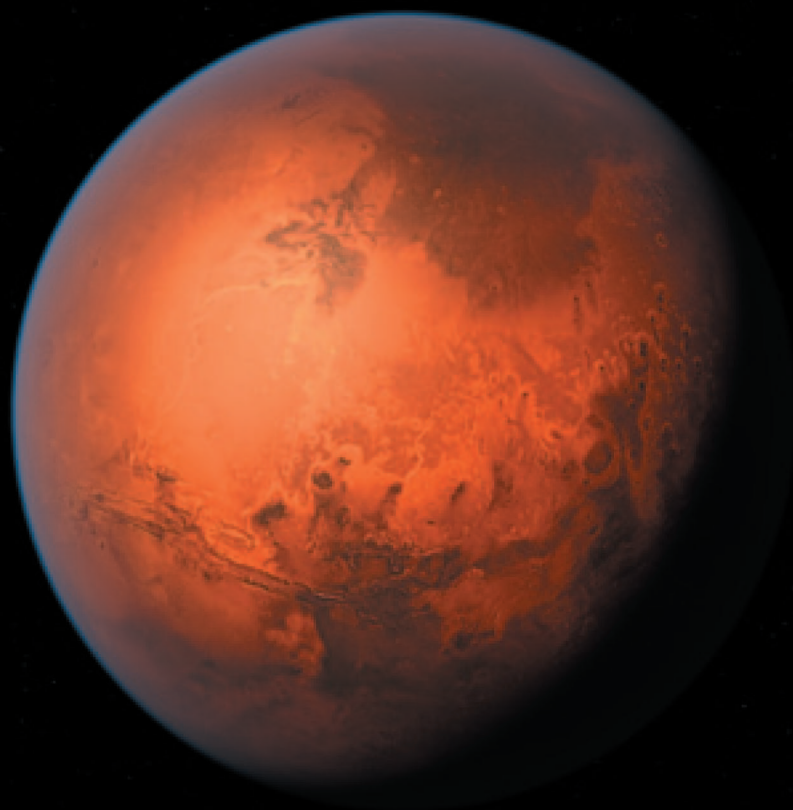


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3350



Free Mars



Written By
Ian 'Lizard' Harac

Babylon 5 Created by J. Michael Straczynski

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or exercise their revolutionary right to overthrow it.

- Abraham Lincoln

Free Mars

Ian 'Lizard' Harac

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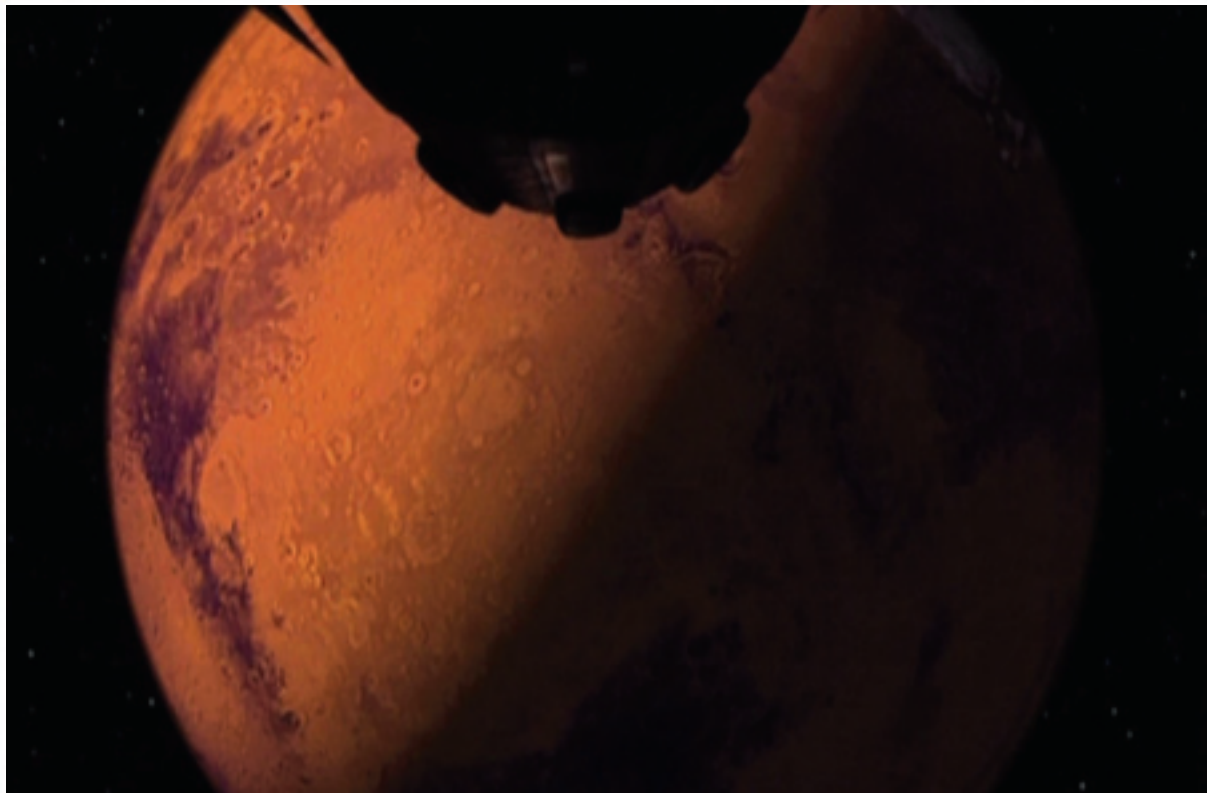
The Angry Red Planet

Mars, hanging blood red in the sky, has long been associated with war, darkness and death. It has been the imagined source of both alien invaders and ancient wisdom. From the optical illusion of 'canals' which fooled Lowell to the imagined 'Face on Mars' which fooled the credulous in the 20th and 21st centuries, it has long been believed that minds like our own dwelled there. When the first landers showed that, at most, Mars held only the most primitive forms of life and even in its 'golden age' had never given rise to anything beyond simple multicellular creatures, there was a sense of loss for a legend now shown to be a lie.

In the 23rd century, minds do dwell on Mars - human minds, for the most part. Mars is the most populous planet in the Solar System apart from Earth and the most capable of sustaining itself without outside support. It is also a world that lives up to its name, for it is enmeshed in war. Sometimes cold, sometimes hot,

but always there. From the slaughter of John Carter in 2177 to the Food Riots of the 2240s, the brutal crackdowns of the Clark Administration and the final liberation from Earth rule in 2262, Mars has been the site of constant struggle.

This book contains everything a Player or Games Master needs to use Mars in his *Babylon 5* game. Mars can be the backdrop to a series of adventures or the setting for an entire campaign – for several different campaigns, in fact. A game can focus on the Free Mars resistance struggling to liberate its home from the grip of Earth tyranny or it can focus on a team of elite EarthGov specialists charged with protecting the innocent from ruthless Martian terrorists. Naturally, a single game can include characters on both sides – G'Kar and Londo were hardly friends or allies for most of the original series. The doctrine that all characters must love and trust each other is often out of place in the universe of *Babylon 5*. Other roles are also possible – tunnel rats struggling to survive in the undercities, Psi Corps employees working at Syria Planum, blips fleeing the Corps, thugs working for the Martian Mafia or striking out on their own.



The actors, though, are only half the equation – there is also the stage! This book details all aspects of Mars, from what a typical citizen's apartment looks like, to the weather outside the domes, to the greatest casinos in New Vegas. Secrets are revealed – the hidden bases of the Shadows, the networks of forgotten tunnels that link the domes, the tricks the Resistance uses to operate under the nose of Psi Corps. From fast food to education, from transport tubes to desert rovers, every aspect of Martian life is covered.

A Note on Dates

Unless otherwise noted, this supplement primarily focuses on the same period as the *Babylon 5* television program, until Martian Independence: 2258 to December 2261. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, all information is true for any point in that timeline. Information that is only valid post-Independence, or which only applies during the time of Clark's control of EarthGov, will be explicitly noted. In general, the book focuses on providing a 'generic' pre-Independence Mars. The Resistance is active but has not yet won; EarthGov is firmly in control, either under the legitimate pre-Clark leadership or the Clark dictatorship. Ample information is provided on post-Independence Mars as well, allowing for play during the later years of the *Babylon 5* canon.

Physical Traits

Sol IV, known to the Humans as Mars (see 'Earth Deities') is smaller, colder and drier than the Humans' homeworld of Sol III (Earth). However, it is still the closest match to their homeworld that the Great Maker saw fit to grant them in their own system and it has thus been a focus of colonisation efforts ever since the species gained the technology to do so.

Histories of the Lesser Races, House Refa Publications, 2256 Edition

Mars is 4,200 miles in diameter, as compared to Earth's roughly 8,000-mile equator. Its year is 687 Earth days long and its day is 24 and a half Earth hours long. Prior to terraforming, the hottest temperatures recorded on Mars were in the high 70s Fahrenheit, while the lowest were more than 200 degrees below zero.

Geography

As soon as the earliest orbital probes reached Mars, two things became evident to astronomers. Firstly, that Mars was a dead, lifeless world and secondly, that

it had once been very different. Geological features such as canyons, volcanoes and mountain ranges all showed signs of a once-active hydrosphere and while many alternative explanations were offered, continued research showed that the initial impressions were correct. Mars had at one point been a wet planet, or at least a wetter one. There were dried lakebeds, empty river deltas and other land formations that could only plausibly have been shaped by water. There were non-hydrographic explanations for almost any given feature but trying to explain all of them away by such means was impossible.

The *Spirit* and *Endeavour* probes, which landed in the early 21st century, offered final confirmation. Mars had once been wet.

Olympus Mons

I find it interesting that a world which is half the size of the Human homeworld possesses features that exceed the largest examples found on said world. It is as if Mars, feeling ashamed of its small size, seeks to puff itself out with bloated and gargantuan geographical formations, a tiny bird adorned with gigantic plumage. One might almost say Mars is the 'Centauri' of planets.

Citizen G'Kar, Musings on the Sol System, 2264

Twice the size of Mount Everest and with a base roughly 300 miles across, Olympus Mons was one of the first distinct features to be found by early probes of Mars. It is a remnant of the great volcanic era of Mars billions of years ago, though there are hints that it continued to have some sputters of activity as recently as a mere 20 million years ago... minutes ago, geologically speaking. Rings of sensors set there by IPX and other explorers have found nothing but the feeblest rumblings deep in the core. Even so, there is enough warmth remaining that geothermal taps have been sunk deep into the heart of the mountain and these provide power for many of the surrounding settlements.

The inner crater of the mountain has sprung a grid work of catwalks and platforms as geologists and vulcanologists have set up temporary bases from the rim to the base. A somewhat dangerous network of power cables and lights adorn this makeshift grid. From the far side, at night, it somewhat resembles a Christmas tree designed by a sightless deity who had only had the concept described to him once.



Olympus Mons poses a slight problem for IPX. It is too spectacular to ignore as a tourist destination but it is also the site of the corporation's extensive and semi-secret work on the Shadow excavations. While the actual dig site is fairly far away, there is a risk of overflights from tourist shuttles going off-path and independent explorers travelling to places they should not. IPX tries to mitigate this by running all tourist operations themselves and carefully shepherding visitors. Still, there is always the occasional fool who wants to climb the mountain solo (a process which can take three or more weeks, even in the low gravity). Many of these die in the process, leaving their mummified bodies to be found months or years later when relatives finally track them down.

A small hotel and museum complex run by IPX can be found at the base. It often plays host to scientists from worlds well outside the Alliance and thus has extensive life-support facilities.

'Safety patrols' regularly circumnavigate the mountain looking for lost hikers, foolish mountaineers, tourists who have wandered off, spies and saboteurs. Deciding into which category a particular individual fits is usually

a matter of snap judgement on the part of the patrol.

The Resistance knows *something* is up at Olympus Mons and suspects it is top-secret weapons research. Few know the full story. Given the prominence of the location as a tourist site, it is considered a low-priority target.

After Independence, IPX drastically scales back their operations here, purging datafiles in advance of inspection by the new provisional government. The tourist centre is sold at a small price to the provisional government, which greatly increases its profile and run it as a means of generating much-needed revenue.

Polar Caps

The ice caps of Mars were among the first features to be seen with early human telescopes and aroused hopes in many observers that Mars was an Earth-like world – no other world showed such features. The caps could be seen growing and shrinking as the Martian seasons passed, leading many to speculate about a lush Martian summer where water flowed freely, followed by a bitter winter during which life would hibernate.

Alas, this was not the case. The growing and shrinking was due to sublimation; Mars did not know liquid water. There were no great cascades of icy water pouring forth from the poles each year and certainly no canals to carry the bounty to the water-starved civilisations of the planet. Indeed, the southern cap was as much carbon dioxide as water.

Today the poles are still mostly barren. They are frighteningly inhospitable spots. The mix of water ice and frozen carbon dioxide which characterises the south pole makes it especially dangerous; pockets of CO₂ will vaporise at much lower temperatures than water and exploration craft (which emit a good deal of waste heat) may unexpectedly thaw the carbon dioxide, leaving sudden gaps and holes that weaken the water ice. Even in the northern cap, which is mostly

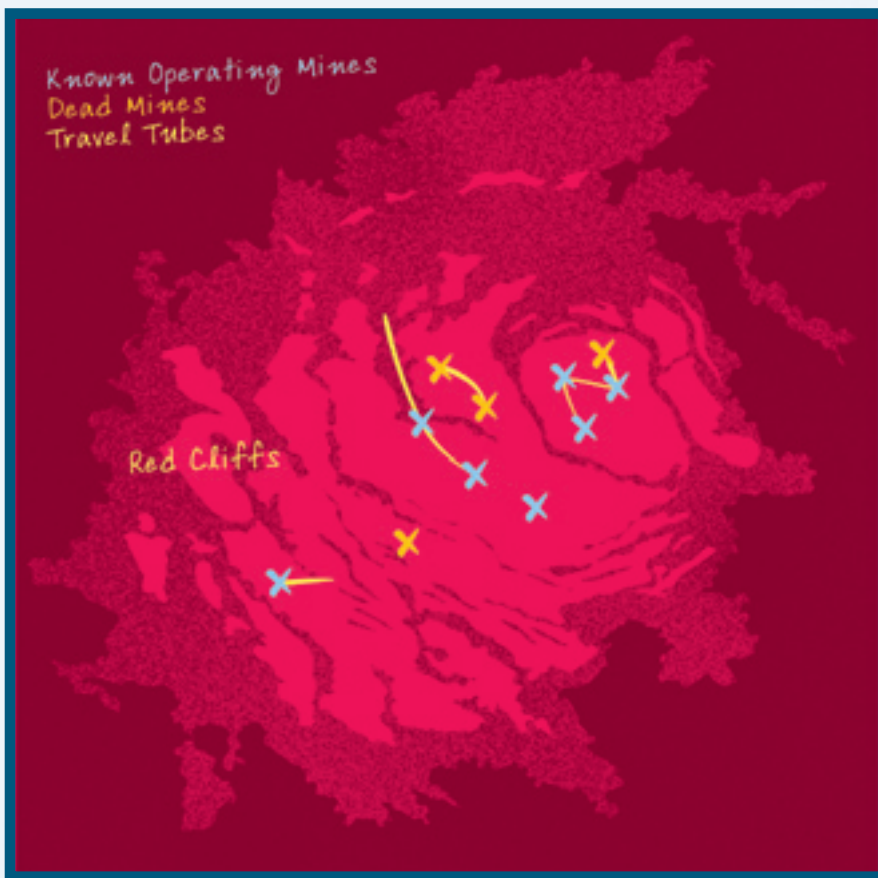
water, such occurrences are far too common.

However, the scientific value of the poles continues to attract a few visitors each year. The twin permanent bases, Tweel Base in the south and Valentine Base in the north, have a continual population of a dozen or so scientists each, who work three- to six-month shifts studying everything from deep core samples to biological residue. Little of the research done here is groundbreaking but it is often useful in surprising ways.

The north pole is somewhat more active than the south. Seven ice-mines have been set up to carve out chunks of pure water ice and ship it down to the ever-thirsty colonies. These mines are dangerous and unpleasant, and those who work in them are often criminals serving a 'public service' sentence. A small number of volunteers also work the mines, often those who are fleeing something. The death toll averages one worker a month, with causes ranging from impalement on the knife-edged shards which suddenly shift to being crushed beneath blocks that melt slightly and slip from their moorings.

Unthinkable as it is, even this frozen plain – which some claim resembles the Ninth Circle of Dante's Hell – attracts tourists. The Red Cliffs, as they are known, are an area where alternating layers of ice and dust have created a spectacular sight, a quarter of a mile high wall of shades of red and white. A handful of determined visitors come here each year to see this and other sites that appeal to those who find beauty in that which is harsh, stark and uninviting. Members of the Minbari warrior caste, as well as some Narn and Drazi, find this place inspiring and a handful of each make the difficult journey each year.

Some of the prisoners working the mines were sent there for Resistance activities and clandestine communication is still possible. At a word, sabotage can shut down the mines, cutting off a vital source of needed water. While the Martian patriots generally do



not wish to harm their own people, they might do so if a sudden water shortage could trigger uprisings against EarthGov or distract the government long enough for the Resistance to put other plans into operation.

Valles Marineris

The sheer mass of it... to stand on the rim and look down is to gaze into time itself. If more of the humans were to come here and see this place, they would be, I think, a better people for it.

Vhatal of the Family Harr, Minbari religious caste

It is a...a ditch. Yes, very big. Very impressive. But, still, a ditch, yes? I will be having words with the person who booked me on this tour when I get home.

Lord Montari Cotto

Considered by many to be the most spectacular natural feature of Mars, the Valles Marineris canyon, which stretches almost 2,500 miles, is the single largest such feature in all of EA space. Elsewhere, only the canyons on the Hurr homeworld surpass it. The canyon was clearly carved by water during the long-ago 'wet Mars' era but a number of scientists have found features that



cannot be explained by simple water action, given the estimated length of the wet period on Mars and the composition of the rock. Some studies indicate the canyon may be partially the result of a powerful energy discharge, such as from an antimatter beam, scouring the planet, but the degree of erosion in the area makes this explanation highly unlikely, as it would have had to have happened millions of years in the past, long before any sentient life existed in this portion of the galaxy.

Because the canyon, like the Grand Canyon on Earth, exposes the geological history of Mars, there are dozens of small scientific outposts scattered along the length of the vast rift. A small number are active; many were abandoned when their research was completed or their budgets were cut. A certain percentage of those are occasionally reactivated; some by Psi Corps, some by criminal gangs and some by tunnel rats or blips looking for places to hide. The canyon contains links to extensive cavern systems, some of which may hook up with old tunnels under the research outposts.

The deepest parts of the Valles Marineris are where the most obvious effects of terraforming can be seen. The air is fairly thick here, equal to that of a high mountain peak on Earth and during certain times of the year there is a trickle of water running through the riverbed.

Hardy lichens and mosses have begun to establish footholds and there are small insects living among them. All of this life is genetically modified to survive the long, cold winters but during the summer months Valles Marineris is a tiny slice of living green in the barren rust-hued wastes of Mars.

Biosphere

Spirit proved Mars once had water and might once have had life. Later probes such as *Vision* in 2011 and *Leakey* in 2013 confirmed the presence of limited extant life in a handful of warm spots. They also confirmed a brief 'Martian Spring' had occurred some two billion years earlier, during which multicellular life began to evolve.

In the mid-22nd century the Centauri contacted Earth and triggered half a dozen scientific revolutions. The discovery of hyperspace and the construction of jumpgates in the Sol system opened the galaxy up to man but the Centauri brought other gifts; advances in every field from medicine to material engineering. Among the technologies purchased from the Centauri were terraforming techniques – fast-growing plants to turn carbon dioxide into oxygen, bacteria to turn dust into soil, condensers to draw water out of the

The Red Mars Front

Naturally, no matter how extreme the cause there is always someone to champion it. The Red Mars Front is a small group of radicals opposed to the terraforming of Mars. They are inclined to sabotage water condensers, poison fields of oxygen-producing plants and gather in very small but very loud protests to demand the cessation of the planetary transformation. They are, for the most part, ignored. They are loosely connected with the Resistance but only because the people who join the RMF define themselves by what they oppose. They do not have a cohesive vision for a free Mars; they just hate EarthGov because it is there. As far as the leaders of the Resistance are concerned, the RMF falls into the 'useful idiot' category.

atmosphere and so on. Of course, when applied to a process like terraforming, a term such as 'rapid' is still relative – as of 2262, Mars will most likely be habitable without breathing masks in another century or so. Even then it will be a very harsh world, cold and dry and thin-aired, strongly resembling the Mars of science fiction legend.

