

Kacihko's post is a good post. I think that I view the problem as a three-fold issue:

1.

Why ganking is in a good place? 2.

Why the change is bad? 3.

Where is ganking going?

Why ganking is in a good place? 1) Ganking is already difficult. It requires a significant amount of skill, logistics, coordination and a large player base to make it possible.

Proof: there's only one 'professional' freighter ganking organization left in the game, which requires an extreme amount of coordination, personnel management, fiscal management, strategic directing and effort to maintain its presence in all three major time zones. To accomplish this, we have a dedicated team of 11+ leadership members, 4 directors and (as of 3 Aug, 2016) 271 members and roughly 100 active members.

2) Ganking is not without counters.

Proof: We failed on 2 ganks the last week of our deployment, one was Warr Akini and myself. I think we both have claims as 'best-in-class' gankers. The freighter was only bumped until the fleet arrived on gate and managed to jump through the gate at 1% structure before DPS could finish applying their damage. After throwing another talos at the target in unprepped 0.7 security space, we couldn't kill the target, lost bumps and it docked.

The other was a gank lead by Helfeln, with me bumping, with Jason Kusion (12 boxing DPS extraordinaire) and Logical (8-boxing DPS/Support extraordinaire) both supporting on DPS (that's 20 dudes right there), Rollo running support. The freighter was triple bulkheaded and brought an escort which caused our excessive DPS to fall below the threshold needed to kill the freighter. Desync issues after the gank allowed the freighter to dock, and the second chance at ganking would've had to happen on gate or in an unprepped station-less 0.5, while still under the protection of its 5-logi escort fleet.

Freighters can get away through a number of methods that I've exposed on reddit; JFs are night invincible provided they have a cyno in-place and have an ounce of intelligence. There is no foolproof way to kill a JF that is prepared (as they can always cyno out during gate cloak).

3) Ganking is incredibly profitable, but also comes at a high cost.

Proof: Last month we spent nearly 130b isk on PLEX, skill injectors, ships and more. That included managing multiple supply lines from manufacturers, managing buy and sell orders as well as the logistics involved. Additionally, we only stand to make money when we keep hard limits on what we're willing to gank (the 5b mark). Reducing the cost of ganking (by using catalysts and keeping things cheap) doesn't actually make us money; the majority of our money comes from big dollar ganks.

4) Ganking serves a purpose in the meta within strategic positioning in nullsec.

Proof: We shut down the Palas trade route when Goons deployed to Delve. While this had a negligible effect compared to the might of GSF and the impotence of Delve residents, it definitely put additional pressure on our enemies supply lines. The result was that by the end of the week, 95% of traffic was blue or was blue courier packages. Most hostile logistics used jump freighters, or used escorts.

We put additional pressure on Lonetrek based supply lines during WWB, producing 500b in kill mails. The only other effective ways of interfering within supply lines is nyncing and economic fuckery.

5) Ganking is the single most accessible method of strategic level operations.

Proof: A new character can train for 20 minutes and sit in a catalyst, participate on freighter and JF gank fleets and have a significant strategic impact.

Conclusion: Running a professional, self-sufficient ganking group that is capable of producing noticeable impacts is difficult, requires significant coordination, skill, knowledge of mechanics and membership/recruitment as well as monetary funding. It requires dedicated leadership. Ganking is not an epidemic problem because most people who have tried to form a ganking group have failed when confronted with the amount of effort it takes to run a single timezone ganking organization, let alone a multi-timezone ganking organization (See: Globby and PanFam's Ministry of Love).

Why the change is bad?

1) 3 minute warp timer will make freighter ganking unduly difficult.

Proof: Keeping a freighter bumped already requires at least 3 characters (2x aggressors, 1x bumper), with 5 being a better number (3x aggressors, 2x bumpers). Increasing the timer will increase that to 7 (bumper + 6 aggressors), not including any characters needed for suicide pointing, loot scooping, warp-ins and perches.

2) Bumping is already a skill-intense ability.

Proof: MiniLuv requires bumpers to expend upwards of 20 to 40 hours practicing bumping in order to gain a level competency where they can successfully, reliably and consistently execute bumps on a target, keep them bumped for ~25 minutes (typical rage-form time) and then perform the final bumps on the target before the DPS fleet warps in. Some players are simply not capable of gaining that level of skill/ability or expending the time to achieve that level of skill or ability.

3) Bumping is already a knowledge-intense ability.

