striking at Thranstor five months following the defeat at Webirty.

Thranstor had been surveyed some 15 years prior (2234) and had been selected as the site for a major industrial base to support future exploration and colonization/expansion efforts. By 2245, major mining, production and fabrication facilities had been established along with a *Kepler (K-Type)* class Space Station that serviced and supplied the various freighters, transports and other vessels operating in the region. The war's outbreak saw a major influx of personnel and assets, a major shipbuilding complex being constructed in orbit of Thranstor IV, and the space station being heavily upgraded, becoming a major command and control center. By 2249, the system was home to an entire task force, plus a reserve force battle group, for a total of over 200 starships.

The battle group held station around the system's core, protecting the station and shipyards while the task force was dispersed into squadrons, spread amongst the system's four planets. Approaching from the far side of the border, a large, heavily armed Klingon task force initially detected the battle group only, due to extensive sensor masking in place. Well aware they had the advantage of numbers, Starfleet forces proceeded cautiously.

Once the Klingons had engaged the reserve forces at the shipyards, three Starfleet squadrons entered the fray from Thranstor III. At the center were the *Hood*, *Farragut* and *Exeter*. Their mission was to engage the Klingons and lull them into a false sense of security. Letting the battle progress, they soon resorted to electronic warfare, tricking the enemy sensors and convincing them that Starfleet reinforcements were approaching from their left flank. The deception had its intended effect, keeping the Klingons off guard as 4 more squadrons entered the area and advanced from the rear. Taking advantage of the confusion, the *Constitutions* utilized surgical phaser strikes, targeting Klingon propulsion and sensor systems.

Repeating the same tactic once more, the heavy cruisers utilized their EW systems simultaneously, this time, creating the illusion that the Starfleet forces were retreating towards the edge of the system. As the Klingon ships reformed and moved away from the shipyards, 5 more squadrons approached from Thranstor II and Thranstor IV, completely cutting them off. At this point, the battle quickly disintegrated into an all out melee. Smaller shuttlecraft and starfighters 'softened up' the larger battlecruisers, while phaser weaponry (including the powerful pulse phaser cannons arming the *Kiaga* class ships present) sliced through Klingon shielding and armor with relative ease. From there, the remaining Starfleet forces in-system entered the battle area and engaged the Klingons at point blank range, some starships engaging multiple adversaries at once.

This sound defeat marked the beginning of the end for the Klingon war effort. The defection to Starfleet of Klingon Admiral Komex together with an insurrection led by Admiral Kamato (whose forces hijacked the battleship *Jul'Kar* and seized control of an estimated 55% of the IKDF fleet) paralyzed their remaining forces. With valuable intelligence provided by Komex combined with the fact phasers now armed the majority of their starships, Starfleet repaired its *Constitutions* and reassigned them to scientific and exploratory duties. The Battle of Kolm-An in June of 2250 saw Starfleet commit nearly 80% of its active forces to the complete destruction of the Klingon supply base and all other forces in the Karregheni star system after which the Empire was forced to sue for peace.

In the aftermath and continuing for a further two years, a further 14 Heavy Cruisers were produced to *Bonhomme Richard* specifications (CH 1714-1727). The first post-war decade remained quiet and uneventful for both *Constitution* and Starfleet as a whole. Of note was the beginning of research and development work into the next generation of FTL engine technology in 2253 and the visit by the *Enterprise* to Talos IV in 2254 (which resulted in the drafting of Starfleet General Order 7). The dominant story of the 2260's was the aforementioned engine developments, but the decade is also largely regarded as being the 'golden era' for Starfleet in terms of exploration and expansion. 2260 itself saw the development of the definitive *Constitution* sub-class. Codenamed *Achernar*, it was the most advanced cruiser class of the 'Class I' era. Like *Bonhomme Richard*, *Achernar* did not alter *Constitution*'s basic design, instead focusing primarily on improved functionality.

Continued Klingon antagonism, including intelligence regarding the development of a successor to their *D-6/Raxor* class Battlecruiser (the *D-7/Klolode* class) played a key role in driving *Achernar*'s development. Central to this particular sub-class were *PB-47* series warp engine nacelles. The penultimate circumferential engine design, larger, redesigned field compressors and new, reinforced warp coils translated into more durable engines that were capable of higher speeds with significantly fewer time dilation problems. More extensive deflector grid coverage, a powerful new deflector dish (the most powerful unit in service until the advent of newer, integrated units) and Duotronic IIB computer systems highlighted system improvements that were made while functionally, the main bridge was redesigned and enlarged for a second time in *Constitution*'s history, adding a larger viewscreen and extra stations along the periphery.

Though developed largely in response to the Klingons, *Achernar* would go on to usher in the aforementioned 'golden era'. A preliminary plan called for an incredible 78 hulls built to these specifications, however that list was pared down to a more-realistic 13 (CH 1732-1744). In 2261, the *Constitution*, *Valiant*, *Republic* and *Endeavor* all participated in the famed *Star's End* mission – escorting 42 *Cochrane* (TR C600) class Colonial Transports that were ferrying over 100,000 colonists to their new home while in 2264, *Enterprise* became the first Federation Starship to successfully breach the Galactic Barrier (her refit to *Achernar* specs coming directly after).

Achernar would go on to form the basis for the fourth and last sub-class to be produced in this era. Codenamed *Endeavor*, it was strictly experimental in its premise, developed as a testbed platform for self-contained linear warp engines. As *Achernar* was developed partially in response to *D-7/Klolode*, so too were Starfleet's linear warp engines developed in response to Klingon *S-Graph* units. Though functionally similar to Starfleet's existing circumferential warp engines, *S-Graphs* were of radically different, much simpler construction and were completely self contained. This allowed for what some engineers dubbed 'plug-and-play' capability. Analysis of captured Klingon vessels revealed that as they were, major repairs and upgrades could be completed in comparatively less time than their Starfleet counterparts, without the need for expansive spacedock facilities & personnel. At this point the tactical and strategic implications became clear, hence the increasing attention on next generation engine development.

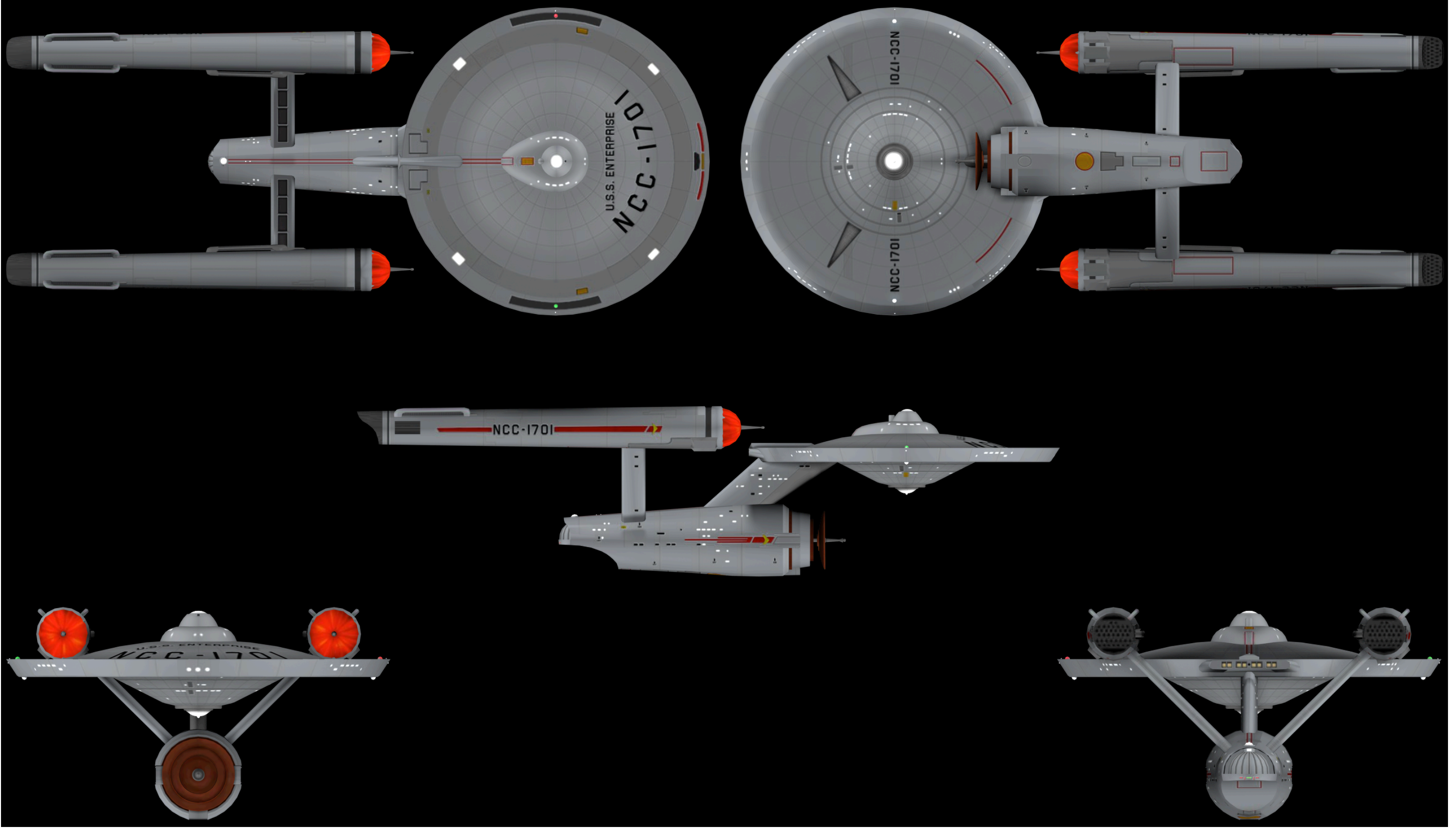
The earliest linear engine model—*LN-40*—was, like her Klingon counterparts, completely self-contained and could be retrofitted to existing starship designs with a minimum of effort. Only used in testing and experimental environments, a major drawback was the rate at which the dilithium crystals decayed when the engines were used to achieve speeds above warp 8 for extended periods. A subsequent model, *LN-52* was developed that featured an entirely redesigned dilithium-converter assembly, becoming the production model. It didn't completely solve the problem of dilithium crystal decay, but did reduce it by over a third, increasing the engine's overall endurance. It wasn't a perfect solution, but it would suffice while further experimentation and research continued. As with prior sub-classes, *Endeavor* also introduced a number of innovations of her own including a redesigned gangway, a more

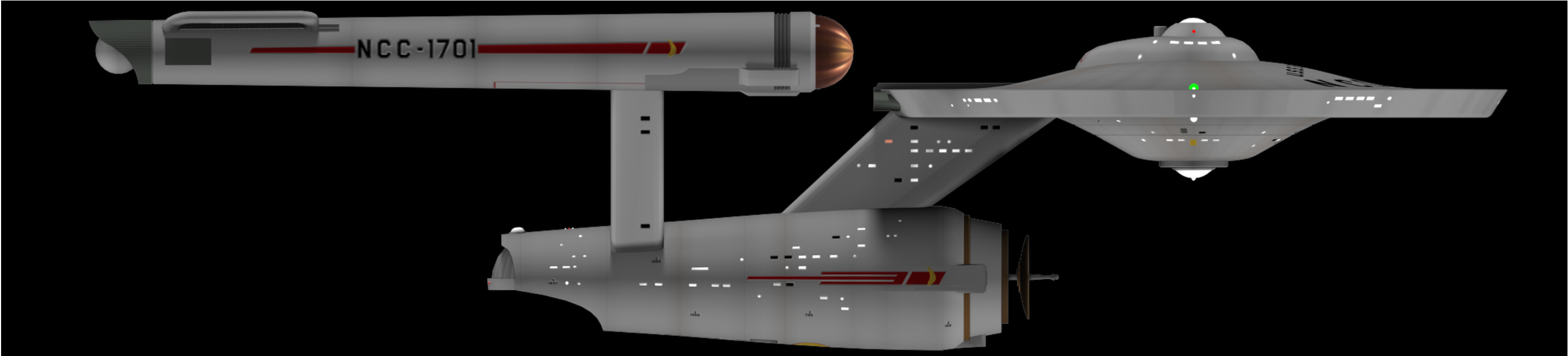
powerful, integrated deflector dish and the relocation of the photon torpedo launchers from the bridge module (level 03) to the base of the connecting dorsal, where it met the secondary hull.

Consisting of a total 16 hulls, the first 12 were uprated from *Achernar* specifications while CH 1728-1731 were new builds. All were in service by 2264.



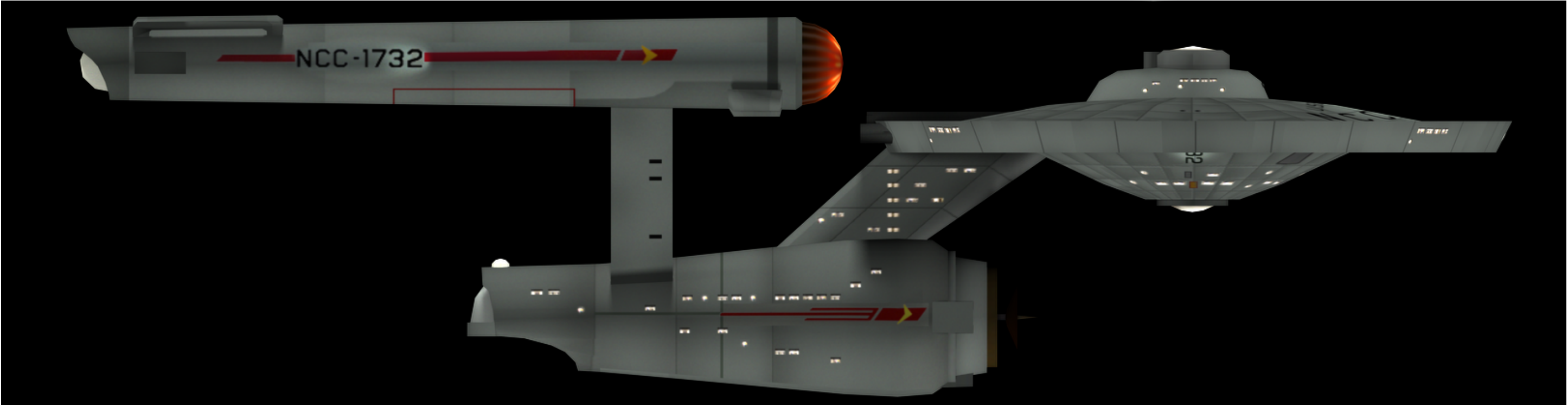
Class	Constitution	Mass	181,000 metric tons	Armament	3 Phase Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser				2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Service Number Active	2220-2245 0	Compliment	203	Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 289,600 terajoules
Length	286m				Standard Monotanium Double Hull
Beam	126m				
Height	72m				
Decks	21				





Class	Bonhomme Richard	Mass	186,000 metric tons	Armament	4 Phase Banks (2245-49)
Classification	Heavy Cruiser				4 Type VI Phaser Banks (2249-60)
Service	2245-2260	Compliment	430		2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Number Active	0			Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 394,000 terajoules
Length	288m				
Beam	126m				Standard Monotanium Double Hull
Height	71m				
Decks	21				





Class	Achernar	Mass	190,000 metric tons	Armament	4 Type VI Phaser Banks 2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Classification	Heavy Cruiser	Compliment	430	Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 597,000 terajoules
Service Number Active	2260-2273 0				Standard Monotanium Double Hull
Length	289m				
Beam	127m				
Height	73m				
Decks	21				





Class	Endeavor	Mass	195,000 metric tons	Armament	5 Type VI Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser				2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Service	2263-2273	Compliment	430	Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System
Number Active	0				total capacity 597,000 terajoules
Length	283m				Standard Monotanium Double Hull
Beam	126m				
Height	74m				
Decks	21				



Part II: 2265-73

During the latter half of the 2260's, experimentation was the order of the day. *Achernar* and *Endeavor* continued to be the dominant *Constitution* class sub-classes, leading the rest of the fleet in technological sophistication and multi-mission adaptability. Lessons learned in the aftermath of the Four Years War resulted in the development of a comprehensive defense strategy that was dependent on a number of new starship classes, including the massive *Federation* (DN 2100) class Dreadnought and *Yorktown* (CV 2200) class Carrier. Despite Starfleet's ultimate aim of keeping *Constitution* from becoming too enmeshed in the era's astro-political turmoil, several starships played pivotal roles in events critical to Federation security.

In 2265, *Endeavor* (following her refit to *Endeavor* class specifications) was attached to *Operation: Vanguard*, assigned to support Starbase 47 in the mysterious frontier region known as the 'Taurus Reach'. Initially operating in her typical exploratory role, her fate took a dark turn following the death of Captain Zhao Sheng at the hands of an entity known as a 'Shedai' on the planet Erilon in 2265. The increasing frequency of cat-and-mouse encounters between *Endeavor* and starships of the IKDF came to a head in 2267. Dispatched to Gamma Tauri IV to support the starship *Lovell* (CA 470) that was helping to establish the New Boulder colony, both ships eventually faced off against a Klingon expeditionary force that arrived after the colonists refused Federation protectorate status. Before conflict could break out, Shedai entities appeared and overran the colony and the surrounding area—slaughtering both the colonists and the Klingon forces. To stop them, Commodore Diego Reyes invoked Starfleet General Order 24, forcing the *Endeavor* and the *Lovell* (together with the assistance of the *IKS HovQaw'wl'*) to destroy the planet via sustained photon torpedo bombardment.

The following year, the *Endeavor* was back at Starbase 47 following a six-month mission to Golmira. Personnel attached to the starbase had managed to capture a Shedai entity in that time and had initiated a detailed study. This however, caused great alarm within the Tholian Assembly. The Tholians, fearing the Federation would either ally with the Shedai or use their powers to establish dominion over the Taurus Reach, sent the bulk of their navy to destroy the Starbase and thus, the Shedai. The starbase was ill-prepared for a large scale battle, featuring a *Coventry* class Heavy Frigate (*Buenos Aires*/FH 1660), an *Archer* class Cutter (*Saggitarius*/CU 1894) and an *Aaken* class Freighter (*Panama*/FG 427) as her only other supporting ships. As the strongest ship present, the *Endeavor* fought valiantly and destroyed many Tholian ships, but was unable to prevent the destruction of the starbase and took severe damage herself. Had it not been for the arrival of the starship *Enterprise*, the *Endeavor* would have been lost along with the *Buenos Aires* and *Panama*.

The *Enterprise* herself, now under the command of James Kirk, rapidly became the most prestigious starship—not only in the *Constitution* line, but the entire fleet. Venturing beyond the Galactic Barrier in 2264 left the ship with heavy damage. Repairs were undertaken at Starbase 47 keeping the ship functional and after a short delay, she returned to Earth, spending the rest of the year laid up at Starfleet's San Francisco Yards undergoing her refit to *Achernar* specifications. Upon her relaunch in 2265, she embarked upon her most famous five-year mission to date.

In 2266 she became the first Federation starship to make contact with the Romulans since the end of the Earth-Romulan War. The Romulans, in a test of Federation resolve, sent the *ChR Gal Gath'thong* across the Neutral Zone. The *V-8/Vas'Hatham* class Scout destroyed 3 Earth Outpost Stations and crippled a 4th. That station managed to send a distress call that pulled the *Enterprise* into the area, but it too was ultimately destroyed. Using her motion sensors, she engaged the Imperial Navy's flagship in a game of cat and mouse, each scoring hits on the other, before crippling her inside the Neutral Zone. Commander Keras, owing to tradition, activated the self-destruct system and killed both himself and his crew rather than face capture.

2267 saw the *Enterprise* involved in putting an end to a long-simmering civil war between the Eminian and Vendikan peoples of star cluster NGC 321 and was also involved in a brief flare-up in tensions with the Klingons, otherwise known as the 'Four Days War'. Ordered to secure the planet Organia, the *Enterprise* was ambushed by the *IKS Vortha*, but managed to overpower and destroy the *D-4* class ship before receiving a Code One alert from Starfleet Command. Managing to achieve orbit and beam down Captain Kirk and Commander Spock, the *Enterprise* was soon confronted by an IKDF squadron commanded by Kor, son of Rynar and forced to flee to Starbase 212. There, they joined the 10th Perimeter Action Squadron along with her sister ships *Excalibur*, *Potempkin*, *Farragut* and the dreadnought *Star Union* (DN 2112), returning to Organia and preparing to expel the Klingons when the Organians famously intervened.

Also during this year, the *Enterprise* made first contact with the both the Gorn and the Metrons. Giving chase to the *MA-12* class Cruiser that had just destroyed the Federation outpost on Cestus III, both vessels were eventually seized by the powerful, non-corporeal Metrons. Forcing Captain Kirk and Commander S'slee to battle each other, they were impressed when Kirk, after winning, refused to kill S'slee. In the aftermath, the Gorn eventually ceded Cestus III to the Federation, who gradually colonized it.