This process has, however, changed the biosphere of the planet. The air is growing denser and richer in oxygen; the permafrost is thawing or melting; misting rains fall regularly in some regions. The native life, never very robust to begin with, is all but extinct now, save for strains preserved for scientific purposes at labs on Mars and Earth.

For the most part, this is not viewed as any great loss, even by those normally concerned with environmental issues. The Martian ecosystem had already been dying a slow, billion-year death. It was not evolving and ice cores and other experiments have shown that it was already shrinking year after year, with more and more of the planet becoming barren. The terraforming of Mars is not the destruction of a thriving world to serve man's rapaciousness; it is merely breathing life into a corpse.

At this point none of the life on Mars has any intended function other than terraforming; there are no food crops outside the agrodomes. However, due to various accidents and errors, a number of species have escaped the domes and now live on the Martian surface, including many varieties of insects (mutating rapidly due to the high levels of ultraviolet radiation reaching the surface) and a number of hardy plants managing to survive in the cold, arid conditions. Removing all such contamination would be costly and likely incomplete, so scientists content themselves with studying how such unplanned additions to the nascent biosphere adapt.

Gravity

It is the little things that a visitor notices first. The way the water splashes. The way someone trying to catch a falling glass constantly overshoots and the way the glass does not break when it should. The ease with which large boxes of wall plating are hoisted around.



The casual manner in which a Martian steps off a ten-foot wall or leaps up onto a four-foot one. Gravity on Mars is roughly half that of Earth. This poses few problems for long-term residents and those it does cause are handled by vitamin and mineral supplements pumped into every water system and by a culture that stresses regular exercise to keep muscles toned. Visitors, however, spend some time adjusting.

Many first-time travellers confuse 'Gravity is half Earth normal' with 'I am twice as strong'. They are wrong. A normal Earthman on Mars is no more capable of bending a steel bar or punching through a wall than he is on Earth. Material strength is unaffected, as is mass. What changes is *weight*. Things are easier to carry. They fall more slowly and take less damage when they hit. Structures can be built thinner and taller, as they need to support less weight.

Those who have not acclimated to Mars usually appear clumsy. They apply too much force to moving their own limbs, unused to the lightness of their own bodies. They misjudge how far and how fast they will fall, and overreact when trying to compensate. It takes a few weeks of practise before it becomes second nature. In addition, muscles atrophy slightly no matter how much exercise is undertaken.

The *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book* provides the mechanics for low-gravity situations. For ease of reference, the conditions on Mars provide the following modifiers to offworlders:

'That wasn't on the show!'

Budget limitations mean that trying to show objects falling at half-speed and so on during all Martian scenes would be highly impractical. Such minor details were not vital to the story being told and could be safely ignored. The unlimited budget of a roleplaying game, however, means that such things can be added in with trivial effort. By the same token, if worrying about gravity and the like gets in the way of the game, ignore it. Details are useful if they enhance immersion and make Mars feel like a different world from Earth; if they detract from storytelling and fun, they should be discarded.

Dexterity	-2
Strength	+0
Jump	x2
Lift	x2
Climbing	x2
Falling Damage	x/12
Base Speed	x2
Range Increment	x2

After one month on Mars, Dexterity becomes normal and jump and lift become one and a half times Earth normal, reflecting the character's acclimatisation. All Martian natives use those modifiers.

A few people are obsessive about not letting the lower gravity get to them. They engage in intensive exercise and eat diets rich in muscle-building chemicals. This costs 200 credits a month and consumes at least 10 hours a week in exercise time. Some Martians do this as well; they retain the x2 modifiers to jump and lift.

Unfortunately, some muscle wastage is inevitable in the lower gravity. This begins to manifest once any character has spend six months living on Mars. As long as the character remains on Mars, he will suffer no additional penalty. However, once he returns to a higher gravity environment, he will immediately suffer a -1 penalty to his Strength characteristic. This penalty remains for three months while the character's physiognomy adjusts.

The Martian Chronicle

Mars formed from the same primordial dust as Earth and at roughly the same time. Four billion years ago Sol shone upon three worlds with the potential to become rich with life. One was consumed in a choking haze, becoming a burning hell of molten lead and acid seas. One gave rise not only to life but also to thinking, feeling conscious life. On the last and coldest, life started, sputtered and finally collapsed in failure.

One billion years ago Mars was warmer and wetter. It was never a lush world but it was a habitable one, on a par with Minbar in many ways – cold and dry but capable of sustaining life. Life cannot be said to have flourished there but it did exist. Strange frond-like plants waved in the shallow, chill equatorial seas. Small worms crawled among them. Bacteria and micro-organisms spread out from the shores, beginning the process of turning sand into soil.

Then it ended. The low gravity could not sustain the atmosphere. The sun cooled slightly, just enough to trigger climactic shocks throughout Mars. The seas evaporated as the atmosphere thinned and what water was left was locked into polar ice or layers of permafrost. A small handful of bacteria survived in the frozen soil but they would never evolve beyond that state.

The Shadows Come

It is not certain when the first Shadow craft landed on Mars. It is known the Vorlons had a longstanding interest in Earth, with traces of their influence being evident throughout human history. Granted, there is considerable debate over which aspects of Earth legend and mythology are the results of direct Vorlon visitation, which are thrice-told and distorted tales of such and which were made up out of the whole cloth, but the fact that the Vorlons have had their eyes on Earth for a long time is no longer doubted by archaeologists. Whatever the Vorlons were interested in, the Shadows were also interested in. It is less clear if there was direct influence by the Shadows on Earth – some have theorised that white chocolate may be proof of their interference in human society - but they were definitely watching.

Mars once held an active Shadow presence. The remnants of organic technology – fragments, but it can be proved they are of Shadow make – have been found in a dozen places on the planet, from the south pole to the crater of Olympus Mons. These bases were clearly abandoned a very long time ago, as nothing remains but shards and dust.

During the last Shadow War, roughly one millennia ago (circa 1200 CE on Earth), the Shadows used Mars as a minor staging area. At least one battlecrab was left behind at Syria Planum and it is suspected that other craft were likewise buried. There is a lot of surface on Mars, however, and finding well-hidden Shadow craft is often a matter of luck or an oblique hint by those who wish the craft to be discovered. For example, the Drakh might lead a group of Player Characters to a well-hidden Shadow vessel.

It is also possible that other races have used Mars in the past. It is a convenient place from which to spy on Earth and it is one of the most habitable spots in the Solar System. While none of the known Major or League races can survive on Mars unaided, it is much easier to establish life support on Mars than on Luna, Venus or one of the moons of the outer gas giants. There are many reasons to believe the Vree may have had bases on Mars as recently as the mid-20th century and it is suspected that the Streib also had a presence there. Such discoveries could be a valuable source of alien technology.

The Battle of Valles Marineris

While it is difficult to determine the full details, it appears that during the last Shadow War one of the races involved, which has now vanished from the galaxy, attacked the Shadows on Mars. This battle took place in the region now known as Valles Marineris, which at the time was slightly less spectacular. Antimatter beams scoured the region, deepening and lengthening the canyon as well as temporarily thawing the permafrost, unleashing a flood of new water into the region. Whatever base may have been located there was destroyed. IPX expeditions have found fragments of Shadow technology, as well as small bits of organic detritus which seem to have come from the Shadows themselves, but the main target was either completely obliterated or very deeply buried. Locating the target of the attack or determining the identity of the attacking race are both long-term goals of IPX, but it is generally conceded that unless a revolutionary discovery is made

in the region, the full story of the attack will remain a mystery.

The Vree

It is generally known that Vree ships explored Earth during the 20th and 21st centuries. It is less well known that for a time a thriving Vree colony existed on Mars. From roughly the 1940s to the 1990s, a Vree observation and scientific outpost was located near Tharsis Mons, where a geothermal tap was used to supply power. At its height the base held 1,000 Vree – a necessity given the Vree's need for constant companionship and closeness.

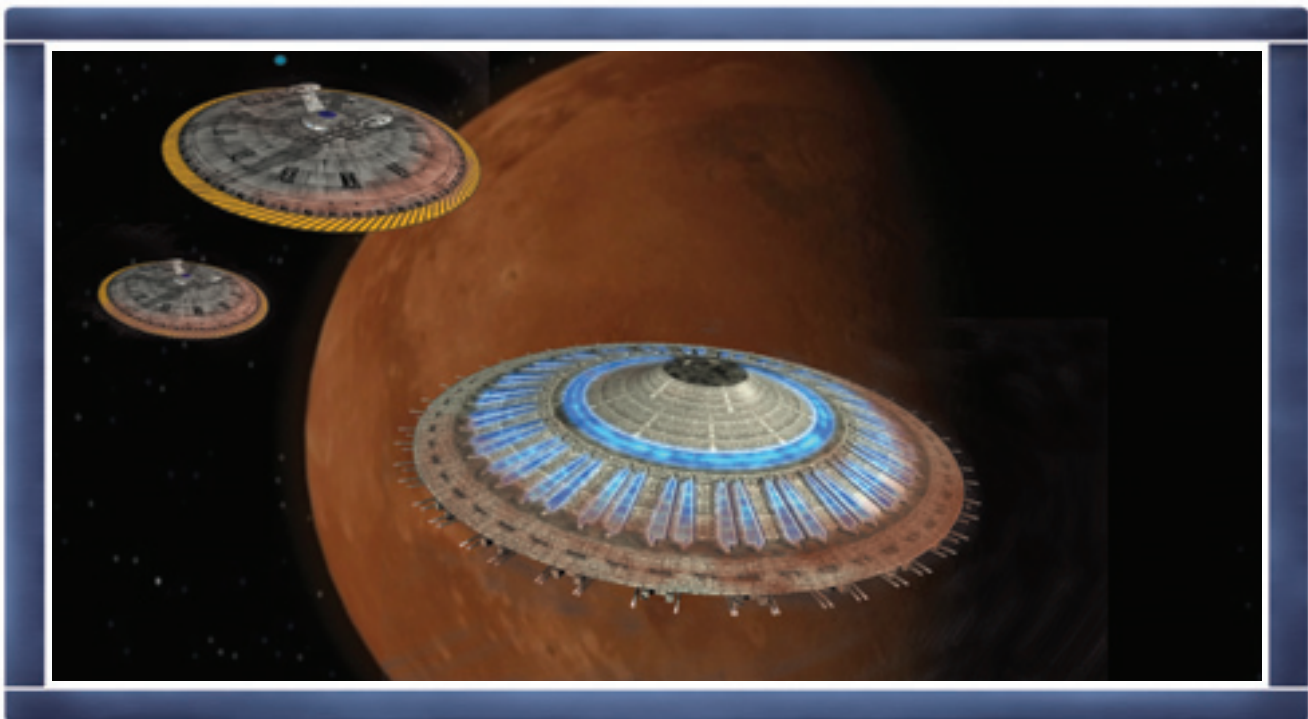
The base had several functions – it provided a listening post aimed Rimward, where the Ch'Lonas, Toukati and Koulani were all either moving into space or within a century or so of doing so. It also allowed the Vree a place to conduct extensive studies on humans, several of whom were captured, brought here and then mind-wiped by Vree telepaths, leaving only a few subconscious hints. It is worth noting that fewer than 20 such abductions ever took place – the mass abductions which Terrans wrote about in the 20th and early 21st centuries were a blend of pure delusion, fraud and, some suspect, Streib activity. Those few who had true memories of Vree experimentation and who spoke of it provided a model for the delusions and fantasies of thousands of others. The Vree never engaged in

genetic manipulation, torture or vivisection – most of their experiments were aimed at understanding the psychology, not the physiology, of humans.

When humans began launching orbital probes and then landers towards Mars, the Vree decided it was time to leave lest their base be seen. The base was too small to be picked up by the *Mariner* probes but the *Viking* probes may have found some hints of it, although the Vree made efforts to keep the base disguised during the periods when it would be exposed by creating small dust storms throughout the area. Shortly after this, they buried and abandoned the base.

A few automatic listening devices and probes in orbit around Mars failed to respond properly to the shutdown orders sent when the Vree left; these sometimes sporadically attacked human craft sent to the planet. By the 2050s, the power supplies on these relics had finally given out, leaving Mars truly open.

To this day the Vree refuse to make any amends or even offer apologies for their treatment of humans; they do not believe they did anything wrong and point out with considerable correctness that the Centauri would have enslaved the humans and the Minbari would have turned them into a neutered protectorate. All the Vree did was, in essence, make a minuscule number of humans look at the Vree equivalents of inkblots.



The Vree base remains hidden today. The Vree have never revealed its existence. Many Vree feel some effort must be made to destroy the base before the humans locate it but doing so would be very difficult, given how well guarded Mars is. A number of complex plots have been put forward and rejected.

The base is completely shut down and buried beneath volcanic rock of the same density as the surrounding earth. It is deeper than most deep radar scans will penetrate. Only a deliberate search of the area, or the sort of detailed scan which would precede major tunnelling operations, will reveal it. If it is discovered, it is likely that whoever is ruling Mars at the time will keep the fact well hidden until a complete investigation can be performed.

Some Vree artefacts have been found elsewhere on Mars, and Vree admit to having sometimes landed ships there for maintenance, but they do not feel it is wise to let humans know that an alien scientific base was observing them for some six decades.

It is speculated that the Vorlons took some pains to mimic Vree ships and operating patterns when they introduced telepaths to humanity in the 2050s, in order that humans would consider any new 'UFO' reports continuations of the same old legends.

Early Human Exploration

Telescopes

Mars has always fascinated humans. Once early optical telescopes were invented it became a favourite subject for investigation. It was the only world, apart from the Moon, with clear surface features that could be detected even by primitive lenses. As telescopes improved, so did knowledge of Mars. In the 1700s, the planet's polar caps were discovered. In the late 1800s, wishful thinking and atmospheric distortions

created 'canals', straight lines criss-crossing the planet, seemingly evidence of intelligence. Other false impressions included apparent patches of green that spread during the Martian summer and retreated during the Martian winter. As observations improved in the early and mid-20th centuries, these myths were discarded from the scientific lexicon but remained fixed in the public's mind.

Orbiters and Landers

In 40 years, a single human generation, mankind went from its first experiments with chemical rockets to launching a man to the Moon. In this rush of new exploration, Mars was targeted for close but unmanned investigation. The following notes some of the highlights of these early explorations.

Mariner

The first successful Mars flyby was the *Mariner 4* probe launched by the United States, which reached Mars in 1964. The pictures it sent back, though low-resolution by modern standards, were orders of magnitude better than anything telescopes could produce and they destroyed the Mars of myth, seemingly for all time. Mars was dry and dead; there were no oceans, no canals, no life. Further *Mariner* missions provided more details, but no surprises in the life department. The *Mariner 9* probe, which reached Mars in 1971, was the first human-made spacecraft to orbit another planet.

Mars-3

This was the first successful – barely – landing on Mars by a human craft. The probe, created by the USSR, managed to land on the planet but failed after only 20 seconds, returning no surface photographs. The orbiter associated with the lander was only a partial success; its orbital time was severely truncated but it did reveal information about the topography and atmospheric composition of Mars.

A Note from the Author

Material up to 2004 is factual, except where references to alien races occur. Material after 2004 is wholly speculative, based on proposed NASA and other missions and on the established 'future history' of the *Babylon 5* universe. In addition, the author has chosen to gamble on the thesis that life existed in the past on Mars and exists today in microbial form. This debate has *not* been scientifically resolved and this sourcebook should not be considered a treatise on anything but Mars in the fictional universe of *Babylon 5*. Those interested in studying the ongoing debate over life on Mars are advised to seek out scientific sources, not game books.



Viking

The *Viking* landers, which touched down at Utopia Planitia and Chryse Planitia in 1976, provided mankind with the first images from the surface of Mars. They revealed a reddish-brown world strewn with rocks, utterly barren. Experiments onboard the landers that were intended to detect life returned negative results, though one of them was mired in controversy. The associated *Viking* orbiters provided far more detailed views of Mars than any previous craft and showed strong evidence that Mars had once been a much wetter world. Many scientists, however, offered alternative explanations, and the Water on Mars question remained unanswered for some time.

Mars Observer

The *Mars Observer* would have provided spectacular surface images, as well as detailed climactic information. Unfortunately, a malfunctioning Vree defence satellite destroyed it prior to its establishing orbit. The true nature of the event was quickly covered up. A similar fate befell the *Mars Climate Orbiter* in 1998 and the *Polar Lander* in 1999; again, alternative explanations involving software failures or units of measurement errors were put forth.

Pathfinder

One of the most successful landers (and one which narrowly missed the Vree satellite's scanning beams), *Pathfinder*, reached Mars in 1996, was the first self-

propelled vehicle to be landed by humans on another world. It returned a wealth of detailed data on the planet's surface, offering extensive information on geography and weather. It did not, however, resolve the water issue, though it did provide a test bed for the technology that would.

Spirit and Opportunity

These two landers, the next generation beyond the *Pathfinder* technology, proved to be triumphs making up for the long string of failures that had dogged human exploration of the Red Planet over the previous years. They landed in 2004 and operated for far longer than their expected 90 days. The powerful instruments and sensors on the two craft revealed proof of liquid water in the planet's past and also showed images which would later be shown to be fossils of primitive multicellular life that had very briefly existed during the planet's wet phase.

Mars Science Lab

This probe reached Mars in 2009 and was equipped to perform exhaustive studies on the topic of active biology on Mars, repeating some of the *Viking* experiments but armed with much stronger knowledge of likely exobiology. These experiments were successes – bacterial life still existed on Mars, dwelling several inches below the surface in layers of permafrost. The life forms were primitive but they were inarguably life.

ESA 'Leakey' Sample Return Mission

Following the failure of the 2011 NASA mission to return samples of Martian soil to Earth (though it proved the existence of prior multicellular life on Mars), the Europeans launched *Leakey* in 2013 and it returned from Mars to dock with the International Space Station in 2015, where the samples were studied at no risk to Earth. Living Martian bacteria were successfully cultured, and after studies showed they posed no threat to humans, 'Mars Slime' - rocks covered with extraterrestrial bacteria - became a short-lived fad on Earth.

Ares 1 Prototype Habitation

The final step before landing men on Mars was proving that self-sustaining habitation was possible. Long-term Martian habitation would require 'living off the land'. The *Ares 1* probe contained an automated shelter system that would deploy on landing. Life support machines would synthesise air and water out of the soil. The shelter was tested for durability against dust storms, freezing nights and harsh radiation. All tests were positive; the cultured tissue samples stored within the prototype shelter survived.

Because of the hemispherical shape of the shelter, later colonists would refer to the *Ares 1* probe as 'MarsDome Zero'.

Man on Mars – The Early Years

By the 2050s, technology and international politics had both reached the stage where a manned mission to Mars was deemed feasible. The United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation pooled their expertise and their limited space budgets to launch the *Ares* missions.

Ares 3

Ares 3 sits beside *Apollo 11* in human memory as an achievement symbolic of an age. On July 4, 2057 – a century after Sputnik – the *Ares 3* lander set down on Mars. The words spoken by Andrei Topovich, who had drawn the high card which determined who the first man to set foot on Mars would be, were cryptic and prophetic: 'We are home'. Sadly the expedition, originally intended to last for six weeks, lasted only one as problems with the orbiter mandated an early return to Earth. In that single week, though, knowledge of Mars advanced tremendously. Humans could react and

move faster than the best probes and could easily lift up rocks, step over gullies, dig deep ditches and otherwise gather more information and perform more experiments than the past century of unmanned missions had done.

Ares 9

Ares 9, which landed in 2065, was record setting in two ways. The 20-person crew of the research station, located near the base of Olympus Mons, stayed for two years and proved that it would be possible for a small population to live there indefinitely with existing technology. Secondly, the *Ares 9* mission produced the first human conceived and born on another world – Amanda Brenkowitz, who was just learning to speak when the return voyage began. Unfortunately the year long return flight in zero-G played havoc with her developing bones and she found that any time spent in gravity was agonising for her. She spent her life in an L-5 colony, where she was able to live without pain but was essentially a prisoner. This caused the start of a long-simmering controversy over the dangers of exploration.

Ares 13

Due to the controversy over the consequences of long-term settlement, the *Ares* missions were scaled back. *Ares 13* held a seven-person crew but all seven were lost due to an engine failure. This tragedy, combined with the outbreak of World War III, ended Mars exploration for a generation.

