

THE HEAT OF WHAT BURNS

Dispatches from Terheia

A companion collection for The Narrowing

L Modulo

The documents contained herein were assembled during a period of institutional acceleration. Sources disagree on cause. Sources disagree on consequence. The documents do not resolve this disagreement. They were not intended to. They were intended to arrive too late.

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Committee for Strategic Applications of Elemental Research

Oathbound Crown, Ministry of Defence // Internal Memorandum // Classification: Crown Officers Only

COMMITTEE FORMATION ORDER

Authorizing Body: Ministry of Defence, Oathbound Crown

Committee Chair: Commander Edric Velstaan

Reporting Structure: Direct to the Ministry. Advisory channel to the Office of the Crown Strategist.

Formation Date: Second fortnight of Saelura

The Ministry of Defence hereby establishes the Committee for Strategic Applications of Elemental Research, tasked with assessing the military and institutional viability of recent advances in Elemental-school technique. The committee's mandate encompasses evaluation of tactical deployment scenarios, infrastructure requirements for field-scale application, and institutional frameworks for integrating Elemental offensive capability into existing Crown military doctrine.

The committee is formed in response to findings reported by Viro Mahrz, Oathbound Crown Wizard, Elemental School, regarding the generation of controlled thermal bursts, magnetic earth manipulation, and atmospheric electrical channeling at output levels significantly exceeding previously documented thresholds. These findings have been independently verified by the Ministry's Technical Assessment Division and are considered reliable.

The committee will operate independently of the Office of the Crown Strategist. This is an administrative decision reflecting the committee's operational focus and should not be interpreted as a jurisdictional reassignment. The Office of the Crown Strategist retains its advisory function on matters of long-horizon strategic assessment. The committee's scope is narrower: the practical application of specific capabilities to specific institutional needs.

The committee's membership is drawn from the Ministry of Defence, the Bureau of Elemental Standards, and the Garrison Command. A representative from the Office of the Crown Strategist may attend committee sessions in an observational capacity. Observational capacity is defined as attendance without voting authority, contribution to the record by written submission only, and no authority to delay or table committee proceedings.

Initial Directives

First: The committee will produce a preliminary assessment of field deployment scenarios within two fortnights of formation. This assessment will identify a minimum of three operational contexts in which Elemental offensive capability could supplement existing Crown military operations.

Second: The committee will coordinate with Garrison Command to identify personnel suitable for cross-training on channeling amplifier equipment. Selection criteria will emphasize Elemental attunement scores and operational reliability. A training authorization will be prepared for the relevant garrison commanders' signatures.

Third: The committee will assess logistical requirements for amplifier equipment distribution to northern garrisons currently assigned to activation site perimeter security. Equipment procurement has been authorized in advance of the training program to ensure readiness upon completion.

By order of the Ministry of Defence, Oathbound Crown.

Margin note, handwritten, unsigned: Equipment authorized before training. Procurement sequence inverted. Note for the record. — Z.A.

Deployment Authorization: Channeling Amplifiers

Northern Garrison Command // Equipment Directive 4-N-22 // Distribution: Garrison Commanders, Northern Sector

EQUIPMENT DEPLOYMENT ORDER

Equipment Type: Channeling Amplifier, Mark III (Elemental-Rated)

Quantity: Forty-eight (48) units

Distribution: Northern garrisons, activation site perimeter assignments

Authorization: Committee for Strategic Applications of Elemental Research

Garrison commanders receiving this directive are ordered to accept delivery of channeling amplifier equipment and to secure storage in accordance with Sensitive Equipment Protocol 7. Equipment will be delivered by Crown logistics convoy and should be expected within one fortnight of this directive's date.

A cross-training authorization for designated personnel will follow under separate order. Commanders are instructed to identify personnel meeting the following criteria: Elemental attunement score of 3.0 or above on the standard assessment scale, operational reliability rating of Satisfactory or above, and current assignment to activation site perimeter security or rapid-response rotation.