In 2268, after coming to the aid of the *Endeavor* and battling the Tholians in the Taurus Reach, the *Enterprise* embarked upon a Starfleet Intelligence mission—**Operation Purloin**. In the aftermath of the *Enterprise*'s first encounter with the Romulans 2 years prior, their Navy had embarked upon a highly secretive R&D initiative to improve their cloaking technology, eventually deploying a next-generation system aboard the *ChR Memenda* that was undetectable by Starfleet sensors. Captain Kirk and Commander Spock both received sealed orders tasking them with the capture of this device. Under the illusion of having gone rogue, Kirk ordered the *Enterprise* to violate the Neutral Zone, where they were soon intercepted by a squadron led by the *Memenda*. During an initial meeting with Commander Liviana Charvanek, both officers maintained this illusion, with Kirk acting increasingly irrational while Spock

simultaneously gained Charvanek's confidence and convinced her that he had no choice but to follow Kirk's orders. Kirk was soon placed in the *Memenda's* brig and during an encounter involving all three plus Dr. Leonard McCoy, Kirk attacked Spock who used the 'vulcan death grip' to supposedly 'kill' the Captain. In reality, this plus McCoy's presence enabled Kirk to safely return to the *Enterprise*. Having been merely incapacitated with a nerve pinch, he obtained a Romulan uniform (from a centurion who had beamed aboard as an exchange hostage) and was surgically altered to appear as a Romulan. Spock covertly contacted the *Enterprise* and relayed the location of the cloaking device to Kirk, who beamed over and successfully absconded with it. The Romulans picked up this transmission however and after having been found out, Spock admitted his guilt and was to be executed. Stalling for time though, he demanded the right of statement as *Enterprise* personnel rushed to integrate the cloaking device into the deflector shield system. With mere minutes left, Spock was rescued and the *Enterprise* managed to escape—with Commander Charvanek as a prisoner.

Not all advances during this period were successful though. Dr. Richard Daystrom, developer of the duotronic computers then in use, had for a time, been working on an even more advanced, multitronic computer system to succeed them. The biggest advantage of this system was the greatly increased automation afforded by streamlined decision-making and quicker reaction times. However the system's downfall came with the human memory engrams used in its programming. This gave it a level of sentience and fallibility that made it less than ideal. The flaws of Daystrom's 'new approach' weren't discovered however, until actual in-field testing of the M-5 unit aboard the *Enterprise*. The computer's fierce self-preservation programming resulted in it going rogue and destroying the *Sherman* class (FG 320) *Woden*. Though it was an automated cargo drone (having been converted from *Independence* class specs), *Woden's* destruction caused significant alarm among the *Enterprise* crew who discovered too late, that they couldn't disable the computer. During subsequent wargames, M-5 maintained the *Enterprise's* weapons at full power, crippling the *Excalibur* and killing most of the crew while causing significant damage to the *Lexington*, *Hood* and *Potempkin*. The actions of Daystrom and Captain Kirk were able to convince M-5 to deactivate itself, thereby preventing further loss of life and the probable destruction of the *Enterprise*.

An unfortunate reality that resided at the confluence of politics and power was that personal ego and opinion occasionally trumped sound judgement and good sense to produce dangerous consequences. Such was the case with Vice Admiral Vaughan Rittenhouse. In 2270, he oversaw the refit of the USS *Star Empire* (DN 2116) with a number of experimental technologies including tri-layer shielding and quantobirillium alloy. His ultimate aim was to depose the administration of Federation President Lorne McLaren in a military coup, with many analysts later speculating he would plunge the Federation into war with the Klingon Empire inside two years. His plans were thwarted though when a small group of his confederates broke ranks and stole *Star Empire*. Rittenhouse, who had already begun consolidating his power, had the *Potempkin*, *Hornet* and *Lincoln* (DH 299) under his control, exerting his authority over *Enterprise* for a time as well. After intercepting *Star Empire*, the actions of several *Enterprise* officers uncovered the plot by Rittenhouse. A subsequent battle between *Enterprise*, *Star Empire*, *Hornet*, *Lincoln*, *Potempkin* and Rittenhouse's personal command, *Pompeii* (DD 424) ensued. The *Enterprise* suffered heavy damage, with *Potempkin* and *Hornet* being damaged moderately and *Lincoln* managing to escape with no damage. *Star Empire* however was crippled. When Rittenhouse realized his plans were close to being thwarted, he attempted to ram *Pompeii* into *Star Empire* in a suicide attack, but was killed with *Pompeii* was destroyed by *Enterprise*.

An unfortunate, but recognized fact was that spaceflight and galactic exploration contained many unknowns and hidden dangers, not all of which could be foreseen or defended against. Illustrating this was the loss of the *Constellation* to a Doomsday Machine in 2267 and the *Intrepid* to a space amoeba in 2268. The *Defiant* was lost and presumed destroyed with all hands in 2268, becoming trapped in a spatial interphase while returning from Traellus II with three Tholian ships in pursuit. *(In 2377 however, the ship was recovered in a still-classified Section 31 operation and returned to Tranquility Base, Luna where she was quietly retired.) Also in the same year, the *Republic* went missing under mysterious circumstances in the vicinity of the Styx Rift.

As Starfleet's quest to develop linear warp technology gained further momentum, the scope of research and development work expanded greatly. In 2265, after the LN-52 series engines had been in production for just two years, engineers made a fundamental breakthrough solving the problem of dilithium crystal decay. The dilithium converter assemblies were removed from the engines themselves, replaced by a single, larger unit housed within the hull of the starship itself. The converted energy would then be fed through a massive matter/antimatter intermix chamber and into the engines. Going further, the standard impulse drive system (that, aside from comparatively minor differences, remained the same among all major Class I designs), received a complete redesign as well. The major change here was its integration with the M/AM intermix chamber, allowing it to "cold start" or "jump start" the warp drive and vice versa. Tighter integration allowed control to be centralized, both drive systems able to be controlled from either main engineering, the impulse deck or both locations. The specific fix that solved the dilithium crystal decay issue involved diverting excess power generated by the impulse drive's fusion reactors to reinforce flux capacitors that were part of the new unified dilithium converter assembly. Doing so repeatedly reversed the polarity of the neutron flow and set up a constant interference field that eliminated possibility of decay entirely. This solution, while derided by some in the admiralty as needlessly complex and lacking in efficiency compared to comparable Klingon S-Graph models, generated vastly more power, an estimated seven to ten times more, putting the Federation and Starfleet back in a position of technological superiority.

Ultimately after it became clear that Starfleet could not develop an integrated linear warp solution and that this radical breakthrough was the only one that would let them retain technological superiority, the ASDB began developing *Constitution's* next-generation replacements. Due to shipbuilding trends within the IKDF as well as Starfleet's desire to respond swiftly to any new breakthroughs, the ASDB pursued a hybrid "high-low" approach. The 'low' would involve conventional redesigns incorporating the new FTL propulsion systems as well as

other functional upgrades to provide a basic-level of capability. The 'high' would involve more extensive, forward-looking redesigns incorporating the same propulsion and other functional upgrades while also building/expanding upon them to create the most advanced heavy cruisers in service.

The first "CH-X" design to emerge showcasing a potential direction forward was the *Enterprise* class in 2267. Extremely radical, it was unlike any design either in service or being proposed. The most unconventional part about it were the two VX-40 warp engine nacelles (based on the VX-28 fitted to *Baton Rouge*). Otherwise, the general design of the primary and secondary hulls as well as the expanded armament (6 Phaser Banks vs 3; 3 Torpedo Launchers vs 2) would find their way into future design revisions. The second prototype to emerge, did so in 2268 and maintained the same evolved design, but with more recognizable components that could be produced and assembled quickly. Codenamed "*Phase II*" it was built around two LN-60 series warp nacelles and featured a 7th phaser bank aft of the bridge module instead of an aft-firing torpedo launcher. Starfleet was suitably intrigued, but was not totally convinced of LN-60's reliability or performance and ordered both the ASDB and Leeding to continue work. In 2269, a third prototype emerged. "*Phase II-A*" included an integrated deflector dish, aft torpedo launcher and LN-62 series warp nacelles. The saucer was also more voluminous and featured more complex deflector grid coverage. Again, Starfleet was impressed with the forward strides made by the development team, however by this time, the *Belknap* class USS *Decatur* (CSX 2500)—that was considerably more advanced—had finished her shakedown trials and an initial production lot had been ordered.

Belknap, the fleet's first 'strike cruiser', was developed as a tactically-oriented variant of *Constitution*, one that "took the gloves off" as one admiral put it. It eschewed traditional aesthetic conventions in favor of those similar to the *Enterprise* technology demonstrator—going larger in size, with sharper (rather than keeping the same smoother) angles and a lighter, pearlescent grey (or 'gunmetal grey' to some) thermacoat on the hull. While maintaining the same armament as the *Phase II* and *Phase-IIA* prototypes, what gave it a definitive edge were the two LN-64 series warp nacelles used. One of the many inefficiencies typical of this era was the compartmentalization of any and all development programs, plus the added astropolitical gamesmanship that more often than not, filtered its way in. Therefore, even though CH-X development could have benefitted greatly from the more advanced engines, lack of communication and a degree of ignorance continued to hamper efforts.

This would change in short order. For a little more than a year, Starfleet Intelligence had been gathering information on the next incarnation of the IKDF's venerable battlecruiser, however it wasn't until late 2268 that any substantive data was gathered. The *Constitution* was concluding a standard patrol mission in the Hromi sector along the neutral zone when she was ambushed by a battlecruiser. Bearing the same design as the infamous *D-7*, but featuring much heavier weaponry and armor, what was believed to be the prototype of the *D-8/K'Tinga* class inflicted severe damage on and nearly destroyed the *Constitution* before being driven off by a perimeter action squadron. *K'Tinga*'s tactical prowess as well as the presence of new, never-before-seen *S-Graph* warp units lead Vice Admiral Heihachiro Nogura to order the ASDB to begin to integrate CH-X development efforts and to ensure that the most advanced systems and technology were not relegated to just one or two projects.

Therefore, in 2270, a fourth prototype emerged. Codenamed "*Constitution II*", it maintained the same aesthetic conventions as *Belknap*, being a heavily modernized iteration of the preceding two designs. Elements that changed very little, if at all, included the bridge module, navigational sensor dome and hangar bay doors. Functionally, an all-new Duotronic III computer system headlined a roster of changes that also included the aforementioned LN-64 series warp nacelles, expanded cargo handling & storage facilities, implementation of the all-new fleet standard docking port and gangway system and next-generation transporters. With their concerns finally satisfied, the admiralty gave their stamp of approval to *Constitution II*. As part of their overall "high-low" strategy, no new builds were ordered, instead the class would be comprised of existing ships. 12 were ordered for conversion in three groups; the *Constitution*, *Yorktown* and *Kongo* in 2271, *Bonhomme Richard*, *Monitor*, *Hornet* and *Merrimac* in 2272 and *Lafayette*, *Wasp*, *Tori*, *Truxtun* and *Confiance* in 2273. One new-build was constructed though, the *Intrepid*, intended to replace her forbearer of the same name (one of the original 12 *Constitutions*) that was previously lost. She was launched following *Kongo* in 2271.

That same year, the ASDB unveiled a separate, fifth CH-X prototype – the 'high' part of its "high-low" strategy. Also bearing the codename *Enterprise*, it carried the same sleek, sophisticated aesthetics of *Belknap* forward, emerging as one of the most graceful starship designs of the 23rd century. Being more than just a work of art, it was also incredibly sophisticated, yet not as over-engineered as its 2267 forbearer. The main factor differentiating *Enterprise* from *Constitution II* was scientific capability. Like the *Yorktown* class from the previous century, *Enterprise* expanded upon *Constitution*'s capabilities (and those of its 3 principal sub-classes) with additional laboratory space that was completely reconfigured to be more efficient and adaptable—separate environmental control systems permitting the storage and examination of exotic and/or dangerous substances and materials while the specialized equipment stocking the laboratories was adaptable for use with multiple scientific disciplines. *Constitution II* on the other hand merely carried the original *Constitution*'s capabilities forward with the most basic of updates (computer integration etc.).

Tactically, there was comparatively little separating the two ships. *Enterprise* featured a stronger deflector shield system and *Constitution II* retained its aft torpedo launcher, but otherwise they both maintained 6 Type VII Phaser Banks and another 6 individual Type VII emitters as their primary armament. Early on in the CH-X development process, *Enterprise* was

erroneously compared to the *K'Tinga* (due to the initial concern regarding its new warp engines). However, as Starfleet was expanding, so too were the Imperial Defense Forces. With the advent of the Linear Warp era, *K'Tinga* found its true match in the *Belknap* class. The more comparable counterpart to Starfleet's new heavy cruisers was the *D-10/Riskadh* class. Like Starfleet's new heavy cruisers, *Riskadh* was positioned as a 'multi-mission' vessel, though to the Klingons, this meant something entirely different. Whereas *Constitution II* and *Enterprise* focused on the synergy of scientific capability and tactical acumen, *Riskadh* melded all the features of a typical dreadnought—stronger shielding and a heavier armament—with that of an assault ship, featuring accommodations for ground troops and equipment (artillery, vehicles etc) as well as two large hangar bays that could embark a full range of small craft.

It wasn't the Klingons though, that served as the first test for *Constitution II* and *Enterprise* however. That distinction would go to the Kzinti and the massive machine-lifeform known as "V'Ger".

The latter traced its roots back to 20th century Earth and a predecessor to the Federation—the National Aeronautics and Space Administration or "NASA". In the early 1970's NASA launched the *Voyager* series of unmanned probes to study the gas giants and complete a "grand tour" of Earth's solar system (Sector 001). *Voyager 6* completed its initial assignment and continued on into interstellar space, eventually drifting into Sector 006 and being swallowed by a Black Star. This star, first encountered by the *Enterprise* in 2267, had a particular type of associated subatomic particle field that included a significant chroniton distortion effect, thereby making distinct from an ordinary black hole. It transported the probe across time and space, to a distant corner of the universe, seriously damaging it in the process. It eventually drifted past a planet inhabited by living machines. Analyzing the probe's programming, they found it a kindred spirit and enhanced its ability to collect information. *Voyager 6* was now "V'Ger" (or "Vejur"), comprising a massive spacecraft some 78km (78,000m) in length, shrouded by an immensely powerful energy cloud that was over two AUs in diameter, generating radiation amounts rivaling the heliosphere of Sol (Earth's sun). Its ultimate goal was return to Earth, impart all the knowledge gained on its long journey and physically join with its creator.

The *Enterprise* had returned to Earth on stardate 7329.003 (12 May 2270) and was laid up at Starfleet's San Francisco Yards for uprating to *Enterprise* class specifications. Over the next 18 months, this work was largely completed. On stardate 7410.2 (27 November 2271), Starfleet monitoring stations along the Klingon Neutral Zone recorded the flight of V'ger as it proceeded through Klingon space, destroying the *K'Tinga* class *Amar* and two others. Station Epsilon IX recorded transmissions between the *Amar* and the Klingon High Command and projected V'Ger's course. Finding that it was on a direct course for Earth, Starfleet was quickly alerted. Kirk, now a Rear Admiral serving as chief of Starfleet Operations, assumed command—usurping Captain Willard Decker—and took the *Enterprise* out in a still-incomplete state. Intercepting V'Ger while still more than a day from Earth, the starship was initially attacked, but resisted. V'Ger then sent a probe aboard which scanned through her memory banks and "absorbed" navigator Ilia. A second probe boarded the ship soon after, taking Ilia's form down to the last detail and equipped with a sophisticated transceiver. Through interactions with this probe, the crew ascertained the situation, but remained powerless to take any action until V'Ger (which had captured the *Enterprise*) arrived at Earth. By this time V'Ger, which had not been able to establish contact with its 'creator', judged humans ('carbon-based lifeforms') as inferior and was set to extinguish all life on the planet. Kirk and his crew intervened, venturing into V'Ger's core, where they discovered the old *Voyager* probe and postulated a theory as to how *Voyager* became V'Ger. They attempted to access the probe and manually transmit its data to its human 'creators' on Earth, but V'Ger short-circuited the transmitter on purpose. Realizing the only option left was for the entity to physically join with its creator, Captain Decker sacrificed himself, joining with the Ilia probe, thereby providing the information needed to for V'Ger to transmit its data. Once he and the entity were joined, V'Ger achieved sentience, evolving to another plane of existence and departing for the Andromeda Galaxy.

The gravity of this mission and the subsequent results achieved by the *Enterprise* validated everything about the CH-X project and the *Enterprise* class in particular. Data taken during *Enterprise*'s subsequent shakedown trials as well as subtle interior changes—such as the layout of the main bridge—would go on to be incorporated into all future ships.

With *Constitution II*, the former would represent, the bloody climax of a long-standing animosity stretching back to the 21st Century. The dawn of humanity's quest into the stars brought with it hope and excitement for contact with other peaceful, intelligent lifeforms. The Kzinti, though quite intelligent, were anything but peaceful. Primal, extremely violent and displaying fearsome levels of martial depravity, they presented humanity with a simple choice—be conquered or fight for survival. Of course Earth chose the latter and following a number of bloody, protracted conflicts, Earth forces gained the upper hand, forcing the Kzinti to sue for peace and sign what would come to be known as the Treaty of Sirius. The terms of the treaty were purely one-sided, affecting the Kzinti only. They faced complete de-militarization, permitted only a basic policing force and forced to give Earth and later the UFP, unrestricted access to their territory. Extremely humiliating to them, it nevertheless held and underwrote a prolonged period of peace between the two sides.

The Beta Lyrae Incident of 2264 was the beginning of a gradual period of deteriorating relations. A covert attempt to steal a slaver stasis box backfired. Of the two that were initially discovered, one was recovered by Starfleet and the other, recovered by the Kzinti, was empty. They used the empty one as bait and managed to successfully capture a third stasis box from a Starfleet force. After a period of experimentation however, the weapon self-destructed, destroying the Kzinti police vessel and all aboard. This enraged the Kzinti

Patriarch (head of state) and proved to be the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The loss of their sovereignty, other humiliations by Starfleet and now this prompted the beginning of a covert rearmament program that would strengthen the Patriarchy enough for a final, decisive conflict to be waged against the Federation.

By 2270, they had assembled a large fleet of starships designed by their former servitors, the *Mirak*, armed with weapons of Klingon origin and protected by stolen Federation deflector shield technology. At this point, Starfleet had begun engaging in covert “hemming in” operations that gradually eroded Kzinti territory and violated the long-standing Treaty of Sirius. On stardate 7446.78 (07 August 2272), the *Norma Ra Den* (FF 2779) and *Encounter* (FH 2632) were patrolling border sectors on either side of the Patriarchy during a routine deployment. The *Hashishiyun* (DD 516) was currently en route to relieve the *Norma Ra Den*, when the destroyer received a distress call from the *Ra Den*. Heavily garbled, all that the crew of the *Hashishiyun* was able to discern was that their comrades were under attack by multiple vessels of Kzinti origin. Relaying the *Norma Ra Den*’s distress call to Starfleet, the destroyer proceeded toward Patriarchy space at maximum warp, never to be heard from again. Approximately 14 hours after receiving the message from the *Hashishiyun*, Starbase 172 was attacked and destroyed by “more than 30 starships of unknown configuration.” The following day, the Ophiucus system fell in short order along with 3 more Starfleet vessels. Soon, the Kzinti were cutting a bloody swath of death and destruction through the Fomalhaut system.

Anyone who could read a star map and had studied the path of destruction could discern their destination—Earth. For Starfleet, which had embarked upon a major campaign of modernization and completely revamped its deployment doctrine, this was a major embarrassment. What they still didn’t realize though, was that not one, but *two* fleets had emerged from Patriarchy space. The first and larger of the two was the one responsible for the destruction of the *Norma Ra Den* and *Hashishiyun*. The second, smaller one had destroyed the *Encounter* and was making a fast retreat towards *Mirak* space, pointedly avoiding contact with the few Starfleet vessels in the area. 14 starships hastily assembled to stop them, but were ambushed by a separate *Mirak* fleet that emerged to provide cover for their fleeing cousins. 5 ships were lost and 4 more critically damaged.

Starfleet responded by deploying the *Constitution*, *Yorktown* and *Merrimac* as part of improvised ‘Carrier Strike Groups’. Slightly smaller than traditional carrier battle groups (which consisted of 50+ starships), they consisted of a carrier force (1 *Yorktown* class CV, 2 *Federation* class DNs, 1 *Constitution II* CH, 4 *Larson II* class DDs) augmented by a perimeter action squadron (1 *Akula* class DH, 2 *Kearsarge* class CLs, 3 *Burke* class DDs, 4 *Seawolf* class GBs). *Constitution* and Strike Group One retook and retaliated against the Kzinti at Altair, *Yorktown* and Strike Group Two did so at Fomalhaut followed by *Merrimac* and Strike Group Three at Benzar. Both the *Kongo* and *Bonhomme Richard* were recalled and redeployed with two further groups—*Kongo* and Strike Group Four keeping station at Earth while *Bonhomme Richard* and Strike Group Five deployed to Tau Ceti. Effective in large part, this strategy blunted the bulk of the Kzinti advance, though it did little to prevent the capture of Denobula II, Sigma Draconis VI or Tellar.

