SURVIVING A WAR DECLARATION.

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"SomeMeanCorporation has declared war on SomeNoobCorporation. Hostilities may begin in 24 hours."

Congratulations, you've just enjoyed the attention of someone who wants nothing more than to drive your entire corporation back to their rookie ships. In 24 hours (probably less unless you were on right when the declaration came in) your corporation is going to be free game anywhere, anytime. Mining in a 1.0 belt, ratting in a .5 belt, driving a hauler or a shuttle, they can be attacked by the aggressor corporation.

Ain't life grand?

Many new corporations have been utterly destroyed by this mechanism. Their members jumped ship, they lost too many battles, or they just stopped playing altogether. Some people have even cried out that War Declarations are utterly unfair altogether. What they didn't know – and what you're about to find out – is exactly how to react to that situation when it arises. It may not be as fun as what you had planned for your weekend, but a war declaration can be beaten. If you move fast, you might cut your losses drastically. Grab the two weapons at every new CEO's disposal, put one in each hand, and decide the plan that will work best for you.

Weapon #1: Information

Before you can do anything else, you need to know exactly what you are dealing with. It may not get you anywhere, but try anyhow – send the aggressor CEO a message. Not rude or abusive; just "Hey, do we have a problem we can resolve here?" Negotiations might not get you out of trouble, but it doesn't lose you anything, either. (Note that negotiating doesn't mean begging – many 'bully' corps will actually want to attack you MORE if you grovel.) Don't expect anything to come of that message, though. In the meantime, you need other information and to continue preparations.

Where is this corporation HQ'd?

If their headquarters is in the same space you operate in, you may have a problem on your hand. This corp may see you on a daily basis and know you're a soft target. Bad news, but read on. If the corporation has a headquarters far, far away (15+ jumps) you may not have a problem at all – they may have just picked you to target at random, and you may never even see them. Don't bet on it, but don't flick the "PANIC" switch just yet. It's very possible that their HQ has nothing to do with their operating area, but it is at least a place to start your reconnaissance.

Get a shuttle over to their HQ area as soon as you can. Find out what their average member is flying, and write it down. Make sure all your members know as well. If you're looking at an enemy fleet composed mostly of tier 1 frigates, destroyers, and the occasional cruiser, you don't have as much to worry about. If it's Battlecruisers, Battleships, and Tier 2 ships… well. More bad news. (Read on. You still have hope.)

How well known is this corporation?

Remember that shuttle you've got loitering near their HQ? Ask around – do people know these pilots? What are their habits? Industrials with attitude? Gatecamping pirates? "Who? I've never heard of them?" The corporation's presence in local politics – if any – may be another useful piece of information for your use.

How old is the corporation?

This may give you some insight as to the age of the members. If the corporation is only a week old, they may be noobs simply looking to use you as a victim for their first major activity. (Or they may be a newly formed corp of grizzled vets looking for their first easy killing field.) How many members do they have? Are you looking at five nasty pirates in Battleships that are trying to get free attack rights, or 90 pilots bent on your extermination?

How old is the CEO's character?

Again, although there are no golden rules, this factors into your information pool. CEOs tend to have some of the older characters in most bully corporations. If the character is only 3 months old, you've got good news – you probably won't see too many elite ships, as most of the pilots signed up after the CEO and haven't had time to train those ships yet. (Beware, though, if the CEO is much younger than the corporation – that means a transfer of power has been made, and therefore the CEO's age tells you nothing useful at all.)

Is the corporation part of an alliance?

If the answer to this question is yes, unfortunately, that's VERY bad news. That means they (probably) had enough infrastructure/membership/fighting prowess to impress an Alliance enough to gain admission. Odds are much lower that this is a stumbling newbie corp attacking you, and much higher that it's a corp with teeth and a methodology for using them.

Weapon Two: Friends, Neighbors, and Mercenaries

So you've determined that this isn't a threat you can simply ignore – or you want to take precautions anyhow.

Got Friends?

Some corporations get along well with others. While it may not be enough for them to commit to a highly dangerous war declaration, specific pilots in that friendly corp may be willing to fly around with yours, and bulk your numbers a bit. Perhaps they'll sell some ships to you cheaply in return for a later favor. (Perhaps you have favors with them you'd like to cash in on?) Don't be bashful about asking; your survival is at stake. Offer them a deal for future assistance in whatever manner would be most valuable to them. Good friends are invaluable.