Dawn 9

The newly formed Earth Alliance, determined to prove it could carry man forward in a way squabbling nations could not, returned to Mars at the beginning of the 22nd century with the *Dawn* series of missions. The original missions had been designed under the rubric *Red Dawn*, until a media historian at EarthDome uncovered a century-old propaganda film by the same name. *Dawn 1* was launched in 2101. The *Dawn* missions were generally similar to the *Ares* missions, though more specialised, as general information about the planet was well known. They were also partially funded by private corporations that would gain exclusive rights to any discoveries made. One such company was IPX, at the time little more than a front for EarthGov military research. Missions began digging, looking for fossils and more information on the past climate and history of Mars. It was *Dawn 9*, which had landed near the site of the *Ares 9* base (which was still intact and needed only a little work to be made functional again), which

made the discovery that would change the nature of Martian exploration.

EA Dome One

This was established in 2134 as the first permanent scientific base on Mars. It was designed to allow stays of indefinite length – so if, for example, a child were to be conceived, it could grow up on Mars until it could handle the long journey back to Earth without risking bone damage. EA Dome One included

‘all the comforts of home’ including private quarters, a small central park as a public space and provisions for expansion by joining a second dome to the first with a transport tube. It was also the first structure to make use of extensive tunnelling for additional room, as well as providing easily sealed areas in the event of a dome breach.

EA Dome One was eventually turned into an historical site, as ever-increasing technology made its scientific value nil. It was destroyed in 2241 in an explosion classified as suspicious, though no group or person was ever charged with the crime.

Mars One

In 2148 the discovery of Shadow technology near Olympus Mons made Mars colonisation a top priority for EarthGov. In 2155 the Mars One colony, the first permanent colony on Mars (EA Dome One was a permanent *base* with a rotating staff) was established and 53 scientists and archaeologists, many of whom did not know all of what they were looking for until they had disembarked, became the first colonists on Mars. For a variety of reasons the dome was not located directly at the dig site but at Solis Planum. As far as Earth was concerned, this was primarily a research colony whose intent was proving long-term habitation of Mars was possible; the archaeological work was



completely secret and any rumours of it which got out were dismissed as experiments in mining and water-drilling technology.

Mars One was not self-sufficient but it could survive long stretches of time out of contact with Earth. In theory it could have been made self-sustaining but only at an exorbitant cost; it was easier to spend the money on scientific equipment, labs and storage space than on ultra-refined air recyclers and massive water tanks. IPX ships arrived annually with food, air and other necessities. Within a decade, 12 children had been born to the colonists - there was not much to do besides tediously sift through dirt at Syria Planum - and a small section of the dome became a makeshift nursery and school. A second dome was added in 2168, which included larger residential areas and a small number of temporary apartments to hold short-term visitors to the colony; it was the first ‘hotel’ on Mars.

John Carter of Mars

Actually, growing up, I never did feel especially drawn to Mars. Believe it or not, ‘John Carter’ really isn’t all that unusual a name. I was always interested in exploration, though, and was never one for rules and people telling me what couldn’t be done – when I was 14, I backpacked from San Francisco to the ruins of San

Diego, and nearly died from the lingering radiation. My parents asked me if I'd learned my lesson. I told them the only lesson I learned was to make sure you study where you're going before you go there.

And that's sort of the lesson I took with me through my life. In 2156, the Centauri came, and suddenly everyone was looking outwards, past Pluto, to Proxima, to Beta Durani...I was thinking, 'Why go so far? Why not make a start with something a little more close to home?' It seems almost silly – to most people, I'm this great pioneer blasting into the unknown, but, to me, I'm just someone who wanted to be a bit cautious.

Interview with John Carter, 2176

John Carter born in the United States in 2120. A strong-willed, intelligent and charismatic man, he earned degrees in engineering and business and, aided by a small inheritance, founded Carter Aerospace in 2128. This small company flourished, providing low-orbit transcontinental craft and a range of military vehicles to EarthGov. Carter's contacts and connections in the government put him in regular contact with IPX and he learned there was a lot more going on on Mars than most people had ever dreamed, though the exact details always eluded him.

When the Centauri came, Carter was among the first given contracts to adapt vehicles for hyperspace. Carter was a brilliant engineer in his own right and had surrounded himself with equally sharp minds. As they worked on a number of government-approved plans, small amounts of Q-40 and other materials were purchased directly from the Centauri (who were more than happy to accept the additional business and were very comfortable with the concept of one 'official' deal and one 'unofficial' deal – it made them feel the humans were much like them) and then funnelled into projects enigmatically referred to as B-1 through B-4.

On March 3rd, 2169, the *Burroughs 1*, a converted Earth-to-orbit liner, took off from Carter Aerospace. Onboard were 760 people and a plethora of supplies. Three other craft, similarly outfitted but containing only pilots and supplies, followed immediately afterwards. All four craft headed to the newly built jumpgate in Earth orbit, entered it - Carter had the access codes, which were required for his work - and went into hyperspace. They did not, however, follow any of the major jump beacons leading to far-off systems – they

honed in on the IPX beacon that had recently been placed in Mars orbit.

Barely five hours later they reached the beacon. Each ship activated a one-time vortex generator. This was the riskiest part of the venture, as the generators were untested, based on Centauri blueprints Carter had to follow using technology centuries less advanced. Three of the four worked properly; the last did not. The craft carrying it, one of the three primary supply craft, was sent careening off the beacon and was lost forever in hyperspace.

The other craft successfully landed at Hellas Planitia, and the passengers disembarked and set to work. The loss of a supply ship was serious but not crippling – the expedition had been planned with redundancy in mind. Semi-permanent bases, similar to those used in the older *Ares* expeditions but a century further advanced in design and efficiency, held the colonists while the three landing craft were disassembled to form the first civilian dome. MarsDome One was crowded and everything from water to electric power was strictly rationed... but it *was* built. Others would soon follow, and the Martian population would explode.

At long last, Mars had Martians.

The Mars Boom

Suddenly everyone was 'Go for Mars!' Almost any sort of craft could manage a few hours in hyperspace, and Carter, wishing to encourage other settlers, had made the plans for the one-time vortex generator public. While it was not true that any backyard tinkerer could turn an old high-atmosphere plane into a one-way Mars rocket, it was fairly simple for a large group of motivated people to acquire the tools and equipment necessary to do it. Settling Mars seemed safer than building a Lagrange colony or heading to a distant sun, especially in a craft not designed for the rigours of hyperspace. Every month, it seemed, brought a new group of a few hundred to Mars, eager to begin their own new lives.

EarthGov tried to regulate it but the pressure was too great. Many member nations encouraged emigration, as those most likely to leave for Mars were troublesome minorities – ethnic, political or religious – whom the majority were happy to be rid of.

Colonists mostly set up near other colonists, although not too near, for reasons of both growth and privacy. Many groups came to Mars due to an isolationist bent and did not want to sacrifice their hard-won individuality on a new world. Hellas Planitia began to sprout domes and other types of settlements as if the planet had suddenly developed a skin disease.

After the first wave of dedicated colonists had mostly worn out, the second wave began. This consisted of those who were not willing or able to be pioneers but were willing to join up after the ground had been broken. Some were idealists, some were entrepreneurs and others were simply scoundrels. They came not to found colonies but to join them and once landed they had to find somewhere to go. Of all the settlements, Carter's was the most welcoming to anyone willing to work to build a new home on Mars and so it grew rapidly. The single dome became a tight cluster of domes and outbuildings.

The other domes found self-sufficiency difficult. Trade began, and with trade came the need for rapid dome-to-dome transportation. The first tube networks were *ad hoc*, linking two domes that had agreed to be so connected but as the interconnections grew a true system began to appear. Meanwhile, as populations expanded, the limitations of the domes meant that downwards, rather than outwards, was the necessary direction of growth. Areas intended as emergency

shelters or bulk storage became houses, stores, mines and factories.

The other issue was that of government. Each dome was claimed by the government from which the original settlement had come and that nation's laws ostensibly held force - though this was often ignored, especially by the more militant separatist factions. As the domes began to merge into something resembling a single society instead of a collection of colonies, issues of governance became more difficult. If a rich lode of minerals was discovered and worked by settlers from domes originally founded by Quebec separatists and Islamic fundamentalists, was it the North American Federation or the United Islamic Nations which was entitled to the taxes and whose laws would settle a treaty dispute between the two domes running the mines? More than a few brushfire wars were fought over such issues and inter dome warfare began to become as common as inter dome trade.

This culminated in 2177, eight years after Carter's founding of the colony, at a time when the Martian population had already gone from a few hundred to nearly 10,000 scattered over 18 major domes and twice that many semi-permanent settlements struggling to become full-fledged domes. A terrorist attack on MarsDome One (by then home to 2,000 people) killed Carter and nearly 500 others - one-quarter of the dome's population. It also destroyed much of the dome's

structure, requiring a mass exodus to the cramped passages below. MarsDome One would likely have failed if it had been alone but the connections made to the nearby domes saved it. With the help of neighbours, the dome was repaired and the colony managed to recover. The goal of the attack was to dissuade all off-Earth colonisation. However, as with most terrorism, it failed. Rather than scaring the colonists back to



Earth, it changed the culture of Mars in two ways. Firstly, it created a much-needed sense of Martian unity – this attack was not on one particular dome but on all those who had chosen to build a new life on Mars. Suddenly every colonist from the pale fundamentalists of New Bethlehem to the anarchonudists of Rainbow Forest had a small trace of a common identity. Secondly, it created a sentiment that would define Martian life for the next ninety years – the idea that Earth, until very recently their home, was now an enemy.

Botany Bay

The next phase of colonial expansion was somewhat darker than the euphoric rush of the first decade. Governments on Earth began to use Mars as a dumping ground. Whereas many of the early colonists had been dissidents or minorities who wished to leave Earth voluntarily, later colonists were those who had been 'asked' to leave. Rather than try to deal with complex issues of balancing minority rights against majority will, many governments with intransigent local populations began offering them one-way tickets instead of political compromises. While the number of emigrants was never large, it usually included the most fanatical or devoted, weakening the ability of those left behind to engage in cohesive political action. Along with those whose crimes were political were those whose crimes were more tangible – small-time crooks, con artists, thugs, drug dealers. In many cases, shipment to Mars was the result of a plea bargain, with the accused being given a sentence of what amounted to indentured servitude in the rapidly expanding mining and refining centres, or working on constructing the military bases. A good number were assigned to building the Phobos Prison Facility and comforted themselves that while they might have had to build it, at least they would not be staying in it.

Once on Mars, of course, keeping track of these convicts was difficult. Some worked out their terms and, having invested sweat equity in the domes and tunnels, chose to become solid citizens of their new home. Others bolted at the first opportunity and disappeared into the underdomes. The Martian population swelled but what it was gaining was primarily an underclass. One of the fundamental class divisions of Martian culture, which between the descendants of voluntary and involuntary colonists, had begun.

Another side effect of the extradition program was to upset the delicate balance of self-sufficiency on Mars.



The early colonists carefully calculated space needed for crops, the amount of water they could extract and recycle and so on, and made plans for orderly population growth. The new colonists were sent to work in mines, not farms, and food and water were to be provided for them from Earth. This meant that the population of Mars quickly became unsustainable without food from Earth. During the early years, when the first 'involuntaries' were mostly confined to their own domes this was manageable but as the populations continued to blur many domes found they could no longer survive on what they could grow themselves. Trade with Earth became a necessity.

However, most of the original colonies were not set up as production centres but as homes. This left them few goods to trade. Fury at Earth for placing them in this situation grew among the colonists and violence began to spread. In 2195, as both sides neared civil war, a compromise was offered – Earth would provide food and other necessities to the colonies to supplement locally grown supplies, while a small general tax would be laid on all Martian transactions, with the money collected going to a general fund for Martian development, allowing for such things as a centrally-designed transit system, research into improved terraforming and other services which individual domes could not afford. In addition, Mars would be able to elect a non-voting representative to EarthDome.

This compromise, known as the Macintyre-Carter Treaty of 2195, established the basic framework for Martian governance for the next half-century or so. The tensions that gave rise to it also laid the groundwork for the Free Mars movement.

Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed

Mars in the late 2250s and early 2260s has a population estimated at anywhere from 10 million to 15 million, making it the most populous planet in the Solar System after Earth and one of the most populous of all human worlds. It has been settled for almost a century and there are several fourth-generation Martians who can trace their ancestries back to John Carter's crew or even Carter himself.

The Martian Character

The people on Mars are highly varied and there are few if any dominant 'Marzie' traits. There is no well-defined Martian accent, for example, or broad stereotypical behaviour. The domes of Mars include Christians, Jews, Muslims, Foundationists, atheists and others in roughly the same proportions as Earth, though there are a number of growing doctrinal differences. There are no unusual skewings in Martian sexual orientation or preferred practices, although families tend to have more children (despite the cramped conditions) and there is a slight but statistically meaningful reduction in the rate of divorce.

In general, Martians tend to be more tolerant of private behaviour and less tolerant of public expressions of it. The cramped domes, tight tube trains, smallish public facilities and few open spaces mean that it is difficult to escape rude behaviour on the parts of others, from excessive body odour to second-hand smoke to loud music. What happens behind closed doors is considered to be nobody's business but in public Martians expect their neighbours to reduce the impact of their actions on each other.

The general closeness of Martian life means that personal space is at a premium and that close contact is simply a part of day-to-day life. A Martian is likely to stand much closer than other humans feel comfortable with. By the same token, flamboyant gestures are likely to annoy, so Martians tend to be unexpressive with body language, relying on subtle shifts in pose or facial expression to express their feelings.

Gluttony is considered one of the worst sins on Mars, especially if food or water goes to waste. Conspicuous consumption is frowned on, even by the very rich

– wealthy folks who emigrate from Earth are usually advised to leave their gaudiest items back home and to take only those things they truly need. A wealthy Martian wears one or two small but beautiful jewels rather than a mountain of them; a Martian's personal vehicle is small and very well maintained rather than large and loud. Martian society is not opposed to wealth but to waste – ordering expensive food is fine, eating one bite and throwing the rest away is a major *faux pas*. In other words, having money to burn is fine – actually burning it is unacceptable.

Arts and Leisure

In general, Martians share the same taste in art as the rest of the Earth Alliance. Mozart plays in the concert halls, Rebo and Zooty movies attract devoted fans (and sneers from the elite), *Drazi in the House* remains the highest-rated tri-vid series year after year and so on. However, just as the American colonies quickly developed their own distinctive cultural expressions in the decades following their separation from England, so too has Martian society begun to find its own voice. Whether the Great Martian Novel has yet to be written is a matter of considerable debate among the literati but there are definite cultural shifts occurring and distinctly Martian art forms are taking shape.

Anti-Functionalism: This is a movement in architecture and industrial design that grew out of the limited space available to most Martians for purely aesthetic items. Anti-functionalism holds that functional items should be attractive as well as useful and that a couch, table, bookcase or computer should be as decorated as possible. Rather than neutral furniture highlighting sculpture or painting, Martians have couches which double as sculpture or bookcases with embedded liquid crystal displays. Everything from links to fountain pens contains some purely useless elements that exist only for decoration's sake.

Tunnel Rap: Every subculture develops its own indigenous music, often very rapidly, and the style of music called tunnel rap (blending the 'tunnel rat' and the 20th/21st-century style of heavily rhythmic, often political music) quickly took shape in the 2040s, when Martian independence became much more mainstream in the wake of the Food Riots. However, much of the music has little to do with independence *per se* and much to do with the tunnel rat lifestyle of survival, desperation and community born of necessity. Tunnel rap is popular among well-off Martians, especially the

young, who often adopt clothing in the scavenged, hand-sewn style of the tunnel dwellers and attempt to mimic their attitudes and culture. Such imitators are looked on with contempt by those for whom the struggle for survival is a daily reality, not a fashion statement.

Dome Cooking: This form of cuisine takes its name from an early cooking program from the 2030s, the title of which was some marketing exec's idea of a clever pun (on 'home cooking'). 'Dome cooking' has become a generic term for the indigenous Martian style of cooking, which relies on a minimum of fresh meat and vegetables added to a larger quantity of synthetics, hydroponics and textured proteins. Each ethnic culture on Mars has adapted many of its staple foods to the necessities of Martian life – only the very wealthy can afford not to stretch their food budget with synthetics.

Classes on Mars

While the core classes in the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book* were designed primarily to model the sort of characters found on the Babylon 5 station, they are more than capable of handling an all-Mars campaign. The following section discusses some Mars-centric character concepts based on those classes.

Some of the concepts include optional variants on the basic class structure. Only one such variant should be chosen, no matter how many times classes are switched. Someone who chooses the optional changes for the corporate troubleshooter concept, for example, may not also select the modifications for the provocateur.

Agent

Mars is a world of countless factions, from corporations to the Resistance to the Psi Corps. All of these factions maintain both public and private faces and agents can serve in either – or both – roles. Agents are expected to move smoothly through the varied levels of Martian society, at home in the cocktail parties in the corporate sub-domes or among the vicious tunnel gangs in the Betweens. They are also expected to travel well – to take their employers' concerns to EarthDome, Babylon 5 or Brakos if need be.

A Martian agent is likely to be a bit less mercenary and bit more dedicated than the standard agent; something about the world breeds passion and devotion to one's cause. The relatively small population makes it harder

to fade into the shadows and traitors are quickly found out. 'Mercenary' free agents are frowned on; from the Resistance to the Martian Mafia, unswerving loyalty is expected. Some concepts for agent characters include:

Corporate Troubleshooter

'I find trouble. Then I shoot it.'

Running a business is never easy and on a planet filled with terrorists, rogue telepaths, snoopy EarthGov bureaucrats and perennial food and water scarcities it is especially difficult. Corporate troubleshooters work to make life easier for their bosses. This can be as innocuous as cutting a deal with a union rep or as vicious as blowing up a little-used warehouse dome (killing a few workers who happen to be inside) and pinning it on the Resistance in order to keep them discredited. Troubleshooters also have to deal with corporate espionage – either engaging in it or preventing it.

Optional Variant: Corporate troubleshooters are expected to present an acceptable public face, to know the local business scene and to stick close to home. As an option, Pilot and Sleight of Hand become cross-class skills and Diplomacy and Knowledge (corporations) become class skills.

Provocateur

'Enough of this kiddie stuff! I'm telling you, Mars will never be free unless we show we're serious! Now, here's what we ought to do...'

Provocateurs live very dangerous double lives. They are agents of EarthGov or the Psi Corps who have



Cultural Deviations

There are many subtle cues that identify cultural affiliation, from choice of words to body language. While Martian culture is not dramatically different from Earth culture, there are some differences – as there are with any of the established colony worlds. If a character attempts to disguise himself as a native of a colony world, apply a +2 circumstance bonus to any Spot checks made by natives to penetrate the disguise.

Further, small differences can create subconscious reactions. A Martian stands a few inches closer when negotiating than an Earthborn does, causing the Earthborn to try to back away to increase the distance to a comfortable level. The Earthborn will see the Martian as pushy and rude; the Martian will think the Earthborn is nervous or trying to hide something. The net result is a -1 penalty to Diplomacy checks due to cultural differences, unless at least one partner has studied the cultural mores involved and consciously adjusts his behaviour to be acceptable while ignoring ‘odd’ behaviour from the person he is negotiating with. A single rank in Knowledge (colonial culture) will allow for this.

infiltrated Resistance or blip groups and who seek to make the groups more visible so they can be easily destroyed – without tipping off the members that they are double agents. Convincing peaceful groups to perform acts of violence can swing public sentiment against them and convincing well-hidden groups to become more visible makes them easier to track and arrest. A skilled provocateur can turn a peaceful protest into a violent riot or generate massive public support for a ‘law and order’ candidate by inciting a wave of terrorist attacks just prior to an election. An unskilled provocateur is usually identified by a few fragments of DNA recovered from the inner workings of a tunnel-borer.

Diplomat

There are few true ‘diplomats’ on Mars. Since it is considered (prior to 2262) part of the Earth Alliance, the EA does not maintain an embassy there. A few alien races, most notably the Centauri, do have auxiliary embassies on Mars but they are considered expendable in times of budget crisis. However, the role of a diplomat – a representative of a greater power, empowered to speak on its behalf and negotiate settlements – is vital. Many organisations on Mars have individuals whose skills and the diplomat class best models abilities.