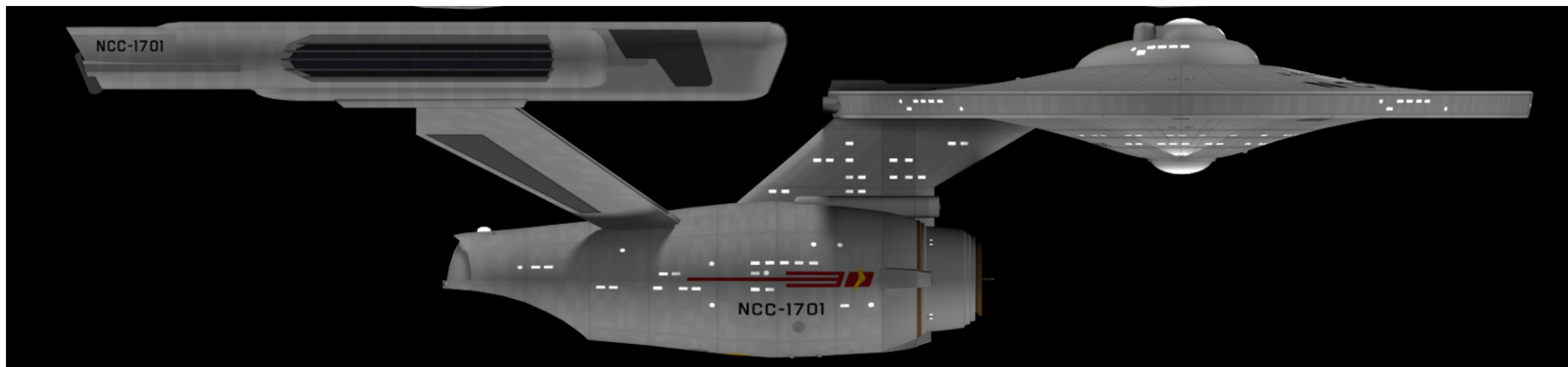
The second phase of the campaign involved the liberation of the above three planets and the defeat of Kzinti ground forces. Here, the *Hornet* along with the *Enterprise* class *Farragut*, *Hood* and *Exeter* supported marines of the 7th Ranger Brigade by hurriedly delivering new *Assault Bee* and *Killer Bee* type Assault Craft as well as *Type IV/A* Assault Shuttles. The former were a set of ingenious modifications made to the fleet’s *Work Bee* type Utility Craft. Comprised of various bolt-on components, they were intended to approximate the capabilities of the new *Wasp* and *Hornet* class Fighters while remaining smaller and both easier and faster to build and deploy. The latter was a heavy reworking of the fleet’s new *Type IV* Long Range Shuttlecraft, able to embark up to 18 fully equipped marines while featuring stronger shields and additional weaponry. Even with these assets, the fight to liberate the three worlds was hard fought and bloody, the Kzinti displaying levels of aggression that far exceeded that of the Klingons during the Four Years War.

The final phase consisted of a single battle in the vicinity of Tau Ceti IX. The location was personally selected by the Kzinti Patriarch, as its seizure would afford his forces the time and resources needed to regroup before the final thrust to Earth. Defended by the *Bonhomme Richard* strike group, the Starfleet vessels as well as the base on Tau Ceti IX had been receiving regular updates on the battles being waged and it was expected that Tau Ceti would be the next target. What was unexpected was the sheer strength marshaled by their enemies. While elements of their main fleet had kept Starfleet distracted and helped build momentum, the Kzinti brought their second, smaller fleet in from *Mirak* space, enabling them to field enough ships to attack in multiple waves. Their warships, armed with both Klingon disruptors and drone missiles, were quite capable of engaging both the Starfleet ships and their fighters, making for one of the largest and most vicious space battles of the era. Were it not for the arrival of the *Constitution*, *Yorktown* and *Merrimac* strike groups midway through, Tau Ceti would have surely fallen, further threatening Earth and millions of lives.

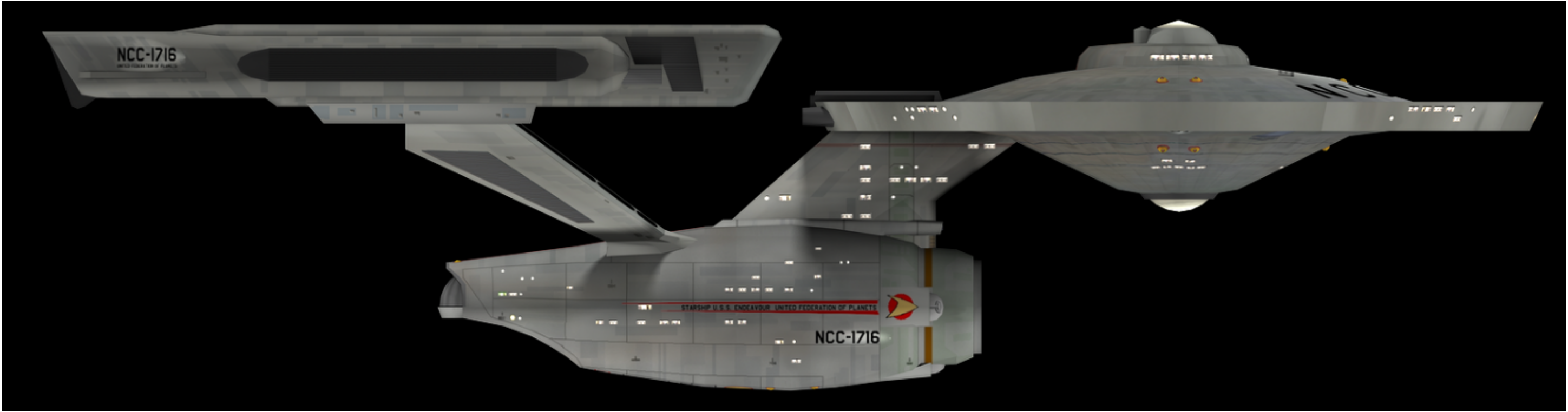
The end result saw the destruction of the starships *Sumter* (DD 308), *Vinson* (DD 320), *Soryu* (DD 321) and *Rio Grande* (CL 1511) along with the majority of the Kzinti’s fleet as well as the capture of the patriarch himself. As optimistic as some in the Admiralty and on the Federation Security Council chose to be in the aftermath, this would unfortunately prove to be the first of many conflicts to unfold in the decades ahead.



Enterprise class Technology Demonstrator (2267)



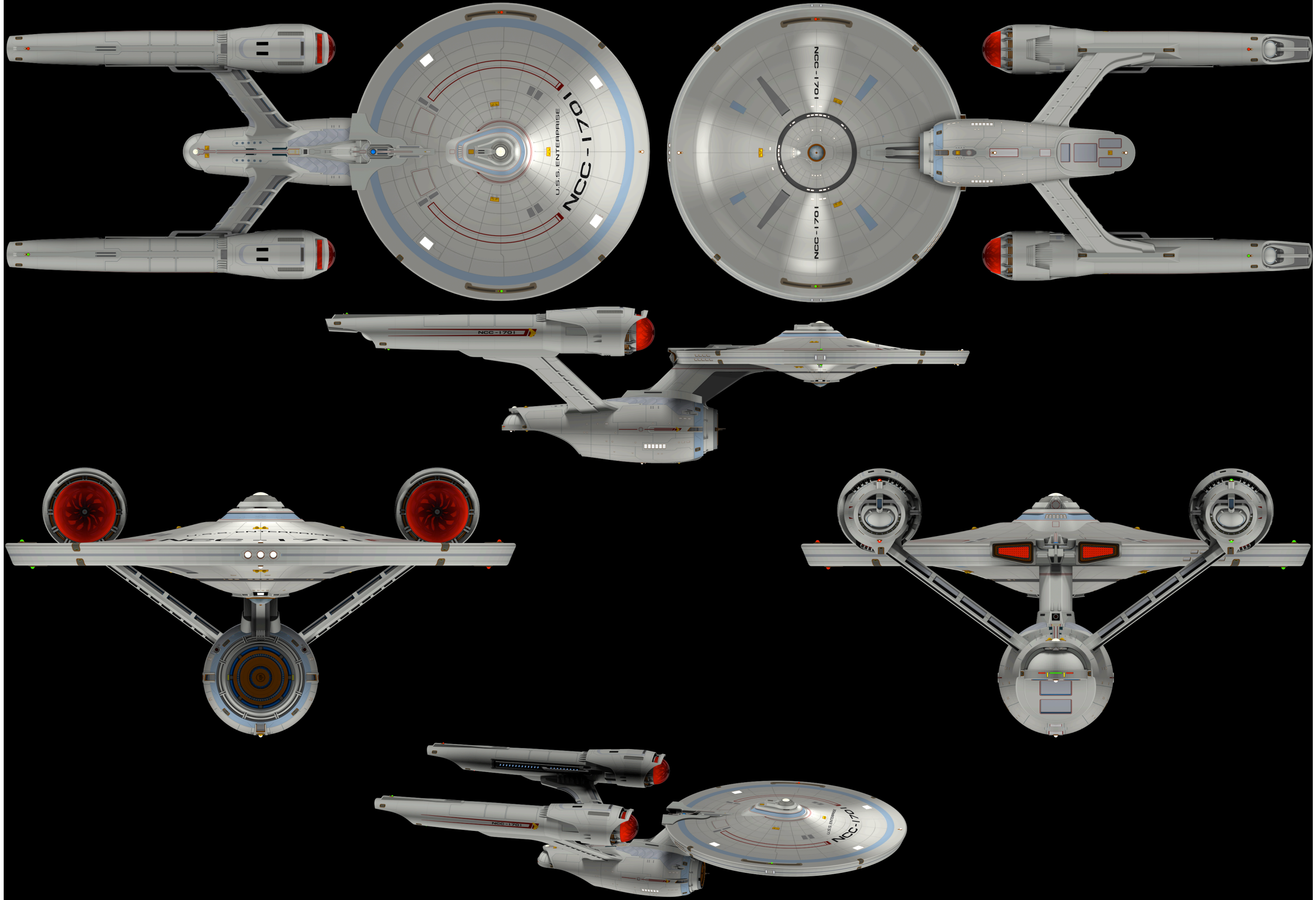
CH-X "Phase II" Prototype (2268)

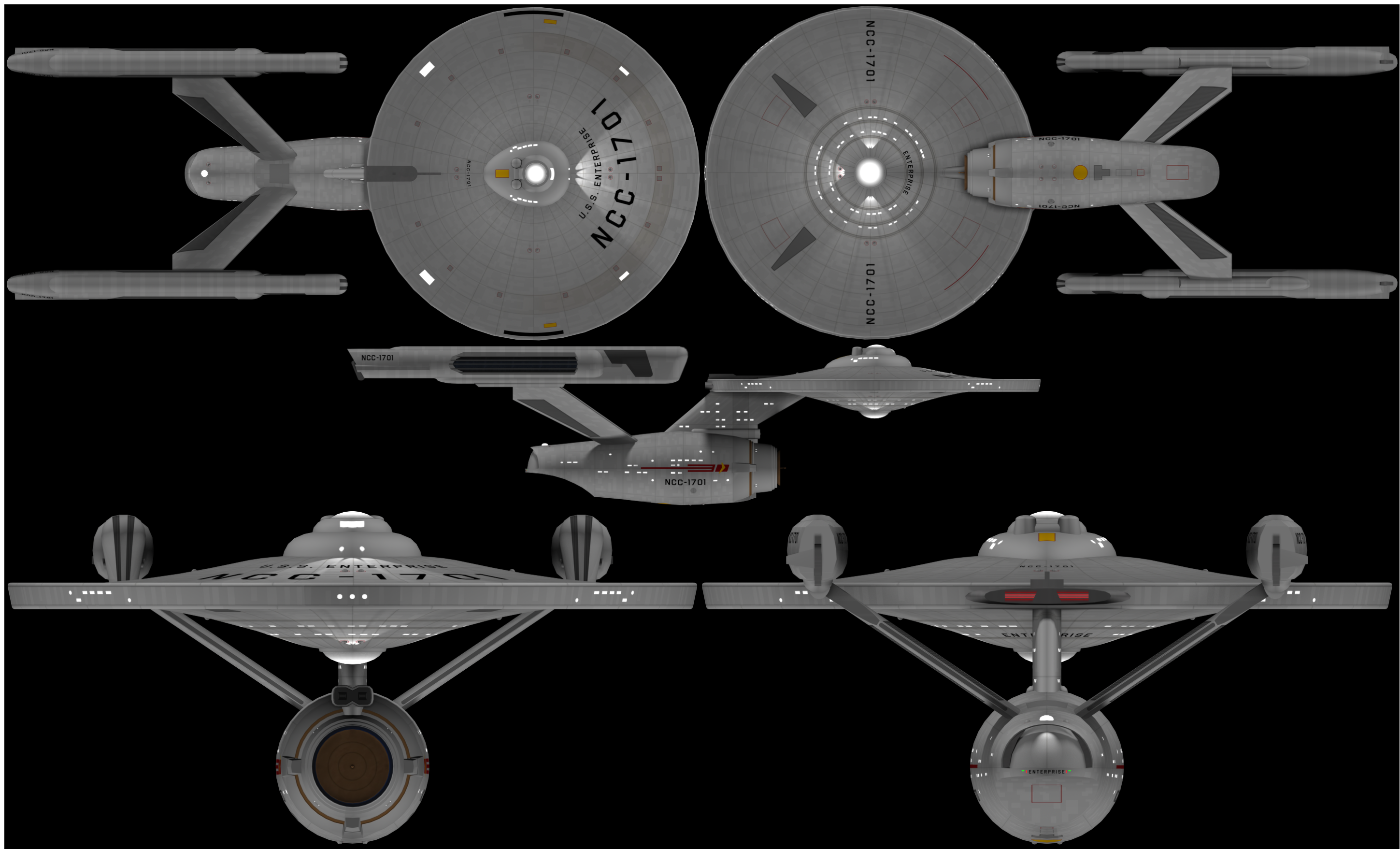


CH-X “Phase II-A” Prototype (2269)



Class	Constitution II	Mass	207,000 metric tons	Armament	6 Type VII Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser	Compliment	435		6 Type VII Phaser Emitters
Service Number Active	2271-2293 0			Defense Systems	3 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Length	298m				Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 628,643 terajoules
Beam	141m				
Height	71m				
Decks	18				Standard Duranium Double Hull









Part III: 2273-86

In the year following the Kzinti Incursion (2273), the buildouts of the *Constitution II* and *Enterprise* class were completed. Approximately half of the existing *Endeavor* class ships were uprated—*Wasp* and *Tori* to *Constitution II* specifications and *Endeavor*, *Eagle* and *Ari* to *Enterprise* class specs, leaving *Jupiter*, *Qundar*, *Androcus* and *Mondoloy* as the only remaining members of the class. With the ASDB turning its attention to modernizing the *Loknar* and *Saladin* classes, production of *Belknap* continuing, modernization plans drafted for the *Federation* class and plans being developed for a new starship class to assume perimeter action duties, *Constitution II* and *Enterprise* cemented themselves in the scientific and exploratory fields. The Cammel IV revelations however, threatened to upend this carefully crafted, still-evolving order and thrust the fleet's heavy cruisers back into conflict.

Intelligence data regarding the Kzinti and Starfleet's covert operations was quietly collected by civilian analyst Christina Brady at the base on Cammel IV and then passed along to an unnamed reporter at the Federation News Service. A number of stories were subsequently written and once the data was fully disseminated, it painted the Federation in a damning light, making it seem as if they were the sole instigators of the whole sordid affair. While their operations existed in an ethically/morally 'gray' area (it could be argued that the entire Treaty of Sirius—the stipulations of which forced the unconditional disarmament of the Kzinti and confined them to a sphere 50 light years in diameter—was both unethical and immoral), Starfleet was not the only party whose conduct was questionable. For a decade or more (it is unknown exactly how long) the Kzinti had been covertly constructing a modern naval force with the aid of independent actors, including both the Klingons and Orions, among others. The Orion connection is what attracted the attention of Starfleet Intelligence, who after conducting an initial investigation became convinced the Klingons were preparing to wage a proxy war using the Kzinti.

No matter the truth of the situation, the public outcry following Brady's leak demanded a response. The Federation Security Council concurred with the Intelligence assertions regarding the possibility of a proxy war against the Klingons, but to soothe the inflamed popular opinion, the Federation Council censured Starfleet Command and froze both the *Perimeter Action Replacement* (PAR) and the *Future Dreadnought Experimental* (FUTDREDX) projects. For all the populist outrage, astropolitical realities still carried greater weight. While security agents and intelligence operatives hunted the now rouge analyst, shipbuilding continued on, 2275 seeing the release of two *Enterprise* class variants as well as a new, exotic companion.

The *Casablanca* class (CVL 1880) Light Carrier was the first carrier of the Linear Warp era, intended to replace both the *Independence* (CVL 1590) and *Santee* (CVS 1925) classes. Nearly identical to *Enterprise*, the only external difference was in the secondary hull. Whereas on *Enterprise*, the cigar-shaped hull section gently curved up about two-thirds of the way back, *Casablanca*'s continued straight and flat. This created a longer, slightly blockier appearance, but also created enough habitable volume for a second hangar bay to be installed below the existing one in an over/under arrangement similar to *Santee*. Internally was where most of the substantive changes were made including removal of all existing science labs and associated facilities (greatly reducing the crew compliment), relocation of the cargo storage and handling facilities to the saucer and installation of barracks-style accommodations for pilots and flight crews.

Tikopai (CH 1800) became the largest variant/sub-class produced during this period comprising a total of 33 ships (the first 13 being uprated from *Achernar* and *Endeavor* class specifications). Not an upgrade in the evolutionary sense (like *Bonhomme Richard* and *Achernar* were to *Constitution*), *Tikopai* instead focused on an incredibly narrow, yet well-defined set of objectives related chiefly to scientific exploration. Utilizing the same Duotronic III computer system, it lacked the sophisticated fire-control and target acquisition/tracking software aboard *Enterprise* in favor of an equally sophisticated multi-spectral/EM analysis package, ideal for surveying nebulae, spatial anomalies and other various phenomena. Cargo space was reduced as well, some functions being relocated to the secondary hull in order to accommodate additional laboratories and personnel accommodations. Externally, there was little difference between *Tikopai* and *Enterprise*, though in a nod to her scientific mission profile (and to *Constitution II*), both the bridge module and navigational sensor dome maintained smoother, more austere lines. Of note was the small craft hangar within the primary hull, just aft of the bridge module. Nominally, this could accommodate a pair of new *Type IV/S* survey shuttles, but also served as more discrete storage for VIP craft as well (size permitting).

Perhaps most significant however, was the introduction of the *Constellation* (CA 1974) class Cruiser. Combining the scientific capabilities of *Tikopai* and various smaller scouts & science/survey vessels, the tactical acumen of *Enterprise* and the latest advances in propulsion technology & research, *Constellation* was an 'ultra long-range' explorer that brought Starfleet's capabilities here to their absolute zenith. A unique design making use of an innovative 'laminar' hull (2 fleet-standard saucers merged together, surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped outer 'shell') married to an unusual quad-nacelle assembly, not only did it highlight the fleet's continuing commitment to peaceful exploration, but more so their commitment to continual research and development of linear warp technology and the development of faster, more advanced warp engines.

Despite Starfleet's commitment to missions of peace, continuing astro-political volatility meant that the admiralty and individual ship commanders had to plan and execute missions with the unknown in mind. Such was the case in 2275, when Starfleet became enmeshed in the Romulan Civil War. Responding to an appeal by Commander-General Ael i-Mhiessan

t'Rlailieu and also seeking to discover the fate of the missing USS *Intrepid*, the *Enterprise* together with the ChR *Bloodwing* ventured to Levavi V, where they boarded and then destroyed a secret research facility as well as recovered the *Intrepid* and her crew. At the base, a secret project initiated by the increasingly autocratic Romulan rulers sought to leverage harvested genetic material from the Vulcan crew of the *Intrepid* to enhance their own neural abilities. Disturbed by the project's brazen immorality as well as the extreme secrecy surrounding it, Ael had spoken out, only to be censured, stripped of her command and banished to a backwater posting. Once she had regained her command, gained Starfleet assistance in thwarting the plans of her government and thus opened their eyes to the volatile reality of the situation, it was too late for Starfleet to back out.

The tipping point came a year later. *Enterprise* Dr. Leonard McCoy had been dispatched on a covert mission to ascertain the status of a Starfleet Intelligence operative, but had been located and captured. In the process of rescuing him, Commander-General Ael also took with her the Sword of S'task. The theft of the ancient artifact, brought to Romulus by S'task, leader of the exodus from Vulcan, pushed already inflamed tensions even further, to their lowest point in decades while simultaneously serving as a rallying cry to a growing number of disaffected Romulan colony worlds.

