

It first appeared in the sky about forty years ago, amidst a period of relative peace and prosperity as mankind seemed to be entering a new Golden age. It was just enough to break the sense of peace and calm with its sudden and unnerving appearance, and presence. Scientists called it an astral anomaly, while the more fanatical called it a sign of the end times. A jagged and festering scar had appeared in the cosmos, as if God himself had stabbed a jagged blade through the very heavens, leaving a festering wound to stir among the stars. Its center was black with an eerie epervescent violet hue, a halo of bright crimson red ringed its ragged and elongated edge, as if the very space around it was bleeding. The red faded away gently at the edges into a deep orange hue, as if it burned with the very fires of hell. It was visible simultaneously to every terran colony that bore the flag of the United Nations and Planets, or the UNP. It was a sudden, yet disturbing phenomenon, but at the same time a source of much gossiping and rumor mongering. The public media took to a myriad of stories and ran with them, yet any truth about the new "eye in the sky" as some were calling it, was completely lost to, and intentionally kept from the public.

The military, though just as much in the dark as the general public, had just enough insight into the situation as to cause alarm, though only quietly and within specific military circles. Around the same time as the appearance of the "rift," as the military scientists were calling it, communications were lost with three fringe colonies, one of which had a classified military presence. There was a lack of information, and whispers hinting at something more sinister. Military empaths, psynetically enhanced, employed to reach out to the outer colonies were all interred, driven into an incoherent insanity, reduced to gibberish and horrifying screams of terror and psychosomatic pain. It wasn't hard evidence, or even factual, but the success rate of the program combined with the present results, all was enough to push the military machine into motion.

Fringe colonies were unique in the fact that they fell outside the standard interstellar infrastructure. The jump points in space that connected the majority of the systems under the UNP flag were readily and relatively accessible. A trip that would normally take years in real time by conventional sub-light drives, could be completed in hours by point to point travel through fluid space. Fringe colonies, however, earned their name because they quite literally were on the fringes of civilized space. The only way to reach them was by conventional means, which is to say by sub-light travel.