

A short history of Vesta, 52nd State of the United States

Andreas Merker, Asari Press, Ceres

Port Vesta

Plans of the United States of America to settle down in the Main Asteroid Belt first came up in the late 2010s, when the National Space Council advised President John McCain with the formation of the US Space Force. This was a reaction to several discoveries in saved documents of the Quetzal discovered in the 1990s, as well as to the activities of the Peoples Republic of China, following the lease of the ex-Soviet Aelita space craft for Chinese Mars missions and the construction of the Kui Xing.

While the interservice rivalries between the US Navy and the US Air Force concerning the US Space Force delayed the actual foundation of the service until the mid 2030s, plans were already made for a number of bases in the Main Belt, to prevent the Chinese to set up bases and settlements on some of the larger targets. The plans to develop a base on Ceres were upstaged when Euro Asteroid set up the Asari Mining Complex on Ceres.

The US Space Force was slow come be turned into a working military service in the US Armed Forces, largely due to the lack of coordination of the formerly US Navy and US Air Force personal making up the Space Force. This allowed the Peoples Republic of China to build outposts and settlements on several Main Belt objects, including Pallas, the third largest Main Belt Object. Forced to act before the Space Force was actually ready, the United States Government, under President Bethany Ross (Rep), layed claim on a settlement on Vesta, in keeping with the 2019 Beijing Space Settlement Accords.

Within just one year, a mission of eleven spacecraft were prepared and equipped with prefabricated modules originally meant for the extension of Port Daimos with a military outpost. The Vesta Outpost Mission reached the asteroid on June 24, 2045, and constructed a small double torus for artificial gravity at 0.5g, as well as docking ports for up to 4 space craft. Port Vesta was located in the Lucaria Tholus.

During the later half of the 2040s, Port Vesta was slowly expanded and became the main port of the US Space Force in the Main Belt. At the time the new administration, under President Andrew Mitchel (W¹), put a heightened importance on expanding the interplanetary development of US settlements and

¹New Whig, founded in 2002

commercial interests. Port Vesta was considered the primary development ground for the program in the Main Belt, at the detriment of other largely commercial interests in the Main Belt, like 2675 Tolkien and 288 Glauke.

The Port Vesta Expansion Program led to the declaration of Vesta as being a Territory of the United States and the development of civilian infrastructure and habitats close to the military base, as well as the extension of the limited mining and dockyard operations. Within less than twenty years Port Vesta grew to a large settlement of one million, with a hundred thousand of the inhabitants being members of the US Space Force, as well as the US Space Guard, the space equivalent of the US Coast Guard.

Growth of Vesta Territory

The declaration of Vesta as a Territory of the United States of America rekindled old dreams and memories of an American Frontier and the Old West. Until 2095, more than thirty million US citizens moved from Earth to Vesta to populate the asteroid and found new settlements, like New Chicago, New Boston and San Angeles. Many of these new settlements are based around mining and fabrication, though a number of universities were also set up.

Vesta also became home to a surprisingly many religious and ideological communities that believed to be pursued by the US Government, but didn't want to actually leave the United States or the protection of their laws. One of the most well known are the remnants of the Church of Scientology² or the Vesta Free Militia³, who have set up their own settlements. Some of these settlements have been raided by the FBI during the 2060s and 2070s, following disturbing information⁴ coming from these settlements, and disbanded.

By 2095, the Vesta Territory has become the major source of tax revenue in the Outer System and Port Vesta the major military port of the United States.

Vesta Statehood

The success of the Vesta Territory led to the inhabitants of the Territory to call for more independence in their local problems and a growing resentment towards the federal government. Various anti-government groups and militias added to the resentment by raising old American phrases like 'No taxation without

²Especially following The Walt Disney Company vs The Church of Scientology lawsuit in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida in 2054, following Scientologists attempt to take over Disney

³An anti-government Militia organization under observation of the FBI

⁴See New Stepford, New Bethlehem

representation', as well as 'Don't tread on me', in hopes to foster calls for independence.

The US government, and especially the US Congress, still reeled from the declaration of independence of the Mars Territory as Marinieris Congressional Republic, in 2091, where a 'War of Independence' was only avoided by the Democratic Majority in Congress at the time. Not wishing to lose Vesta, and especially the Vestan tax revenue and Port Vesta as a major military installation, Congress decided to ask Vesta to hold a referendum whether the Territory wants to remain within the United States as a state or declare independence.

Against the widely available propaganda and vocal demands of the various anti-federal groups, the population of Vesta decided to embrace Statehood in the United States rather than independence by 78 percent. Following a two year transition period, Vesta became the 52nd State of the United States of America on July 4, 2100.

Vesta Controversies

While Vesta's statehood has removed significant problems from local political groups, the Vestan State government became a source of controversies within the United States and made heavy use of its newly found representation within Congress and the Federal government.

One of the larger controversies was the problem of a space borne part of the National Guard, brought forth by Congresswoman Liz Bradford (W - VS). As Vesta was the first State of the Union not to be located on Earth, she noted, Vesta had different problems concerning its National Guard. Countering this view was chiefly Senator David Williamson (R - TX), who noted Vesta was the main base of the Space Force in the Outer System. Bradford in turn noted Vesta would not be the last State of the United States in Sol, and that it would be probable that there would be more States outside the solar system altogether.

This discussion eventually led to the Space National Guard Act of 2131, forming a new part of the National Guard.

Following this decision, the new National Guard Office on Vesta began the procurement process for a number of combat capable spacecraft, asking the Vestan dock yards for offers. As the Space National Guard has largely different requirements from the Space Force, most dockyards had no existing space craft to offer, but were willing to begin the development of new spacecraft. Largely unwanted the Thalix-Vulkan Dockyard on Ceres made an offer for their existing Type 15 Escort craft and the Type 17 Guard spacecraft, both of which were produced for the Cereran Ministry of Defense, and for a few other nations space forces, and were almost perfect for the Space National Guards needs. As Thalix-Vulkan was already

working with other NATO nations and used some American components, they figured they were able to provide for the Vesta Space National Guard.

When the selection of the National Guard Office fell on the Thalis-Vulkan offer, on grounds that the deployment of the spacecraft would be quicker and cheaper compared to the offers of General Dynamics and Port Vesta Dockyards, it sparked a new controversy. This controversy is still going as of June 2049, even though the Vesta Space National Guard now employs ten Type 15, three Type 17 and five Type 23 combat spacecraft built by Thalis-Vulkan.