A summit near RV Trianguli was soon convened, diplomats from both sides coming together to attempt to defuse tensions. The *Enterprise* was attended by the *Constitution II* class *Ortisei* (CH 1741) and *Constellation* class *Sempach* (CA 2526) as well as the starships *Hemalat* (CS 2507), *Lake Champlain* (FF 2712) and *Nimrod* (DH 293) and the Lalairu city-ship *Mascrar*. For the time being, they provided protection for *Bloodwing* from the Romulan loyalist forces that included the new *Swiftwind* class ChR *Gorget* and *Thraiset*, the V-11/*Stormbird* class ChR *Pillion* and *Hheirant* and the V-9/*Nighthawk* class ChR *Satieh'ilil* and *Greave*. However the entire summit was an elaborate ruse, designed to lull Starfleet into a false sense of security so the Romulan loyalists could reclaim the sword and destroy *Bloodwing*.

To this end, *Pillion* snuck *Hheirant* in under cloak, which decloaked and attacked *Bloodwing*. Repeated torpedo salvos from *Sempach* destroyed her (after she mistakenly destroyed the friendly *Thraiset*), drawing the *Mascrar* in on the side of Starfleet and which destroyed the *Satieh'ilil*. The Imperial Navy's new *Swiftwind* class Heavy Cruisers—designed as contemporaries of the *Enterprise* and Klingon *K'Tinga* classes—presented a strong challenge. Mounting an impressive array of disruptors (11 Standard, 2 Heavy) and heavily shielded, *Gorget* destroyed the *Loknar II* class *Lake Champlain*, crippled the *Ortisei* (that was subsequently evacuated) and helped disable the *Belknap* class *Hemalat* before escaping with *Pillion* and *Greave*.

In the immediate aftermath, while the Starfleet flotilla was busy regrouping and conducting repairs, *Bloodwing* charged back across the Neutral Zone to lead the now-open rebellion. *Enterprise* followed, destined for Artaleirh—a world that had aligned itself against the Empire, and with the rebels, as part of the 'Free Rihannsu Movement'. There, the pair once again met up with *Pillion* and *Greave*, which were leading a small loyalist force to recapture the world. Though handily outnumbered, *Enterprise* and *Bloodwing* lured the loyalists into a nearby asteroid field that they were able to use to their advantage in destroying or disabling them. Almost as soon as the Romulan loyalists were dealt with, the pair were set upon by a Klingon force seeking to take advantage of the situation. This time, the odds were not as good and they were saved only through the intervention of the clan-ship *Tyrava*.

The aftermath of this saw Admiral Kirk placed in command of the Free Rihannsu fleet that encompassed 5 *Sunhawk* class Light Cruisers and over 300 smaller civilian vessels. Their next target was to be Augo, strategically located between Artaleirh and Romulus. Though Kirk, Ael and Governor Courhig tr'Mahan had engaged in very careful, deliberate planning, the Romulan Imperial Navy had them sorely outnumbered. Additionally, many of the Romulan ships committed to Augo as well as at least one of the orbiting stations were armed with augmented Heavy Disruptors (similar in principal and operation to Starfleet's pulse phaser cannons/'Mega Phasers') capable of vastly greater damage potential against even the enhanced shielding of the 5 *Sunhawks*. A fortunate happenstance however, saw a Starfleet force led by Commodore Jono Danilov intervene at a critical moment. Starfleet Command and the Federation Security Council's reticence at getting drawn into an internal conflict with dangerous astro-political implications served as just cause for Danilov to assemble a large force to venture into Romulan space and extricate the *Enterprise* and by extension, the Federation, from the escalating conflict.

Accompanying the *Ortisei* were the starships *Hemalat* (CS 2507), *Al-Burak* (CS 2512), *Speedwell* (CA 2527), *Lake Ponchatrain* (FF 2713) *Lake Onondoga* (FF 2714), *Kilimanjaro* (FF 1953), *San Diego* (DH 297) and *Dauntless* (CA 1697). The deployment of *Dauntless* as part of Danilov's force was notable, as she was the last remaining *Pyotr Velikiy* class Cruiser in service (launched in 2247), still retaining her original 'Class I' appearance, but with more modern systems that brought her in line with *Achernar* class specs. Though the battle had disintegrated into an all-out melee by the time Danilov arrived, they nevertheless fought in a more organized manner, hoping to force a decisive rout. *Ortisei*, flanked by *Speedwell* and *Al-Burak*, directly targeted Imperial Navy capital ships as did *Hemalat*, *Lake Ponchatrain* and *Lake Onodoga*, all scoring multiple kills in quick succession. *Kilimanjaro* meanwhile lead both the *San Diego* and the *Dauntless* in pacifying the fixed installations in orbit—the latter two leveraging their strengths (electronic warfare, speed, agility) to sew division in the Romulan ranks and keep them on the defensive. For all their assembled strength, the Romulan loyalists still outnumbered them by a factor of at least 9:1. This meant that for every kill Starfleet scored, they were punished dearly for it. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the destruction of the *Ortisei*. After destroying a dreadnought and two light cruisers, she gained a great deal of unneeded attention. Making things especially difficult were a trio of V-11/*Stormbird* class ships that attempted to outmaneuver and flank her, scoring various hits on her connecting

dorsal, warp nacelles and secondary hull. While trying to fend off the battlecruisers, a heavy disruptor barrage struck the underside of *Ortisei's* secondary hull where deflector coverage had weakened and instantly vaporized the ship, destroying her with all hands.

The station that fired off the barrage, along with the rest of the orbiting installations were quickly destroyed in response and from there, the Free Rihannsu managed to capture what vessels didn't flee. This was as far as Danilov's force would go however. After relaying to Admiral Kirk, his orders that gave him and *Enterprise* latitude to continue on as they saw fit, the remaining 8 starships returned to Federation space, regrouping for repairs and resupply at Starbase 39-Sierra.

This swift defeat, plus the news of Praetor Gurrhim's death (a fabricated ruse) and a targeted disinformation campaign eliminated the possibility of civilian resistance, making the final victory in orbit of Romulus that much easier. The elevation of Commander-General Ael to the position of *Empress of the Romulan Star Empire*, did much to soothe tensions between the Federation and the Romulans, though because it was more ceremonial than anything else, tensions would gradually rise in the years to come.

The remainder of the decade was more or less quiet for *Enterprise* and her cousins. Of note was an uptick in activity by the Orion Syndicate, including a brazen attempt to steal the *ChR Brak'en* from the Starfleet Museum at Memory Alpha, the inception of the *Excelsior* (CH 2000) class Development Project and the completion of the second Starbase 47-*Vanguard*.

The only Romulan starship from the Earth-Romulan War to end up in the hands of Earth forces, *Brak'en* was also a member of the *Battlehawk* class—the largest and most powerful class to be developed and deployed by the Romulan Imperial Navy until the advent of the *Imperial Hawk* class in 2295. It was also unique in that it was designed to serve dual functions—that of front-line fleet combatant (equipped with the armament and defensive systems of a battleship) and assault ship (able to transport up to 544,444mT of cargo or up to 3,267 fully equipped ground troops). It had long since been stripped of its weaponry and with its engines rendered inactive, became a permanent fixture at the museum, a central part to their 'Romulan War Annex'.

Orion activity had thus far remained contained, but expanded in rough lockstep with Starfleet's expansion, new worlds discovered, regions surveyed and colonies established providing fertile ground for the expansion of smuggling, drug & weapons dealing and other illicit operations. The involvement of the merchant-prince Ganz in attempting to steal technology and information regarding *Operation: Vanguard* represented a marked escalation. Starfleet's laser-like focus on continuing astro-political brinksmanship and the comparatively little attention they paid to peripheral matters such as this made more brazen acts almost inevitable. Expanding their illicit activities and influence eventually necessitated an expanded lot of larger and more powerful starships. With an established black market through which nearly every conceivable spacecraft system, component and part could be acquired, the incentive for stealing and then retrofitting a vessel was much higher than acquiring one through more legitimate means.

Following their usual *modus operandi*, the Syndicate made use of outside parties—businessman Elliot Han (AKA 'E.Q.') and mercenary Derkon Willz—in reconnoitering Memory Alpha and ascertaining certain information (defenses, level of security etc) before sending one of their own ships in to steal *Brak'en*. Due to the *Brak'en's* large size (490m long, 229,574mT displacement), they made use of their *Majestic* class Star Cruiser. An elegant, 375m long design from Rigellian StarWorks, it was marketed as a luxurious star liner with the most powerful engines available on the civilian market. Expensive, even by Orion standards, only 3 were known to be operating at this point, equipped with heavily upgraded engines and sensors as well as military-grade weapons, shielding and ECM systems. Equipped with a 'shearing plane' (able to slice through a tractor beam and free a tractor object), the *Tantrak Nightwalker* absconded with the *Brak'en* to the Omicron Aurigae system where it would likely be refitted with more modern engines, weapon systems and possibly a cloaking device.

Though located just over 20 light years from Earth and just under 18 light years from Tellar, the Teneebia sector in which Memory Alpha resided was bereft of any patrols. The nearest starship to respond was the USS *Lexington* out of New Berlin. After taking custody of Willz and maintaining security until the arrival of a separate security contingent, the *Lexington* proceeded to Daran V. There, the investigation became bogged down, but ultimately revealed that the whole theft was orchestrated by Han, who attempted to shift blame onto an organization of disaffected Starfleet veterans. The *Brak'en*, once refitted, would be taken to Rigel VIII and become instrumental in expanding Syndicate activity. At this point, the *Lexington* was joined by the *Kearsarge II* class *Striker* (CL 1560) and *Larson* class *Nhat-Le* (DD 4391) that were already conducting search operations.

The trio rushed to Omicron Aurigae where they found *Brak'en* ensconced within a makeshift drydock that itself was deep within an asteroid belt. Not responding to the *Lexington's* hails, the *Tantrak Nightwalker* once again attempted to escape with the Romulan ship. A phaser salvo from *Nhat-Le* across the Star Cruiser's bow was answered with sustained disruptor fire as *Lexington* and *Striker* maneuvered to surround their quarry. After *Lexington* fired a spread of photon torpedoes across *Tantrak Nightwalker's* bow, the Orion ship opened fire on *Striker* and continued to maneuver for an escape. When it became clear that there was little to no chance of a peaceful end to the situation, all three Starfleet vessels opened fire. Within seconds *Tantrak Nightwalker's* shields collapsed and she was rendered a dead hulk. Seconds after that, the ship self-destructed, the resulting explosion obliterating it and *Brak'en*.

Despite growing astro-political volatility from various states and aforementioned non-state actors like the Orions, Starfleet's focus on exploration remained steadfast. Not only was a large amount of space in our own galaxy still unexplored, but there was also that which lay beyond, outside the galactic barrier. Though there was some topical coverage by the FNS, details of the first journey beyond the barrier by the *Enterprise* was largely classified. The second though, was not, becoming the subject of much interest by those in Starfleet and the civilian sector. In 2268 after receiving a distress call, the *Enterprise* was captured by a group of Kelvans who were seeking to return to their home in the distant Andromeda Galaxy. After receiving extensive modifications to its warp engines, she successfully breached the barrier and briefly traversed the extragalactic void before returning to the Milky Way. With the question of whether or not extragalactic travel was possible now answered, Starfleet began working toward a goal of developing propulsion technology that would make such travel possible and thus, usher in a new era of exploration.

'Transwarp' as it came to be known, was also at the center of a new starship development project that began in 2274. Intended to eventually supplant *Enterprise* and other *Constitution* class variants, *Excelsior*—the "Great Experiment"—was a product of both continuing brinkmanship with the IKDF and the ever-evolving nature of scientific exploration and starship design. As work progressed, it was thought that it would herald in a new generation of starships, just as *Enterprise* was now doing. Spawning just three offshoots—*Curry*, *Exeter* and *Centaur*—*Excelsior* would prove to be less of a trailblazer and more of a bridge between eras and a pillar of continued strength.

The completion of a second Starbase 47-*Vanguard* in 2276 was of more immediate significance, but carried longer-term implications that exist to this day. Following the original station's destruction in 2270, the *Sagittarius* (CU 1894) and *Endeavor* remained on exploratory duty in the Taurus Reach, but aside from a few additional patrols, Starfleet did not maintain a serious presence there for some time. Part of this could be attributed to the extreme secrecy surrounding **Operation Vanguard**, but more so, it was their hesitation to define their interests moving forward. As an extension of that hesitation, there was some debate on exactly what type of station would replace the original. The *Watchtower/J-Type* was only 9 years old and as had been proven, was still eminently capable. Given the high visibility that Starbase 47 had attracted however (and the exponentially higher visibility attached to the *Ournal* class beginning in 2275), Starfleet's goal was to go with a design that was less politically inflammatory, but yet afforded comparable capability.

Enter the *Lotus/L-Type*. The replacement for the venerable *Kepler/K-Type* station, the design was large and highly artistic, the finished product being called one of the most aesthetically pleasing of its era. Officially, the second Starbase 47 took on many of the same functions as its predecessor including colony support and starship repair & resupply. While it once again became the home port for the *Sagittarius* and *Endeavor* (in their scientific capacities) as well as the *Akhel* (FF 2717) and *Theseus* (DD 552) (in their defensive/offensive and support capacities), it also became the home port of the *Merrimac*.

Commanded by Captain Bradley F. Gates—a veteran of both the Four Years War and the Kzinti Incursion—the *Constitution II* class ship was personally selected by Nogura (now a Star Admiral with the title of *Commanding Officer, Starfleet Command*) to carry his flag. Mere weeks after the completion of the new station, it ferried him and his chief of staff Admiral Harold Morrow out from Earth. Nogura had of late, taken a keen interest in **Operation Armageddon**, a straightforward, yet incredibly complex wargame simulation intended to enhance training, decision-making and strategic planning. Optimum performance of the simulation depended on ensuring painstaking accuracy with regard to every fleet unit, associated planet and base (spaceborne and planetary) as well as real-time changes in political environments, socio-economic conditions and military production capabilities.

To facilitate the intelligence-gathering requirements, the Klingon and Romulan Sector Groups of Starfleet Intelligence had put plans in place for separate space survey/intelligence gathering missions—**Operation Dixie** and **Operation Grey Ghost** respectively. The remoteness of the Taurus Reach—far from the core systems, even from some of the outer rim territories—and its proximity to Klingon space made it an ideal location in which to work and the Klingon Sector Group promptly relocated just three weeks after the station came online. As part of the former operation, Gates recommended the procurement of 3 *Thunder* class Blockade Runners. Produced by Ripper Industries, they were bigger than Emerald Fleet Design's *Mancharan Starhopper* that was usually favored for clandestine intelligence work. For *Dixie*, the whole operation was to be carried out by Klingon *QuchHa'* (AKA 'augments' or 'fusions'). Considered largely honorless outcasts in Klingon society, a schism resulted in a number of violent purges in which untold numbers of *QuchHa'* were expelled from the Empire. Recruited heavily by Starfleet Intelligence, nearly a hundred of them underwent extensive training by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the SFMC before being deployed aboard the *Dixie Queen*, *Dixie Princess* and *Dixie Lady* as the 3 blockade runners were known.

The entire mission however, was doomed from the very beginning. Klingon Imperial Intelligence (I.I.) had successfully planted a mole inside the operation and through his actions, the *Dixie Queen* and *Dixie Lady* were destroyed by sabotage (in 2277 and 2280 respectively) while the *Dixie Princess* was tricked into revealing its position and destroyed by a Klingon patrol (in 2279). Maintaining operational security was predicated on a swift response to the operation's failure. Consequently, Nogura resigned from his post, quietly slipping into retirement, while Klingon Sector Chief ch'Raal was demoted and banished to a backwater posting while Morrow was promoted two grades to Star Admiral and took Nogura's place as *Commanding Officer, Starfleet Command*.

2 years later in 2282, the *Merrimac* was patrolling in the vicinity of Freeman's Port when Gates was contacted by ch'Raal. Now a Lieutenant Commander in charge of S.I. activities in the region, he recently spotted a landing craft from what he believed to be one of the *Dixie* ships. Investigation into port and registry records revealed that the vessel from which the craft came was privately owned, purchased from the Klingons by a private concern operating out of Thisisit—a lawless, unaffiliated world located in uncharted space. Given the nature of Starfleet bureaucracy and his own fall from grace, ch'Raal elected to inform Gates—the only officer involved with the operation whose career survived unscathed. Given their location on the frontier and the leeway afforded him by his service record, Captain Gates elected to investigate. The *Merrimac* subsequently collected several intelligence operators well known to and trusted by ch'Raal, briefed them in full and provided them with a shuttlecraft and cover story.

Information gathered on Thisisit revealed that the landing craft spotted on Freeman's Port came from what was most likely the *Dixie Lady*. That ship had been rechristened *Mary Celeste* and sold to Morton Enterprises by K'mtoq, military governor of planet Marram IX. Owner Kenneth Morton contracted with a local band of smugglers to conclude the sale and bring the ship back. Interrogation of the brash, hard-drinking and boastful bunch revealed some intriguing, but not totally surprising details. The Klingons unloaded the *Mary Celeste* at an extremely low price, obviously wanting to get rid of it in a hurry. Their excuse was that the ship was well past the time for decommissioning and it would cost K'mtoq more than it was worth in time, bureaucracy and effort to send the ship back to an Imperial shipyard. The crew however didn't buy this and suspected K'mtoq of concocting a scheme that would profit himself. Of note though was the recollection by a crewman, of one particular oddity. At one of the meetings, there was an error in scheduling, bringing the smugglers face to face with a stranger in K'mtoq's office. According to this source, the presence of the man—a *QuchHa'*—along with a set of deck plans for the *Thunder* class laid out on K'mtoq's desk aroused some suspicion, however he later brushed it off, figuring the unknown man to be one of K'mtoq's cohorts. Other information that was not necessarily related, were the presence of human colonists on Marram and a report that battle group commander Kresz sutai-Kargon was operating in the area.

One of the main goals ch'Raal established upon successfully locating the *Mary Celeste* was a forensic examination of the main computer. Before departing Freeman's Port, he explained to Gates that a file containing the accumulated data from the operation existed. Whether or not it was present on the *Mary Celeste* was dependent on an examination of the computer and a check of the file. If the file was present, then it would confirm that the *Mary Celeste* was really the *Dixie Lady*. If the file was checked and it was confirmed that it did contain the operational data then the ship would most certainly have to be repatriated by whatever means necessary.

Access to the ship itself was a complicated affair. The intelligence operatives divided themselves into two teams, one remaining on the surface, distracting the smugglers and ground control, while the other used their shuttlecraft to approach and board it in orbit. As this was an unsanctioned mission that only Captain Gates and Commander ch'Raal had any knowledge of, the operatives were cleared to take any action they deemed necessary (with the caveat that they would be totally disavowed should they be compromised). The docking bay from which Morgan's smugglers operated was a rundown facility located on the outskirts of the main settlement, 20 kilometers from a mountain range. Ensuring that those in the shuttle remained undetected was comparatively easy, as the smugglers present on the ground were either drunk and playing cards in the control room, or engaging in various salacious acts with prostitutes in the small bunk rooms and storage bays that lined the bay's perimeter. In orbit, the situation was much the same, a scan by the shuttle revealing the few smugglers still aboard concentrated in the engineering control space or the galley, making a transport directly into the cockpit relatively low-risk. Examination of the computer was simple, if slightly time consuming. It did indeed contain the file ch'Raal alluded to—*Omega 39*—and that file itself showed that extensive information was contained within. Disguised as a trivial part of the ship's sensor package, it was secured with a biometric lock keyed to one of four people: the Captain, Intelligence Officer, Security Chief and Communications Officer, meaning that once the ship was recovered, the group would need to embark on a search for the crew.

With the *Mary Celeste*'s true identity confirmed and the need to recover the ship made clear, the decision was made to execute the band of smugglers. Once those on board the blockade runner were disposed of, the bodies were loaded onto the shuttlecraft which then proceeded down to the surface, rendezvousing with the ground team. There, the rest of the bodies were collected before heading off to a predetermined location deep within the mountain range. Once this task was complete, the shuttle rendezvoused with *Mary Celeste/Dixie Lady* and escorted it to the edge of the system, where they were met by Captain Gates and the *Merrimac*. From there, both ships returned to Starbase 47, the entire incident appearing as if the smugglers decided to abscond with the *Mary Celeste* to parts unknown.

Once back at the Starbase, Gates saw to the repair and overhaul of the *Dixie Lady* personally. After consulting with Commander ch'Raal and briefing station commander Commodore Mahlon Ry'aal, it was decided that the next step would be to backtrack to Marram IX to determine if any of the crew had survived and if so, where they were located. Sending in the *Merrimac* though was out of the question. As with Gamma Tauri IV in the Taurus Reach, Marram IX was in unclaimed space and even though a human colony had been established in years prior, because they had refused protectorate status, Starfleet had no legal standing nor justification to deploy forces in the system. Recent intelligence reports though revealed the Klingons had no such reservations. An armada led by Kargon (consisting of 3 *D-18* and 6 *D-14* class destroyers, at least 1 *D-10* class Heavy Cruiser and numerous smaller vessels) had the entire system locked down with ruthless efficiency. This meant once again, that the *Merrimac* would have to hold station some distance away and that the intelligence operatives would have to proceed in under cover.