Commanders are reminded that channeling amplifier equipment is classified as Crown Sensitive Material and may not be inspected, disassembled, or operationally tested without explicit authorization from the Committee for Strategic Applications. Storage only. Training authorization will specify permitted operational use.

Personnel Roster Requirements

Each garrison commander will submit a roster of qualified personnel within one fortnight of receipt. Rosters will be transmitted to Northern Garrison Command and forwarded to the Committee. Personnel on the roster will be considered pre-authorized for cross-training upon issuance of the training order.

Commanders should note that roster submission constitutes acknowledgment of the equipment directive and acceptance of storage responsibility. Rosters are not requests. They are compliance documentation.

Issued: Third fortnight of Saelura

Authorized: Commander Edric Velstaan, Committee Chair

Distribution: All northern sector garrison commanders

Handwritten on the filed copy at the Fourth Outpost, Skrovian Border Garrison: Heikki is on the list. He is twenty-three. — unsigned

Cascade Contamination: Pattern Assessment

Azure Accord, Bureau of Therapeutic Assessment // Preliminary Findings // Classification: Institutional Distribution

Summary of Findings

The Bureau of Therapeutic Assessment has completed preliminary analysis of contamination event data from fourteen activation sites across three administrative regions. This assessment covers the period from the first fortnight of Velquor through the fourth fortnight of Saelura — a span of approximately nine fortnights during which activation site frequency has increased by a factor the Bureau considers significant.

The Bureau notes at the outset that the term "cascade contamination" is not yet formally adopted. It is used here as a working descriptor for a pattern of events that share structural similarities across sites. Whether these events represent a single phenomenon or multiple coincident phenomena remains under assessment.

Observed Pattern

Activation events produce localized environmental disruption consistent with high-energy magical discharge of indeterminate school classification. Affected areas exhibit glazed earth, severed root networks, disrupted ambient magical fields, and — in populated zones — biological effects on exposed individuals.

The biological effects are the Bureau's primary concern. Exposed individuals present with symptoms that resist single-school classification. Somatic channels are disrupted but not destroyed. Neural pathways remain intact but coordination between systems fails. A contaminated patient's body continues to function, but the systems within it cease communicating with one another.

Standard Accord treatment protocols address contamination by school classification: Elemental contamination is treated with thermal stabilization, Divine contamination with attunement realignment, and so forth. Cascade contamination does not respond to single-school treatment. It does not respond to sequential multi-school treatment. The contamination appears to affect the integrative layer beneath school-specific systems — the substrate that allows a body's magical and biological architecture to function as a unified whole.

Acceleration

The rate of new activation events has increased measurably over the assessment period. In the first three fortnights, the Bureau documented four events. In the subsequent six fortnights, the Bureau documented ten. The acceleration is not

linear. It is accelerating.

The Bureau does not currently possess a model that predicts when or where the next activation event will occur. Existing models assume stable ambient conditions. Ambient conditions are not stable.

The Bureau further notes that field treatment capacity has not increased in proportion to event frequency. The number of qualified field healers capable of addressing cascade-pattern contamination remains approximately nine. This number has not changed in six fortnights. The number of patients requiring treatment has.

Recommendation

The Bureau recommends immediate interinstitutional consultation on cascade contamination treatment protocols, expansion of field healer authorization to include Nature-school somatic practitioners currently operating without Accord certification, and a suspension of the Tier III licensing restriction on felwarrow moss for the duration of the crisis period. The Bureau recognizes that this last recommendation conflicts with the Bureau's own research agenda. The Bureau makes it anyway.

Assessment Lead: Dr. Kaelen Voris, Bureau of Therapeutic Assessment
Filed: Fourth fortnight of Saelura
Status: PENDING INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

Attached to the file copy, on Bureau letterhead, stamped RECEIVED and dated two fortnights after filing: Reviewed. Recommendations noted. Interinstitutional consultation deferred pending completion of the Committee for Strategic Applications' preliminary assessment. Felwarrow reclassification remains under Standing Committee jurisdiction. No action at this time.