Resistance Spokesperson

The Resistance spokesman is the public face of the Resistance. They are never associated or linked with violent or terrorist factions; they always speak about peaceful settlement of disputes, working within the system, using the political process. They appear on talk shows, author columns in *Mars Today*, have books distributed on the major nets, get humanitarian awards from various foundations. At times they may use carefully veiled language to imply violence is in the offing: ‘I am opposed to violence in all forms, of course, but if Clark’s proposed regulations become law, I am certain others will be unable to restrain their baser impulses.’

Some Spokesmen are everything they seem to be – intellectuals who believe in Martian liberation via political means. Many, however, are carefully groomed front men for the more violent elements of the Resistance. Some are nothing but skilled actors playing the role; others are philosophers, thinkers and activists who understand the wisdom of showing the open hand to the public while keeping the upraised fist secret. A small number have no real connection to the true Resistance – they are *poseurs* who live for the talk-show and book-tour circuit and are often courted by EarthGov because of their ‘open-mindedness’ and ‘willingness to compromise.’ Some shift from one role to another over the course of their lives.

Optional Variant: Many spokespersons lead almost double lives, their public faces and their private ones kept very separate. Disguise becomes a class skill for them, however, because they prefer to lure flies with honey rather than vinegar; Intimidation becomes a cross-class skill.

Corporate Lobbyist

Corporations have a great deal of wealth and power but they are also favoured targets. It is easy for a politician to grab a few points in the polls by declaring himself 'not a pawn of the corporations' – even if he is. Activists blame corporations for everything from pollution to empty public coffers. Unions are forever demanding that their workers be paid on occasion. Corporate lobbyists exist to sell their employers' sides of things and to counter the efforts of lobbyists for other organisations and, often, other corporations. Regulations can make or break a business and they are often crafted so as to favour large business over small, or one business over another. The role of the lobbyist is to talk to politicians, reporters, celebrities and their ilk. Many lobbyists work somewhere else before taking on this role – a large number are former EarthGov employees (especially lobbyists for military contractors) or have proven themselves doing darker deeds (in other words, they have a few Agent levels). Some are drawn from university backgrounds and serve to provide an air of credibility to claims that a certain manufacturing process is perfectly safe or that there is no environmental danger from the rumoured chemical spill.

Corporate lobbyists have access to corporate, not government, resources. This should be taken into account when considering what sorts of requests can be made and what the DCs of fulfilling them should be. Few corporations have squadrons of Starfuries sitting on the landing field ready to launch but they do have skilled professionals in a wide range of fields, massive liquid cash reserves and access to first-class passage on almost any transport at a moment's notice.

Lurker

Lurkers are better known as tunnel rats on Mars and that is how they think of themselves. They are omnipresent. They can be found beneath every dome and in the long twilight corridors of the Betweens. While there is no Lurker 'culture' on Babylon 5 beyond the crudest of social structures, there are many second- and third-generation tunnel rats. Complex social forms have begun to appear, along with a complex *patois* that few outsiders can master.

There are also plenty of newcomers, though, from criminals fleeing EarthGov justice to blips, workers or managers caught in a downsizing wave and unable

to make rent or leave the planet. There are also some non-humans, especially in the Clark era, when purges and pogroms take their toll on the Sol system's alien population.

Teep Runner

Mars is the 'Grand Central Station' of the Underground Railroad that gets rogue teeps off Earth, away from Psi Corps and heading for safe havens in the outer colonies or beyond EA space. Many of the tunnel rats are strongly sympathetic to the blips, having had more than a few bad run-ins with Psi Cops and Bloodhound units, not to mention having had their brains reamed out by extra-legal 'interrogations' at the hands of impatient Martian authorities. A teep runner is an individual who has dedicated himself to helping the blips, and who knows all the tricks of the trade – who to call in an emergency, how to avoid tipping off a casual scan, just how far away you need to stand from a Psi Cop to be out of scanning range.

Optional Variant: A teep runner has Knowledge (telepathy) as a class skill, as well as Contact and Resist Scan as available bonus feats, but loses Blind-Fight and Weapon Focus. They are sneaks, not fighters. Note that a teep runner can still take these when entitled to take any normal feat.

Switchsider

Most tunnel rats stay in the tunnels, especially those who were born and raised there. A few, however, have adopted a sort of secret identity holding down odd jobs in the domes. These adaptable individuals provide a vital link between the surface world of Mars and the mostly hidden underworld, bringing in news, supplies and credits. Some manage to work their way out of the tunnels entirely but most find that a life on the fringes, with one foot in legitimate Martian society and one in the world of the tunnels, gives them best of all worlds.

Officer

EarthGov has a strong presence on Mars. It is a major military staging area, and the constant threat of terrorism and riots means that Earth must constantly remind the Martians that it is *here*, not millions of miles away. All branches of EarthForce are well represented on Mars. Officers can be assigned to orbital patrol craft, to infantry training bases, to security at EarthDome Mars or to recruiting offices in the slums of MarsDome One.



Counterterrorism

Some officers are placed on especially dangerous duty, working to prevent terrorist attacks. These officers almost always have levels of Agent and divide their time between espionage (including high-risk infiltration of suspected cells) and countermeasures (setting up security systems, looking for likely targets). They may switch rapidly between overt and covert roles.

MarsCop

The officer class works well for modelling civilian police forces and Mars has plenty – and needs more. Perennially overworked and under funded and often torn by conflicting loyalties, the civilian police on Mars are often seen as second-class citizens by EarthGov and as collaborators or traitors by the Resistance. In addition to dealing with Free Mars terrorists, cops on Mars must deal with tunnel rats, help Psi Cops run down blips, keep the Martian Mafia under some sort of control, find fugitives escaping into the Betweens and somehow survive on a cop's salary. Despair and frustration lead to corruption and those cops who do not give in to the temptation often find themselves trapped between corrupt partners (who do not trust anyone not as guilty as they are) and hostile citizens (who assume all cops are equally corrupt).

Scientist

Martian colonisation began as a scientific endeavour and science has always been a strong influence on Martian society. Much of Martian industry, both locally owned and Earth-based, is centred around R&D. The major domes all have prestigious universities and

students often travel from Earth or the outer colonies to complete their training here. Environmental engineering, biotechnology, terraforming and advanced electronics are the most common pursuits but nearly all the sciences are represented. The life sciences, except where they overlap with ecological engineering, are the weakest; few biologists come to Mars unless they wish to study a fossil bacterium that has been dead for a billion years or help genetically engineer tomatoes to grow better in hydroponic tanks.

Equally important, though much less well known to the general public, are the xenoarchaeological specialists. Most people assume the IPX dome on Mars is there because IPX needs to develop techniques for long-term survival on hostile worlds. Few suspect that Mars itself is an active xenoarchaeological site.

The Psi Corps also has many scientists stationed at its Syria Planum base; these are also teeps, of course, but they are often those whose telepathic abilities are of only minimal utility. Some work for the Corps because they have nowhere else to go; others have a special interest in any research that might boost telepathic ability, often planning to use such techniques on themselves.

Soldier

There is always a need for someone who knows how to fight and this need is acute on Mars. EarthGov needs front-line grunts and security staff. The Martian Mafia needs thugs, bullies and enforcers. The Resistance needs skilled soldiers to hold off the guards and to defend safehouses and the like against assault while the systems are wiped and those with valuable knowledge make their escape. The tunnel rats... well, they do not need big tough guys throwing their weight around, but they get them anyway, and having a skilled fighter on your side is never a bad thing. Most of those who live their lives in the rougher strata of Martian society have a level or two of this class, and many more make it their true calling in life.

Worker

Most people on Mars are Workers. From the street sweepers who keep the roads of MarsDome One clean, to the miners of Slimtown, to the ranks of bureaucrats filling cubicles at EarthDome Mars, it is the Workers who, on Mars as everywhere, keep the planet running. Many of them, especially the blue collar, regularly experience the petty indignities that come from living

in an occupied state. They are Martians but their bosses – corporate and government – are more likely to be Earthborn. The small shopkeeper or would-be entrepreneur has an uphill climb, as the regulations and restrictions which bind him are either not enforced or simply waived when they would hinder his Earther competition. The blue-collar labourer often sees management positions given to Earthers fresh off the shuttle, with no field experience and nothing to justify their positions but connections with the home office on Earth. Even those businesses which are wholly Martian-run must jump through hoops – securing permits and forms often requires the wholly unnecessary step of having physical goods shipped from Earth – ostensibly to prevent forgery or for security reasons but the added expense can mean the difference between profit and loss.

Most workers, of course, accept this. They do their jobs and collect their paychecks and while they might wish the world were different, they stoically accept that it is not. Others form the true core of the Resistance, the rank-and-file members who do the deeds planned by the leadership, who provide the constant stream of information that the Resistance needs to operate. An office worker, miner or hotel worker hears and sees a lot, and has access to places which can be ideal for planting a bug... or a bomb. Who better to tell a Resistance member how to disable a tube train than one whose job it is to keep it running?

Infiltrator

The infiltrator is a worker who is absolutely committed to the Resistance. Whatever job he holds, he thinks of it as his 'cover' – his real job is freeing Mars. While many workers with Resistance sympathies pass along titbits of news that they pick up, the infiltrator actively seeks out information, sometimes pushing the limits of what his job allows. However, he knows his utility is in his seeming neutrality. He is just a harmless drone, a faceless member of the proletariat, waved along by bored security guards and ignored by corporate executives as he empties their trash bins as they discuss their upcoming plans.

Optional Variant: Infiltrators gain Computer Use, Hide and Search as class skills. However, they do not become Experts until 8th level, as their work for the Resistance keeps them hopping from job to job and also occupies them to the point where they cannot focus solely on their career skills.

Characters by Campaign

There are a wide range of campaign types that can take place among the domes, tunnels and crimson sands. The Campaigning section describes some of them; this section discusses character archetypes that fit within them.

Resistance

Resistance characters come from all walks of life. The majority are native-born Martians but there are some who are not, including those motivated by a passionate desire to work for a cause and those who immigrated to Mars with no political agenda but who soon found themselves wholly sympathetic to the ideal of liberating their new home.

A character may be drawn to the Resistance for many reasons. He might be motivated by pure patriotism, a desire to see his homeland freed from Earth tyranny. He may have radical political agendas which he knows will never be supported by Earth but which might find a home on Mars. He may be driven by vengeance – family killed during the Food Riots, the Dilgar War or the Earth/Minbari war. While the latter two have little to do with Earth's relationship with Mars, it is easy to blame a distant and uncaring EarthGov for the loss of family or friends during one of 'Earth's wars'. He may simply enjoy blowing things up and like having political activism as an excuse. Some Resistance characters will be *poseurs* playing at being radical activists but unwilling to really take the direct action necessary to free their planet. Many will move through several of these phases.

Agents in the Resistance are the elite undercover operatives, spies and saboteurs, as well as skilled assassins. Diplomats represent the public face of the Resistance and also serve to forge ties between splintered factions and offworld groups that may offer support. Lurkers are often recruited as messengers, go-betweens and scouts, as well as forming a certain body of expendable personnel. Officers are very rare as active members but Martian-born military personnel might be working secretly for the Resistance. Scientists, too, have limited roles – there are a few doctors who donate their time and skills to the cause and some technicians and chemists skilled in bomb making, security cracking and other underground skills. Soldiers are there to provide brute force when it is called for. Telepaths are often distrusted by the Resistance, since Psi Corps is known to plant deep-cover agents, but their skills are

sometimes too useful to ignore. Workers, as always, form the bulk of the rank and file. They pass along titbits of information heard at work, maintain whatever equipment the Resistance has managed to secure for itself and remind the plotters and planners what they are really supposed to be fighting for.

Counter-Resistance

Those opposed to Martian independence also come from a variety of backgrounds. Most are not Mars-born but many are – far more than the Resistance will publicly (or sometimes even privately) admit. Some treat this as just a job – they are there to provide law and order and to them Resistance members or street thugs are just criminals. Others are more passionate, viewing political activism as treason and those who espouse Martian independence as enemies of Earth, far worse than run-of-the-mill criminals motivated solely by greed.

The majority of those working to oppose the Resistance are doing so under the direct orders of EarthGov as members of the military or civilian intelligence or law-enforcement agencies. There are a number of political groups that oppose Martian independence as well. Most of the larger corporations likewise oppose independence, as it will dramatically reduce their favoured status, increase their tax burdens and force them to invest in an entirely new set of politicians, just when they have the old ones nicely broken in. This latter group is responsible for many covert anti-Resistance strikes, which are often done without the explicit knowledge of EarthGov but with its tacit approval.

Agents working against the Resistance are often double agents infiltrating groups and reporting on their activities. Diplomats are seen mostly in the role of convincing the undecideds not to support the Resistance and in ‘spinning’ government actions to put them into the best possible light. ‘Clark’s new policies are for your own security. And for your children. If you love your children, you will support Clark.’ Lurkers are rarely an active part of counter-Resistance activities but some serve as snitches or informants and some who have been victims of terrorist activities may offer what skills they have in the service of revenge. Officers form the bulk of counter-terrorist activities, often leading strike teams against known Resistance strongholds or providing security for likely targets. Scientists can be found in forensics and support roles,

as well as more hands-on activities such as cracking security codes on a data crystal or finding a cure for a genetically engineered disease a Resistance cell has gotten its hands on. Soldiers, as always, do the fighting – if an Officer leads the strike force, it is Soldiers who compose it. Many SWAT teams and elite civilian counter-terrorist units are also composed primarily of Soldiers. Telepaths, especially Bloodhound units, are often used against the Resistance but rarely in a direct combat role – Psi Corps does not permit its people to be placed at risk unless it is absolutely necessary. Workers... work. The people who maintain the vehicle pool, keep the network running and make sure the communications array is functional all fill vital roles and they also provide a useful set of innocent victims – when the Resistance bombs a police headquarters or army base, they are killing janitors and technicians alongside cops or officers, something which those eager to play ‘freedom fighters’ had best keep in mind...

The Martian Mafia

There are two primary reasons for indulging in a life of crime – money and power. Some would claim that as a practical matter those add up to a single reason, as either one will get you the other, but that is a matter for the philosophers to discuss. The makeup of a criminal gang is likely to be varied but there are some common threads. Most members are from the lower or working classes. Most are also native-born; long-time organised crime relies on family and tradition and newcomers are treated with suspicion or outright hostility. Some come from old-time criminal families, while others are formerly independent crooks who have managed to earn the respect of the established gangs and have been offered the choice of a prosperous partnership... or a shallow grave. Few have any sort of noble motives; crime is not about changing politics but about corrupting whatever system is in place. Some few act out of desperation and retain a shred of morality; others may be reluctant participants due to a sense of family obligation or a feeling that there is no way to escape the lifestyle once they have fallen into it.

Agents represent the elite of the gangs – the silent killers, the stalkers, the infiltrators. Diplomats include those who handle inter gang rivalry, as well as representing any ‘legitimate’ interests that the gang might have. Lurkers are tools to be used and discarded – snitches, runners, simple thugs. Officers are few and far between; especially corrupt members of the armed forces might provide contacts and connections,

selling weapons and milspec hardware in return for cash, drugs, power or a 'hit' on an annoying superior. Scientists can be found running illegal clinics or 'no questions asked' surgical theatres, where those shot up in street fights can be healed without the cops knowing about it; they also serve to improve drug production techniques or crack security protocols. Soldiers are the raw muscle of a gang and also provide bodyguard and 'hulking threat' services. Telepaths are rarely seen – no one wants someone else knowing his secrets. On occasion, though, a telepath is born into a criminal family and kept from the Corps by various means and he is considered trustworthy because of blood ties. Such 'family teeps' or *lettore di mente della famiglia* are considered a valuable resource and are often targeted for quick assassination by other gangs – a fact the Psi Corps will mention if they discover such individuals and seek to recruit them. Workers often have risky lives in the gangs – a chauffeur is the first one killed by a bomb attached to a dust buggy and household servants and staff are not considered immune to a 'hit'.

Tunnel Rats

This type of campaign will be Lurker-heavy but almost anyone can end up dwelling in the tunnels. The underground society needs a wide variety of skills and long-established deepdweller communities often have a surprising range of human resources available to them. Furthermore, outsiders of all sorts often find themselves scavenging for food, water and air in the dry coldness below the domes. It is rarely a conscious choice, except one made in desperation, but once made it often represents a permanent lifestyle switch. A few months of living on the fringes and returning to the sunlit world above seems more and more like an alien dream.

Characters in this campaign are driven not so much by motivations as by circumstances. Some were simply born to this life and know nor want no other. Others found themselves here, pursued by the law (with or without cause); they lost their means of support due to accident, malice, bad luck or their own poor choices; they are fleeing something or someone. The lost, the confused, the mad, the addicted and the desperate all come down to the tunnels, as do, occasionally, a different breed. The preacher who wishes to walk among those who need the Lord, not among the Pharisees; the doctor who sees only desperate patients who need his help; the teacher who believes even the lowliest deserve a chance to better themselves.

Agents in a tunnel rat game tend to be either the slickest rogues of the underground or fallen-from-grace operatives of domeside forces. An intelligence agent who gets too close to the wrong conspiracy or who pokes into things his superiors do not want known may find himself in the underdome. Diplomats, save for a few who have drunk themselves into oblivion, are rarely seen. With no true organised government, there is no one for Diplomats to speak *for* and their interpersonal skills are best modelled with other classes. Lurkers, of course, form the majority of those who dwell beneath the domes. Officers are usually the disgraced and the dishonourable, their careers in tatters, though they still retain some of the skills of command and can find themselves in positions of leadership. Scientists are scarce – many are self-taught techies, stim addicts or charity workers who have ended up living among their patients. Soldiers are usually those who survive by dint of sheer toughness and combat skill, though some may be disgraced military officers or battle-scarred vets – drug-addicted or suffering from post-traumatic stress and unable to survive anywhere else.

Prestige Classes

Most of the existing prestige classes work well on Mars, especially those in *The Earth Alliance Fact Book*. The following classes are intended for use in every Mars-centric campaign; their skills and abilities would be of less use elsewhere in the galaxy but may come in handy on worlds that are much like Mars, either physically or socially. All of these classes are intended for Human characters only.

The Rat King

The world of the tunnel rats is a world of the inferred, the understood and the unspoken. Very little of their culture is formally documented or written down; much of it is taught intuitively and simply becomes 'the way things are'. The same is true of the role of the leaders of this society. Theoretically all tunnel rats are equal. In reality humans are still monkeys, and our ancient instincts require us to form social hierarchies, whether or not these hierarchies have any official acknowledgement. Even in putative anarchies, there is always an unspoken consensus on who is in charge.

Among the tunnel rats there are some individuals who become widely respected for their skill, insight and survival ability. These 'Rat Kings', as sociologists have named them, are the *de facto* leaders of the society, deferred to almost subconsciously by others.

They can set an agenda without stating it and are seen as the arbiters for disputes despite having no official authorisation.

Resistance leaders often seek these people out, as they can motivate the many who live in the underdomes to action at a word, something that is very useful when a mass disruption is needed.

Additional Hit Points: 2

Requirements

To qualify to become a Rat King, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Skills: Appraise 7 ranks, Bluff 6 ranks, Gather Information 5 ranks, Sense Motive 6 ranks.

Feats: Tunnel Rat

Special: Rat Kings are born, not made. All must come from the tunnel rat background, born and raised in the community of the underdomes, and must not have left it for any significant length of time. Rat Kings do not rule from above; they are the centres of their communities and an integral part of them.

Class Skills

The Rat King's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis) and Tumble (Dex).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Rat King prestige class.

Rat King: The ability that earns the class its name, the Rat King may add his class level as a circumstance to all Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate or Sense Motive checks used with other members of tunnel rat society. He is a master diplomat of the underdomes. At the Games Master's option, this ability may work when dealing with similar societies, such as the lurkers of Downbelow in *Babylon 5*.

Scrounge: The Rat King can find what he needs quickly in the piles of refuse and rubbish under the domes. Once per day, he may spend one hour searching to find any item or group of items worth 100 credits or less, not including unique or rare items. Thus he could find 'a data crystal' or 'a knife', not 'the data crystal with the plans on it' or 'the knife used in the murder'. Note these items are generally functional but not resaleable – this ability does not allow fast acquisition of wealth, just the ability to find a needed tool when it is needed and then discard it.

Friends in Low Places: The Rat King has 'one in every dome'... a contact, that is, albeit not necessarily a reliable one. To use this contact the character must make a Diplomacy check (DC 18 for a major dome, DC 23 for a lesser dome). Failure by more than five indicates the contact will betray or hinder the character. The Rat King ability does not apply to this roll but other reasonable modifiers do. The exact nature of the contact is up to the Games Master.

Master Scrounge: As for Scrounge above but items of up to 500 credits' value may be found.