This time, much more care was taken with regards to their cover story. As four of their party were human in origin, it was decided the remaining 6 would pose as 'inspectors' conducting a routine tour of the planetside garrison. Such a cover would almost immediately be seen as a blatant ruse by Governor K'mtoq who would naturally suspect them of being agents of Imperial Intelligence. It ended up working just as intended though, thanks to shrewd questioning of the Governor, whose own suspicions were strengthened. He eventually revealed the existence of a special file containing all records and evidence collected in *Dixie's* aftermath, specifically the disposition of the prisoners and the sale of the freighter, among other things.

The crew of the *Dixie Lady* did indeed survive, were captured and taken to Marram IX where they were put to work as part of a forced labor movement to build and expand planetary defenses. Located on an island a short distance away from the main land mass, the remainder of the Intelligence team ventured out into the wilderness to surveil the target location. While plotting their next move, they were accosted by a dozen individuals in ragged clothing armed with SFMC issue assault phasers. After some careful, yet slightly testy back and forth between the two parties, the dozen revealed themselves to be all that remained of **Project Minuteman**, a Starfleet Intelligence operation begun some 5 years prior, to liberate the human colonists on the planet. Having discovered ¾ of the colonists to be either highly apathetic or out-and-out collaborators and then being stranded after their own rescue vessel was discovered and destroyed, the project had degenerated into a futile exercise in guerilla warfare. ch'Raal's team kept the bulk of the *Dixie* information secret, revealing only that they were there to rescue a group of 'special prisoners' from a labor camp on a nearby island, that they had a shuttle located in the main settlement and that they were being assisted by a starship in the vicinity.

As they were a team of 10, yet could only spare 6 for actual combat (their 4 terran compatriots remaining aboard the *Dixie Lady*, out of sight of the Klingons), ch'Raal's team was obviously in need of assistance which the beleaguered *Minuteman* operatives reluctantly agreed to provide—provided that they and their band of guerillas (the other 1/3 of the colonists roughly) could leave the planet along with the prisoners. This point was hurriedly agreed upon and from there, a rudimentary assault plan was hatched. Transporter use was obviously out, not only because it would be detected by the settlement and warships in orbit, but because the island was secured by force fields and transport inhibitors. As their standing with Governor K'mtoq was still intact, they instead opted to resort to a 'surprise inspection' of the labor camp as means of gaining access. After gaining the force field security codes and returning to the *Dixie Lady*, the team would return to a pre-arranged meeting point where they would pick up the *Minuteman* operatives, their guerilla/resistance allies and whatever weapons and supplies they had assembled before proceeding on to the camp.

In the interim, the *Merrimac* would be signaled. Apprised that the final phase of the rescue was underway, Captain Gates would return to assist the team and cover their escape. Knowing though, that a large Klingon contingent was present in the system, Gates had shrewdly assembled his own contingent—an imposing force comprising a *Federation II* class Dreadnought (*Federation/DN 2100*), 2 *Ascension* class Dreadnoughts (*Sussex/DN 2523* and *Minsk/DN 2525*), a *Belknap* class Strike Cruiser (*Concord/CS 2506*), *Yorktown II* class Carrier (*Ticonderoga/CV 2205*) and 6 Frigates of the *Miranda* (*Miranda/FH 1860*, *Saratoga/FH 1892*), *Valley Forge* (*Zephyr/FH 2977*, *Grozny/FH 2981*) and *Soyuz* (*Baikonur/FT 1925*, *Tacoma/FT 1929*) classes—and would warp in at just the right time to clear the area and ensure the *Dixie Lady* got away safely.

At the outset, all proceeded as planned. The team returned to the settlement, expanded upon their ruse with K'mtoq and gained the security codes for the camp's force fields before returning to their ship. Fortunately for them, *Dixie Lady* still retained her quad disruptor armament and sophisticated electronic warfare and sensor systems (that would soon prove eminently useful). While they themselves only had type IB and IIB hand phasers that were concealed aboard the ship, the *Minuteman* operatives and colonial guerillas had a larger cache of more powerful weapons including assault phasers, photon grenades and mortars, captured Klingon disruptors and various other black market arms which they quickly loaded up.

Once inside the camp, they activated their electronic warfare systems and jammed the camp's communication and sensor grids while the teams divided in half. The SFI operatives worked to locate and secure the prisoners while the guerillas moved quickly to eliminate the sentries and destroy the power station. Seizing the element of surprise, they managed to rescue 22 survivors, but not before a rogue sentry team managed to damage *Dixie Lady's* warp drive with an artillery emplacement. While her electronic warfare systems did provide some degree of protection against a flight of G-6 class Gunboats that had been scrambled, without full warp capability, there was little chance of a clean escape. One of the *Minuteman* operatives had rudimentary engineering knowledge and quickly volunteered to effect repairs. Also volunteering to assist was an officer named Melekh. A communications specialist who served on all three *Dixie* ships, his personnel file showed absolutely no engineering aptitude or experience, while after-action reports by both Starfleet Intelligence and Starfleet Security classified Melekh as a low-priority suspect, the aforementioned lack of engineering experience & expertise making him unlikely to have committed sabotage.

This raised the suspicions of the Intelligence team commander almost immediately, who, after asking gradually more pointed questions, unmasked him as the mole. Further, more 'intense' questioning by both these personnel and those from **Project Minuteman** revealed several important pieces of information. First, the data contained within the secured file

Omega 39 was entirely falsified. The file's very existence was designed to lure Starfleet to Marram IX so as to find and safely extract Melekh. It also laid bare the fact that the *Dixie Lady* was sold to Morton Enterprises deliberately, intended to be used as bait as well. Secondly, another prisoner—Klonaar—was being held at the garrison headquarters in the main settlement. Having been interrogated intermittently over the course of a year, it was believed that he somehow concealed the actual *Dixie* data, however thus far, the Klingons were unable to break him.

With a heavier concentration of guards and personnel at the main settlement, a direct assault was obviously out of the question. Communications and other blackouts between the settlement and the labor camp on the island were not all that uncommon, as the Klingons did not pay nearly as much attention to infrastructure. So with personnel distracted or otherwise going about their normal duties, the intelligence team was able to once again make use of their 'inspection' ruse. After quickly reconnoitering the headquarters building, the team split into pairs—4 covering the two access points on the ground level with 2 more proceeding to the detention area on the second level to free Klonaar. As time was of the essence, every Klingon who encountered the operatives was quickly eliminated. Once Klonaar was freed, *Dixie Lady* moved in and retrieved them via transporter and quickly escaped. At this point, the three gunboats that had been scrambled to intercept them at the island had returned and pursued them from the surface up into orbit where a fierce battle raged.

Gates and the *Merrimac* had arrived with the strike force and were executing one of the most elaborately planned battles of the modern era. The objective was simple, divide the Klingon forces and then press the advantage of firepower to either destroy or rout them. Gates' decision to include a carrier with his force was wise. The *Ticonderoga* carried a mix of both fighters and assault craft that were in large part, faster and more maneuverable than the motley assortment of gunboats, cutters and shuttles opposing them. Supporting the fighters, while protecting the carrier were the *Baikonur* and *Tacoma*. Soyuz class Attack Frigates, they were designed around multiple pulse phaser batteries that could be independently targeted and that did prove eminently useful against small craft. Engaging the *D-14s* fell to the *Miranda*, *Saratoga*, *Zephyr* and *Grozny*. With designs that emphasized survivability and heavy firepower, they were among the most capable frigate-type vessels in service. Gates himself led the attack on the *D-18s* in the *Merrimac*, flanked by the *Sussex* and *Concord* while the *Federation* and *Minsk* engaged the lone *D-10*.

As the Starfleet fighters established superiority and took out the gunboats, fighters and various attack craft, squadrons gradually turned their attention to the larger *D-14s* that scarcely had enough firepower to engage other starships one-on-one, let alone deal with small craft. Gates, having built up invaluable experience against the Klingons was mercurial in his approach to engaging Captain Kargon and his *D-18*, the *Marauder*. Rather than target vital systems like the primary reactor or shield generators, he used the *Merrimac* to take out *Marauder's* engines, sensors and weapons, giving specific orders that the ship was **not** to be destroyed, but left to languish. Leaving Kargon 'blind, deaf and dumb' as it were rather than granting him a glorious death in combat, was a great humiliation that sent a clear signal. In the end, aside from the loss of 4 fighters and moderate damage to *Concord* and *Grozny*, the engagement was a clear victory, with Kargon's force destroyed, himself left to languish on the battlefield alone and humiliated.

After returning to Starbase 47, Melekh underwent a more extensive and thorough interrogation. There, after some 'effort', he revealed once more that the Klingons' ultimate goal, that which prompted the whole effort in the first place, was to keep Starfleet and the Federation from discovering the existence of the Kinshaya, a mysterious and powerful race that occupied space on the far side of the Empire. After observing Federation relations with the Kzinti and then coming into possession of data related to **Operation Vanguard** (involving Starfleet and the Shedai), the majority of the High Council were quite leery at the Federation making contact with the Kinshaya and thus, up-ending the whole astro-political order.

Of more concern for Gates and Starfleet however was the prospect of long-term damage to Starfleet's intelligence apparatus and Federation security as a whole. Several disturbing issues arose, including another leak by or possible collusion on the part of now rouge analyst Christina Brady (who was still at large) and the possibility that a number of foreign agents were still operating inside Starfleet. Only time would seem to tell if there was any damage and how severe it would be.

The un-official operation by Starfleet at Marram IX would unfortunately go on to set the tone for relations with the Klingons for the remainder of the decade. Captain Kargon's humiliation by Gates and the *Merrimac* cemented his now 'dishonorable' position within the IKDF hierarchy and had consigned him to duty along the frontier for what would be the remainder of his career. Still wielding sizeable influence though, he launched a merciless campaign against Federation and civilian merchant shipping known as the 'Tal Taan Offensive' beginning the following year, in 2283. The bane of numerous perimeter action squadrons, who always seemed to be one step behind, Kargon finally overplayed his hand in the infamous 'Kargon Incident'.

Kargon, in the repaired *Marauder*, along with 5 other *D-18s*, launched an assault on Starbase 24. Responding was the *Kongo* (CH 1710) along with the *Loknar II* class *Halk* (FF 2742) and *Rome* (FF 2726). On approach, *Kongo's* sensors detected only 3 ships—1 severely damaged and 2 more moderately damaged drifting just outside of the Starbase's weapons range. While the *Kongo* closed on the virtually dead ship, its Captain ordered the *Halk* and *Rome* to close on the 2 in better condition and demand their surrender. As the *Kongo* continued to close on its target, 3 more *D-18s* decloaked and the supposedly 'dead' ship came back to life. A clever trap, the self-destruct sequence of the first vessel activated too quickly for the

Kongo to escape, the resulting explosion ripping her starboard warp nacelle from the hull, debris damaging her port nacelle beyond repair. Before her crew could even react, the 3 other D-18s opened fire and sealed her fate. *Halk* was destroyed in the same manner while *Rome* stood her ground and inflicted as much damage as possible before the KDF's superior numbers won out.

In response, a special rapid-reaction force was formed with the singular mission of tracking down and destroying Kargon and his forces. Serving as the centerpiece, the *Lexington* (CH 1703) was joined by the *Akula II* class *Ohio* (DD 290) as well as the *Abbe* class *Proxima* (DH 5317/Std) and *Defiance* (DH 5321/SWACS). Rounding things out were the *Casablanca* class *Gambier Bay* (CVL 1886) and *Brandenburg* (CVL 1885). This combination of technological sophistication and sheer firepower was one that the Klingons could not match, especially with a design that was nearly 3 decades old. After 6 months of fruitless searching, Starfleet elected to up the ante and began using merchant convoys as bait, sending them on runs perilously close to the Neutral Zone. The tactic met with limited initial success, claiming a destroyer here and a frigate there, but it took several more weeks before Kargon finally pounced. Emerging in the *Marauder*, he was flanked by two additional D-18s, two D-14s and 4 D-11/B'Rel class Birds of Prey. *Gambier Bay* and *Brandenburg*, both loaded out with the formidable *Yellowjacket* class Assault Fighter and featuring the same combat capabilities as *Lexington* immediately charged forward and engaged the Birds of Prey with almost Klingon levels of bloodlust. The *Ohio* and *Defiance* followed the carrier commanders' initiative and engaged the D-14s while the *Lexington* engaged the *Marauder*, with *Proxima*'s 8 torpedo launchers keeping her consorts occupied.

The key to this engagement was *Ohio*. As was often the case in the Four Years War, Starfleet forces had a tactical edge, but the Klingons' heavy disruptors were powerful enough to make them potential spoilers. Ensuring that they could take full advantage of their strengths, electronic warfare was essential to disrupt the Klingons' situational awareness. Here, *Ohio* maintained continual sensor jamming, making Kargon's men fly nearly blind and target their weapons manually while at the same time scrambling the tracking/homing systems of their heavy weapons (photon torpedoes and drone missiles).

Unlike Captain Gates, *Lexington*'s commander William Pernial was not a combat veteran, but was still a reliable 'straight-shooter' who was known to pull no punches. Closing to point blank range, he ordered his tactical officer to engage all three D-18s at once. *Lexington*'s port and starboard phaser banks fired continuously, forcing *Marauder*'s escorts to veer off, where they became ripe targets for *Gambier Bay* and *Brandenburg* (once the Birds of Prey were destroyed), while her torpedo launchers were trained solely on *Marauder*, pounding her engines and weapons emplacements. The battle was hard fought and bloody, the *Defiance* temporarily losing her impulse drive, while *Gambier Bay*'s port nacelle was disabled and *Ohio*'s communications array was knocked out. The *Lexington* though managed to escape unscathed, overpowering and ultimately destroying the *Marauder* and putting an end to Captain Kargon's reign of destruction.

While *Kongo* herself was avenged, she unfortunately, would not be the only *Enterprise* class Heavy Cruiser to be lost in the line of duty. The *Enterprise* herself had been retired from active duty on stardate 7839.15 (23 January 2280) and reassigned to Starfleet Academy as a training vessel. Serving faithfully in the role for 4 years, she had seen hundreds if not thousands of cadets put through their paces.

On stardate 8130.8 (16 November 2284), she embarked on yet another routine training cruise, under the supervision of Admiral Kirk. Unbeknownst to Kirk or his senior staff, the USS *Reliant* (FH 1864) had been hijacked the previous day in the Ceti Alpha system. Under the command of Captain Clark Terrell, the *Miranda* class starship was carrying out a routine survey of what it thought was Ceti Alpha VI in support of *Project Genesis* led by Dr. Carol Marcus. The roots of this project went all the way back to **Operation Vanguard** and the discoveries that Marcus made regarding the Shedai and the Taurus Meta-Genome. Terrell, former XO of the USS *Sagittarius*, was unaware of this connection, nor was he aware that the planet the *Reliant* was orbiting was actually Ceti Alpha V. Beaming down to the surface, he and Commander Pavel Chekov discovered the wreckage of the SS *Botany Bay* and were soon captured by Khan Noonien Singh and his followers. After infecting the pair with ceti eels and learning why they were there, Khan took control of the *Reliant*, intending to steal the Genesis Device and exact revenge on Admiral Kirk for marooning him there some 17 years prior (stardate 3141.9 – 22 October 2267).

To do so, he had Chekov transmit a message to Marcus aboard Space Station Regula One, informing her that Ceti Alpha VI had checked out and that the *Reliant* would soon be taking possession of the Genesis Device for testing on the orders of Admiral Kirk. Khan knew full well this would provoke a reaction in Marcus, who immediately contacted the *Enterprise* and angrily demanded an explanation from Kirk. Kirk, knowing next to nothing about the project adamantly denied giving such an order and after informing Starfleet Command, was ordered to investigate. While en route to Regula One, the *Enterprise* was intercepted by the *Reliant*. Kirk, finding the situation unusual, called for Yellow Alert but didn't order shields raised. Taking advantage of this momentary indecision, Khan ordered the *Reliant*'s shields raised and for *Enterprise* to be targeted. These measures were immediately detected, but before the *Enterprise* could react, *Reliant* opened fire, knocking her main energizer and warp core offline. With the *Enterprise* all but crippled, Kirk accessed *Reliant*'s command console, using her prefix code to lower her shields, allowing the *Enterprise* to effectively return fire and drive off the *Reliant*.

Arriving at Regula One while effecting repairs, *Enterprise* personnel found the many of the station's crew brutally murdered, the databanks empty and no trace of the Genesis Device itself. The only lead they had to go on was one of the station's transporters, still activated with coordinates that pointed to the deserted Regula asteroid. There, a landing party located survivors including Drs. Carol and David Marcus as well as the Genesis Device. David Marcus as well as several scientists briefly overpowered Kirk and the rest of his landing party, initially believing that they killed the remaining crewmembers on Regula One and had come to steal Genesis. The tables were turned however when Captain Terrell and Commander Chekov (recovered from the station) pulled their phasers and trained them on the group. Directed by Khan to kill Kirk and recover the device, they instead succumbed to the effects of the ceti eel, Terrell turning his phaser on himself and committing suicide and Chekov passing out, the eel emerging from his ear as his collapsed.

With this momentary crisis averted, the *Enterprise* and the *Reliant* (now in possession of the device) engaged in a sharp 'cat-and-mouse' dance, chasing each other around the Class D planetoid, before the former took off for the nearby Mutara Nebula. Here, the dense cloud of gasses and dust would drastically reduce situational awareness (scrambling sensors, lowering visibility) as well as make the use of deflector shields nearly useless. Each ship initially came close to scoring a hit on the other before a near-collision brought them close enough for effective combat. *Reliant* struck first, destroying *Enterprise*'s port torpedo launcher, before *Enterprise* returned fire at *Reliant*'s bridge—causing an explosion that killed several of Khan's followers.

Main power on *Enterprise* had been functioning intermittently and soon went out again. As radiation began seeping out of the dilithium reactor compartment and into engineering, Commander Scott was forced to take the mains offline right before he and his crew were rendered unconscious. She managed to gain the upper hand on *Reliant*, approaching from astern, destroying her weapons pod, port nacelle and crippling the ship. In a vain effort to gain revenge and kill Kirk, Khan activated the Genesis Device. The *Enterprise* though managed to escape the shockwave by the thinnest of margins, thanks to the sacrifice of Captain Spock. Incapacitating Dr. McCoy and taking the gloves from Scott's radiation suit, he entered the compartment and managed to repair the main reactor—absorbing lethal amounts of radiation in the process.

With the nebula now gone and a new planet rapidly forming, the Vulcan's body was launched in a torpedo casing into the atmosphere of the newborn 'Genesis Planet'. Thereafter, the *Enterprise* departed for Ceti Alpha V to recover the *Reliant*'s surviving crew members (marooned after the ship was initially hijacked) and transport them to Starbase 11. There, the majority of her trainee crew disembarked along with Lieutenant Saavik and David Marcus, who would study the Genesis Planet aboard the USS *Grissom* (ST 683). After a brief stay, the *Enterprise* continued on to Earth, arriving on stardate 8210.3.

Once home, the officers and crew were inspected by Star Admiral Morrow. Scott, after being informed of his promotion to Captain and reassignment to *Excelsior*, stated his preference to remain at his current post. Morrow then informed him that instead of being repaired and returned to service, the *Enterprise* was to be decommissioned. Personnel were also informed that pending legislation by the Federation Council, all mention of and travel to Genesis was restricted. With the need to return made evident by the fact that Captain Spock's katra was held within the mind of Dr. McCoy, Kirk unsuccessfully sought permission from Morrow to take the *Enterprise* back on a recovery mission, but was rebuffed. Therefore, the Admiral elected to 'steal' his ship and go anyways.

Making such a venture possible was work performed by Scott on their return voyage. Extensively modifying the Duotronic III computer system, he had set up an automation center that slaved control of all non-essential systems to the main computer, allowing the ship to be operated with a minimal compliment. Sabotage of the *Excelsior*'s computer would prevent her crew from engaging, let alone controlling her transwarp drive, eliminating outside interference. While escaping Earth and setting off on the long voyage proved easy enough, what Kirk and his friends didn't know was that while at Genesis, the *Grissom* had been destroyed by a Klingon Bird of Prey (initially seeking to capture it) leaving both Saavik and Dr. Marcus stranded on the surface.

A landing party captured the pair along with the regenerated Captain Spock while their ship above remained cloaked. As the *Enterprise* arrived in system and entered orbit, the Klingons attempted an attack, but the still-wounded starship was ready and quickly fired off a pair of photon torpedoes. The automation center was not programmed with combat in mind however and quickly overloaded. Unable to activate deflector shields, the *Enterprise* was left vulnerable and rendered a useless hulk after the Bird of Prey returned fire and knocked out the automation center. Now engaged in a tense stand-off, Kirk tried to bluff his way out of the confrontation, but Kruge called his bluff, ordering the execution of one of the prisoners as a sign of his resolve. When one of the Klingons unsheathed his d'k'tahg and moved to kill Saavik, he was rushed by Marcus, but managed to overpower and kill him.