Testimony of Lien Phuc of the Speakers

Transcribed by Accord Liaison for Practitioner Documentation // Third Fortnight of Namaris – Kaimawasu Transit Station

Liaison's note: The following testimony was delivered in Yingcan with occasional Reverie ritual phrasing. Lien Phuc is a Nature-school healer affiliated with the Speakers of the Reverie, currently displaced from her practice area by Crown Medical Theology Directive 7. She spoke voluntarily. She asked that nothing be corrected.

I was in Hul Guo for eleven fortnights. Not by choice — a contamination event near the Hulei road brought me there, and once you begin treating patients you cannot leave them because someone has decided your hands are unauthorized.

I treated nineteen people. Somatic technique. Hands on skin. The same method I was trained in, by my teacher, who was trained by her teacher, in a lineage that has not needed a license for longer than the Crown has existed. I treated them because they were sick and I was there and my hands could feel what was wrong.

The Crown healer at the local shrine was a good man. I say this because what comes next might sound like I am attacking him, and I am not. He followed his training. He used the sanctioned protocols. He prayed over his patients and administered the blessings his doctrine prescribed. He did what he was taught to do.

Seven of his patients died. Not because he was incompetent. Because his training did not include what was killing them. The contamination was not Divine. It was not Elemental. It was not anything his framework could classify, and his framework did not permit him to treat what he could not classify. So he prayed, and they died, and the prayers were correct and the dying was also correct, and somewhere in the gap between those two correct things were seven people who are no longer breathing.

My nineteen survived. Not because I am better than the shrine healer. Because my hands do not require classification before they work. I touch the body. The body tells me what is wrong. I do not need to name it before I can address it. Naming is for the record. The body does not care about the record. The body cares about the hands.

The Crown sent a notice. You have seen the notice — everyone has seen the notice. It says I am unlicensed. It says somatic technique is unverified. It says residents who received my treatment should report to the shrine for spiritual assessment. It says the Crown provides. It says the Crown protects.

My nineteen patients are alive. I do not know what the Crown is protecting them from.

They fined me. Sixty credits. I paid it because sixty credits is less than nineteen funerals. They did not bar me from the territory — the tribunal denied that motion,

which I am told is a victory. A victory is when you are permitted to continue doing what you were always supposed to be doing, but now you must do it while a man with a seal watches you and writes things down.

I am not angry at the Crown. Anger requires energy and I have patients. I am stating what happened. You asked me to state what happened and I am stating it.

But I will say this. When the next contamination event comes — and it will come, the ground is restless and the acceleration is real and everyone who places their hands on the earth can feel it — when it comes, the Crown's healers will follow their protocols and some of those protocols will not work. And somewhere nearby, if I am close enough, I will kneel in the dirt and place my hands on someone who is dying and I will try to help them. And someone will write down that I did this without authorization.

That is the report. That is the system. A woman kneeling in the dirt with her hands on a dying person, and a man standing above her with a pen, recording the violation.

[Liaison's note: Lien Phuc declined to add anything further. She asked when the next transport to the southern corridor was leaving. I told her. She left.]

Watch Commander's Log (Continued)

Skrovian Border Garrison, Fourth Outpost // Namaris Entries // Commander: Torild Asvennsdottir

NAMARIS-3 / DAY 2

Equipment convoy arrived. Forty-eight crates. Crown Sensitive Material seals intact. I signed the delivery receipt and assigned storage in the lower armoury per Sensitive Equipment Protocol 7. The convoy master asked if we had been briefed on the contents. I said we had received a directive. He said that was not the same thing. I agreed. He left.

NAMARIS-3 / DAY 5

Submitted the personnel roster as ordered. Fourteen names, including Corporal Heikki Torvaldsen. Attunement score 3.4. Operational reliability: Excellent. I included him because the directive required inclusion of all qualifying personnel and I do not have the authority to exclude names from compliance documentation. I note this for the record. The roster is not a request. It is compliance documentation. The directive was clear on this point.

NAMARIS-3 / DAY 8

The Crown operative conducted another psionic sweep. This time he informed me beforehand. I asked whether the sweep would include the lower armoury and its contents. He said the equipment was outside his assessment framework. I asked what was inside his assessment framework. He said: personnel. I asked whether my personnel had passed. He said the concept of passing did not apply. I did not find this reassuring.