Proof: Significant work has been done to understand and master bumping at an organizational level since I've joined MiniLuv. Tuning fits, understanding certain magic points (0.0352 inertia factor), understanding the trade-offs between tank and speed are already built into the bumping and can be handled on an institutional level. Understand the mechanics behind bumping, when freighters are rigid and easy to bump, or loose (spaghetti) and hard to bump are individual skills. Understand the mechanics behind log-offs and log-ons, as well as passable skills (player skills, not SP skills) on probing are requirements to be a good bumper. With the watchlist changes, determining when a freighter has logged off requires vigilance, as does managing the aggression timer on logged-off freighters.

4) There are only a dozen or so competent to skilled bumpers in the game.

Proof: We know almost all of them. Sjugar02, Franky Jaeger, Joe Painter, Viserion Pavarius, Cheesetoast (Not MiniLuv), Faylee Freir (Not MiniLuv), Chincata Shihari, Siegfried Cohenberg (Quit), Globby (Quit), Rackarns (QuitBack!), Porky (Quit), Abdulaz (Quit), Loyalanon (Banned), Arkitektite, Boneytooth Thompkins Isk-Chip, Warr Akini.

5) The change seems to be solving a problem that doesn't exist or already has solutions.

Proof: As said above, counters exist to being bumped.

1. Cargo Size and Value: No one ganks just for ganking anymore (Loyalanon got banned), so careful consideration of cargo renders a target uninteresting to current ganking organizations. Thoughtful use of double wraps (plastic wraps or containers inside plastic wraps) also can reduce the chances of being a target. 2. Scouting: Careful use of scouting and intelligence forewarns a target of danger in the pipe

they're travelling. JF and Freighter traffic often picks up right after we do a gank (particularly in the case of JF traffic). Good freighters that slip by do so because of good scouting. 3. Webbing: Using a webber reduces the warp time to a theoretical minimum of 3

seconds. This increases the number of people required to catch a freighter to include a suicide point and doesn't necessarily result in a bumped freighter every time. 4. Speed: A freighter with ascedencies, hyperspatial lows and a webber can out run a suicide

point and nearly outrun the machariel, leaving the bump up to chance on an exceptionally good spawn or exceptionally bad webber. 5. Emergency Warp-outs: Warp-outs can be provided by additional characters (often Covert

Ops) or bookmarks on gates of common gank systems (Red Frog was selling packs for a while).

6. Logging Off: Log-off games can trick bumpers and confuse them. In these cases, the

bumper often doesn't know where the freighter is going to warp. I will concede that this is an especially dangerous tactic. It either works, or it seals the fate of the freighter. 7. Counter Bumping: Counter bumps can often bump a freighter into warp, optimally docking

in a station. They can also significantly impact the application of DPS from the Gank Fleet when the fleet lands if bumps are carefully timed. 8. Logistics: If you bring logistics, it increases the number of DPS required to successfully

gank the freighter. Given the right logistics for the right freighter type, logistics can cause a gank to fail. 9. EWAR: Griffins, Blackbirds, Rokhs and Falcons all can jam 1 or more ships before

CONCORD arrives. Their effectiveness increases as system security status decreases. They can jam before the gank fleet engages provided that the gankers are criminal sec status. Griffins and Blackbirds aren't worth ganking instead of the freighter 10. Boosting: Boosters with armored warfare/siege warfare links (or characters with just leadership skills) can increase the raw HP of the target by significant amounts and is undetectable by scouts, often causing a gank to fail.

Boosters with skirmish links (or skirmish leadership skills) increase the agility of the freighter/JF, making it harder to bump due to increased deceleration / increased acceleration towards their alignment.

11. Alternate routes: While we do often take advantage of chokepoints such as Uedama and Niarja, even Niarja is not a perfect chokepoint - smart freighters taking side routes such as Bahromab (that also borders Niarja) will escape our attention when we only have a scout placed in Madirmilire on Ashab gate (a very common scanner position). Freighters leaving Jita may escape notice by going into Perimeter via Maurasi, escaping the notice of a scanner on the Jita gate in Perimeter (perhaps the most common scanner position).

Proof: The problem it's solving doesn't exist. Part of the foundation of 'the problem with bumping' is that a bumper is capable of keeping a target bumped for an indefinite amount of time. Yes, it's true, a bumper can keep a target bumped for an indefinite amount of time. But a long enough time allows for the target to form a response fleet (ECM Ships, Logistics Ships, Tracking Disruptor Ships, Smart bombing Ships, Counter Bumpers). Additionally, since no one is ganking for ganking's sake anymore, there are rarely fleets where more than 1-2 targets are lined up to kill. Similarly, people trying to bump for ransoms try to use a fast turn-over time on targets to maximize profits and minimize time wasted on targets that won't pay. As I said before, typically the longest MiniLuv keeps a target bumped is 25-30 minutes.