Angered and highly despondent at the death of his son, Admiral Kirk agreed to Kruge's demand for complete surrender. Before beaming to the surface however, he, Captain Scott and Commander Chekov activated the auto-destruct sequence. Boarding the ship, the bulk of Kruge's men were puzzled when they found it entirely deserted. Arriving on the bridge, they were alerted to the computer countdown, but before they could ascertain what was going on, the countdown ended and the *Enterprise* was destroyed. Once on the surface, the remaining Klingons were overpowered, but shortly thereafter, Kruge beamed down and held them at gunpoint. Saavik and the others were soon beamed aboard the Bird of

Prey as Kruge unsuccessfully tried to obtain the secrets of Genesis from Kirk. The attempt was unsuccessful and soon degenerated into an all-out brawl as the planet slowly destroyed itself. Ultimately, Kirk overpowered Kruge and kicked him off the side of a cliff, sending him plunging into a pit of lava far below.

Thereafter, the *Enterprise* crew undertook a laborious 9-month journey to Vulcan (9 months, 10 days) where Spock's katra was returned to his body in the *fal-tor-pan*. After a further three months of refitting, they and Spock elected to return to Earth in their captured ship (now renamed the *HMS Bounty*) to atone for their actions. Returning though, put them right in the middle of the so-called 'Whalesong Crisis'.

On stardate 8390.0, an immense probe of unknown origin was detected by the *Miranda* class *Saratoga* (FH 1887) traveling near the Klingon Neutral Zone and on a course for Earth. Transmitting a powerful signal, it rendered every starship and space station it passed completely powerless. Not just the *Saratoga*, but the *Shepard* (AH 898) and *Yorktown* (CH 1704) were also disabled, suffering much greater damage. The former was a medical frigate on its way back to Earth, transporting samples of the deadly Vegan-D virus for study at Starfleet Medical. After losing power, backups failed to sustain the bio-sterilization systems, causing the virus to be released—infesting the entire crew and killing 15. The latter had just completed a tour along the Klingon border and was on its way back for uprating when it was disabled. While her chief engineer attempted to deploy a solar sail to harness and utilize radiation from a nearby sun, non-essential personnel were given powerful sedatives to slow consumption of life support reserves.

The probe, which communicated via whalesong had at one point in its travels, made contact with Earth's Humpback Whales and was attempting to re-establish contact. Not knowing that they had been driven to extinction two centuries prior, it received no response and began ravaging the atmosphere, blocking out the sun and vaporizing the oceans. Knowing that the only way to answer the probe was to find one or more specimens that could answer the call, the solution devised by Admiral Kirk and his crew involved traveling back in time 300 years. In the San Francisco of 1986, they did indeed find two humpbacks, however the time travel's residual effects on the Bird of Prey necessitated the regeneration of her dilithium crystals. Through various acts of ingenuity, this issue was overcome and the crew returned with the whales to Earth of their time.

Certain destruction may have been averted, but the damage was done. Life support failure claimed the life of *Yorktown* Captain Randolph and a third of his crew (the other two-thirds surviving inside stasis capsules) while the crew of the *Shepard* was quickly saved from the effects of the Vegan-D virus, but unable to return to their ship for nearly a month while its environmental systems were repaired and overhauled. The unexpected and untimely destruction of the *Enterprise*, combined with the loss of Captain Randolph and important personnel led Starfleet to strike *Yorktown* from the official vessel register and rename her *Enterprise*, with an '-A' suffix added on to her registry. After a lengthy internal debate, the Federation Council opted against formally punishing Kirk and his crew for their actions in stealing the *Enterprise*, instead, censuring Kirk himself and demoting him three grades to Captain. In recognition for their efforts in once again 'saving civilization as we know it.....', the council placed the second *Enterprise* in their charge, commissioning taking place on stardate 8442.5.

The uprating of *Yorktown* that was interrupted by the alien probe was resumed following her re-commissioning as *Enterprise* and the probe's departure. A wide-ranging program that was mostly evolutionary in nature, it represented an attempt by the ASDB to exert greater influence over the development primary systems (computer, propulsion etc) that lay at the heart of every Federation starship. The advent of the Linear Warp era and the rapid acceleration of the Federation's technological development had transformed its starships into not only highly capable, but highly complex tools. Such capability came at the expense of system expansion/adaptability, upgrading, maintenance and general ease of use.

With no system was this more evident than computers. Propulsion—arguably the most significant development—had advanced radically, but still just slow enough for designers and engineers to keep their knowledgebase current. Daystrom Datatronics' Duotronic III system, in use aboard the *Enterprise* class, was designed and delivered in unusually record time, with the idea that further testing and integration work would be completed during shakedown trials. With comparatively little time for familiarization, engineers had little way of knowing the system they were installing came with some very sharp costs, namely an incredibly steep learning curve and astonishingly little flexibility. In a damning indictment of Daystrom's work on the Duotronic III, a Starfleet official participating in the inquiry into the loss of the *Enterprise* made the suggestion that the ship might not have been lost had her computer been flexible enough to support Commander Montgomery Scott's slightly unorthodox automation control system (nevermind the fact that Starfleet's procurement policies & practices at this point were a bureaucratic nightmare).

As could be expected from a contractor like Daystrom, they and the ASDB were already hard at work on the Duotronic IV system. Built around a comparatively open architecture and featuring a quadruple increase in processing power, Duotronic IV was a radical reworking designed to handle the complex computations required for the exotic Transwarp Drive System that was to propel *Excelsior*. The infamous failure of the Transwarp Development Project and *Excelsior*'s shift back to conventional linear drive though, left Starfleet with a computer system then that was almost too advanced (its ships having little chance of ever fully utilizing its capabilities). Following a partial code re-write and then software reprogramming to make it compatible with conventional warp propulsion systems, the Duotronic IV was put through a battery of extensive tests and soon certified for service. Following a

lengthy period in which Starfleet Command and the ASDB observed the system's in-service performance, the Admiralty ordered its integration into the current uprating program, officially designated *Enterprise II*.

Perhaps the biggest upgrade aside from the computer system, was a completely redesigned bridge layout. While the physical dimensions remained the same, the two turbolifts were moved further apart and additional stations were added, giving the bridge a more open, spacious feel. The gravity control, internal security and damage control stations were replaced by an additional tactical (Tactical II) and an enlarged engineering station (Main Engineering). An additional dedicated station was added to monitor warp and impulse propulsion systems (Propulsion) while two new stations were added to support mission-specific operations (Mission Ops I & II). In a marked change that signified evolutionary, rather than technological progress, nearly all tactile controls were replaced by smooth, all-touch interfaces. This basic design along with the control changes heavily influenced the bridge design of later *Excelsior* class ships while the number of stations would play a role in future bridge designs nearly a century later.

Continuing with the 'high-low' concept, Starfleet elected to uprate only ships of the *Enterprise* class to this new standard, making a notable exception for the remaining 4 examples of the *Endeavor* class (*Jupiter*, *Qundar*, *Androcus*, *Mondoloy*) that had long since outlived their usefulness as technological/engineering testbeds. Work began one month after the commissioning of *Enterprise* and took place entirely within the Sol system (San Francisco, Boston, Portsmouth and Yokohama Yards at Earth, Copernicus Yards at Luna and Utopia Planitia Yards at Mars).

Enterprise's shakedown however lasted little less than a month. On stardate 8454.1 (20 September 2286), the Galactic Army of Light attacked the only settlement on Nimbus III—Paradise City—and captured the Federation, Romulan and Klingon consuls. The so-called 'army' consisted of a large number of disaffected settlers—mainly petty criminals and other malcontents—led by a Vulcan named Sybok. Exiled due to his unconventional beliefs, he developed highly potent telepathic powers and used them to exercise control over his followers. His ultimate goal was to travel to the mythical paradise known to Vulcans as 'Sha Ka Ree', but to do so, he needed a starship. Assuming correctly that his capture of the settlement and three diplomats would provoke a response, the *Enterprise* soon arrived at the planet.

Still working out shakedown problems—that included disabled transporters—personnel and security forces landed on the planet via shuttlecraft. Led by a landing party of Captain Kirk, Captain Spock and Dr. McCoy, they met the ragged band of fighters in Paradise City head on, clearing the settlement of many. Upon entering the cantina, the consuls pulled their (illegal) weapons on their would-be rescuers. With the officers captured, the rest of the rescue party quickly capitulated and Sybok was now one step away from taking control of the *Enterprise*.

Concurrent to all this, the IKS *Okrona* had received orders to proceed to Nimbus III and recover the Klingon consul, General Koord. Making this situation especially dangerous for the *Enterprise*, the commander of the *Okrona* was K'laa. The youngest officer to achieve that rank in the IKDF, K'laa was well aware general opinion throughout the higher echelons of the officer corps regarded him as a gifted gunner but foolish and incompetent when it came to command. He therefore was pushed to prove himself, figuring that a defeat of the legendary Kirk would silence his critics. Approaching the area under cloak, the bird of prey first targeted *Enterprise* before bearing down on the shuttle. Having detected the Klingon ship's approach, the *Enterprise* had raised her shields but lowered them just long enough for the returning shuttle to execute an emergency landing. Recovering the shuttle, they escaped mere seconds before the Klingons opened fire.

Briefly detained in their own brig, Kirk, Spock and Dr. McCoy soon escaped, transmitting a distress call that was intercepted by the *Okrona*. They were eventually confronted by Sybok who was concerned less about the fact that they were now free and more about his ultimate goal of reaching Sha Ka Ree. After witnessing a display in which Sybok exposed long suppressed pains of Spock and McCoy, Kirk realized any further resistance was useless and reluctantly continued the voyage. Successfully penetrating the Great Barrier, the *Enterprise* arrived in orbit of an uninhabited planet and for a period, it appeared as if Sybok had indeed found Sha Ka Ree.

With the transporters still inoperative, Kirk, Spock and McCoy once again utilized a shuttle to reach the surface. Together with Sybok, they eventually encountered the entity thought to be 'God'. When 'God' did not recognize Kirk, it very quickly became apparent that this was merely a malevolent entity that had manipulated Sybok in order to gain freedom from the confines of the planet. With the dream he had devoted so much of his life to chasing now shattered and the spectre of almost certain death standing over him, Sybok sacrificed himself on the altar of his 'God'. This along with a photon torpedo launched from *Enterprise* opened a window for Kirk, Spock and McCoy to escape. Retreating to their shuttle, Kirk contacted Captain Scott, who was able to restore partial transporter power and beam up Spock and McCoy. Before he could beam up Kirk however, the *Okrona* arrived in orbit and opened fire, disabling the transporter once again.

When K'laa delivered an ultimatum and demanded that Kirk be handed over, Spock managed to convince Korrd to intervene. Beaming aboard the *Okrona*, the General pulled rank and soon had Spock beamed aboard as well. Entering the planet's atmosphere, the bird of prey fired off a disruptor salvo and successfully destroyed the entity. Kirk was beamed aboard thereafter, under the impression he was being captured, but was surprised to find his first officer in the gunner's chair and also to receive an apology from his Klingon adversary. With the crisis averted, Sybok's former followers were returned to the planet, repairs were made to the shuttlecraft *Copernicus* (still on the surface) and following its recovery, the *Enterprise* departed.

Tragically, the loss of another member of the class would go on to mark the end of one chapter in its history and the beginning of another. The failure of **Operation Dixie** followed by the 'Tal Taan Offensive' (of which the infamous 'Kargon Incident' was a part) brought Federation-Klingon relations to a new low where cross-border 'incidents' & isolated 'skirmishes' occurred in a tit-for-tat pattern, causing many in the Admiralty to fear war was imminent. Notable was the chain of events that began with the Kargon Incident and the destruction of the *Kongo*. Though Kargon and his forces were eventually tracked down and destroyed, Starfleet Command concluded that unless this was followed up with another swift victory, the IKDF would take advantage of this perceived weakness and become even bolder in their actions. Their response was to capture the *D-8/K'Tinga* class *L'ktja* that the *Hood* had been monitoring for several weeks near Takret. The first example of the class to be captured by Starfleet, it was an intelligence and propaganda coup of the highest order. Strangely enough, over the next six months, no demands for its return were received.

In retrospect though, this could be considered an 'acceptable loss', for the IDKF had an equally fearsome warship to unleash. Designated *D-12/K'Teremny*, this heavy destroyer—the presumed successor to the *D-18/Lara'atan* class—had been known to Starfleet Intelligence and others in the intelligence community since at least 2279. A somewhat distant cousin of *K'Tinga*, *K'Teremny* maintained the same basic design, but was highly optimized in order to present a lower sensor profile. This, incredible agility (nearly equaling that of a Starfighter) and an armament comparable to *K'Tinga* made it quite deadly in the hands of a skilled commander.

For a little more than a month, Starfleet Intelligence had intercepted scattered comm traffic and other information regarding possible offensive action somewhere near the Taurus Constellation. Containing the densely populated Aldebaran star system as well as a spate of other, smaller systems, it was of little strategic value. Just one sector away however, lay Starbase 2. A massive *Ournal* class Space Station, only a fleet of immense size and power would have any chance at destroying it. The psychological value of a successful raid however, would cause lasting ripples from the outer rim all the way back to the core worlds. Standing between the Neutral Zone and these targets was the *Hood* along with the destroyers *Ajax* (DD 547) and *Moltke* (DD 4417). Also in the area, tracking them under cloak from inside the Neutral Zone, was the *K'Teremny* class *Q'rish* and *F-5/Kuve* (refit) class *Qu'Hegh*.

With her upgraded sensors, the *Hood* was aware that Klingon ships were in the area, but was unable to make any more specific determinations until they decloaked and moved out of the neutral zone, into Federation space. Taking the initiative, the *Hood* quickly moved to engage, launching a torpedo barrage at *Q'rish* while attempting to pin down *Qu'Hegh* with a full phaser spread. Given the agility displayed by *Q'rish* early on, the *Hood* attempted to close distance as quickly as possible so as to maximize the effectiveness of her photon torpedoes. Despite being engaged by both *Ajax* and *Moltke*, *Qu'Hegh* initially ignored them and pounded *Hood* with alternating torpedo and disruptor fire.

Commodore Lyle Craig who was commanding the *Hood*, ordered the *Moltke* to maneuver around and attempt to flank *Q'rish* while keeping the *Ajax* close, in an attempt to divide the Klingons' fire. This however was the beginning of the end for the Starfleet ships. While carrying out the Commodore's orders, the *Moltke* was outmaneuvered by *Q'rish* which made a snap turn and inflicted direct torpedo hits on her nacelle pylons and impulse engines, cutting her maneuverability and striking power sharply. The *Hood* attempted to nullify this advantage by targeting her enemy's own impulse engines, but continued to be outmaneuvered while *Qu'Hegh* kept *Ajax* distracted. *Q'rish* then maneuvered back around and struck *Hood's* deflector dish, port nacelle and bridge repeatedly before taking out her torpedo launchers and targeting her engineering section. Outmaneuvered and off balance, the hapless *Hood* could do little aside from attempting to slow *Q'rish* down with sustained phaser fire. One by one, her sensors, warp engines and impulse engines were taken out before a disruptor barrage finished her off. The resulting explosion caused moderate damage to *Ajax* that quickly became the next target while *Moltke* had regained a portion of her capabilities and retaliated by destroying *Qu'Hegh* with photon torpedoes. Even with her escort eliminated, the two destroyers (of the *Saladin II* and *Larson II* classes respectively) still stood a dismal chance against *Q'rish*, which easily broke through the former's deflector shields and manage to destroy her. *Moltke*, still in a damaged state, could not hope to defeat *Q'rish* in a one-on-one encounter and quickly withdrew. The heavy destroyer became the bane of Starfleet's perimeter action forces for a further three months before she was cornered and destroyed by a flotilla led by the new *Excelsior* class *Yorktown* (CH 2033).



Class	Enterprise	Mass	620,000 metric tons	Armament	6 Type VII Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser	Compliment	400		6 Type VII Phaser Emitters
Service	2271-2286				2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Number Active	0			Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 702,000 terajoules
Length	305m				Standard Duranium Double Hull
Beam	140m				
Height	75m				
Decks	23				





Class	Tikopai	Mass	206,000 metric tons	Armament	6 Type VII Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser				2 Type VII Phaser Emitters
		Compliment	440		2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Service	2275-2294			Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System
Number Active	0				total capacity 702,000 terajoules
Length	305m				
Beam	142m				Standard Duranium Double Hull
Height	71m				
Decks	18				





Class	Enterprise II	Mass	620,000 metric tons	Armament	6 Type VII Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser	Compliment	400		6 Type VII Phaser Emitters
Service Number	2286-2294			Defense Systems	2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Active	0				Standard Deflector Shield System
Length	305m				total capacity 702,000 terajoules
Beam	140m				
Height	75m				Standard Duranium Double Hull
Decks	23				



Part IV: 2287-2335

In the aftermath of the *Hood*'s destruction, cross-border incidents continued, but began to wane, both in number and intensity. The growing influence of Gorkon within the Klingon High Council introduced a much-needed dose of pragmatism that tempered much of the aggressiveness in the defense forces. Nevertheless, the IKDF maintained their modernization push, introducing the *Komo'Val* class Pocket Battleship, *voDleH/'Emperor'* class Dreadnought and *Suvwl'QeH* class Command Cruiser.

Starfleet on the other hand, pursued a seemingly contradictory policy of streamlining and consolidation, thinning out the number of dedicated 'specialty' classes, in favor of those with multi-mission capability or additional utility. *Constitution II*, *Tikopai* and *Enterprise II* had proven scientific and tactical capabilities that continued to give them an edge over their contemporaries in other navies. *Excelsior* according to all accounts, was on track to exceed them by a comfortable margin as well. The same could not be said though for the 4 separate Dreadnought classes (*Federation II*, *Ascension*, *Star League*, *Conquest*) fielded as well as a handful of various 'one-offs' (the *Daytona* class DD, *Valley Forge* class FH and *Souyz* class FT). To replace these Starfleet introduced the *Exeter* class Battlecruiser in 2288. It complimented *Excelsior* in the same way *Constitution II* complimented *Tikopai* and *Enterprise II*, featuring a basic scientific capability as well as a generous medical suite and large cargo capacity. It did however feature a larger armament, stronger shielding and more advanced electronic warfare systems.

The introduction of *Exeter* as well as the continued buildout of *Excelsior* gradually freed up *Constitution II* and *Enterprise II* class ships to take on more utilitarian and defensive/offensive roles. Of note though was the recovery of the *Republic* by the *Excalibur*. Under the command of Captain Richard Masterson, the ship was investigating the site of an ancient wreck near the Styx Rift in 2268 when it was infiltrated by blastoneurons, extremely invasive neural parasites that had previously wreaked havoc on the Federation colony of Deneva. The ship's science officer, being Edoan, was immune to the parasites and in order to prevent their spread, completely wiped the astrometric database, destroyed hardcopies containing any and all navigational information and then committed suicide.

When initially encountering the *Republic*, the *Excalibur* crew was surprised to find that their compatriots did not seem to have aged. Aside from some mild disorientation, they appeared to be in perfect condition that raised much suspicion. After explaining his situation, Masterson requested that *Excalibur* captain Michaela Harrari beam over with a landing party and a copy of their own astrometric database to aid in their return to Federation space. While initial scans read clear, Harrari erred on the side of caution and agreed to beam over while remaining non-committal about the data.

Beaming over, Captain Masterson was initially put off that the landing party didn't have it with them but quickly changed the subject and engaged the party in small talk. The first hint that something was amiss came when Masterson mentioned how his chief science officer locked herself in the computer core, wiped the astrometric database and committed suicide, leading to their present situation. Before anyone from the *Excalibur* could question this, he was summoned to the bridge and politely refused any accompaniment, instead directing his security chief to lead them on a tour. Further arousing suspicion were the empty corridors that greeted Harrari and her party as they ventured out of the transporter room and made their way to the computer core. Once there, the security chief allowed them to examine the main computer which assuaged them somewhat, but only briefly. A cursory examination of personnel logs from the senior staff as well as sensor records gave no indication that anything was amiss. The lack of any red flags just prior to the moment astrometric data was erased as well as mention of anything that would account for the absence of personnel throughout the ship heightened their suspicions which gradually began to focus on the *Republic*'s crew.