As Below, So Above: The Rat King has managed to gain some influence in the dome proper from years of providing useful services and information. He gains a +2 modifier to all Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate and Sense Motive checks when dealing with non-tunnel rats and also gains the Contact feat.

The Rat King

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Rat King
2	+1	+0	+2	+2	Scrounge
3	+1	+1	+2	+2	Friends in Low Places
4	+2	+1	+2	+2	Master Scrounge
5	+2	+1	+3	+3	As Below, So Above

Martian Life

(2248 - 2262)

In the distant future historians will simplify history by declaring the 14-year period between the Food Riots and Martian Independence to be 'the Mars Rebellion Era'. Those living through that decade and a half, however, do not consider themselves part of an 'era' – to them, it is just normal life on Mars.

Food Riots

In refusing to aid Earth in the Battle of the Line, knowing such aid would be ultimately futile anyway, Mars was, in what it thought were its last days, 'giving Earth the finger', colloquially speaking. Earth replied by shooting Mars in the face. An act of symbolic defiance became the excuse for utter and unforgivable oppression.

Tessa Holland, *A History of Martian Liberation*, 2271

As discussed in the Martian Chronicle, early Martian history was shaped by the forced immigration of criminals and dissidents who, unlike the first colonists, did not come with careful plans for balancing food production and population growth. As a result, Mars' population soon became unsustainable without regular food shipments from Earth. For decades this system

worked more-or-less as planned, even long after Mars reached the point where it *could* develop a self-sustaining ecosystem. Earth did nothing to wean Mars from dependence and even justified every increase in taxes or trade regulations by noting that the food shipments kept coming. Nonetheless tensions grew as Earth used food as an ever more powerful lever to control internal Martian affairs.

Martians watched the Earth/Minbari War with alarm. Neither of the two Martian senators had voted for the initial expedition into Minbari space but then again none of the colony worlds being ravaged by the unstoppable alien fleets had asked for this either. Mars felt Earth might deserve what it got but *they* did not. When ordered to stand at the Battle of the Line, Mars refused. As a nation recognised by the Earth Alliance, they had the right to control their own defence and chose to not contribute their share of the military to the Battle of the Line.

Earth was incensed but with the Minbari upon them, could do nothing. Mars expected to be wiped out along with the rest of humanity, so the action was taken as a last stand on principle, one defiant gesture before the end... that never came. At least not for Earth. The Minbari surrendered at the Line, shocking Earth and Mars alike. Freed from imminent doom, EarthGov turned its attention to the rebel world and cut off the food.



Mars exploded. In days, shelves were empty; in weeks, starvation began. The Martian government found itself the target of as much anger as EarthGov and was blamed by a large percentage of the population for the current plight – despite the fact that polls had showed high approval of the 'No Martian Blood for Terran Arrogance!' policy only weeks before. This left the government without the credibility and moral sanction it needed to introduce strict rationing and to take emergency control of existing food supplies and agrodomes. The result was chaos. Food warehouses were looted and the contents distributed to the mobs without regard for rationing or need. The Martian Mafia orchestrated many of the raids, then resold the stolen food

at obscene prices. Domes sealed themselves off from other domes, disabling or in some cases destroying tube stations and blocking tunnels, in order to keep their own stockpiles safe. Agrodomes were seized and often fought over, to the point where many were destroyed. Mars was on the verge of bloody anarchy.

EarthGov acted. Some would say it acted vengefully or foolishly; other would say it acted as if it was not the cause of the problem in the first place; still others, albeit mostly Earthers, would say it saved the Martians from themselves. It asserted total control over Mars. EarthForce troops were used to quell the riots and while casualties were light, especially compared to the likely death toll had the riots continued, few would forget the recorded scenes of EarthForce soldiers firing on crowds. While every effort was taken to use nonlethal methods and minimise civilian casualties, soldiers are not policemen and they are trained to kill, not to subdue or arrest. While the planet eventually calmed, tremendous anger was directed at the occupying army. Incidents of mutiny involving units of mostly Mars-born soldiers were common and many soldiers were dishonourably discharged or imprisoned for such actions, increasing the wrath of the civilian populace.

Still, most contented themselves by saying Earth would leave once order was restored. It was generally expected that the Martian government would be forced to issue an apology for failing to aid Earth. Some speculated that control of Martian defence forces would be placed wholly in EarthGov hands, a bitter pill to swallow, but one that the population could probably accept. Pundits noted reluctantly that Mars was a nation that was part of the Earth Alliance and did owe some obligations to mutual defence. The *zeitgeist* prepared itself for humiliation. What Mars received, however, was tyranny.

During the 2248 - 2251 era, EarthGov had been promising that the current Provisional Government was merely a stopgap measure to restore order. As the struggle wore on, however, many at EarthDome began to believe there was no way to restore Mars to its prior status easily and, influenced by certain of the rich and powerful who saw ways to profit from a more... *tractable*... Mars, the Kochinsky Amendment was added to the Mars Provisional Government charter, removing all timetables for the return of self-rule and merely promising the issue would be addressed when it was appropriate.

A Modern Perspective

To put what happened on Mars into a 21st-century perspective, imagine if following the 1992 riots in California, the United States Government had dissolved the California Senate, removed the elected governor, sent home all of California's senators and representatives, then appointed unelected Federal officials to run the state indefinitely. Readers not native to the United States should have no difficulty finding equivalent scenarios in their native lands to use to gain an understanding of how the Martians felt.

The Provisional Government

The Martian nation was dissolved. EarthGov was to administer Mars directly. The Martian representatives to EarthDome were recalled and dismissed; a single 'observer' appointed by EarthGov (not necessarily a Mars native and utterly unaccountable to the Martian populace) would be the sole voice of Mars on Earth. With EarthForce soldiers in every dome, empty food supplies and damaged or destroyed agrodomes; Mars had little choice but to accept these terms.

To a large extent, Earth began by simply seizing control of the existing governmental infrastructure, replacing those at the top and letting the middle and bottom layers do the jobs they knew how to do. Bringing in tens of thousands of Earthborn bureaucrats was not the plan. However, as time wore on more and more replacements occurred. Many of the most skilled workers simply quit; they were loyal employees of the Martian government, not EarthGov. This led to further purges, as well as issues of 'blue flu' and other means of performing minimal work. There had always been a stubborn and independent streak in the Martian character, as well as a solid layer of conniving criminality, the result of a planet built half from iconoclastic refugees and half from exiled petty crooks. This made Mars challenging to govern even under ideal circumstances and circumstances following the Food Riots were far from ideal. Not only were many of the major agrodomes damaged and food stockpiles depleted, but also Earth was still reeling from the effects of the Minbari War. The Minbari, who surrendered, paid reparations but Earth was not in a position to make excessive demands and rebuilding was slow. Though

Earth itself had been spared Minbari attack, it found itself needing to supply and rebuild a dozen colony worlds, most of which had been damaged through alien assault, not their own intransigence. Every shipment of grain that went to Mars instead of Proxima or Beta Durani brought resentment from the colonies; every shipment of grain that left Sol system brought resentment from Mars. Given all this, EarthGov's increasingly draconian response to Martian unrest is understandable – some might even argue that it showed remarkable restraint – but the Martians did not see it that way and while a few commentators and pundits did try to argue Earth's side of it, they were dismissed as apologists or collaborators.

A large part of the early rage was fuelled by Earth's failure to provide. Earth had promised, in essence, food for freedom – but the food was scarce. Dietary variety and richness had never been great on Mars but from 2248 to 2251 it was virtually nonexistent. Bulk proteins, algal mats and the like were fed into synthesisers to produce food that would sustain life but add no joy to it. Restaurants closed up or raised prices to extreme levels. Middle-class citizens would save for a once-a-month meal made from higher-quality synthetics, the equivalent of their baseline sustenance prior to the Food Riots; only the very rich could manage real meat, eggs or vegetables and even they did so sparingly.

Anti-Earth sentiment had been part of Martian culture since the death of John Carter and it had become inexorably linked with violent action during the Mine Wars, but it had always been a subtext, a background present in all cultural discourse, noticeable by its absence if silenced for a time but never the dominant tone. Now, however, the volume had increased. People who viewed independence as a worthwhile goal for some distant future time were speaking of what they would do 'when Mars was free' and those who expected independence in their lifetimes were demanding it tomorrow, if not sooner.

By 2251 repairs on the agrodomes and the resumption of normal life on the outer colonies meant that day-to-day life on Mars had resumed something of normalcy. However, the Provisional Government remained and while the initial shouts of 'Independence Now!' had already faded, the ceaseless rumble of discontent was never again going to fade into near-inaudibility. In three years EarthGov had done what it had not managed to

do in the prior seventy years – it had caused the various grumbling factions of Mars to come together as a unified, determined Resistance.

The 2258 Uprisings

Throughout the 2250s, Free Mars slowly learned to work as one allied entity instead of dozens of independent parts. It used propaganda, political activism and street violence in equal measure in attempts to depose the Earth-imposed Provisional Government. In 2258 the leaders of Free Mars felt that public opinion was largely on their side, with even many on Earth feeling that Martian independence was imminent. They also felt that an Earth that was looking outwards to the larger galaxy should not be so concerned with holding on to one small red rock.

In late September Free Mars made their move, staging mass uprisings in the major domes but especially in MarsDome One, where they blockaded EarthDome Mars and demanded the immediate removal of the Provisional Government. They counted on two things: that Earth would make only a token show of force before backing down and that the majority of Martian citizens would take to the streets, tubes and tunnels in protest. They were wrong.

Earth had been shifting its attention away from the stars and closer to home, and Luis Santiago had won election on the promise to focus on the problems of Earth. A rebellion a few hours away certainly fit into that category. While later historians would sense Clark's hand in it, it was Santiago who ordered that the rebellion be put down without restriction – lethal force was mandated and martial law was declared in all domes currently in rebellion. This was the Resistance's first error.

Their second was in overestimating popular support for rebellion. Being pro-Independence was fashionable – most claimed to support it and polls showed it was a popular idea – but the half-decade or so since the Food Riots had dulled true outrage. When the small hardcore of revolutionaries took to the streets, they expected the crowds to surge and join them. Many did – some out of support for Independence, a few to find good looting opportunities – but when the troops came out the supporters fled. The Mars Resistance fighters were outnumbered and outgunned and the crowd was not there. EarthForce troops would not fire on a massive crowd composed mostly of the ordinary

people of Mars but for the most part all who remained to stand and fight were the committed revolutionaries – and the soldiers considered them legitimate targets.

This was not an absolute but it was the pattern. In Slimtown the population did turn out to fight but, unarmed and untrained, they broke and ran after only a few hours. Sporadic violence and tragic errors led to civilian casualties in all of the major domes and the complete destruction of several outlying domes known or believed to be Resistance strongholds. The planet-wide revolution where ‘the sands will run red with Earther blood’ simply did not happen.

It is a testament to the strength and resilience of the Free Mars movement that it even continued to exist. The old leadership was quickly deposed – some stepped down, some died in the fighting and others were found - years or decades later - in pieces far out in the desert. A new command structure, younger and more in touch with the realities of Mars, took over. The Resistance was badly wounded but it was not dead. Despite losing a critical battle it was determined to win the war.

The Clark Years

After the 2258 failure, the Resistance took stock of itself, after purging those responsible. Publicly, the propaganda declared that now the iron fist of Earth was seen, it would not be long before a second uprising swept the Earther parasites from the sands. Privately, the main leaders and thinkers in the Resistance, the ones who understood psychohistorical predictive algorithms, calculated it would take 20 years before there was sufficient pressure on EarthGov to force it to leave, even with the best variables factored into the equations. Prior to the Food Riots and the imposition of the Provisional Government, most had calculated true Independence to be over a century away. Then



Clark seized power and everything changed for the worse – or the better, if revolution was the goal.

The level of oppression reached the point where even the Provisional Government refused to play along. Most of those in power had lived and worked on Mars for years and genuinely believed they were doing what was best for both Mars and Earth in the long run. When the order came down to impose martial law, even Earth’s appointed government refused, and Clark retaliated. In early April 2260 Clark ordered military units loyal to him to attack civilian targets on Mars. Earth ships attacked outlying domes alleged to be terrorist strongholds. A series of airstrikes were launched against MarsDome One, forcing hundreds of thousands into the underdome or the subdomes. Elite forces within the dome stormed EarthDome Mars, killing dozens and arresting those who managed to surrender in time. The total death toll was put at 874, with many times that number wounded.

Domes revolted wholesale. New Vegas, Slimtown and others simply refused to implement martial law. This led to ongoing struggles by EarthForce to ‘liberate’ these domes, which resulted in constant attacks against civilian targets. Most of day-to-day life moved underground out of fear of dome-shattering attacks. The upper domes were often gripped in brutal street

fighting as EarthForce troops loyal to Clark attempted to impose martial law while battling both Resistance agents and troops loyal to the original Mars Provisional Government. The result was a brutal three-way civil war fought not as a series of battles between massed soldiers but as an ongoing series of guerrilla raids. Bit by bit, Clark's forces gained ground and by April 2261 most of the major domes had been placed firmly under Clark's command.

Even as they reeled from shock and distress, the psychohistorians updated their algorithms. Independence would be possible within half a decade or less if the right actions were taken. Furious at Earth, and with real victory within reach, the Resistance increased its activities and strengthened its internal structure.

Clark was a propagandist's dream. The worst distortions and exaggerations that could be made about EarthGov oppression were day-to-day facts under Clark. Minor acts of vandalism were treated as violent terrorist assaults. Respected writers, commentators and pundits who made the political and moral case for Martian Independence were silenced, intimidated or arrested. Local Martian media was silenced – ISN-Mars became a puppet of EarthGov, the *Martian Chronicle* and the *Daily Dome* (see Media) were purged and reduced to laughable shadows; teens who jeered Nightwatch patrols were savagely beaten. The *samizdat* went into overdrive. No aboveground media could do more than hint at the truth and most of what was published was pure lies, so underground sources once dismissed as pure propaganda came to be seen as the only sources of real news. Certainly there were propaganda and lies coming from the Resistance but there was far more truth in the underground media than Clark's media would ever reveal.

Daily life on Mars under Clark was difficult, even in those areas that Clark had 'liberated'. The natural tendency of Martians to complain and disagree had to be stifled, as something as simple as joking about the government might result in a stern warning or even an arrest. Nightwatch, overtly and covertly, was everywhere. The rest of the galaxy beyond Earth almost disappeared. The Resistance had very few offworld contacts, with only the Narn having regular interaction with Resistance cells... and given the nature of the War of Retribution, the Narn on Mars were as cut off as anyone else. Bits and pieces of what

was reported on the Clark-controlled media could not be put together into a coherent whole. Not until 2262 would most of Mars understand the war that was consuming the galaxy. Some have theorised this was almost a blessing – had the Martians known the extent of the conflict, of entire worlds being ravaged, of races of near-gods warring, they might have felt their own issues were relatively petty. A lack of such perspective allowed them to focus their rage and frustration against EarthGov and Clark.

Clark used food as a weapon, as well. Unlike during the Food Riots, where all food was simply cut off, Clark controlled shipments and supplies. 'Good' domes would receive ample supplies. 'Bad' domes would be cut off for days at a time until stockpiles were empty. Clark intended this to fuel inter dome hatred but instead it created a strong sense of interdependency. The networks of unmapped tunnels linking the domes were used for clandestine shipments, keeping all of the major domes supplied, if not rich.

Even corporations felt the boot of Clark. While control over business was less overt, it was there. Pressure to fire 'disloyal' employees and to promote those with no skills but parroting the party line of the Clark regime was exerted on any business with government dealings. Those who tried to stay clean found themselves victims of 'inspections' and overzealous enforcement of the pettiest regulations. Those who played along found laws regulating pollution, protecting workers' rights or controlling entry into some markets being 'suspended by executive order due to planetary emergency'. Publicly asking how the threat of alien influences would be reduced by increasing the amount of toxins released by factories or by allowing employers to deny overtime no matter how many hours were worked was a sure-fire ticket to the polar ice mines.

Politics

Factions and Groups

While most discussion of politics on Mars prior to Independence focus on the activities of the Resistance, there are also many groups dedicated to change within the system – and for that matter, groups which support the status quo for reasons ideological, personal or both. The following is a selection of some of them.

Children of Earth

The simplistic view that all Martians want independence is false. Many born and raised on Mars do not consider themselves 'Martians' but simply humans born on Mars. They are loyal to Earth, the world of their ancestors. They know that Martian colonisation was not cheap for Earth and that Earth deserves something back. They point out that the Provisional Government established in the 2150s was the direct result of Martian disloyalty (in not aiding Earth against the Minbari) and stupidity (destroying agrodomes and food warehouses in riots, making a bad situation infinitely worse). They argue that the shared history and culture of Earth and Mars makes the idea of a separate Martian society somewhat simplistic that having two independent governments in the same star system is a recipe for political disaster and that Earth is acting pragmatically, not cruelly, in opposing it.

Children of Earth tend to come from the upper crust of Martian society, often those who have many genetic or business connections back on Earth. It would be foolish and wrong to think of them as mindless shills for EarthGov. They consider themselves to be patriots loyal to humanity as a single species, not to provincial subcultures.

Following Martian Independence, many Children of Earth decide to emigrate, especially those who had been very vocal in their criticism of the 'terrorists' who were now the new government. Some, however, stay on and serve as the nucleus of a pro-Earth wing within Martian politics, one that advocates reconciliation and close ties with the mother planet.

Dejah Thoris Society

This group originally began as a bit of a joke (as the name would indicate), a sort of self-aware parody of 20th century groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution. It was founded in 2220 by a group of four politically active women who were direct descendants of the first colonists. The group became active in Martian politics and was one of the earliest 'respectable' groups to agitate for Martian Independence. It also addresses issues of special concern to women on Mars, from the need for special care during pregnancy to counteract gravitational effects on the foetus to rights for sex workers in the less-regulated brothels of New Vegas. The Deetees, as they are known, skew older and richer than most activist groups and put on a great show of

respectability but they are seasoned political veterans whose support, tacit or overt, can be vital.

Mars Provisional Congress

Prior to the Food Riots, Mars was considered a member nation of the Earth Alliance, much like other nations. When EarthGov took over it removed all local authority, including the Martian Congress. In 2252, following demands for democracy and accountability, EarthGov grudgingly restored the Congress, allowing old members to run for re-election if they wished. The newly formed Provisional Congress, however, had no authority. Any legislation it passed could be vetoed by EarthGov without any ability to override. It could not even fund itself via taxation; its budget was set by EarthGov and it was not set high. By the time of the second election in 2254, most of the genuinely politically concerned candidates refused to run again; they would not participate in a sham. This mass walkout crossed all political lines; politicians who had spent their early careers eviscerating each other were united in opposition. The result was that the Provisional Congress became less than a rubber-stamp for EarthGov; it became a status symbol crossed with a debating society and those who ran for election to it were those who wished to seek favour with EarthGov, those who wished the faux honour of being a 'Congressman' and those who felt even a crippled Congress would provide enough corruption opportunities to enrich themselves.

Life in the Domes

Time and Seasons

The Martian year is almost twice as long as the Terran year. For all purposes, time on Mars is synchronised with Terran dates; when it is December on Earth, it is December on Mars. This has the result of completely disassociating weather from the date; a December on Mars may come in midsummer or in the dead of winter. Since most Martians dwell in domes with controlled environments anyway, this is of little concern.

The Martian day is roughly a half-hour longer than the terrestrial day. In order to keep clocks and calendars synchronised, an extra period of time is added between 3:00 and 4:00 AM; all Martian clocks take 90 minutes to traverse this single hour. The official term for this is the Martian Extended Hour; on Mars, many call it Carter's Hour. It is trivial for those used to a 24-hour cycle to adjust to this slight extension and many

Earthers on Mars enjoy the effect of gaining an extra half-hour sleep every night.

Aliens on Mars

Most Martians are human. A few are not – as with most worlds in the fairly tolerant Earth Alliance, expatriates form a portion of the population of Mars. Most are immigrants who do not plan to live on Mars for their whole lives but have come in pursuit of job opportunities or to escape conditions at home. A very small number are the children of those who came and decided to stay.

About 1% of the population of Mars is non-human, putting the total number of aliens in the tens of thousands. Of these, the general breakdown is as follows:

Narn: 40%, Drazi: 30%, Centauri: 10%, Brakiri: 10%, Minbari: 5%, Pak'Ma'Ra: 3%, All others: 2%

The reasons for coming to a strange and hostile world vary from person to person, of course, but the following general guidelines apply:

Narn

The Narn find Mars reminds them a great deal of their homeworld – after all, it is red, cold and dry. During

the War of Retribution many Narn fled the Regime or found they could not safely return and so ended up on Mars. Others came to Mars over the past several decades because they saw work opportunities they could not match in the Regime or because they saw chances to help the Regime by working among the humans. A small number are criminals who find Mars to be a safe place to hide.