NAMARIS-3 / DAY 11

Subsurface tremor. The second this season. Stronger than the first — knocked a lantern off the mess hall table, cracked a windowpane in the east barracks. I sent the standard notification to the geological survey office in Tverdetso. Their response: noted, monitoring. The old miners in the settlement below sent a boy up to the garrison with a message. The message said: the mountain is breathing faster. I filed the message with my log because I do not know what else to do with it.

NAMARIS-4 / DAY 1

Training authorization arrived. The cross-training program will begin next fortnight. An instructor from the Committee for Strategic Applications will be assigned to this garrison. The authorization specifies that training will include operational use of channeling amplifier equipment in field conditions. I note that the authorization arrived four fortnights after the equipment. I have been storing equipment whose purpose I was not authorized to understand for four fortnights. This is standard procedure. I note it anyway.

NAMARIS-4 / DAY 6

Conscript Halvdan asked me what the crates in the lower armoury contain. I told him they contain classified equipment. He asked if the classified equipment is why an instructor is coming. I said yes. He asked if the instructor is coming because of the tremors. I said no. He looked at me the way soldiers look at commanding officers when the commanding officer has said something technically accurate and entirely insufficient. He is learning. I wish he were learning slower.

NAMARIS-4 / DAY 9

A Reverie wanderer arrived at the gate. Different woman than last season — younger, carrying no staff, moving fast. She did not request passage. She requested water and asked whether the garrison had experienced tremors. I confirmed. She placed her hand on the garrison wall for approximately three seconds — not the long listening of the last wanderer, but a quick check, the way you touch a surface to test if it is hot. She said: the ground is not breathing. Something beneath it is. She took the water and left through the eastern gate. Chaplain Dreva was not informed. I am running out of patience for informing Chaplain Dreva.

NAMARIS-4 / DAY 14

End of fortnight. Garrison strength: forty-two. Morale: strained. Supply: adequate. Weather: warm. The crates sit in the lower armoury and I sit above them and the mountain breathes beneath us both. Halvdan has stopped asking questions, which concerns me more than the questions did. The border is quiet. I no longer believe this means what it used to mean.

Log continues. Subsequent entries filed with Skrovian Provincial Command, Tverdetso.

On the Readiness of the Faithful

Office of the Provincial Minister of Theological Oversight // Crown Directive – Provincial Distribution

To all Provincial Administrators, Garrison Commanders, and Shrine Officials within the jurisdiction of the Oathbound Crown:

The Oathbound Crown, in its enduring commitment to the safety and spiritual integrity of the faithful, issues the following directive regarding institutional readiness in a period of elevated environmental instability.

The Crown acknowledges that reports of geological disturbance, environmental anomaly, and localized contamination events have increased in frequency across multiple provinces. The Crown further acknowledges that these events have produced anxiety among the faithful and uncertainty among administrative officials regarding appropriate institutional response.

This directive provides clarity.

On the Nature of the Disturbances

The environmental events observed across Crown territory are under active assessment by the Ministry of Defence and its affiliated committees. The Crown possesses both the institutional resources and the divine mandate to address threats to the faithful. The faithful are not required to understand the nature of the threat. They are required to trust the institutions that were built to understand it on their behalf.

Speculation regarding the cause, origin, or meaning of environmental disturbances is discouraged. Speculation produces anxiety. Anxiety produces disorder. The Crown's position on disorder is well established.

On Institutional Cooperation

The Crown values its cooperative relationship with the Azure Accord and recognizes the Accord's contributions to environmental monitoring and scientific assessment. However, the Crown reminds provincial administrators that theological jurisdiction supersedes scientific classification in matters affecting the spiritual welfare of Crown subjects. Where Accord assessments conflict with Crown doctrine, Crown doctrine prevails. This is not hostility toward the Accord. It is clarity regarding the hierarchy of institutional authority.