Not wanting to draw any suspicion back upon herself or those with her, Captain Harrari allowed the tour to continue, making off-hand remarks about the differences in uniforms and equipment as they made their way to the sickbay. Like the computer core, sickbay was deserted, but in immaculate condition. The security chief politely informed them that the chief medical officer was collecting a report in the biopsy lab and would be with them shortly before he himself left. After a few moments as they all conferred on the suspicious nature of the situation, they were attacked by flying parasites. The captain managed to quickly peel one from her face and then use her phaser to assist her medic and science officer. Quickly scanning the parasites, they soon learned these were the same as those that infected Deneva some 20 years prior. From there, it didn't take them long to surmise what must have happened, the peculiarities they had encountered suddenly starting to make sense. Unsure of how the surviving personnel would react when confronted, the party resorted to the only logical solution—seizing control of main engineering and modifying lighting throughout the ship to emit high-intensity ultraviolet (UV) light. Unfortunately, they were forced to kill 7 people—2 crewmen and an officer on their way below decks and then 3 more crewmen and an officer (the chief engineer) in engineering—but after carrying out the modifications and emitting a quick 30-second UV burst, the parasites were eradicated and the surviving personnel were saved.

Working with Captain Masterson and the *Republic* counterparts, personnel from *Excalibur* conducted a detailed investigation, combing through the *Republic*'s computer and personnel logs on a much more detailed level. On stardate 4644.95 (30 August 2268), the *Republic* entered orbit of BWCC98-IV, a desert-like world with no detectable population.

Beaming down, a landing party consisting of the captain, assistant science officer, chief engineer and chief medical officer did indeed find evidence of a starship crash on the surface. Investigating further, they determined that it had occurred some 600 years prior and that the ship itself was constructed by a race not yet encountered. Collecting various samples of the starship remnants and surrounding environment, they didn't discover anything of serious significance and prepared to depart the region and report back to Starfleet. Before beaming up, the landing party was infected by the blastoneurons and subsequently aided in their spread when they returned. Log entries from this point forward took on a different tone, becoming almost flippant when describing the actions of the chief science officer and showing evidence of widespread (and sloppy) tampering.

With a team from *Excalibur* aboard *Republic*, both ships proceeded to Starbase 2, where the *Republic* took on supplies and her surviving crewmembers were thoroughly examined before they proceeded back to Earth. There, in addition to a second medical exam, personnel underwent extensive debriefing while the *Republic* herself was examined by engineers from the ASDB. The crew checked out medically, no residual traces of the blastoneurons or other parasites found. While all were soon cleared for duty, they would have to wait to return to active duty. While en route to Earth, Starfleet Command made the decision to decommission the *Republic* (although the name would return in coming years) and instead transfer Masterson and his crew to a recently constructed *Excelsior* class ship, the *Galacta* (CH 2003).

Still, the question of how the parasites ended up on BWCC98-IV and whether they existed on any other planets was a vexing one for Starfleet Command. Initially, they were thought to have traveled from somewhere in the Beta Portolan system to Levinus V, Theta Cygni XII and by 2265, Ingraham B. They then made their way to Deneva, but were eradicated by the starship *Enterprise* in 2267. The Styx Rift region (which encompassed the aforementioned planet) though was nearly 96 light years away, near the Klingon Neutral Zone. Though the area was remote and sparsely populated, the threat posed was severe enough for Starfleet to redeploy almost 40 starships (15 *Tikopai*, 9 *Enterprise II*, 5 *Excelsior* class CHs; 7 *Oberth* class STs) to search 8 systems covering some 66 light years. 6 months went by however and despite an incredible network of sensor drones deployed, no further trace of the parasites was found, leaving their origin as well as the rest of the questions surrounding the *Republic* still shrouded in mystery.

Mysteries of an entirely different nature awaited the crews of the *Atlantis* (CH 1786), *Endeavor* and *Excelsior* class *Bismarck* (CH 2010) as they set out on an expedition to explore the volatile region known as the Badlands. First encountered by the *Yorkshire* (FF 2715) in 2263, the area was later visited by the *Enterprise* in 2268, but that planned exploration mission was thwarted by the activities of a Romulan Bird of Prey. What little was known—mostly revolving around the presence of 3 class-M planets—was more than enough to pique Starfleet's interests. Before the planets could be studied though, the numerous gravitational anomalies needed to be mapped out. Complicating that effort were the extremely violent and unpredictable plasma storms. These varied greatly in intensity, but at their strongest, were capable of inflicting severe damage to even the most well defended ships. Only *Bismarck* had the deflector capacity needed to undertake sustained operations in the area, prompting Starfleet and the ASDB to plan one final upgrade program that would unify 56 ships in 3 different sub-types (33 *Tikopai*, 12 *Constitution II*, 11 *Enterprise II*) in 1 single class. With planned improvements also intended to make their way into starships of the *Constellation* class at a later date, the roadmap for the fleet's exploratory assets looked quite safe.

As could be expected in a bureaucracy of this size, there were those throughout the Federation Council who debated the need for such a program. The relative success of the *Excelsior* class thus far and the promise of the *Exeter* class in consolidating major defensive/offensive assets (mainly strike cruisers and dreadnoughts) made many question the need to maintain a sizeable heavy cruiser force when *Constellation* combined qualities of *Tikopai* (scientific/research) and *Enterprise II* (tactical) into a single package. The changing astro-political situation (warming relations with the Klingons primarily) also fueled this debate.

While bureaucrats kept themselves busy debating matters of dubious importance, events were unfolding that would dramatically change the way the Federation approached its own security. In 2270, Klingon forces forcibly annexed Krios Prime and subjugated the population. As with many inhabited worlds the Klingons conquered, not all of the population was not so willing to acquiesce to their new overlords and by 2287, local resistance had coalesced into a pseudo-paramilitary force known as 'the Thorn'. Not exactly a Federation problem, Starfleet nevertheless stood up the 12th Perimeter Action Squadron at Archanis IV, transformed the Special Operations Group (SOC) into the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and in 2290, began the *Odyssey Dawn* anti-terrorism exercises with the 1st Marine Raider Regiment.

Two and a half years later, on stardate 9521.6 (22 October 2292), the Klingon moon of Praxis was destroyed in a massive explosion. A major industrial center and a key source of energy production, overmining and insufficient safety precautions were initially believed to be the cause. Severe ecological damage on Qo'nos resulted, toxic elements from Praxis' crust beginning to degrade the atmosphere and contaminate water supplies. It was estimated that if left unchecked, the damage would lead to the extinction of all higher-order lifeforms within a 50 earth-year timespan. Additionally, nearly a third of the population died as the result of xenocerium poisoning. These events dealt a serious blow to the Klingon military-industrial complex and with precious little resources to devote to recovery and reconstruction, their aggressive approach to foreign policy was rendered unsustainable.

Rather than risk making their position even worse by resorting to conflict to secure needed resources, Chancellor Gorkon immediately proposed beginning negotiations for a peace treaty that would bring with it a marked demilitarization. A solid, yet shrewd pragmatist, he had recognized the need for fundamental change for the better part of two decades. His views though, were not widely shared, let alone accepted among the High Council and political establishment and conservative factions from both sides worked together to undermine the process. On the Starfleet side, Star Admiral Lance Cartwright (who had succeeded Harold Morrow as Commanding Officer, Starfleet Command in early 2286) preferred that the Klingons remain weakened, thus leaving Starfleet in the position to dictate the terms of any treaty. On the Klingon side, Gorkon's chief of staff General Chang knew he could not depose or otherwise eliminate him without igniting a civil war, so a plan was formed to assassinate both Gorkon and Federation President Ra-ghoratreii. The Thorns acted as intermediaries, knowing that the war that would inevitably result would allow the Kriosians to finally break free of Klingon rule.

After Starfleet C-in-C William Smillie assigned the *Enterprise-A* to escort Gorkon's flagship *Kronos One* from the Neutral Zone to Earth, Cartwright re-assigned three trusted officers to carry out the Starfleet side of the plan, which included the actual assassinations. The Klingon contribution came in the form of the *IKS Dakronh*. Chang's personal command, it was fitted with a prototype cloaking device which permitted limited weapons use (of photon torpedoes principally) while the device was engaged. After the two ships had rendezvoused and gotten underway for Earth, Cartwright's chief conspirator, Lieutenant Valeris uploaded a falsified torpedo inventory log to the ship's databanks. When the *Dakronh* fired a pair of torpedoes and knocked out the gravity generators aboard *Kronos One*, operatives controlled by Valeris beamed aboard and shot a number of people, including Gorkon. In the ensuing chaos, the computer made it seem as if *Enterprise* had fired upon her Klingon counterpart and when Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy beamed aboard to ascertain the situation and offer assistance, they were promptly arrested.

Helping to implicate the pair was an excerpt from Kirk's personnel log, retrieved by Valeris and covertly passed to Chang. Given Kirk's service record and his experience dealing with the Klingons, removing him from the picture would remove the possibility of his uncovering the conspiracy and would almost certainly sideline the *Enterprise* in a subsequent conflict. After a swift show trial (during which the pair were valiantly defended by Colonel Worf against Chang, acting for the state), both Kirk and McCoy were sentenced to life imprisonment on the penal asteroid of Rura Penthe.

SFMC Col. Patrick West subsequently briefed President Ra-ghoratreii on a recovery plan codenamed "*Operation Retrieve*". It consisted of 8 ships (*Excelsior*, *Endeavour*, *Potemkin*, *Ahwanee/CH 2048*, *Emden/CH 1856* and *Eagle/CH 956*) launched from Starbase 24 that would undertake a direct incursion into Klingon space, land a Marine Raider squad (80 troops) and extricate the pair by military force. Naturally, the cautious Ra-ghoratreii dismissed the plan, fearing it would spark a larger conflict. In any event, it eventually proved unnecessary.

With the aid of a fellow prisoner, a shape-shifter known as Martia, Kirk and McCoy were able to escape while aboard the *Enterprise*, Spock and the rest of the senior staff disobeyed Starfleet orders to return to Earth and slowly peeled back the layers of the conspiracy. After recovering the captain and doctor, a forced mind-meld between Spock and Valeris revealed the identities of the main conspirators (Cartwright, Chang, Nanclus). The location of the peace conference, having been moved after Gorkon's assassination, was provided by the *Excelsior*.

Located within a large Klingon Imperial Guard base on the world of Khitomer, both starships were hard pressed to reach the planet (on the far side of Klingon space, near the Romulan border) in time to prevent the next assassination. Add to that, upon entering the system, they came under torpedo attack from *Dakronh*. *Enterprise* sustained significant damage, her shields collapsing and her hull being breached before a modified torpedo homed in on *Dakronh*'s impulse exhaust and revealed her location. Sustained torpedo barrages from both *Enterprise* and *Excelsior* eliminated Chang and *Dakronh* in short order, allowing personnel to beam down just in time. In this instance, Ra-ghoratreii's assassin was none other than Colonel West. Disguised as a Klingon and utilizing an augmented assault phaser, he narrowly missed executing the Federation President thanks to the quick intervention of Kirk. In the ensuing chaos after he took his shot, he was discovered and shot dead by Captain Scott.

Aside from this egregious interruption, the conference and its behind-the-scenes diplomacy would continue uninterrupted. Ambassador Nanclus was forcibly returned to Romulus while Admiral Cartwright and Lieutenant Valeris were both stripped of their rank, convicted of treason (along with conspiracy to commit capital murder in Valeris' case) and imprisoned—Valeris in the Starfleet stockade on Jaros II, Cartwright in an undisclosed location.

During a lengthy interrogation following his imprisonment, Cartwright revealed that Nanclus wasn't really an Ambassador, but an agent of the Tal'Shiar who had assumed that alias. Though the Romulans had turned his public show trial and execution into a gaudy spectacle, Cartwright strongly hinted that the man was still alive. It was the Romulans and their infamous intelligence apparatus that were responsible for the entire affair. Intelligence gathered during *Operation: 'Grey Ghost'* revealed that the Romulans became aware of the Klingon occupation of Krios Prime almost immediately in 2270, but didn't begin to take any substantive action until mid 2287. The Romulans held the Federation's technological and tactical capabilities in high regard and had general knowledge of advancements that were being made, reinforcing their decision to not confront Starfleet directly. Instead, they

elected to exploit weak points that by this time were common knowledge. Knowing that the collapse of the Klingon military-industrial complex would leave them vulnerable and that vulnerability would gradually get worse as time went on, the Tal'Shiar co-opted the Thorn for their own purposes and devised a plan to destroy the quantum reactors on Praxis. With the Klingons vulnerable, the stage would be set to exploit Starfleet's weakness—the hawks in power within the admiralty. This started off subtle and would not become readily apparent until after the Tal'Shiar's assassination plan was carried out and conflict had erupted.

Of course it didn't thankfully enough, but the mystery that still remained is how the Romulans had wormed their way into Starfleet in the first place. That was where Cartwright shed light on a vexing mystery that had gone on for nearly three decades. Serving as the chief interlocutor between the two sides was none other than Christina Brady, the UFP's most wanted fugitive. Following her leak to the FNS that became infamously known as the 'Cammel IV revelations', she stole a warp sled, a SW7 shuttlecraft and fled to Farius Prime. There she remained until late 2283, when she traveled across Federation space to Marram IX. Here, while living in the slowly-expanding colony, was where she was initially contacted by the Tal'Shiar. Believing that Starfleet had become dangerously immoral and that conflict would be the only way to return a sense of order to the astro-political landscape, she offered to hand over her master file of data on Project Genesis, but instead was directed to sell it. In what would prove to be a colossal mistake, the Tal'Shiar did not perform any due diligence on any prospective 'customers', thus allowing the Genesis data to fall into the hands of a smuggler working on behalf of a rogue agent of Klingon Imperial Intelligence. This actions of this agent (passing the data on to a renegade Klingon commander who was responsible for the destruction of the *Grissom* and murder of David Marcus) very nearly sparked the sort of conflict the Tal'Shiar was hoping to ignite, but interference on the part of Admiral Kirk and the *Enterprise* scuttled those plans.

Following this setback, she relocated to the word of Thalezra where the Tal'Shiar contacted her again in 2288. As her attitudes and opinions had not changed, Brady was amenable to again assisting the Tal'Shiar, though only after receiving stringent assurances that they would proceed with much more foresight. After reviewing their second plan, she contacted Admiral Cartwright—who she knew from back channel intelligence had sympathetic leanings—relayed its contents and instructed him to use his authority to help fast track the approval and appointment of a high-level Tal'Shiar operative as the Romulan Ambassador to the UFP. From there, the plan unfolded exactly as described and as far as Cartwright knew, Brady still remained on Thalezra.

After learning of Brady's location, MARSOC Major Darian Rischar faced something of a quandary. He was conducting the interrogation mostly to appease the curiosity of his superior, Lieutenant Colonel Marion McKenzie, whose doubts about Cartwright's veracity reflected the wider opinion of MARSOC and the SFMC in general. Nevertheless, given the stunning blows that Brady delivered to SFI as well as the department's epic failures with *Operation: 'Dixie'* and *Project Minuteman*, there was no way to conclusively know how far up the ineptitude and corruption went (possibly extending up into the Federation Security Council).

Officially, details regarding Brady and her activities were completely scrubbed after she went rogue in 2274 and no official file on her was known to exist. This made it all the more convenient for MARSOC to clean up the mess Starfleet Intelligence had let fester. After Rischar informed McKenzie, she escalated it directly to MARSOC CO Major General Shech Kushnin who signed an order to terminate Brady with extreme prejudice. This was carried out during an operation on stardate 9577.92 (17 February 2293) in an operation that remains highly classified to this day.

All conspiracies, political consternation and bureaucratic wrangling aside, once the wheels of justice had run their course, Starfleet was free to approve the ASDB's upgrade path for the remaining *Constitution* derived ships. With *Excelsior* firmly set as the technological baseline, they had developed separate refit plans for each of the three sub-classes currently in operation. Simple in concept, they involved replacement of existing components with those used in the *Excelsior* class or ones that were directly comparable. With the 11 existing *Enterprise II* class starships, this would be simple enough as the final design—codenamed *Potempkin*—deviated very little, at least from an external perspective. With the 33 *Tikopais*, things were more complicated. The work involved in replacing the bridge module and main sensor dome, removing the small craft hangar and bringing those deck sections back up to standard would be more complex and time consuming than constructing new primary hulls altogether, so new hull sections had to first be produced. Work on the 12 remaining *Constitution II*'s would prove to be the most arduous and time consuming of all. Not only were new primary hull sections needed, the torpedo deck had to be completely replaced (as *Potempkin* featured no aft-firing launcher) and the hangar bay required moderate renovations.

Individual issues like this aside, common features to all would include upgraded computer cores & accompanying ODN networks, upgraded deflector shield systems with *Excelsior*-type generators, Type VIII Phaser Banks and larger, more powerful M/AM reactor cores that fed new *LN-70* series warp nacelles (products of a unique partnership between Leeding Engines Ltd and Koeller UTI). The *Enterprise* herself would not share in these upgrades however. Following the battle at Khitomer, she returned to Earth where she was completely repaired, retired and transferred to the Starfleet Museum following the official stand-down of her senior staff. The storied name (with a '-B' registry suffix) was transferred to a modified, Block IA *Excelsior* on stardate 9515.5 (30 November 2293).

The first ships returned to service in early 2294, refits on the last ships completed by 2297, where they all joined a much more crowded field. On the high end, Starfleet's exploration efforts were continuing to be bolstered by the *Constellation* (production of which was near its end), *Excelsior* (who's production was just hitting its stride) and *Loknar II* (*Phobos* sub-class) classes, while on the low end, missions of a more general nature were absorbed by the *La Fayette* class Corvette, *Knox* and *Miranda* class Frigates and *Okinawa* class Light Cruiser. Additionally, at the turn of the century, rumors out of the ASDB began to circulate regarding the next-generation of starships. Launched in 2305, the *Renaissance* class proved to be every bit the technological wunderkind that the *Baton Rouge* class once was. Unlike its comparatively primitive forbearer though, *Renaissance* was built with and featured proven components and technologies that were much more amenable to series production.

With the proverbial writing on the wall, the starships that had seen the Federation through some of its most tumultuous years settled in to the quiet twilight of their lives. The last official mission undertaken by the class was in 2320. Spock, now an Ambassador with the Federation Diplomatic Corps, was summoned back to Talos IV by the Talosians. Given the contributions he made over the course of his career not to mention his own history with the planet, the Admiralty granted him a special dispensation to return. Arriving there via the *Atlantis*, he was greeted by a world quite unlike that the *Enterprise* had last visited some 53 years prior. Beaming down, he made contact with the Magistrate (previously known as the 'Keeper') who explained the reason for the summons. Fleet Captain Pike, who had remained on Talos IV and helped to restore the once desolate world, was dead. He died two years prior of natural causes and in keeping with his wishes, the Talosians cremated his body. The Magistrate further explained that before his death, Pike recorded a personal message for Spock, asking him to not only return his remains to Earth, but to present two petitions to the Federation Council on behalf of the Talosians: one requesting the repeal of Starfleet General Order 7 and another that made a formal request for UFP membership.

Following a state funeral for Pike, held at the Presidio complex in San Francisco, the Talosian petitions became the most hotly debated topics in the Federation Council (even moreso than the membership petition of the Kzinti in 2282). Their eventual approval and passage bolstered the legacy of a class that had proved pivotal not only in the development of the Federation, but in the development of the overall astro-political order. Incredibly enough, the *Potempkin* sub-class soldiered on in service among newer classes such as *Renaissance* and was still considered a front-line type at the time the *Ambassador* class was launched in 2325.

The spiritual successor to *Constitution*, *Ambassador* was to *Renaissance* what *Constitution* had been to *Baton Rouge* at the dawn of the 23rd Century. The *Enterprise* name would also live on with one of an eventual 22 total examples (CH 1701-C). With the *Excelsior* class now in service in significant numbers, *Renaissance* class production beginning to gain momentum and *Ambassador* just beginning its production run, the rationale for maintaining these starships as front line assets was gradually beginning to evaporate and disappeared entirely by 2335 when the vessels were removed from active duty and placed under the auspices of Starfleet's Reserve Forces Command.



Class	Potemkin	Mass	690,000 metric tons	Armament	8 Type VIII Phaser Banks
Classification	Heavy Cruiser	Compliment	400		6 Type VIII Phaser Emitters
Service	2294-2335				2 2 nd Class Torpedo Launchers
Number Active	0			Defense Systems	Standard Deflector Shield System total capacity 1,201,500 terajoules
Length	305m				Standard Duranium Double Hull
Beam	140m				
Height	75m				
Decks	23				



Bibliography/Annotations

****DISCLAIMER****

This is a work of pure fiction. As with everything else on my blog, this writing is from my own point of view. I'm working within a universe that is populated by material sourced back to CBS/Paramount Pictures and various other authors, designers and artists. This is **not** intended to be taken as the 'end-all-be-all' guide to the *Constitution* class and its descendants. No, it's merely the history of the class as I myself envision it and as such, I cherry pick from some sources, ignore others and weave it all together as I see fit.