Slimtown has the largest Narn population, as Narn artistry is well suited to working the gems of the mines, and strong Narn backs and indefatigable Narn endurance are useful in working the mines themselves. See 'Narn Town' on page 95.

The Narn have obvious sympathies for the Resistance and many actively but tacitly support it. They do not wish to bring EarthGov's wrath against the Regime but they do what they can behind the scenes, from operating safehouses to smuggling weapons.

Drazi

Much like the Narn, the Drazi find much to like on Mars and they also find many opportunities there that are less available in the Freehold. Oddly, Mars appeals to two very different types of Drazi. Thuggish Drazi find it is much easier to bully humans than other



Drazi and quickly fit in with the criminal element as bodyguards and enforcers. Intellectual Drazi find there are more chances for work in the sciences or the arts without needing to literally fight one's competitors for scant postings. Overcoming prejudice is often difficult but perseverance and a mastery of English often win respect.

Centaury

Nearly all the Centaury on Mars are commoners who grew tired of the stratified society of the Republic. A small handful of nobles in exile for various political crimes make up the remainder. This latter group usually lives entirely off its lingering fortunes and does little on Mars but attend what parties there are and weep for the social events it is missing. Most from this group settle in New Vegas, where their fortunes dwindle with alarming speed.

The commoners, though, fill almost every role. Free to advance as far as their abilities will take them, they show the determination and will which made the Centaury Republic great in the first place. They are status-conscious and prideful, of course, but they appreciate the concept of a meritocratic society where status can be earned through achievement, rather than politics or backstabbing. That said, they understand 'office politics' very well indeed and after being raised in the Republic they find the petty games of corporate status to be simple. Most Centaury who come to Mars, if they have any genuine skills at all, quickly rise to relatively high levels in society.

Brakiri

Brakiri are fairly common on Mars and as many arrive as visitors (usually on business trips) as reside on the planet, this leads to a vibrant if small Brakiri subculture. Brakiri are often hired by human corporations, sometimes as subcontractors from one of the Brakiri syndicates but sometimes, though less often, as free agents. Some Brakiri find human-style business less stressful or prefer a world in which business and government are at least nominally separate. Others have more criminal motivations, seeking to use their skills in the underworld of Mars, or are simply fleeing Brakiri justice and consider Mars a comfortable place to lay low until the heat is off.

Brakiri expatriate communities are found in all the major domes of Mars. Their nocturnal nature makes them especially comfortable in the underdomes.

Major 'Brakivilles' can be found in Slimtown and New Vegas.

Minbari

Most Minbari on Mars are there temporarily, though this can involve long terms of service. Nearly all are worker caste and are there because they are somehow serving Minbar by working with or among the humans. Many are at least somewhat involved with the Rangers. During the 2250s, as relations with Minbar slowly warmed after the Earth/Minbari War, some of the worker caste began to offer their services to Earth-based businesses as a form of cultural exchange and reparation. Employers quickly found that Minbari worked hard, never stole, never formed unions and honoured the terms of their employment contracts to the letter. A certain lack of initiative and questioning of routine was considered a virtue, not a vice. While everything the workers told their employers was true, in typical Minbari fashion there were lies of omission. One major reason for the presence of Minbari on Mars was to provide a source of information to the Anla'Shok. Warriors or religious caste members on Earth or Mars would attract far too much attention, but once the initial shock of seeing worksuit-clad Minbari in mines or factories was over, the workers – the quiet, obedient, self-effacing workers – became effectively invisible. While they are few, they are well placed and little happens on Mars that the Anla'Shok do not know.

Pak'Ma'Ra

They are everywhere. How could they not be on Mars? With very few animals other than service animals and parasites such as rats available on Mars, it is fairly evident to most that Pak'Ma'Ra on Mars dine on dead humans. This is of course illegal, but the Pak'Ma'Ra are skilled at not getting caught. Nor are they necessarily ghouls or grave robbers. A useful symbiosis has evolved between the Pak'ma'ra and the tunnel rats. The Pak'Ma'Ra, by virtue of their ubiquity and the wealth that comes from their world's rich Q-40 deposits, have tremendous mobility combined with a form of social invisibility. This allows them to perform many services for the underdwellers. In return, the latter give up their dead. Burial is difficult in the tunnels anyway and disease is omnipresent without adding decaying corpses to the mix. The relationship has a grisly pragmatism that suits the cultures of both parties.

Others

Members of most other races can occasionally be found on Mars but they are rare. No other species has enough members on Mars to form a community, even a small one. Often alien specialists will be hired in small teams and given a cluster of residences – for example, a group of six Cascor aeronautics engineers and their families might accept a five-year contract with a vehicle corporation. Individuals of these uncommon races are distinctive enough to be casually remembered and tracked; there are so few Yolu or Hyach on Mars that seeing one is instantly memorable.

Food and Water

The simple basics of existence taken for granted on other worlds are never simply assumed on Mars. Neither food nor water is easy to find and while terraforming and technology have made Mars much more habitable than the frozen desert seen by the early *Viking* probes, it is not now and never will be a verdant world.

All adult Martians remember the Food Riots and keeping a two- or three-weeks' supply of emergency rations – usually dried synthetics – is common among those who have the space (and many will sacrifice a luxury like a second chair or a large vid screen in order to *make* the space). Water would be hoarded too, save for the cost and space involved – those who have the room and the money to store two weeks' worth of water have the money to be certain they can get it even if a crisis erupts.

Food on Mars tends to be bland and expensive. The agrodomes focus on bulk foods that can be textured and flavoured, not on growing a wide variety of crops. There are specialty domes, of course, which produce all manner of food plants from carrots to lima beans but the costs for these are excessive, four to five times what they would be on Earth. 'Real' food is saved for special occasions... a once-a-week meal for the middle class or a once-a-month meal for the working class.

Water is also expensive. Non-vibe showers are a luxury, albeit a fairly common one. Every building on Mars either recycles its own water or is tied into a local or dome recycling facility. Water waste – water which is pumped into a building but does not go out – is tracked and billed, with the bills eventually making their way to those who wasted the water. A normal water bill consists of a moderately high usage fee and a much larger (per gallon) wastage fee, with a small allotment for normal consumption of water by the body,

accidental spills and so on. A sink which overflows or leaky pipes which are not fixed can cost a small fortune by the time they are found. To some Martians, spilling water is akin to spilling blood.

Medicine

Mars actually has extremely good medical care, at least for those in the working class and above. This dates back to the earliest colonial days, when the thought of having to face a medical crisis with the nearest hospital millions of miles distant was foremost in colonists' minds. Every moderately well planned settlement (save for those which for some reason disdained modern medical knowledge) made sure to bring along doctors and equipment. As inter dome communication grew, the Martian Medical Association quickly formed and some of the earliest inter dome contracts dealt with the sharing of medical resources. The first accredited medical school on Mars was founded in 2195 and since then Mars has had a reputation for galaxy-class medicine. Martian citizens often want for living space and dietary variety, but anyone who is employed at even menial work is likely to have all the medical care he needs. Those who fall through the cracks, of course, must make do. The tunnel rats, the indigent and the criminal are not part of this system. There are countless free clinics in the underdomes but they are rarely able to meet the demand. In addition, Bethesda Dome, the centre of Earth Alliance biological and medical research, is located on Mars and has many branch offices and teaching hospitals throughout the domes.

Below the Domes - The World of the Tunnel Rats

It is my opinion that those who speak of tunnel rats... sorry, of Multigenerational Underdome Inhabitant... culture as something unique and worth preserving are merely trying to deflect calls for social responsibility. The people dwelling in the caves beneath the domes are not some lost tribe of primitives... they are Earth Alliance citizens by birth, they are poor, homeless and starving and they need our help. To speak of 'preserving' a culture of poverty, disease and misery is to enshrine callousness as compassion.

Dr. Alicia Barrows, EarthGov Mars Social Services
Director, 2257

Live like lighters, all rules and clocks? Not for us!
Anonymous underdome inhabitant, 2257

The Mars Boom and the ensuing constant flow of immigrants, mostly from an overcrowded Earth, brought with it those who would not or could not fit in. Likewise, the often iconoclastic and idiosyncratic communities of the early domes left little room for deviant behaviour. Life was often difficult even under the best of circumstances; there was little room for those who did not pull their own weight or who kept questioning the philosophy the dome was founded on. Between the exiles and the unwanted immigrants, a growing number found they had come to Mars only to find no home.

So they made one. Below. All of the domes quickly found that tunnelling was the best way to gain extra space with minimal life-support cost. Mines, wells, storage areas and transit tunnels were rapidly added to the growing colony domes. It was in these places that those with nowhere else to go soon congregated. They learned to live as scavengers, to stay away from the upper domes (and eventually from the upper layers of the tunnels) and to rely on each other for survival. Exiled from the cultures of the domes, they formed their own society.

The term 'tunnel rat' is often casually used to refer to anyone who is part of the large Martian underclass but it is more accurately used only when referring to those who are part of the multigenerational underdome dwelling society that has grown and expanded in the past century or so. Anthropologists, those few who have managed to study the culture in detail, have noticed all the traits of a truly distinct and defined culture emerging, one with its own rituals and customs.

One trait that has been noted is how fast the tunnel rat *patois* moves through the maze of passages. Despite the lack of more than patchy electronic communication, shifts in vocabulary pass throughout the community in a remarkably short period of time, including moving between domes that should have no underground connections. This lends credence to the belief that the tunnel rats have knowledge of and access to passages not on any official map. Others have noted that there is nothing that keeps tunnel rats in the tunnels, and that many have at least

a few credits to spend when needed and can easily take a tube from one dome to the next.

Media

Media on Mars takes all the forms it takes anywhere else in the Earth Alliance. There are 2D and 3D broadcasts, hardcopy papers, datapad updates, comm screen advertising, even paper leaflets and posters. In general, electronic media is preferred to physical simply because space is so limited. A bookshelf full of 'dead tree' media is a luxury most Martians cannot afford and since native agriculture is dedicated almost entirely to food production, paper itself must be imported at exorbitant expense. Thus most Martians keep their libraries entirely digital, usually with redundant offsite backups in the event of some disaster. Many of the middle class indulge in the luxury of print copies of a small number of cherished books, very often religious or philosophical works.

ISN and ISN-Mars

As in most of Earth-controlled space, the bulk of broadcast news comes from either ISN or ISN-Mars, its local affiliate. Due to extremely complex rules about ownership and local media control, ISN-Mars is technically independent of ISN proper (which maintains a small, understaffed Mars Bureau for propriety's sake) but it is an open secret that ISN-Mars gets its marching



orders directly from ISN HQ on Earth. While most Martians get their interplanetary news from ISN, local programming ranging from current affairs talk shows to locally produced soap operas come from ISN-Mars. ISN-Mars also has a first-rate newsgathering operation with bureaus stationed in all the major domes and a fleet of Long Haulers ready to cover almost anything. ISN-Mars conducts undercover and investigative reporting as well, though they stay away from targets the bosses on Earth do not wish to hit. This often causes irritation among the reporters and a reporter on the verge of breaking a major scandal may slip the news to a third party to have it come out in the *samizdat*.

ISN-Mars is noticeably more sympathetic to Martian causes than ISN proper. This can lead to some interesting juxtapositions, such as an ISN broadcast condemning Martian independence activists being followed by an ISN-Mars produced talk show spinning them as heroes. In order to maintain the appearance of independent control, though, ISN is limited in how far it can go in making sure the 'right' people are placed in charge of content decisions at ISN-Mars. ISN-Mars has never condoned violence in any form and its editorial slant has always been one of slow political change, not violent revolution.

During the Clark years, a special presidential order rescinded the ownership rules and ISN-Mars became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Clark-controlled ISN. The resulting bloodbath was both figurative and literal; hundreds of ISN-Mars employees lost their jobs and a dozen lost their lives when they 'resisted arrest' or 'were killed by terrorists'. Following the liberation of Earth and Mars in 2262, ISN-Mars reconstituted itself as the Mars Planetary Network (MPN) and it no longer has any ties, tacit or otherwise, to ISN. ISN still operates on Mars and MPN offers it no competition in the arena of interplanetary news but at least there is a real option for local news and programming on Mars.

ISN-Mars has its main operations HQ in MarsDome One. Production facilities for local programming are found throughout the planet.

Other Martian Media

Mars has many media sources other than ISN-Mars, though no one source commands nearly so large a share of consumer attention. The early Martian colonist culture, composed of many very individualistic groups, tended to produce 'dome-local' media and this has

become standard practise even as a true Martian culture has evolved over the centuries. All of the larger domes have at least one local media source and the largest have two or three in addition to ISN-Mars. Some of the better known include:

The Martian Chronicle

This paper, available on disposable pseudopulp in personally customisable editions from countless streetside machines, is the leading independent paper on the planet. It is based in MarsDome One and tends to cover things from a Dome-based perspective, leading to occasional charges of elitism and some pro-Earth bias. The paper strives for a reputation for accuracy and balance that can sometimes approach dullness; it refrains from sensationalism and speculation and simply reports the facts. This has made it something of a paper of record for Mars; people may prefer the style and flair of the *Daily Dome* but they will not really *believe* something until it has been reported in the *Chronicle*.

Daily Dome

This is the other major MarsDome One paper. It is available in the same formats as *The Martian Chronicle* but there the similarities end. It is sensationalistic and exuberant and wears its pro-Mars bias proudly. It appeals heavily to the working class and is known for short articles that are big on graphic images and weak on detailed analysis. The secession of Babylon 5 from the Earth Alliance, for example, was summed up in a handful of paragraphs under the headline 'Sheridan to Clark: GET BENT!'. Despite this, the 'DD', as it is often known, attracts some of the best and most honest columnists in the business, those whose interest is in the human story rather than the dull facts. The *DD* suffered grievous purges during Clark's control of the media but it never abandoned its trademark style.

The New Vegas Times

This is the only major local paper in New Vegas and it generally uses ISN feeds to cover news from other domes and other worlds, with its own reporters focusing solely on the New Vegas scene. The paper is unfortunately very much under the control of the crime syndicates that run New Vegas, so its ability to conduct hard-hitting investigative reporting is somewhat limited. As a result the paper tends to focus on relatively light news, only venturing into political or social commentary when such does not interfere with the interests of the gangs.

The Sands of Mars

This is not a news source. Rather, it is the longest-running serial drama on the planet, having been in production for almost 40 years. Originally it concerned the travails of the Sands family, a wholly fictional upper-class clan plagued with all manner of ill fortune despite its great wealth but over the decades the program has sprawled to include hundreds of characters and uncounted plotlines. It is the guilty pleasure of far more Martians than will ever admit it. When certain moralists in the Clark Administration attempted to shut it down due to its often risqué storylines and lack of 'patriotic' values, they were warned off by higher-ups who cautioned that while the Martians could be forced to endure high taxes, near-starvation and martial law, messing with *The Sands of Mars* would surely lead to a civil uprising no force could put down.

The Weekly Mars News

This tabloid is often considered to have become a parody of itself, and is known and beloved for its ludicrous headlines such as 'Billion-Year-Old Alien Found on Rim,' 'Vorlons Created Telepaths, Scientists Allege' and 'Invisible Aliens Can Control Your Mind.'

The Mars Business Journal

Originally published as the *Mining Times*, the *Journal* changed its name in 2210, acknowledging that the Martian economy had finally transcended the 'rocks for food' stage of its youth and now sustained a wide variety of industries from mining to pharmaceuticals. The *MBJ* is required reading for the rich and would-be rich but it is often disdained for its strong pro-Earth, anti-independence slant. It suffered fewer purges than any other major Martian news source during the Clark years and its offices have occasionally been targeted by Free Mars.

Slimtown Gazette

The primary news source for Slimtown, focusing as much on the interplanetary metals markets as on daily events such as crime and corruption. Once merely a mouthpiece for Terran business interests that ran the mines, it has changed as the Slimtown Dome has, becoming a much more local paper with strong independence sympathies.

Samizdat

This term dates to the time of the USSR on Earth and is thus Russian in origin. It literally means 'self-published', but what it refers to more specifically is the

production and distribution of material censored or banned by the government. More broadly, on Mars it refers to Resistance propaganda or information which has varied considerably in legality, based both on its content (in general, political activism is legal, while calls for violence or detailed instructions on how to blow up a tube station are not) and the time period (with the Clark years being the worst – even the most innocuous political material was censored).

Of course, very little Resistance propaganda is in paper form – paper is far too expensive and easy to trace. The term, is still used, however, as it evokes memories of a struggle to keep freedom alive beneath the heel of an oppressive totalitarian state and images of clandestine meetings, whispered conversations in crowded terminals and a constant state of paranoia. The iconography of past revolutions is both well known and important to Resistance psychohistorians and they exploit it as ruthlessly as the Earth corporations exploit the Martian populace.

Resistance *samizdat* takes many forms. The most common means of distribution is adding a hidden stream to a legitimate data crystal. A spoken command such as 'Free Mars' or 'Carter Lives' unlocks the stream. This is almost never used for secret communications; it is entirely a means of getting propaganda to the masses. It is assumed that government agents will ultimately see the message, so nothing that needs to be kept hidden is used.

Other methods are more complex. A common trick is steganography – the addition of data encoded into seemingly random pieces of information. For example, the digital encoding of a holograph could contain, mixed with the bits that describe the image, the letters of a coded memo. The visual image of the holograph would not be altered in any way the human eye could detect. Extracting the message from the image requires an algorithmic key; without it there is no way to extract those few bits comprising the code from the vast morass of data forming the image.

Business

Many Earth corporations have relocated to Mars for tax and regulatory reasons but their loyalties are to Earth or, more often, to themselves. Many of the local citizens view the powerful Earth-based corporations as standing in the way of developing native Martian industry; the Earth corps hire Martians as low-level workers or administrators but the 'inner dome' keeps



them out of high-ranking management positions. By the same token, though, these corporations employ tens of thousands and if they were to simply close up shop, few local businesses could pick up the slack.

This places the Resistance in a bind. The ties between corporate and political power are far too great to ignore completely but the more forward-thinking members of the Resistance know that wholesale corporate flight would lead to total economic collapse which would, in turn, lead to the masses looking for relief from EarthGov and withdrawing all popular support from the Resistance.

The Mars Business Conglomerate

The Mars Business Conglomerate or MBC is headed by Amanda Carter, a great-granddaughter of John Carter and one of the richest independent citizens on Mars. The MBC is a lobbying and trade organisation which represents the interests of Martian businesses or businesses operating on Mars. Theoretically it speaks for everyone from the smallest shop owner to the largest corporation but in reality it primarily serves the 'big boys' and, despite Ms Carter's strong leadership, sometimes tends to side with Earth interests over Martian ones. Ms Carter remains the MBC's leader because she wants to exert what control she can over the MBC and because the other would-be leaders would prefer her to be the lightning rod for both EarthGov and Free Mars.

Following the 2258 uprisings, the MBC is instrumental in keeping most major corporations on Mars at all, though doing so requires some compromises which Ms Carter does not like having to make.

Major Industries

Edgars Industries

Edgars Industries was founded in 2130 by William Edgars, at the time a rich man's son with a degree in biochemistry and an MBA. He had a strong humanitarian streak and wanted to find ways to 'do well by doing good' – though he never let his compassion cloud his business judgement. Using contacts and connections in the military, he managed to win several key contracts for bioweapons research during the Dilgar War, though publicly he was working solely on cures and

countermeasures. Captured alien technology readily made its way to the EI labs and said labs produced a series of profitable though not revolutionary drugs – good enough to make EI prosperous and powerful but not so good that anyone would suspect anything underhanded was going on. Deep under layers of front companies and secret labs, though, far more interesting research projects were being conducted, ranging over time from species-specific pathogens to tissue-culturing techniques which would grow Shadow-ship skin in long sheets for use on *Omega*-class destroyers.

Edgars Industries is a publicly traded company, but careful stock buys have kept controlling interest firmly in the hands of Edgars himself. This gives the company much more freedom to change direction than many businesses its size; Edgars' whims are company policy.

In 2261 the tragic death of William Edgars places control of the corporation into the hands of his wife Lise; she shortly married Michael Garibaldi, who took over the running of the company and managed to keep it profitable and productive while purging it of most of its darker secrets.