Provincial administrators are directed to ensure that Accord personnel operating within Crown territory do so under the terms of existing interinstitutional agreements. Accord personnel who exceed their mandate — particularly in matters

of public communication regarding environmental events — should be reported to the Provincial Office for jurisdictional review.

On Unauthorized Healing Practices

The Crown reaffirms the provisions of Crown Medical Theology Directive 7. All healing practice within Crown territory requires ecclesiastical authorization. The increase in contamination events has produced a corresponding increase in unauthorized practitioners operating within Crown borders. These practitioners — however well-intentioned — operate outside the framework of divine sanction that ensures the spiritual safety of the patient.

A body healed without blessing is a body restored without witness. The Crown does not question the efficacy of unauthorized methods. The Crown questions their authority. Efficacy without authority is power without mandate. The Crown exists to ensure that power serves order, not the other way around.

The Crown provides. The Crown protects. The faithful are advised to remain within the shelter of their institutions and to trust that the instruments of order are being sharpened on their behalf.

By the authority of the Provincial Minister of Theological Oversight
Oathbound Crown
First fortnight of Namaris

Found in a provincial administrator's correspondence file, folded into the directive, in a different hand: "The instruments of order are being sharpened." Read that sentence again and tell me it is not a threat dressed as reassurance. — unsigned

Field Healer's Case Notes

Kaenar Node – Contamination Treatment Station // Unsigned

Archivist's note: The following notes were recovered from a field treatment station near the Kaenar activation site. They are written in a mixture of clinical notation and personal observation. The author is not identified. The handwriting is steady in early entries and deteriorates as the document progresses. The final entries are written in a different ink.

DAY 1

Arrived Kaenar. Node active — ambient readings elevated across all five school signatures. Twelve patients awaiting treatment. Standard contamination presentation: somatic disruption, channel severance, coordination failure between systems. I have seen this pattern at three sites now. It does not become familiar.

DAY 2

Treated four patients. Close-range technique. The channels are severable but the reconnection holds only if the patient's own system recognizes the repair. You cannot impose a channel. You can only offer the path and wait for the body to accept it. Two patients stabilized within hours. Two required sustained contact — hands on skin for nearly the full session. My attunement reserves are at perhaps sixty percent.

DAY 3

Six more patients arrived overnight. The acceleration is not theoretical. It is a woman carried on a door and a child walking beside her who has not spoken since the event.

DAY 5

I have begun adapting. The standard technique assumes a stable ambient field. The ambient field here is not stable. So I have changed the approach — shorter channel connections, reinforced at intervals rather than built once. It is imprecise. It is not what I was trained to do. It works approximately sixty percent of the time. Sixty percent is not enough. Sixty percent is what I have.

DAY 7

The adaptation works. I hate that the adaptation works. If it works, it will be documented. If it is documented, it will be replicated. If it is replicated, it will be replicated by people who do not understand why sixty percent is a failure rate, not a success rate. They will call it a protocol. They will train people in it. They will point to the sixty percent and call it progress and they will stop looking for the technique that works on the other forty.

DAY 9

Lost a patient today. Old man. Farmer. Brought in by his daughter, who carried him on her back for two miles. The contamination had reached his core systems before I could begin. I held his hand while his daughter stood in the doorway and did not cry. She did not cry because crying takes time and she had another family member at home who

needed her. She asked me if I had done everything I could. I told her the truth: I did everything I had. It was not the same thing.

DAY 12

Twenty-three patients treated. Fourteen stabilized. Sixty percent. The number does not move. I am beginning to understand that the number will not move. The adaptation is not a bridge to a better technique. It is the technique. This is what the contamination permits.

DAY 14

Shulie's cipher channel has gone quiet. I do not know why. I continue.

The notes end here. A later hand has added, in pencil at the bottom of the page: She stayed for forty-one days. She treated one hundred and twelve patients. The number held. Sixty percent. — unsigned

Intelligence Assessment: Activation Site Acceleration

Crown Strategic Office // Threat Analysis Division // Classification: Restricted

ASSESSMENT PARAMETERS

Assessment Period: First fortnight of Velquor through second fortnight of Namaris

Sites Assessed: Twenty-seven confirmed, eleven probable, four suspected

Projection Model: [REDACTED] v4.2

Summary

Activation site frequency has exceeded the projection model's upper confidence interval for the third consecutive fortnight. The model was calibrated using data from the first eighteen documented sites. The current count of twenty-seven confirmed sites represents a fifty-percent increase over the calibration dataset within a timeframe the model did not predict.