Proof: As a separate note, ganking machariels is also a counter that exists. Granted it does not happen excessively often, it is absolutely possible and multiple people have done it multiple times over the last 2 years. Jennifer en Marland was the most deadly machariel ganker, killing 6 machariels while she was active. I've lost 2 myself. It seems unreasonable that something is unbalanced simply because people are unwilling to deign to use certain tactics to counter it. This would be akin for requesting a nerf to supercapitals because battleships are ineffective at dealing with supercapitals.

6) Lack of agency from the freighter.

Proof: The above list of actions/counters available to the freighter suggest that there isn't a lack of agency. There are also additional actions available to the freighter that don't require outside help and make ganking and bumping the freighter more difficult.

- Fitting Inertial Stabilizers. IStabs increase deceleration / increase alignment towards celestials (preferably Faction, what's another 250m on a ship that costs 1.3b or 7b?).
- Using Nomad implants. Nomads increase agility / decrease inertia modifier, resulting in increased deceleration / increased acceleration towards a celestial.
- Using Slave implants. Slaves mess with the number of ships required to gank a target, and are undetectable by scouts. This is particularly the case on Providences and Arks, and are compounded by using adaptive nano platings.
- **Using Ascendancy Implants. (See above).**

- Aligning instead of warping. I recently made a reddit comment about how your inertia modifier decreases when you're attempting to warp to a target, but remains its native natural number when trying to align to a celestial. Case in point, aligning to a celestial makes a target harder to bump.
- Switching alignments. Part of what the bumper has to keep track of is where the target is aligning, as to ensure it doesn't catch warp to a celestial, ship, can, etc because the bumper didn't know it had switched its alignments. Agency is something that freighters always have and never lose when confronted with Ganking. It is the case that many of the actions available to freighters occur before the freighter undocks or even becomes bumped, yet there are still individual actions the freighter can take after the bump happens to circumvent the gank. To us, it makes sense that if you're moving 5b+ (that's our minimum required level for a gank during normal operation), it behooves you to have friends on standby or escorting you to ensure the safety of your goods.

The only class of players that truly suffer from this are one-account warriors without friends; however, there are avenues to get help through the Anti-Ganking and Gank-Intel channels, which are wholly organic and player run. We've been doing this a lot longer than they have existed; however, it would be patently false to say they haven't disrupted our ganks or outright caused us to fail and abort a gank.

Conclusion: The conclusion is that this change is going to further reduce the parties capable of freighter ganking. Not simply killing a freighter, but being able to scout, target and hunt a freighter. We are already down to two groups that kill freighters (MiniLuv and Habaepo's Russians); one doesn't rely on bumping, but is far less active than MiniLuv. The other, MiniLuv, will be able to keep ganking some targets, using bumping as a disabler; however, in time our bumpers and FCs will burn out from freighter ganking, as this change is going to force any ganking group attempting to bump a freighter to run as many as 6 extra characters to keep a freighter bumped. We've shown that the number of people capable of bumping freighters is low, and the skill floor is high (and the skill ceiling higher), and that these barriers to entry are already a limiting factor on being able to create a group capable of ganking freighters. The 3-minute warp change would destroy an interesting, emergent, null-sec relevant and strategically relevant avenue of gameplay.

Suggestion: Don't do the change at all.

Suggestion 2: Make the warp out timer 15 minutes, in line with the aggression timer. There's already a significant amount of counterplay available before this change; with this change, avenues open up, such as alphaing the scrambling ship before it can apply its scram, jamming the scrambling ship before it can apply its scram, range/scan res damping the scrambling ship before it applies this

scram. This keeps that counterplay intact, along with the freighter's native escape mechanism, in addition to all of the counterplay available to them while not making the job of bumping and ganking the freighters frustratingly difficult.

What is the future of ganking?