Edgars Industries is a major sponsor of cultural foundations and charitable works including the Edgars Childrens' Hospital located in MarsDome One, the Edgars Foundation for the Incurable (which funds stasis chambers for those with incurable diseases, in

the hopes they can someday be cured) and the Edgars Scholarship awarded to promising students of medicine or biochemistry.

Hardgreaves-Mashuhita

Hardgreaves-Mashuhita, generally known simply as HM, is the largest supplier of locally grown foods on Mars. It owns over a dozen major agrodomes, most within a few miles of MarsDome One, and supplies seeds and equipment to thousands of smaller growers. It then turns around and purchases the food these growers produce, completing the cycle. While it is possible to live on Mars without ever eating something in the HM supply chain, it is not easy.

HM was a fairly minor corporation on Earth specialising in techniques for hydroponic food production for space stations and long-range sublight flight. They were more or less providers to American and European space agencies with a handful of civilian clients with unusual needs, such as deep-sea mining operations and Antarctic research labs. They also sold heavily to the Belt. When the Centauri came in 2161 and basically undercut the deep space market, those few people who were even aware of HM sold off their stock. HM barely managed to hold on, supplying long-range exploration ships and the new deep-range stations that were being planned, but the sharks were circling.

Then John Carter launched his famous expedition and he looked to HM to supply the necessary tools and equipment needed to sustain his colony. HM agreed to do so at extremely low rates, in return for some long-term contracts. By the time the Mars colonies were flourishing, no other agribusiness could get a solid foothold on the Red Planet.

However, HM never managed to get production up to the levels needed for the colonies to sustain themselves. Earth always had to ship in food in bulk to supplement hydroponics; political tensions led to the Food Riots of the 2250s. Many feel that HM is deliberately under producing at the behest of Earth in order to keep Mars on the edge of starvation and dependent on Earth for vital supplies. While in general the Resistance has no plans for the wholesale seizure of corporate property, HM is a longstanding - albeit secret - exception to that policy.

IPX

IPX was the first corporation to have a true presence on Mars – indeed, it partially funded many of the *Dawn* missions of the early 22nd century, including the fateful *Dawn 9* mission which revealed the presence of Shadow technology buried beneath Mars. Many of the first permanent scientific bases which later became the seeds of full-scale colonies were created by IPX.

The presence of IPX on Mars is traditionally explained by the fact that Mars is very similar to worlds where IPX conducts digs, as well as by the ability of IPX to easily establish isolated domes for testing potentially hazardous finds, the hostile atmosphere which could contain the spread of alien diseases and so on. All of these reasons are true – but they do not stand alone.

Many suspect IPX is hunting alien artefacts on Mars, that the ‘test sites’ and ‘mock digs’ occurring on various parts of the planet are real. Prior to the events of the late 2250s and early 2260s, conspiracy theorists suspected almost anything – anything from Vree bases, to old Centauri outposts were suggested. Only recently has the truth been revealed; that IPX was looking for and finding Shadow vessels and artefacts and that it had been doing this for some time. The full details of the cover-up, which go back well over a decade and which ultimately led to the *Icarus* expedition which awoke the Shadows, have yet to become fully public.

Today IPX is a major employer on Mars. The major sub dome in MarsDome One holds corporate offices, administrative facilities and so on. Scattered among many other domes are the labs and warehouses where artefacts are analysed and stored. These are kept semi-secret, as they are prime targets for thieves, but careful observation by lurkers or bribes given to the right delivery people can usually identify them.

Truly exotic, dangerous or valuable materials are not stored in the domes, even clandestinely. It is relatively easy to assemble a dome or a dome compound in the vast wilderness of Mars. When something truly important to IPX needs to be taken apart (or put together), such ‘instabases’ are constructed. They are capable of housing up to two dozen personnel for several months. They are placed so as to be virtually impossible to merely stumble upon. Anyone unfortunate enough to find one is treated as a spy. At best they are held until the research is done; at worst they become one more desiccated corpse buried a few inches below the dusty surface.



In addition, there are a dozen remote bases scattered across the planet, ostensibly field-testing techniques and equipment. About half of them are doing just that; the other half are conducting digs.

Domesteading

Throughout the vast, relatively temperate and sun-rich realms of Utopia Planitia and Elysium Planitia (and elsewhere to a lesser extent as well), lie thousands of small domes. Built piecemeal over the past 50 years, these domes hold one to ten families apiece along with extensive hydroponics. They are cramped and living in them is often a matter of jumping from crisis to crisis but the phenomenon has only continued to expand. The practice of establishing a self-sustaining home far from the rest of Martian civilisation has become known as ‘domesteading’ (from ‘homesteading’, the process by which the American West was settled).

This lifestyle has much in common with the practise in the ancient West. Those who do it are driven by an intense desire to make lives for themselves without any interference. They face many dangers – from raiders to dust storms, from crop failure to lack of air. Nonetheless the lifestyle is appealing to many and growing rapidly.

Domesteading is fairly simple – first, buy a dome. These usually come in the form of kits that can be assembled by a few workers over the course of a few weeks. A single-family habitation with no underground can fit

into a relatively small container, one that a Long Hauler (see page 113) can lug across the desert. Ownership of a Long Hauler is considered a vital part of the domesteading lifestyle. Once a dome has been purchased, a location is needed. While any flat space will do, the Utopia and Elysium Planitias are preferred, primarily for their climate and direct sunlight. In addition, these regions have few other settlements, making it unlikely EarthGov, Psi Corps or other forces will come by to uproot a newly planted dome. Furthermore, such areas are already established ‘settlement’ regions, opening the possibility of trade with neighbours.

It is best to have at least a mile between a newly planted dome and any existing dome. Domesteaders want privacy and coming too close to an existing settlement is a good way to get angry neighbours – and if a settler is hundreds of miles from the nearest official law, angry neighbours are a Bad Idea.

Setting up a dome takes a minimum of four people working for 2 +1d2 days and requires four Technical (mechanical) checks (DC 15) and one Technical (electronics) check (DC 20). Failure on any of these checks adds a day to the set-up time. Failure by more than five indicates a subtle but fatal error has been made; the dome appears to be set up correctly but will fail in 1d10+2 days. Obviously some provision must be made for survival while the dome is being set up.

These microdomes are basically geodesic constructs. The primary ground ring is assembled from components. Spikes are driven to secure it. The first circle of panels is installed, then ladders are attached and the second circle of panels is added, then the third and so on, each time closing the dome a bit more. A standard dome of this type is about 250 feet in diameter.

Once the main dome is assembled an airlock must be added. This takes another two days and requires two Technical (electronics) checks (DC 15) and one Technical (mechanical) check (DC 15). Failure by more than five on any of these checks results in a slow leak that will drain the dome of air over the course of a month.

Next the dome must be sealed. Airtight foam must be sprayed around the base of the dome. This foam is

designed to bond molecularly with the Martian soil, forming a perfect seal. This takes an additional day. The dome itself is now complete – but not liveable. It must be filled with air. This can be done via the purchase of sufficient compressed air to fill the dome (which will cost several thousand credits and which must be transported to the dome site) or via biological means. The main drawback to biology – quite simply, the use of plants to produce O² – is time. It will take three to four weeks for even optimised plants to fully convert the interior atmosphere and that means a lot of time in a survival tent or many commutes back to the main domes.

In addition, life-support equipment must be set up. Domesteading is viable only due to advanced recycling techniques. Everything must be reused and reprocessed, from the air to bodily wastes. If these machines fail, those within the dome will die or be forced to abandon their home. Setting up the life support requires four days of work and four Technical (electronics) checks (DC 22).

Life in a dome is hard. Solar panels provide just enough power to keep the life support and dwelling operating but a prolonged dust storm can drain the batteries. Water can be leached from the air or sucked from the deep permafrost but it will be scarce – if there is a leak in the recycling pipes, reserves can drop, leading to crop failure. There is just enough room in a typical dome for gardens that can sustain a family and maybe leave a tiny bit extra to trade for needed supplies.

In the event of a crisis there are few options. No emergency services exist to rescue domesteaders whose air is leaking or whose crops have failed. It is always possible to hop in the Long Hauler and retreat to the main domes but doing so often involves several days' journey over hostile terrain and in many cases the costs of setting up the dome have drained all of the domesteaders' resources. Those who have been good neighbours might find aid but there is very little surplus to share. Why, then, do people choose this risky lifestyle?

Freedom. Domesteaders are generally left alone. They can live as they see fit, a luxury on crowded Mars. Their personal dwellings are often fairly spacious compared to what they could afford in the main domes. There is a sense of control over one's own destiny – success or failure rests with the domesteader, not any outside influences (except for the weather). Nearly all

domesteaders are Mars-born and do not wish to leave the planet of their birth to find a better life on some other colony world. They want to build something on their home planet.

Some of the longest-lasting domesteader settlements are becoming true communities, with a shared communal dome serving as a trading post, meeting hall and refuge.

Legality of Domesteading

Domesteading is technically legal, provided the proper forms are filed and the taxes are paid. However, some 50% of all domesteaders are in violation of some part of the relevant laws. Furthermore, the power of Eminent Domain allows for any part of Mars outside the main domes to be seized at any time for almost any cause; this changes in 2262 and the right of free settlement is enshrined in the new Martian constitution.

The Rulers of Mars

During the timeframe of this sourcebook, Mars has had two Earth-assigned governors: Maria Haldecourt, who was in charge from 2256 to 2260 and authorised the force used to suppress the 2258 uprisings and General Haulden, a Clark appointee who remained in charge until 2261.

Governor Maria Haldecourt

The histories of post-Independence Mars paint confusing and contradictory pictures of Governor Haldecourt, the second and last Earth-appointed governor. She was assigned to Mars in 2256, after the last of the open rebellion had long since died away, and it was widely perceived she was given the post as a political favour. A former EarthForce officer who had fought in the Earth/Minbari War, she seemed to have little personal interest in Mars and often made comments indicating that she felt the world's refusal to come to the aid of Earth during the Battle of the Line meant it was clearly unready for independence. When Free Mars rose up in 2258, Governor Haldecourt showed not the slightest reluctance to use deadly force; the fact that EarthDome Mars was under siege and she was personally threatened may well have been part of that.

It was these facts that kept her in power when Clark took over. He preferred to keep people he felt he could trust where they were, to have the benefit of their experience while so much of the rest of the command structure



was being undermined by his purges. Thus it came as a great surprise to him - and to the Martian populace, who generally viewed Haldecourt as somewhere between uncaring and tyrannical - when she flat-out refused to implement martial law as per his orders. Part of the brutality of the crackdown that followed was due to the fact that Clark felt personally betrayed; that someone he had trusted to support him had turned against him. This was likewise the case with Captain Sheridan.

Haldecourt had always been motivated by a strong belief in the Earth Alliance and in EarthGov and in an interplanetary society united under a fair and just government. She knew the Clark government was neither and that he had taken power via a coup and was using fear and intimidation to undermine the basic principles of the Alliance. She had hoped the issue would be resolved before she had to choose sides but that luxury was denied her.

Unfortunately for her, Clark had put his own people in positions of power within the military units stationed on Mars; when she refused his command, they implemented it without delay. Haldecourt was seized and charged with treason; she was reported to have suffered a fatal heart attack shortly before her scheduled trial.

General Clay Haulden

Clay Haulden followed a somewhat unusual path to power. Unlike many who ended up in the upper

echelons of EarthForce, he did not come from a military family - no close relatives had ever felt called to serve. By his own admission, his early interest was purely selfish - he needed money for his education and the political climate of the early 2220s made it seem as if he would not be involved in a shooting war. Early in his basic training, though, the Dilgar War exploded and Earth chose to get involved. Haulden saw constant action in that war and impressed his superiors with his discipline and courage under fire. He rose rapidly through the ranks, commanding a frigate by the end of the war, and returned covered in medals. An attempt to reward him with a secure Earthside post was turned down; combat had stirred something in him and he refused any position that did not place him at the forefront of wherever the action seemed likely to be.

He fought in many battles during the Earth/Minbari War and only survived it because he obeyed orders, including orders to retreat. Had it been up to him, he would have died early in the war and he probably would have been better for it. Instead he was badly injured. Prosthetics and cybernetics saved his life and gave him reasonable mobility but his condition effectively barred him from combat. He spent years stewing in desk jobs, bitter and frustrated but loyal to the end, until Clark reviewed his psych profile and found someone he felt he could trust. Haulden was on record, as despising Mars for its refusal to aid in the Battle of the Line, so placing him in command of the planet seemed only fitting.

Haulden was once a charismatic leader, a courageous soldier and a loyal officer. Today he is walking rage; a man torn, bitter, angry and willing - even eager - to ease his personal pain by inflicting it on others. He has no qualms about ordering the most vicious reprisals for even the smallest acts of insurrection or about the wholesale revocation of basic human and legal rights.

Following the collapse of the Clark regime, Haulden was tried for war crimes, including his use of lethal force against unarmed civilians, and was found guilty and sentenced to death of personality. Under a new name, he is spending his remaining years as an orderly in a veterans' hospital on Deneb IV.

The Bringer of War

The history of Mars is a troubled one. Many of the earliest attempts to probe the red planet met with disaster. The first manned mission was cut short. The first permanent base was established under false pretences. Assassination marred the creation of the first civilian colony. Riots and uprisings have made its history as bloody as the world's Roman namesake.

This chapter discusses the various forces agitating for Martian liberation, roughly categorised as 'The Resistance', and the opposition to them. It delves into the history of the Resistance, the various factions that compose it, the views of Resistance members and the tactics they use. It provides all the information needed to play a Resistance member or lead a Resistance cell... or to play anti-terrorist forces keeping Mars secure and safe.

'So who are the good guys?'

Mars has suffered enough at the hands of the exploiters and butchers from Earth! We have built this world from nothing but barren rock and near vacuum, while Earth simply takes – takes our wealth, takes our freedom, takes our lives! We owe them nothing but blood!

'Ares Warrior', Martian Independence activist

Without Earth, Mars would be dead. Earth provides an endless stream of food, medicine, advanced technology, all of which are vital to Martian colonisation. Without Earth, there would be no Mars. What they demand is ludicrous – a few million people do not a planet make and no government in known space has an independent world in its home system! Mars took everything Earth offered and only began to speak of 'independence' when Earth's generosity allowed them to finally become a self-sustaining planet. Apparently, there is no word in the Martian tunnel patois for 'gratitude'

Senator Oliver Sanchez, North American Federation

The winners write the history books – and with Martian Independence finally won as of 2262, the history of Earth-Mars relationships is cast as one of an oppressed people finally casting off the shackles and winning their well-deserved freedom. Those who fought for Martian Independence were freedom fighters and patriots, not thugs and terrorists; those who fought against them were tyrants, traitors and murderers. That is the simple

version; the reality, as with all history, is much more complex.

Robert Heinlein once wrote that 'Where you stand depends upon where you sit'. Both Earth and Mars have legitimate points of view, and both have blind spots, prejudices and irrational beliefs. Both have motivations noble and ignoble, honourable and dishonourable.

The decision of who is 'right' is left up to the Games Master. It is quite possible to have a simplistic 'good guys' and 'bad guys' game where heroic Martian revolutionaries 'stick it to the Man', with nary a trace of moral ambiguity or questions about where liberation ends and terrorism begins, or equally a game where elite anti-terrorist forces of Earth infiltrate and rout Martian Resistance cells, foiling their baby-killing schemes without any questions about what might motivate people to take extreme measures in the name of their cause. However, such campaigns not only lack depth, they run counter to the inherent depth of the *Babylon 5* universe. Is Londo Mollari good or evil? Is G'Kar? Is Lyta? Captain Sheridan, one of the least morally ambiguous characters in the saga, uses a wide range of tricks and deceptions in order to accomplish his goals and leads an invasion of his home planet. The Vorlons are presented as 'good' at first but it is they who begin destroying entire worlds to wipe out any trace, no matter how minor, of Shadow influence. The Shadows, in turn, see themselves as making the entire galaxy stronger and better and improving the lesser races, rather than keeping them oppressed as the Vorlons do.

In the context of a Resistance-centred game, it is important to remember that no one is evil in his own mind. Whether it is a Free Mars fanatic who sets off a bomb at a crowded tube station, killing innocent travellers, or an EarthForce officer who uses torture to find out where a Resistance cell is located, people believe they are doing the right thing for the right reasons. As to whether or not this belief is false or true... well, that is up to the Games Master and the players to determine.

That said, there is a pro-Mars bias in the way the history of Mars and the Resistance is presented in this book. Why? Firstly, because the canonical source, to the extent that viewers see an objective reality and not just the subjective opinions of the characters, is pro-Mars. Secondly, because that same source has

another message – just because there are no perfect absolutes of good and evil does not mean all sides are equal. There is a big difference between ‘the world is not just pure heroes and pure villains’ and ‘everyone is right; everyone is wrong’. A fundamental message of *Babylon 5*, echoed implicitly and explicitly, is the idea that we may not be perfect but we can be better than we are – and we should strive to be such. EarthGov (pre- and post- Clark) is no shining utopia. It has corruption, black projects, arrogance – but it is still far better than Clark’s tyranny. It is flawed yet it is worth fighting for and trying to improve. Garibaldi uses intimidation and blackmail to accomplish his goal at times but his goal is usually justice, not personal aggrandisement.

This too is something Games Masters should incorporate in a campaign centred on the Resistance. Right and wrong may be complex but they do exist. The ‘bad guys’ may have understandable motivations – but this does not justify their actions. The ‘good guys’ may be flawed in many ways but they are still good. This level of moral complexity – allowing for the inherent complexity of morality while not simply hand waving away all moral issues with blanket statements that ‘everyone has equally right and wrong’ – is sometimes difficult to achieve but it was a hallmark of the TV series and a campaign which reflects it will ‘feel’ right.

Resistance History

Whence came the Resistance? Some would say it was born in 2177 when John Carter was killed and this would not be far wrong. It was only two months after that tragedy that the essay simplistically entitled ‘Why Mars Must Be Free’ began to circulate on the networks. This short document, no more than 2,000 words or so, became known as the Free Mars Manifesto. The authorship remains a mystery; many speculate it was Eve Carter, John’s widow, who penned it but she denied writing it (though she never denied *agreeing* with it) until her death.

At that point in time, though, independence was a practical impossibility. Mars had a population of a few thousand and no true ‘native’ population – the first children born to the colonists had not even reached puberty. There was no native industry or infrastructure; even keeping the hydroponics functioning well enough to meet minimum

caloric requirements was difficult. Many colonists relied heavily on funding from relatives on Earth to pay for shipments of medicines, electronic components and other necessities. As a practical matter, Mars could not stand alone – but the dream that it someday might had been planted and it had taken root. Few of the colonists in 2177 dreamed they would live to see the free Mars the essay described... but they did dream that their children or grandchildren would. They never imagined how bloody that dream would become.

A hint of the likely cost of the dream came in the 2190s when the first uprisings against Earth began. These were protests against Earth’s policy of shipping their unwanted to Mars – criminals, dissidents and ‘refuseniks’ – and dumping them into the domes without adequate provisions. This strained the domes’ food capacity, often beyond breaking point, leading to severe rationing. The final compromise was accepted in lieu of starvation, war or both, but it galled the Martian populace to have to reach such terms and it increased the self-identification of the Earth-born majority as ‘Martians’. These events also occurred just as the first generation of the Mars-born reached their adulthood, and resulted in a partial radicalisation of many of the young. Those who would be the leaders of Mars for the next generation came to physical and political maturity in a time of simmering resentment towards Earth. Not all adopted this stance but enough did to begin a strong anti-Earth subculture that would persist for the next seventy years.



The Earth View

Most of this book is written from the Martian point of view. However, understanding is a three-edged sword – there is the Martian side, the Earth side and the truth. The last of these is for the Games Master to decide upon and the Martian side is implicitly and explicitly discussed at length elsewhere. Here is the Earth side.

To Earth, Mars is filled with ingrates and criminals with a grossly inflated sense of their own importance. Other colony worlds – Earthlike planets, not barely-habitable desert wastelands – do not regularly agitate for independence, despite far larger populations, not to mention greater distance from the homeworld. Mars should be among the most loyal of worlds, but it is not.

It was Earth, which built Mars – Earth that fed it, Earth that shipped it technology, Earth that funded the massive exodus of the late 2100s. As the Martians outbred their environment and ill-prepared colonists flooded to the planet, Earth kept providing food and supplies without surcease. Earth corporations invested billions in infrastructure before a single credit of profit could be returned and most of the profit was re-invested in Mars.