The model's failure to predict the current rate of acceleration is itself a finding. The model assumes linear interaction between subsurface energy sources and ambient magical fields. The observed acceleration suggests nonlinear feedback — each activation event may be contributing to conditions that produce subsequent events. If this interpretation is correct, the acceleration is self-reinforcing.

Institutional Implications

The Accord's Bureau of Therapeutic Assessment has documented cascade contamination patterns at fourteen sites. Crown medical staff have documented similar patterns independently but under different classification terminology. The two datasets describe the same phenomenon. They are filed in separate institutional archives under incompatible categorization systems. Cross-referencing requires manual effort that neither institution has authorized.

The Committee for Strategic Applications of Elemental Research has produced a preliminary assessment recommending field deployment of channeling amplifier equipment to northern garrisons. This office notes that the Committee's assessment does not reference the activation site acceleration data. The Committee's scenarios assume a stable or slowly increasing threat environment. The data does not support this assumption.

Projection

If the current acceleration rate continues, the projection model estimates [REDACTED] active sites within [REDACTED]. The model's confidence in this estimate is low due to the nonlinear dynamics described above. The actual number may be higher.

This office recommends that the projection data be shared with both the Committee for Strategic Applications and the Accord's Bureau of Therapeutic Assessment. This office further recommends that any military deployment to activation sites account for the possibility that the sites themselves may be more dangerous than the security threats the deployment is intended to address.

Assessment Lead: [REDACTED]
Division: *Crown Strategic Office, Threat Analysis*
Filed: *Second fortnight of Namaris*
Distribution: *Office of the Crown Strategist*

Stamp on file copy: RECEIVED. NOTED. NO ACTION. A second stamp, dated one fortnight later: SUPERSEDED BY COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT 4-N-30.

Intercepted Correspondence

Origin: Unverified // Recovered from Fjeran-Osaban trade corridor, Convoy F0-438 // Filed Without Action

Interception note: The following letter was found concealed within a shipment of felwarrow moss travelling the Fjeran-Osaban corridor. It was written on ungraded paper in a hand that does not match any registered Accord or Crown correspondent. The intended recipient is not identified. Filed per standard contraband documentation protocol.

I do not know if this will reach you. The trade convoys are the only channel that has not been audited and I suspect that will change before the season turns.

The demonstration happened. You will hear about it through institutional channels, sanitized and reframed as progress. I will tell you what I saw.

He stood in the centre of the field and he did not move. The stones rose. Not thrown — lifted, as if magnetized, drawn upward by something that understood gravity and disagreed with it. The air changed temperature in visible bands — you could see the heat, layered, precise, controlled the way a blade is controlled. Then the electricity. Not lightning. Lightning is chaotic. This was architecture. The current flowed along paths that had been prepared, channeled through humidity in the air itself, striking points that had been designated in advance.

It was beautiful. I want you to understand that. It was beautiful and it was precise and it was the most terrifying thing I have ever witnessed, because the man who performed it did not look strained. He looked confirmed.

The room applauded. Not the nervous applause of people who are afraid. The convinced applause of people who have seen a future they prefer. The committees will restructure. The research divisions will be redirected. The military frameworks are already being drafted — I have seen the equipment authorizations, the training orders, the roster submissions.

And somewhere in a corner of the room, a man who has spent his career predicting institutional catastrophe stood with his hands at his sides and watched the applause and said nothing. He did not look surprised. He looked like a man who has been correct about something for a very long time and has just realized that being correct is not the same as being heard.

The weaponization will accelerate. Not because anyone decided it should, but because the demonstration made it inevitable. Once you have shown that a thing can be done, the institution reorganizes around the doing of it. The question shifts from "should we" to "how quickly." And the people who were asking "should we" find themselves reclassified as obstacles.