Got Neighbors?

There may be another corporation that tends to mine/rat/whatever in the same general areas you do that you've never really spoken to, but never really had a problem with, either. Now might be a good time to strike up that conversation, especially if the corporation bullying you is local to your area. A bully that beats down one corporation will feel more bold about taking on others, later. That could be very bad for your neighbor's business, too. If the two of you band together, knocking that bully down to size could help everyone in the long run. (And they might just help out for the sheer bloody minded thrill of it.)

Got Mercenaries?

Don't be immediately off-put by the name. Mercenaries work for both sides – and some will work for a cause. While they aren't exactly in the dozens, there are some corporations that will step up and help defend a new corporation if the aggressor is obviously griefing, or if the aggressor has a particularly bad name. Other corporations will work for pay – and while that sum may be difficult for you to raise, it's probably a good bit cheaper than multiple destroyed vessels. (Point that out to your members if they cringe at the cost.) See if you can work out a longer-term payment plan, if all else fails. (Most mercenaries recognize that it would be truly stupid of their employers to fail payment; then the employer would have twice the problems they had before!)

The Moment of Truth: Fight or Flight

At this point, you've probably got a lot of information at your disposal – what you know about their resources, and what you know about your own. It's time for some decision making. (Hey, I can't hold your hand all the way through this, y'know?)

If you think – either because of the strength of your corporation, or your ability to summon aid – that you can weather the storm or even pound the other corporation down, arm up for war! (Cheaply!) Go on to section 3: "Flying Frigate Frenzy!"

If you think – either because you saw a dozen battleships flying in formation leave their HQ, or the last time you asked for help, even a Minmatar Merc wouldn't step up – it really would be better for you to avoid the conflict altogether, go on to section 4: "Run away! Run away!"

"Eat This!" Flying Frigate Frenzy

So at this point you probably have 6-8 hours left until hostilities break out, and you've received enough reassuring signs that you can, at the very least, hold your own. Remember that most wars between fledgling corporations (and a truly big time corp probably wouldn't bother with a newbie corp) are actually economic wars. You don't win an economic war by going out in your best ship, smashing 5 weaker opponent ships, and losing to the last two. I don't care if you've won 1 vs. 7…. You lost that engagement. Economic warfare is about costs.

Simple fact: you can lose twelve frigates for less than it costs to lose a single tier-1 cruiser, especially after modules are counted.

Simple fact #2: There are no tier-1 cruisers that can weather a storm of twelve frigates working together well.

If you want to properly train a frigate fleet for "storm" tactics, you'll need to divide up your duties a bit. (This brief combat tactics lesson assumes every frigate will have two open mid slots.)

Eight pilots should train in Propulsion Jamming I. (Requires Electronics III, Navigation II.) If they start right away, you can probably get all this in about 8-9 hours, even with newbie attributes. This will enable them to use Stasis Webbers and Warp Disruptors. Four pilots each should be using these. These ships are designated as your tacklers.

Four pilots should train in Electronic Warfare I. (Requires Electronics I.) While ECM modules are very high CPU, the result will be worth it. These ships are intended to jam your target's sensors. None of them alone have a very high chance, but with four ships trying, your chances go up considerably. If you know that the enemy corporation is one race, pack jammers specific to that race; otherwise, use multi-spectrum jammers.

The last four pilots should train in Sensor Linking I. (Requires Electronics III.) These pilots should utilize Remote Sensor Dampener units. These units sharply reduce the distance an enemy can target you, and greatly increase the amount of time it takes for that enemy to lock on. (A battleship with four of these units targeting him is going to take an amazingly long time to lock on to a frigate.)

All twelve pilots should train in Afterburners. (Requires Navigation I.)

The rest of the slots are up to you, but ideally, you're aiming for highest damage, fastest movement, and longest ability to run your weapons and electronics. Skip warp core stabilizers. Your ships are expendable and larger ships that actually manage to "grab" you will finish you before you can react anyhow.

Ideally, all your pilots should also be using drones, missiles or projectile weapons, as the electronic gear and afterburners in these ships have a habit of eating capacitor juice like fiends.