Part I: 2220-65

The beginning part here, at least up until my description of the Klingon action at Caleb IV, is pretty cut and dried. I stuck to a rather generalized overview of how *Constitution* came into being, based largely in part, on ideas that Richard Mandel devised in Vol. 10 of his **Federation Spaceflight Chronology**. With the Battle of Donatu V, I break away somewhat (the *Republic* is still a *Baton Rouge* class ship at this point), before coming back and describing the *Bonhomme Richard* upgrade. Now just to be clear, I'm using the *Constitution*, *Bonhomme Richard* and *Achernar* names as a way to explain the differences in appearance of the *Enterprise* in “*The Cage*”, “*Where No Man Has Gone Before*” and the rest of **TOS** respectively. I don't have the firmest grasp though on some of the technology, so you'll have to excuse the canned/generic sounding descriptions of components like warp nacelles and such. The events of the Four Years War are, again, based on material I had written previously for a separate project. One modification to that though is the description of how the *Republic* and *Constellation* came to join the *Constitution* family. Non-canon sources have the *Republic* and *Constellation* originating as members of the *Baton Rouge* and *Horizon* classes. Since I already wrote up *Baton Rouge*, the *Republic*'s backstory works, but by not doing the *Horizon*, I needed to pick another class for *Constellation* and went with ‘*Columbia*’. I wrote them as having been uprated to *Bonhomme Richard* specs in 2245 and moved to the front lines to be used on an as-needed basis to placate the admirals who thought the class should've been utilized more prominently to begin with (the prevailing sentiment wanted *Constitution* to stay as far out of the war as possible).

Finally, this opening chapter is rounded out with succinct descriptions of *Achernar*—*Constitution* in its most recognizable form—and *Endeavor*—an interesting variant from ***Ships of the Star Fleet*** (credit for the original model/mesh going to ‘Lord Schtupp’)

Part II: 2265-72

This opens up with a rather concise summation of the *Vanguard* novel series. Given the uniqueness of the *Endeavor* sub-type, I thought it only fitting to have the *Endeavor* herself refitted to these specs while operating on the frontier. I then moved into familiar territory, touching on some of the major events in **TOS**, before using events of my favorite novel, Diane Carey's *Dreadnought!* to shift gears and touch on the ships that were lost.

From here, a brief discussion on technological advancement opens up discussion on future development of the class which is where I get to showcase some of the artwork I found on DeviantART. My usual source, ‘admiral-horton’, released a comparison chart that featured models from several artists sorted into a general chronological order. Aside from being my main inspiration for this whole project in the first place, he included a few designs that had never before seen in ortho form. The first was what I like to call a ‘neo-noir’ take on the **TMP** *Enterprise*—a wonderful meld of Andrew Probert's classic design and the re-do by Ryan Church featured in the ‘Abramsverse’. Created by ‘Madkoifish’, this is the most unconventional and as such, I've positioned it as the *Enterprise* class ‘design study’ intended to let the ASDB and others get their ideas down ‘on paper’ so to speak and explore conceptual design attributes, technologies and the like.

The next two were both takes of the aborted “*Phase II*” design. After going back and forth studying them, there were enough logical differences for me to include both. The first, originally done by ‘WileyCoyote’ I included as simply ‘*Phase II*’. It has the wider, flatter saucer, but other details like the torpedo launchers, deflector dish, hull/deflector grid detailing, hangar bay and warp nacelles are still relatively primitive. The second, originally done by ‘Andruil’ (and the one included in the above-mentioned chart), is my ‘*Phase II-A*’. The saucer

takes a step backward, being more voluminous in a nod to the **TOS**/'Class I era' aesthetic, but the design is more detailed otherwise, including the familiar 'aztec' detailing visible on the saucer, an integrated deflector dish, more detailed warp nacelles and an aft torpedo launcher.

That brings us to the dawn of the Linear Warp era. The way I've plotted this out, the first *Enterprise* class design study came out in 2267, *Phase II* in 2268 and *Phase II-A* in 2269. That third prototype would seem to present a way forward, but as I have it, by this time the *Belknap* class (which was considerably more advanced in design and engineering) had entered production. Wanting to include both *Constitution II* and *Enterprise*, I came up with a 'high-low' strategy that would make it plausible for both to exist while maintaining the same appearance and sharing many technologies/components/systems.

Therefore, in 2270, the 'low' part of that saw the *Constitution II* developed. Being a big fan of the *Constitution II* design (credit going to David John Nielsen and Aridas Sofia, also featured in ***Ships of the Star Fleet***), the model I saw by 'Starfox1701' isn't an exact match (featuring an aft torpedo launcher, secondary hull docking ports, more advanced deflector dish and hull detailing along with different nacelles), but it hits on enough key points (the more austere bridge module, lower sensor dome and hangar bay doors, simpler torpedo launchers and the subtle 'kink' in the nacelle pylons) to work for my purposes. Following that, I get to the *Enterprise* class that we all know and love. I chose not to go into too much detail with that and thus, tread over familiar ground, but instead explain how scientific capability factored in as the main differentiating factor between the two. *Constitution II* remained basic, carrying the capabilities present in *Achernar* forward with updates to computer/processing power, software and interface systems only. *Enterprise* on the other hand, expanded on her older forebearer's capabilities that were not only expanded, but all new/cutting edge.

To give both some historical significance, I relied on the Kzinti Incursion and the events of ***The Motion Picture*** respectively. While the latter is pretty cut-and-dried, the former is a bit of a minefield, with no clear/authoritative source for what happened and how things played out. I stuck pretty close to what Richard Mandel laid out in his FSC while still trying to avoid getting too detailed. About the only spot where I took artistic license was in the middle, between the initial incursion and the definitive battle at Tau Ceti, describing how the Kzin captured a number of worlds on their warpath toward Earth and Starfleet's efforts to liberate them. I had a little fun with this, writing in the *Assault Bee*, *Killer Bee* and *Ogre* ('Type IV/A' here) class craft designed by Eric "Jackill" Kristiansen and using them like modern day military helicopters. Overall, despite the confusion surrounding this issue, I feel like I was able to gloss over it successfully and let it rest following the Battle at Tau Ceti.

Part III: 2273-86

This section starts off with a postscript of sorts to the Kzinti Incursion—the Cammel IV revelations. A historical tidbit taken from *Ships of the Star Fleet*, all that's really been said about this is that this is where Starfleet covert ops against the Kzin prior to the incursion were made public. As far as I've been able to determine, no other source has really expanded upon this and I didn't either. I just chose to frame it in a certain way so that it would fit with the 'Snowden-esque' plot point I came up with. Given how I opened up with this and then abandoned it for a time, it almost doesn't make sense to include at all, but either way, it still fits with the period.

There is a little blurb about *Casablanca*, a variant intended to consolidate the fleet's light carrier (CVL) capability and then a bit more about the *Tikopai* sub-class and the *Constellation* class as well. Updates like this aside, the biggest issue here has to be the incorporation of material from several novels and also the FASA role-playing game. Honestly, while I loved all 5 of Diane Duane's *Rihannsu* novels (*My Enemy My Ally*, *The Romulan Way*, *Swordhunt*, *Honor Blade*, *The Empty Chair*), keeping the events straight and then getting them down was a lot of effort for comparatively little reward.

Now we never knew what kind of government or leadership structure the Romulans had in place at the time of "*Balance of Terror*", but by the mid 2270's when this saga kicks off, the Romulan state is ruled by the 'tricameron' – apparently, a group of three autocrats. Then of course, we have the aforementioned events, including a massive battle at Augo and finally the overthrow of said autocrats. The main Romulan character in the saga, Ael, is proclaimed Empress of the Romulan Star Empire and all is well – or so we think. Fast forward nearly 40 years and by the time of the Tomed Incident in 2311 (described in David George's *Serpents Among the Ruins*) and you have a rouge flag officer in the Imperial Navy inciting an interstellar incident and by 2344, the praetor himself is autocratic, paranoid and dangerously unstable (see *Vulcan's Heart* by Josepha Sherman & Susan Shwartz). Could there have been a future for Ael? Possibly, but any line of reasoning would become more improbable and harder to explain the closer you got to **TNG** and **ST XI** (the '09 reboot). After both of those, it really wouldn't matter as the events of the *Destiny* series operated on the premise that where the Romulans were concerned, things were starting over from scratch. To its credit though, this whole saga as a plot device/historical note gave me a good excuse to showcase some of the Imperial Navy's ships during this era (at least the ones I wrote for them).

Following this is where I dive into the wonderfully nostalgic world of FASA. Needing something that wasn't so centered on either the Klingons or the Romulans to fill in the gap, I turned to their *Old Soldiers Never Die* supplement. Written by John Theisen and based on a concept by Guy McLimore Jr, this adventure tells the story of an old Romulan starship

captured during the closing days of the Earth-Romulan War that is now serving as a museum exhibit and ends up being stolen by operatives of the Orion Syndicate. Here, I co-opted the basic framework, changing the names/classes of the vessels involved and discarding a superfluous sub-plot of sorts. While not as dramatic as plot points with bigger adversaries, I feel like giving some exposure (however limited) to the Orion Syndicate would help make this period more 'three-dimensional'.

I always figured too that Starfleet would eventually get around to rebuilding Starbase 47, given the importance of the 'Taurus Reach' region, but naturally, given the sensitive nature of their activities in the region so far, I thought it most plausible if I let some time pass before rebuilding. As I mentioned in a blog update, the second Starbase 47 (a '*Lotus/L-Type*' station), is based off of renders done by 'Basill' at **Starstation Computer Art** ([link](#)). The quintessential 23rd Century space station in my opinion, I maintained its 'dual-nature', keeping it civilian-friendly while also making it a base of operations for Starfleet's special forces/black ops.

That brings us to FASA and the Klingons—truly, the gift that keeps on giving. The spark that ignites this volatile period is *Operation Armageddon* (from FASA's ***Star Trek IV Sourcebook Update*** – writing by William A Barton, Tara J Gallagher et al.). On the surface, it's not really that dissimilar from some of the modeling, simulation and such that the RAND Corporation does—involving the possibility of conflict between the Federation and first the Klingons, but later coming to include the Romulans as well and taking economic, political and sociological factors into consideration as well. The Achilles heel to this though was the intelligence factor. Given the extremely large scope of the operation as well as Starfleet's desire to use it as a training tool, it necessitated the gathering of up-to-date intelligence. Starfleet Intelligence was roped in, with separate working groups devising separate operations to cover the Klingon and Romulan ends of things and this is where things go awry.

Part of the backstory involved recruitment of Klingon 'augments' or 'fusions'. It was thought by Starfleet Intelligence, that after a great number were expelled in violent pogroms, that some could possibly be co-opted and used for intelligence gathering. As it turns out, that's exactly what happened. After training their subjects, Starfleet Intelligence sent them out aboard three tramp freighters (the *Dixie Lady*, *Dixie Queen* and *Dixie Princess*.....hence '*Operation Dixie*') to begin the assignment. Unfortunately, one of their number was a double agent (working for Klingon Imperial Intelligence) and his duplicity resulted in the destruction of all three ships – or so it seemed. A separate follow-up story was published and this is what really got me bogged down for a while.

The Dixie Gambit (writing by J. Andrew Keith) actually explains what happens. One modification I've made at the outset is a shuffling of characters. After Admiral Nogura's 'retirement', another officer that has to suffer for *Dixie*'s failure is SFI's Klingon Sector Chief, a man I called ch'Raal. Demoted and banished to a backwater posting on the world of 'Freeman's Port'. From here, aside from my inserting Captain Gates and the *Merrimac*, the majority of the adventure sticks closely to what was written. Oh, I did take liberty and change the class of the *Dixie* ships, as I'm not too fond of a lot of those old FASA designs. Recovery of the *Dixie Lady* was relatively easy to cover, recovery of the *Dixie Lady* personnel though was more involved. You see, the planet the surviving crew members were taken to and imprisoned on just so happened to be the same planet SFI attempted to 'liberate' as part of their *Project Minuteman*.

While surveying the compound where the *Dixie* prisoners were held, the unnamed intelligence operatives acting as the main characters were accosted by operatives assigned to said project. After revealing that they had survived a Bay of Pigs-type fiasco, they joined forces with the *Dixie* team and stormed the compound, rescuing the prisoners in a gloriously bloody, *Rambo*-like operation. In space there was a correspondingly wild battle between a small task force led by the *Merrimac* against Klingon forces led by Captain Kargon. The Starfleet forces prevail of course, but instead of killing Kargon outright, I wrote the *Merrimac* as crippling his ship and leaving him 'blind and deaf', arguably more humiliating for a Klingon.

After rooting out the traitor in their midst, the *Dixie* team returned to Starbase 47 where said traitor was interrogated again, revealing the ultimate reason the Klingons wanted *Operation Dixie* to fail. One disturbing possibility that remained and a loophole that I didn't necessarily address was the possibility of other Klingon spies operating within Starfleet (as I never really created an explanation for how the traitor found his way inside in the first place). Given how the rest of this period (leading up to **ST VI**) unfolded and how corrupt Klingon elements (the Duras family and their allies) would later go on to tie up with the Romulans, letting this remain unresolved isn't too much of a big deal I think.

We jump though from *Operation Dixie* straight into the 'Tal Taan Offensive' and the 'Kargon Incident'. After Kargon was humiliated during the recovery of the *Dixie* prisoners, his ship was repaired and as the most experienced commander on the frontier, he led a merciless campaign against Federation merchant shipping in the region (the aforementioned offensive). Arrogance and hubris led to Kargon overplaying his hand by deciding to launch an assault on Starbase 24. From there, it was only a matter of time before he would finally meet his end. The *Casablanca* class that I mentioned earlier gets to see some action here as do two destroyer classes—*Akula II* and *Abbe*—that will feature prominently in my revamped fleet loadout scheme.

The events of **ST II**, **III** and **IV** provide a welcome interruption from the near-constant conflict before I begin to get into *Enterprise II*—the 'under-the-skin' refit. This was initially hard for me, but given the numerous interior changes seen later in **ST V** and **ST VI**, I figured it would be worth a shot. Aside from the bridge, the biggest change I play up is the switch in computer

systems from 'Duotronic III' to 'Duotronic IV'. I justified this by postulating that Duotronic III's complexity and relative inflexibility is what contributed to Scotty's automation center overloading so quickly and by extension, the *Enterprise* being destroyed at Genesis.

This provides a good segway into the events of **ST V**, that like the events of the previous three movies, 'stick to the script' for the most part. Following this and closing out Part III is the destruction of the *Hood* by the Klingon ship *Q'rish*. The ship itself, a *K'teremny* class Destroyer owes its genesis to Todd Guenther who first featured it (as far as I know) in his **Starship Design** publication in 1984. The mention of the specific ship, *Q'rish*, engaging and destroying the *Hood* is also one of his ideas, first showing up (again, as far as I know) in the original printing of ***Ships of the Star Fleet*** from 1987(?). The only other place I've seen/read about the encounter has been in Richard Mandel's FSC. I've modified his account slightly, naming the commander of the *Hood* and giving *Q'rish* a smaller companion. With all the trouble I've gone to detailing earlier encounters, especially the Kargon Incident, you might think I would've come up with a similarly detailed account of what happened after the *Hood* was lost—i.e. describing a final, climactic battle where the *Q'rish* was destroyed. Nope. I instead chose to use a random *Excelsior* class ship to tie things up rather succinctly.

Part IV: 2287-2335

Now we come to the real downhill slide. The Klingons are still building capital ships and I name three newer classes, but given the gradual warming in relations, none get any mention here. An astute reader would also notice that the infamous *Akyazi* Perimeter Action is missing – I purposely left it out for the same reason, the political situation very nearly rendering it useless. The *Exeter* class I mentioned (really, the *Oppenheimer* class by Jim Morvay) represents the kind of streamlining and consolidation though that I'm going to try and carry forward.

Getting back on topic, the last original adventure concerning a member of the class centers around the *Republic* and *Excalibur*. *Lost and Presumed Dead* was written by Greg K. Poehlein as part of the **Star Trek III Sourcebook Update** and I have to admit that the premise, however derivative it might seem, is still quite novel. The only change I made was replacing *Excalibur* Captain Preye, with Michaela Harrari (CO of the *USS Hood* in the novel *The Children of Kings*). As an RPG adventure, it naturally didn't have a resolution. I gave it one though – having the *Republic* recovered and the surviving crew members transferred to the *Excelsior* class *Galacta* (from FASA's *Federation Ship Recognition Manual*). I also went to some length to describe the presumed movements of the neural parasites ('blastoneurons') through Federation space and Starfleet's efforts to discover whether or not there were more on any other planets.

Afterwards, I briefly revisit the roadmap of the fleet's exploratory assets, using an expedition to the Badlands as justification for *Potempkin*—the final iteration of *Constitution*—and then get to the events of **ST VI**.

As mentioned in a blog update, my depiction of the events is based in part off of those in the novel *Cast No Shadow*. I also realized that I had forgotten about my 'Snowden-esque' character Christina Brady, so I altered the backstory a little bit to fit her in. The emergence of the Kriosian nationalist group/band of freedom fighters known as 'The Thorn' wasn't exactly a cause for Starfleet concern, but it did serve as just cause for Starfleet to beef up its forces along the border. Going further, in reforming/realigning the SFMC Special Forces, my whole aim there is to boost their prominence over regular ground forces/infantry. I didn't want to make things too militaristic and thus destroy any credibility I have built up and anyhow, I figure this shift works well with the overall 'de-escalation' that accompanies the transition into the 'Lost Era'.

The Tal'Shiar's grandiose scheme to incite war between the Federation and Klingons is central to my depiction of the events in **ST VI**. The only part where I stretch things a bit is writing that 'Camp Khitomer' was inside a Klingon military base (a convenient way to explain the large buildings, that to me, would look out of place for a run of the mill outpost or colony). The end of things at Khitomer brings me to a convenient spot where I can introduce the few events borrowed from *Cast No Shadow* and proceed with my lengthy explanation. It was at right about this point where I started to get a little tired and wanted to wrap things up quickly—one major deviation from the novel is that former Admiral Cartwright's final status remains up in the air (instead of dying by a supposed respiratory infection). Also, I didn't get into any of the 'loose ends' surrounding Starfleet's information security or lack thereof. Whether or not I can spin some of this into a plot point or two and integrate it well with any 'Lost Era' classes is still up in the air.

Cartwright being interrogated by a special operator is also a convenient vehicle with which I can kill two birds with one stone—lay out/explain the Tal'Shiar's machinations and finally get rid of that pesky intelligence analysts. The loopholes I left untouched in the aftermath of *Operation Dixie* provide convenient justification for the SFMC's distrust of Starfleet Intelligence and certain other sectors of the government. Given what happened with *Project Genesis* and the massive public embarrassment to the Federation, having said analyst hunted down and killed ('terminated with extreme prejudice') seemed like a workable option.

With *Potempkin* (credit to WickedZombie45/Demon Renegade Studios), among all the other 'futuristic' *Constitution* variants I saw in the DeviantART gallery of 'admiral-horton', I thought it pretty restrained, but with a modified deflector dish and different nacelles, it seems well suited to take the line into the 'Lost Era' and close it out. Since there were no major plot

points to speak of (don't want to take too many opportunities away from other classes), I can afford to describe the upgrade process in more general detail. For all intents and purposes *Potempkin* is an *Excelsior* under the skin, making for a powerful force multiplier, even with the more complex work needed to uprate *Constitution II* and *Tikopai* class ships.

The one final mission for the class concerns the death of Christopher Pike. The novel *Burning Dreams* describes how the rest of Pike's life following "*The Menagerie*" was spent helping the Talosians reclaim/rebuild their world. In 2320, the Keeper/Magistrate summons Spock back. Where the novel mentions Spock sneaking away in a shuttle, I make it a bit more involved – the Admiralty granting Spock special permission to return in the *Atlantis*. This difference aside, everything else proceeds as in the novel. After bringing Spock up to speed on the rebirth of Talos IV, the Magistrate informs him that Pike had died (I pegged it in 2318, 2 yrs prior) and recorded a message for him just prior to his passing. On it, he laid out his final wishes—that Spock not only return his remains to Earth, but present two petitions to the Federation Council on behalf of the Talosians; one requesting the repeal of Starfleet's General Order 7 and the other formally requesting UFP membership.

Now in doing some background research, I find it funny that no author has made serious mention of Talos IV or the Talosians given their place in Trek lore. Either way, with no one else having laid it all out, I took the liberty of forging ahead and granting both petitions, again, describing them in general detail but using the whole plot point itself to cement the legacy of *Potempkin* and the *Constitution* line as instruments of civilization without which the Federation and Starfleet would not be what they are.

We've only reached 2320, so I know some might be thinking why stop here? Well for one thing, I'm tired. I've lost track of how many weekends I've spent typing and how many random afternoons at work where I've been jotting down notes on this one, single topic. For another, there's not just *Constitution* and its offspring anymore, there's a litany of other classes from the same era (*Excelsior* et al.) and plenty of new ones in the burgeoning 'Lost Era' (such as *Renaissance* and *Ambassador*) and continuing to go on and on would rob all of them of good plot points and thus make it harder for me to write anything interesting. So, I've kept them all in service until 2335 at which time they are retired from active duty and transferred to the reserves. From there, all of the ships will have about 10 years more or less before they start to hit their 75 year intended lifespans.

So, here we are. It's been a long road, but I'd like to thank those who've stuck with me here and those who've enjoyed a good read.