I cannot tell you what to do with this. I can tell you that the ground is restless and the institutions are arming and the people who understand both of these things are being moved to the margins of the rooms where decisions are made.

If there is still someone who can hear this: the acceleration is not separate from the weaponization. They are the same phenomenon viewed from different institutional positions. The ground burns and the Crown sharpens and no one in authority is asking whether sharpening a weapon beside a fire is wise.

I will not write again. The corridors are being watched.

Border inspection note: Letter filed with contraband documentation. Assessed as: political speculation, no actionable intelligence. No follow-up. — Inspector O. Veldring

Internal Dissent Memorandum

Office of the Crown Strategist // Internal Record // Classification: Suppressed

MEMORANDUM

From: [REDACTED]

To: Ministry of Defence, Oathbound Crown

Re: [REDACTED]

This memorandum constitutes a formal objection to the Committee for Strategic Applications' preliminary assessment and its recommendation for field deployment of channeling amplifier equipment to activation site perimeters. The objection is filed under [REDACTED] and is intended for the Ministry's record.

The Committee's assessment identifies three operational scenarios for Elemental offensive deployment. All three scenarios assume that the deployment environment is stable and that the amplifier equipment will perform within its demonstrated parameters. Neither assumption is supported by the available data.

The Threat Analysis Division's most recent projection — filed [REDACTED], received by the Committee [REDACTED], and not referenced in the Committee's assessment — documents activation site acceleration that exceeds the model's upper confidence interval. The projection data indicates that the environments into which the Committee proposes to deploy amplifier equipment are changing faster than the Committee's scenarios account for.

Specific Concerns

First: Channeling amplifier equipment [REDACTED] operates by concentrating Elemental output through a resonance framework that [REDACTED]. In stable ambient conditions, this produces controlled amplification. In unstable ambient conditions — such as those documented at active activation sites — the amplifier's resonance framework may interact with the site's own energy signatures in ways that [REDACTED].

Second: The projection model's estimate of [REDACTED] active sites within [REDACTED] implies that military personnel deployed to these sites will be operating in an environment where the threat is not external actors but the site itself. Equipping these personnel with amplification technology that may [REDACTED] does not address the threat. It compounds it.

Third: The Committee was formed without the participation of this office. This office's advisory function has been preserved in title and eliminated in practice. The

projection data was received and filed. The objection was received and filed. The assessment proceeded without modification. Filing is not consultation. It is storage.

This office does not dispute the demonstrated capability of the Elemental techniques in question. The demonstration was impressive. Institutional authority has shifted accordingly. The question this memorandum raises is not whether the capability exists but whether deploying it in the current environment will produce the outcomes the Committee intends.

Centralized authority is this office's foundational commitment. This memorandum does not argue against centralization. It argues that centralization pursued through weaponization, in an environment of accelerating instability, may produce the opposite of the stability it claims to serve.

This memorandum is filed for the record. This office expects no action. The record is the action. If the deployment proceeds and the outcomes diverge from the Committee's projections, this memorandum will constitute evidence that the divergence was foreseeable and was foreseen. That is [REDACTED]. It is also all this office has.

Filed: *Third fortnight of Namaris*

Status: [REDACTED]

Distribution: *None. Filed internally.*

Public Decree: On Institutional Unity

Provincial Office, Oathbound Crown // For Display: All Settlement Centres, Market Squares, Shrine Boards

REGARDING THE STRENGTHENING OF CROWN READINESS

By order of the Provincial Minister, and with the blessing of the Cardinal of the Northern Provinces, the following decree is issued to all residents of Crown-administered territory.

The Oathbound Crown announces a program of institutional strengthening designed to protect the faithful during a period of elevated environmental instability. This program reflects the Crown's commitment to order, safety, and the spiritual welfare of its subjects.

Residents are informed of the following measures:

First: Crown military garrisons in the northern provinces will receive enhanced equipment and specialized training to ensure the safety of communities near areas of environmental disturbance. This enhancement reflects the Crown's investment in the security of the faithful and should be understood as protection, not escalation.