There is an existential problem that exists with the ganking community, and it is primarily a conflict of relationships between CCP and the rest of the gankers. Gankers often seem spiteful, vindictive, disrespectful and hateful towards CCP as a result of the nerfs that target ganking. One possible example is the wreck HP change. It was an uncounterable mechanic that was allowing a single person to bring ganking to a halt (because without loot, we cannot buy the ships to operate as we do, or pay and incentivize our members). However, when the wreck HP change went in, Fozzie stated very openly and blatantly that the Damage Control nerf applying to freighters was a tit-for-tat change to ganking, using the excuse of fixing a truly uncounterable mechanic to add 'one more nerf' to suicide ganking. This nerf to ganking feels punitive at best and spiteful at worst. But that's just one problem with the relationship between gankers and CCP. The broader claim is that we feel targeted, nerfed and frankly belittled by a development crew that does understand what we do, why we do it or who we are.

Proof of this this can be found in the lack of communication between CCP and any major player in the ganking community. When Warr Akini, the founder of modern highsec freighter ganking and arguably the architect of this entire status quo, offered his knowledge to CCP Rise on an on-demand basis, the offer was soundly rejected. The offer was countered with a suggestion that he make comments via public forums on changes that had already been fully decided. This indicates a significant lack of interest in the how's of suicide ganking (a practice that engages hundreds of pilots in the Imperium and CFC alone, and before Globby's retirement, many members of PL and friends) and suggests a very one-sided and punitive view of the practice.

And that has had a profound effect on the ganking ecosystem. A year ago, there were 5 significant ganking groups: MiniLuv, CODE., Habaepo's Russians, Faylee Freir and his crew of renegade goons, Globby and his crew in PL. There were other smaller groups capable of ganking as well that had loose allegiances to the five big groups. At the time, we were required to engage in metagame, politics and diplomacy in order to keep the ganking ecosystem intact and undisturbed. We often didn't get along. We often had diplomatic incidents when someone ganked someone else's freighter, or shot a machariel or managed some other faux pas. It was stressful, it wasn't always fun but it was a rich microcosm of Eve that very much mirrored the balkanized parts of Nullsec (but with

highsec mechanics and literally no ability to make your enemy move). However, significant changes have reduced that number to 2:

- MiniLuv - Still kickin'
- Habaepo's Russians - Not a professional group, only active in RUTZ.
- Faylee Freir - Left the ganking game after Hyperdunking got nerfed, now kills JFs via wardec mechanics with Vendetta Mercenary group using EveHydra.
- Globby - Recently quit out of frustration with the level of nerfs CCP levied against ganking, problems with customer service and generally not knowing whether his ingenuity in developing new tactics would get him banned.
- CODE. - Mostly dead after the banning of Loyalanon (no complaints!); was dying after the freighter HP buff. We're concerned about the future of ganking. Because if the nerfs keep coming, and our lives keep getting more difficult, why bother with continuing to gank? We don't gank to make money. If greed was our primary motivator, there are other significantly more profitable methods of making money which require far less effort. We gank because it's what we do. It is our passion in New Eden. It is, in our opinion, the most intricate and high level form of gameplay offered in Eve. We gank because it has strategic impacts and ramifications. We gank because we constantly have to theory craft, innovate and adapt to our targets (freighters), to our enemies (anti-gankers) and, from time to time, CCP (unfortunately).

That's why we've reached out. If the long term plan for ganking is to restrict it to mining barges and orcas in belts, well, that's not interesting and we might as well stop now. It has very little counter play involved. It has 0 effects on nullsec or lowsec. It only requires coordination of x dps and a single person to provide a warp-in. We want to keep ganking a vibrant community that offers danger in highsec that can have adverse effects on people in entirely disjoint parts of the galaxy.

With every new, significant nerf, we've thought of shuttering the Ministry of love: Crime watch changes, ISBoxer nerfs, freighter lowslot changes, hyperdunking nerfs (probably deserved), freighter HP changes. Each time we've adapted, transformed and doubled down on the effort we put into this endeavor. We've spent years developing our tactics, focusing our characters, setting up supply chains and contacts across highsec. However, we believe this bumping change will be the final nail in the coffin; however, even if it isn't, how many more nerfs can we endure before this once-vibrant and emergent form of gameplay is snuffed out?

As an aside note, if the bumping change goes in as-is, the next adaptation will be suicide points on gates. The gank fleet keeps a citadel off the gate. The freighter jumps in. The freighter decloaks and the FC begins probing down the freighter. The freighter gets suicide-pointed by cruisers, the FC warps the fleet onto the freighter and the freighter dies. In that situation, there are 0 counters, 0 measures the

freighter can take to prevent their death once they've jumped in. It's already the most effective tactic at killing Jump Freighters. Yet another fear is that if the bumping change goes in as intended, this is the next logical step. The response will be to nerf tethering on citadels if you're of criminal security status and then we're back to the snuffed out ganking gameplay.