The tactic is actually very simple – when your hostile destroyer /cruiser /battlecruiser /battleship shows up, every pilot orbits at their optimal ranges and fires, activating their designated crippler-module as much as possible. (Webs and warp scramblers should be left on at all times, scrams especially.) If a target lock occurs on your vessel, turn on the afterburner and tighten your orbit even further to 500m-1000m. Your opponent:

- Will move very, very slowly. (Webs.)
- Will not be able to warp away. (Scramblers.)
- Will take very long time to lock on to you. (Sensor Dampeners)
- Will even lose those locks once in awhile. (ECM gear)

This combination of effects will render most any single opponent completely helpless. (As if hitting a frigate with afterburners on that orbits so close is easy!) If you are facing two destroyers/cruisers, you can try dividing yourselves evenly, but against multiple larger opponents, it is better for all of you to focus on one target. (It will take a long time for 12 frigates to chew through a battleship – forget about going for more than one.) Even if you lose two-thirds of your fleet, all the ships you are using should be fitted with the lowest-cost version of all these modules. Your opponent will not know for sure which ships are serving which functions (not easily anyhow), so it is unlikely that he will eliminate all of a specific type. If you are fortunate enough to catch a battleship alone, even losing all your ships is fine – if your 12-frigate-fleet destroys a battleship once every four times you try, you're still winning the economic war by a huge margin!

If you win with this tactic two or three times, your opponents may very seriously reconsider the wisdom of engaging in a war with you. Don't smack talk – be polite and suggest that the war end for the good of both sides. As long as they aren't furious beyond reason because of insults, they may take their newfound respect for you and leave. There is almost always easier prey to be found than a blob-wolfpack of frigates that are equipped for PvP.

No Soup For You! Run Away! Run Away!

Maybe you don't have twelve pilots you can count on to fly together, fit the proper gear, and follow direction. (Yeesh. Nice corp you have there – no offense.) Maybe your opponent is flying in packs of three battlecruisers, or six cruisers, or interceptors/assault frigates by the bushel. Maybe you just really aren't interested in fighting back, and would rather choose the better part of valor.

Cool! Fine. Sometimes running away is both the bravest and smartest choice you can make. There are several choices available for you as well. They all focus on the same concept: A corporation that is declaring war on you for fun and profit wants targets. If they don't have any, they'll get bored and go away. Even if wardecs are a paltry sum, it's silly to pay them with no returns.

Relocation

A corporation's headquarters is well-known and published; every other office is not. If you know that your bully-corp is local and tends to remain in a specific area, use your 24 hour window to pack everything up in industrials and head out. If you head 20+ jumps and a full sovereign nation away, odds are very good that a local bully will not know where you went, and not know where to find you now. (It's a BIG world, m'kay?) Who knows; you may even like your new home better!

Rescheduling

Remember the principle of the wardec; targets and profits. Deny those, and you're still "winning" the war. There are two ways you can insure that. If your opponents tend to show up right after you log on, just log on at a station and then walk away. Log on before work and leave. Log on before going to bed, and then rest. Log on before you go see a movie, and then enjoy. Log on and don't "be there." Nothing's more exciting for a bunch of hungry pirates than staring at a station with lots of targets inside it…. who don't come out for eight hours!

Reassignment

Never underestimate the old "bait and switch." Have every member of your corporation make an alt. As swiftly as possible (preferably all within a 1 hour period to reduce the likelihood of your bully recognizing what's going on) have everyone's alt join the corporation and have everyone's main character withdraw to an NPC "newbie corporation." Set yourselves up a private chat channel to use for the time being, and go about your business. The bully sees a fully loaded corporation – same number of pilots – but either A) no targets ever emerge or B) whenever one of their bookmarked targets arrives (the original pilots), they don't have wardec rights on them because they're now in the newbie corp. (And if they DO try to shoot you, enjoy the Concord visit.)

Concluding Thoughts

For every lock, there's a key, and a guy who knows how to pick it. Think of wardecs as a lock, and this as a key. Unfortunately, you can bet that some of the corporations who like to pick fights will probably read this too, and start planning against it, finding a way to pick the lock. None of this information is particularly new or brilliant – it's just intended as a resource. No guide will ever save your hide, but my hope is that this one leads to just a few less really agitated new CEOs and a few more corporations full of players who don't quit. Above all, keep your head, have a plan, and stick to that plan. A corporation full of players who work together, stick it out, and take pride in their corporate name can weather any storm… some just take a bit more weathering than others. (And if it doesn't, hey, the Dead Parrot Shoppe is always hiring!)