Second: Research into advanced applications of Elemental magic — conducted under the direction of the Oathbound Crown's most accomplished practitioners — has produced capabilities that will be deployed in service of public safety. The Crown's mastery of these techniques ensures that the power of the elements serves the order of the faithful, as it was always intended to.

Third: Interinstitutional cooperation with the Azure Accord will continue under the existing framework of jurisdictional agreements. The Crown values the Accord's contributions and will ensure that cooperative activities remain within their appropriate scope. Provincial administrators are authorized to review and adjust Accord operational access as needed to maintain clarity of institutional responsibility.

Fourth: The Crown reaffirms its commitment to authorized healing practice. Residents are encouraged to seek treatment only from Crown-certified practitioners. The Crown's healing institutions are equipped to address the challenges of the current period. Additional resources have been allocated to shrine medical facilities across the northern provinces.

The Crown provides. The Crown protects. In a time of uncertainty, the faithful are reminded that certainty is the gift the Crown was built to offer.

By the authority of the Provincial Minister
Oathbound Crown, Northern Provinces
Fourth fortnight of Namaris

Found posted in the market square of a garrison town in the Skrovian border region. The word "protection" in the first measure had been underlined in charcoal. Beside it, in a small hand: Ask the mountain what it thinks of their protection. The decree had not been torn. It had been left intact, which was worse.

Glossary

Selected Terms – Expanded for Book Two

Activation site

A location where subsurface energy discharge produces environmental disruption and biological contamination. Frequency increasing.

Cascade contamination

Working term for contamination that resists single-school classification. Affects the integrative substrate beneath school-specific systems.

Channeling amplifier

Crown-classified equipment designed to concentrate and amplify Elemental magical output. Mark III variant rated for field deployment.

Committee for Strategic Applications

Crown body established to assess military deployment of Elemental offensive capability. Reports to Ministry of Defence.

Crown Medical Theology Directive 7

Regulation classifying somatic healing as unverified and requiring ecclesiastical authorization for all healing within Crown territory.

Crown Strategist

Advisory office responsible for long-horizon strategic projection within Crown institutional hierarchy. Currently marginalized.

Dispensation

Individual authorization required for Tier III regulated materials. Adds an average of four days to healer resupply.

Elemental exploit layers

Expansions of Elemental magic into thermal, magnetic, atmospheric, and electrical domains at output levels exceeding prior documentation.

Environmental instability

Crown institutional term for activation site acceleration. Preferred over 'crisis' in official communication.

Felwarrow moss

Organic reagent critical to contamination treatment. Reclassified from Tier II to Tier III. Supply constrained by licensing framework.

Field healer

Practitioner treating contamination patients at or near activation sites. Approximately nine currently operating. Number unchanged across six fortnights.

Institutional acceleration

The phenomenon by which institutional response to crisis produces further crisis. Not a recognized term in any official framework.

Observational capacity

Status assigned to the Crown Strategist's representative on the Committee for Strategic Applications. Attendance without authority.

Sensitive Equipment Protocol 7

Storage requirements for Crown-classified military materials. Specifies secure location, access restrictions, and chain-of-custody documentation.

Sixty percent

Approximate stabilization rate achieved by adapted field healing technique at cascade contamination sites. Considered insufficient by the healer. Considered progress by the institution.

Somatic technique

Nature-school healing through direct physical contact. Effective but unverified by any peer-reviewed body that the Crown recognizes.

Spectacle, the

Informal designation for Viro Mahrz's public demonstration of Elemental exploit layers. The event after which institutional authority shifted.

Theological jurisdiction

The Crown's claimed authority over all matters affecting the spiritual welfare of its subjects. Spatially unlimited within Crown territory.

*These documents were assembled during a period no institution chose to name.
The naming fell to those who survived it.*

The Heat of What Burns: Dispatches from Terheia

*A companion collection for The Narrowing series
Continuing with Those We Arm*

The world of Terheia was built by L. Modulo.

*The institutions described in these documents do not speak for their author.
The people burned by them do.*

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