During the Earth/Minbari War, all of humanity faced extinction – but Mars, alone among the colonies of the Alliance, saw this is an Earther problem. When every *human*, regardless of the planet of his birth, was called to defend his species from final extinction, when everyone who could fight was asked to do so to buy a few seconds during which a refugee craft might be able to escape and find safety, Mars stood back, keeping its fleet in orbit and its pilots grounded. Then, when told that if standing alone was what they truly wanted then so be it, they could not handle *that* either and turned on each other like animals, destroying the infrastructure their would-be ‘independent’ world would need to survive. When Earth at last relented, forgave the sins of its sibling and came to keep the world from dying in flame and famine, the response was not gratitude and thanks but hatred and resentment.

The charges of oppression and tyranny are baseless. Claims of prejudice against Martians are unfounded – true, there are few Martians in the highest echelons of power but that is because *there are few Martians!* A world with a population of ten million or so (unless one counts the apocryphal tunnel rat population which adds a few million more) should expect no more than proportional representation against a human population numbering in the high billions. Furthermore, when a Martian does achieve success within the Earth Alliance power structure he is derided as an ‘Uncle Martin’. Jeffrey Sinclair of Mars did not turn his back on Earth during the Battle of the Line and was given command of one of the highest profile projects in Earth Alliance history but he is considered by many on Mars to be a traitor and a collaborator, not a role model.

Despite all of this, Earth perseveres. Earth will not abandon Mars to its fate, no matter how richly the Martian people might deserve to get what they ask for. No matter what, Earth will keep Mars safe, secure and part of the Alliance.

Another major factor that gave rise to the Resistance were the Mine Riots (some historians prefer the terms 'Mine Uprisings' or 'Mine War') of 2109-2110, in the area today known as Slimtown. These were based in large part on issues of ownership – distant Earth-based corps owned, operated and profited from mines on Mars, while it was the Martians who worked and often died in them. 'Our blood, their profit!' was the rallying cry at the time and this issue remained a sticking point in Earth-Mars relations right up to Independence and beyond, as Mars must still deal with the dual loyalties of its corporate citizens.

The modern Resistance, though, was born during the Food Riots of the Earth/Minbari War era and the Mars Provisional Government imposed thereafter. This wholesale denial of basic Martian rights to self-government, including the removal of Mars' two freely-elected representatives to EarthDome and their replacement with appointed surrogates, helped to unite many disparate anti-Earth factions and create, if not a truly unified Resistance, at least something more than squabbling gangs as much at war with each other as with Earth.

The failed revolution (later histories called it 'The First Uprising' or used it as the start date of the 'Rebellion Era') of September 2258, which was put down by Santiago in one of his last major acts prior to his assassination, helped shape the Resistance of the later 2250s and early 2260s. Purges and shuffles in the command chain resulted in a nearly new leadership structure, with the only hangers-on from the old leadership being those who had cautioned that the time was not right.

The Current Resistance

The 'current' Resistance, as of roughly October 2258 through December 2262, is not - despite the convenience of the term 'The Resistance' - a single unified entity. It has grown into something more closely resembling an alliance of separate gangs who grudgingly accept and respect the decisions of a single leadership but the ties that bind are those of desperate necessity and cynical pragmatism and are often frayed. A single hard strike by EarthForce at the titular leadership, or a major dispute over goals or policy, can send it all flying apart.

Canonically, this does not happen – the semi-unified Resistance holds together long enough to see Mars

freed. Still, it must be noted that this does not occur due to Resistance efforts *per se* – it happens because a war-weary Earth, newly freed from Clark's tyranny, decides to honour Sheridan's promise to Mars rather than battle against his forces. It should also be noted that this liberation occurs without a democratic vote on the part of the Martian people. Just as, for example, the decision by the American colonies to secede was made without such a vote; though in both cases the decision reflected the rough will of the populace.

Regardless of what the future has been documented to hold, however, at the time of most Resistance-centric games the Resistance is fragile, fractious and feuding, always on the brink of either victory or collapse into useless squabbling factions.

From roughly July 2260 to April 2261, the Resistance is able to have a much more active and open role in Martian life. The Provisional Government's refusal to implement martial law at Clark's behest causes the planet to move into open rebellion – led in part by the EarthGov-appointed government. This government does not want a 'free Mars' – it wants a Mars that is part of an Earth Alliance *worth* being part of. The result is a three-way guerrilla war – the Resistance, EarthGov Mars and Clark's forces battle throughout the domes with control shifting on a daily basis. Clark can conquer Mars in weeks if he becomes able to focus on it but rebellions and dissent elsewhere, including growing 'disloyalty' among EarthForce officers, keeps him from putting all of his power to work in any one place at this time.

Some of the major Resistance factions are:

Ares League

The Ares League is the most single-mindedly militant faction. Its focus on violence as the first and only means of political action and its unwillingness to distinguish between civilian and government or military targets (or, often, between Earther targets and Mars citizens who 'must be sacrificed for the greater good') mean that it appeals primarily to the angry and disenfranchised who feel they have something to prove. It bombs crowded tube stations, sabotages life support to domes and even attempts to procure biological and nuclear weapons from black market suppliers. However, it lacks the numbers and skill to pull off anything too big and the financial backing needed to purchase the deadly weapons it wants.

The Resistance sometimes considers the League an embarrassment or even a threat but the utility of having a handful of amoral fanatics when fighting a guerrilla war is often high. Furthermore, by keeping the pit bulls close the Resistance leadership can usually aim them at the right targets.

Ares League actions are always destructive. They do not engage in propaganda wars except by issuing post-action manifestoes justifying their deeds. The group is often popular among disaffected youths who produce long rambling screeds detailing their support of the 'true heroes of the Revolution'. Such actions often result in visits from EarthGov security, which ruthlessly track down any link to the League, but true League members are skilled at being quiet. Entry to the League is by invitation only and few of the youthful ideologues are ever even noticed, much less recruited.

Leaving the League is difficult. Doing so is 'treason' and makes the dissident a target. His former friends and allies will show him no mercy, even if he is still loyal to the cause of an independent Mars and has no plans to betray the League.

Rumours persist that the true mastermind of the League is Psi Corp. These rumours insinuate that the mind-controlled leaders of the League will only target people and places the Corps wish eliminated with no trace of culpability.

Free Mars

This is the largest faction of the Resistance and to many people the terms 'Free Mars' and 'Resistance' are synonyms. The Free Mars movement is disciplined

and well-organised, willing to use propaganda, activism and violence as needed to achieve its aims. At times it picks the wrong tool for a given job but most often the call is correct. Free Mars is organised into small cells, most of which have specific names unto themselves – Red Planet Liberation, the Voice of Carter, Podkayne's Avengers and so on. This has the effect of keeping the authorities confused as to the extent of co-ordination between groups and the size of Free Mars as a whole. This skill in networking separate, focused groups into a unified but ever-changing whole is what enables Free Mars to assemble the unified Resistance in the latter years of the 2250s.

Free Mars has a strong policy against targeting civilians directly but it is willing to accept limited civilian casualties where necessary. It is even willing to risk killing Martians if the ends are truly justified but this is rare for reasons both moral and practical. It considers violence a tool like any other and will use it when it is the best tool, yet does not consider it the *only* tool.

There is no official spokesperson or face for Free Mars, though many citizens who speak on behalf of Martian independence are clandestine members or at least in close contact with those who are. Some of the prominent and outspoken advocates for Martian independence in EarthDome or on the talk show and lecture circuits can arguably be said to speak for Free Mars, even though they publicly deny any connection to terrorist activities. Free Mars became prominent in 2248, when it issued proclamations supporting the neutrality of Mars in the Earth/Minbari War. It rose to greater prominence when it began a campaign of terrorism against the Earth-imposed Provisional Government in that same year.

Martian Independence Movement

The MIM began as a purely political movement which grew more and more willing to go outside the law as conditions failed to change in response to political pressure. The MIM was originally a mainstream political group organising 'Get out the vote' drives, sponsoring petitions, sending lobbyists representing their views to EarthDome and in some cases to speak to ambassadors for other worlds, trying to build political ties between other races' governments and Mars. As one effort after another to force Earth to grant a vote to Mars on the topic of planetary secession failed, the MIM became more and more willing to engage in 'direct action', including civil disobedience, sabotage



and similar activities, all in such a way as to not directly implicate the group. This eventually led to something of a schism as the 'respectable' and 'direct action' sides of the group began to war between themselves. The latter group eventually split off to become Free Mars, while the former remains as a shadow of itself, composed mostly of greying radicals who sense their time has passed but who are unwilling to give up the fight. The Resistance has welcomed their prodigal parents back and the 'greybeards' provide much needed intellectual heft and political cunning. They have hard-won knowledge of how to plug the system and networks of contacts throughout EarthDome.

Mars Liberation Now

Originally known as the Popular Front for Mars Liberation Now, the group is now more commonly known as MLN. It has its origins in various campus activist groups influenced by independence-minded teachers and thus includes a surprising number of non-Marsborn members who found themselves drawn into the group while studying on Mars. The most intellectual and least violent of the major factions, MLN does not engage in violence against people, though it will engage in sabotage and property crimes from vandalism to the destruction of buildings known to be empty of human life. Such actions, while undertaken by individuals known to be members, are all officially denied by the group, which has never 'taken credit' for any violent acts. Its public face is that of a ceaseless propaganda mill churning out endless statements, manifestoes and declarations, putting forth its stance on every issue of the day, from water shortages at New Vegas to the 'pro-Earth propaganda' it claims is being promulgated by recent plotlines on *The Sands of Mars*. Free Mars tends to look to MLN as a recruitment source of skilled propagandists and psycholinguists, sorting out the wheat from the chaff and giving the truly talented a chance to put their skills to work in a more effective arena. MLN is also a major source of civil disobedience from sit-ins to 'tube stops', where a few dozen members break into a tube and chain themselves to the support structure, stopping transit on that line until they are cleared off.

When the Clark Administration imposed martial law, MLN members found that their acts of civil disobedience and even formerly legal propagandising netted them punishments far out of line with the severity of the crimes and that Nightwatch was inclined to use more than excessive force against unarmed and unresisting protesters. MLN was reduced to a tiny hard core in a just a few months, as the personal cost of its

style of activism became too high for many members to tolerate. Most either drifted into Free Mars or out of the independence movement altogether; a few became truly radicalised and joined Ares or other ultra-violent factions.

Safehouses

All throughout Mars the Resistance maintains safehouses, places to lie low when the heat is on. These locations vary greatly in size and facilities but all have the following in common:

They are secure: Safehouses are fitted with the best security and anti-detection mechanisms the Resistance can acquire and anyone assigned to a safehouse is told to check these mechanisms before settling in. Trying to plant bugs or otherwise spy on a safehouse requires a contest of skill against the Technical (electronics) skill of the person who set up the security, who is usually a specialist with a bonus of +15 or more.

They are secret: Safehouse locations are among the most closely guarded secrets of the Resistance, protected via many layers of blind connections. No one knows the locations of more than one or two, and the safehouses are constantly monitored to make sure no one has been watching them too closely. If strangers are seen watching a given safehouse location, or if a police patrol passes it with unusual frequency, it is dropped from the list.

Beyond that, safehouses are highly varied. A few possible locations:

Toobicle 15-G, Paradise Gardens Housing, New Vegas: Lost in the endless rows of cheap housing in the New Vegas subdome, this nondescript toobicle unit is kept paid up and empty of inhabitants via a small but constantly funded bank account belonging to a nonexistent businessman who needs a room for his equally nonexistent business trips. Paradise Gardens is dingy but relatively safe and home to transient workers of all types, so the sight of a new neighbour attracts no attention. Behind the dull grey door, though, toobicle 15-G is packed with food and other supplies, as well as a comm system that has been secured against nearly any intrusion (Technical (electronics) check (DC 30) to break in). It is used to provide a secure location for a fugitive for up to a month, during which he never need leave the room. It is a dull existence in Toobicle 15-G but a safe one.

Red Acres Estates, Utopia Planitia: This is a small homestead located a mile from any other, inhabited at this point by Donald Greyson, a retired EarthForce officer who spent most of his career on Mars and came to think of himself as a Martian. He will not fight for the Resistance but he does support those who are battling for liberation, in his own way. The tunnels beneath his dome are far more extensive than most homestead undergrounds and four people can live there indefinitely, if not comfortably. The dank tunnels are fitted with several special ultra-secure chambers that are scan-shielded; if a shuttle or vehicle approaches the dome, anyone hiding below scrambles for those compartments.

Dome 14-B, 'Eden Reborn': One of the early colonial attempts, and one of the first true failures, was the 'Eden Reborn' Christian naturist sect that sought to establish a colony for its ascetic, agrarian lifestyle far from the many temptations of Earth. Two hundred members set up the dome in 2175 but the colony was finally abandoned in 2188 after EarthGov observers concluded that the ceaseless string of maintenance failures, which had killed a quarter of the colonists, was not likely to cease and that the risk posed to the children of the colony was too great. While the seizure of the dome by EarthForce troops was a bit of a news story at the time, with many fearing a Masada- or Waco-style standoff, the raid actually resulted in minimal casualties and is a minor blip in Martian history. However, the empty dome, relatively near to the settled regions but uninhabited due to ongoing legal entanglements with the sect's Earth-based operations, is a major Resistance stronghold. Large portions of the dwellings and the underdome chambers have been surreptitiously fitted with low-emission life support and sensor-shielded tunnels link the dome to a tube transfer point deep in the Martian desert. This safehouse is used when a group of people needs to be housed together for a time or when separating them would be difficult or risky.

Activities

One of the fundamental traits which defines an 'activist' is being, well, active. The Resistance does not just sit around and talk about how evil Earth is and how great it would be if Mars was independent – it acts. These actions are not always violent or criminal but they are all directed at achieving the goal of Martian liberation.

Propaganda

A revolution which does not have the support of the population is doomed to fail or to lead to a government worse than the one deposed. For this reason, the more intelligent and far-thinking members of the Resistance know that propaganda is key. With the tacit support of the majority they can act in relative safety. If the majority sees them as terrorists, however, the very people they are trying to liberate will call the cops and, even worse, accept increased EarthGov control as a fair price to pay for security. Thus the Resistance must sell two ideas to the population – that independence from Earth is a valid goal which will benefit most Martians and is opposed only by a few elitists, and that waiting for change to occur via purely legitimate political means is not an option because the balance of power is such that EarthGov will never free Mars without extraordinary and extralegal pressures.

The first idea is not inherently criminal, except under the Clark regime. Propaganda to sell the idea of independence ranges from the inoffensive (editorials, comments on public discussion forums, the publication of books or tri-vids advocating change) to the borderline criminal (activities such as writing graffiti or hacking legitimate communications to insert messages). Mere advocacy of a political idea is protected by the Earth Constitution and the 'legitimate' face of Martian Independence limits itself to this.

The second idea, that extralegal means are required, strains the boundaries of the law. The North American Federation, for example, which draws a great deal of its law from the old United States, holds that 'advocacy' of criminal activities is legal but 'incitement' is not – the difference being in whether or not the expression will cause an *imminent* breach of the law. It is the distinction between publishing a manifesto and inciting a mob to riot. However, EarthGov as a whole draws from many legal traditions, most of which are less sanguine about the advocacy of lawbreaking. Documents that justify or excuse criminal activity are illegal under current Martian law, though the penalties are relatively light (until the Clark Administration's Edict on Treason #289, which holds that attempting to justify a criminal action taken against the legitimate authority of EarthGov is identical to committing such an action). Judges who believed in the free expression even of noxious ideas were loath to enforce these laws and many were purged by Nightwatch.

Propaganda takes many forms. It can consist of exposing (and sometimes exaggerating) the crimes and abuses of EarthGov. It can involve detailing real, imagined or wholly made-up conspiracies and connections which show that laws or activities undertaken for the putative good of the Martian people serve to financially or politically benefit a small number of Earthers. It can appeal to the intellect, putting forth arguments in favour of Independence based on history, longstanding theories of political rights or the founding principles of many nations of the Alliance, or it can appeal to the emotions, using shocking images of oppression and personalised tales of innocents who have suffered due to EarthGov's misrule. Skilled propagandists use whatever tactics are needed to reach their target audiences.

Propaganda is not *a priori* false – it is biased and unbalanced but it does not need to be lies. Often there are half-truths mixed in, sins of omission, but a good propagandist rarely states out-and-out falsehoods because those are easy to disprove and can cast doubts on the true parts of the message. Statements of opinion, careful selection of facts to eliminate those not supportive of one's claim and the careful use of loaded words are the tools of the skilled propagandist.

Propaganda Rules

In game terms, Propaganda is a Craft skill, with the result being a manifesto, editorial, tri-vid, interactive program or other work that serves to sell a given message. The use is to prepare generally neutral people to accept an idea as valid. For game purposes, Non-Player Characters can be presumed to react to ideas in the same manner in which they react to Player Characters or other Non-Player Characters. They have initial reactions based on their values, social positions, education, beliefs and so on as described below. In some cases the standard attitude descriptions do not work well with regard to ideas, so alternate terms are provided.

Hostile: The character is opposed to the idea, fanatically so. He will likely use violence against those who espouse it if it is safe to do so and he has the means and opportunity. He may even risk his life or reputation against such individuals, so strong is his hatred. He considers the idea anathema and anyone who believes or advocates it to be evil, corrupt and dangerous. If the idea is illegal, he will not hesitate to report the person to the authorities.

Unfriendly (Disagree): The character greatly disapproves of the idea. He is unlikely to use lethal force against someone who espouses it but he might swing a punch. In any event he will likely cut a conversation short, rethink a friendship or otherwise be greatly shocked and offended. If the idea is illegal he is likely to contact the authorities but this will depend on his relationship, if any, with the espousing character.

Indifferent: The character has no strong opinions of his own and is likely to mimic the 'proper' opinion for his social class or profession. If he is inclined towards opposing the idea he will likely mumble a disagreement and change the subject. If the idea is illegal he will consider contacting the authorities if he otherwise dislikes the person expressing the idea but will otherwise likely let it slide unless there is a stronger motivation (such as a reward for turning in 'traitors').

Friendly (Agree): The character is already in partial agreement with the idea and is eager to hear more. He will feel a bond towards someone expressing the idea, sensing a 'kindred soul'. He will not report those expressing illegal ideas and may even take some small steps to aid them. He is unlikely to directly act on the idea himself but he will tacitly support those who do take such actions.

Helpful (Fanatical): The character is in full agreement with the idea. He fully supports it and by inference those who promulgate it. He may even risk life, status or property in order to help spread the idea, though the exact limits of how far he may go are determined by his general personality and inclinations.

Ideas tend to come in pairs and the more someone supports one idea, the more he is likely to oppose the other. Thus someone who Agrees with the idea of Martian independence will Disagree with the idea of continued EarthGov rule. Someone who is Fanatical about it will be Hostile to EarthGov rule. This is not always the case and people sometimes hold contradictory or inconsistent views or hate one idea much more than they dislike another; someone may despise EarthGov, for example, without also thinking Mars is ready for independence, preferring a more nuanced solution. However, as a general rule people tend to simplify their mental realms into 'Us' and 'Them' and act accordingly.

Influencing someone through propaganda is a contest of the propagandist's Craft and the original attitude of the individual. The quality of the propaganda is determined by the Profession check; the reader of the propaganda makes a Sense Motive or Knowledge (politics) (whichever is higher) check against the total of the propagandist's Profession check and adds a modifier based on his original attitude:

Attitude	Modifier
Hostile	+25
Disagreement	+15
Indifferent	+10
Agreement	+5
Fanatical	+0

If the check is successful, the character shifts his attitude up one step. For a week after an attitude shift, the character tends to be unsure. During this time, propaganda for the opposing view (which will undo the shift) gains a +5 circumstance bonus.

A constant barrage of propaganda has a numbing effect. The Games Master should assign modifiers to the check based on how steady and intense the propaganda has been. The longer the same message is promulgated with only minor variations, the less likely it is to convert anyone – anyone likely to have changed his mind, will have done so already.

These rules can be used to generically model the result of a massive propaganda spree on the general attitude of a community. The Games Master should assign a general feeling to the community and an appropriate Sense Motive skill (usually +3 to +10), then check. If the propaganda succeeds, the community's attitude shifts.

Other modifiers can make propaganda more or less appealing. Apply the following to any check. The descriptions in parenthesis are examples for the idea that 'Mars should be independent of Earth.' Similar examples for other ideas can be found.

- Character has suffered because of advocates of the idea (Brother killed by terrorists, lost job due to EarthGov interference): +10

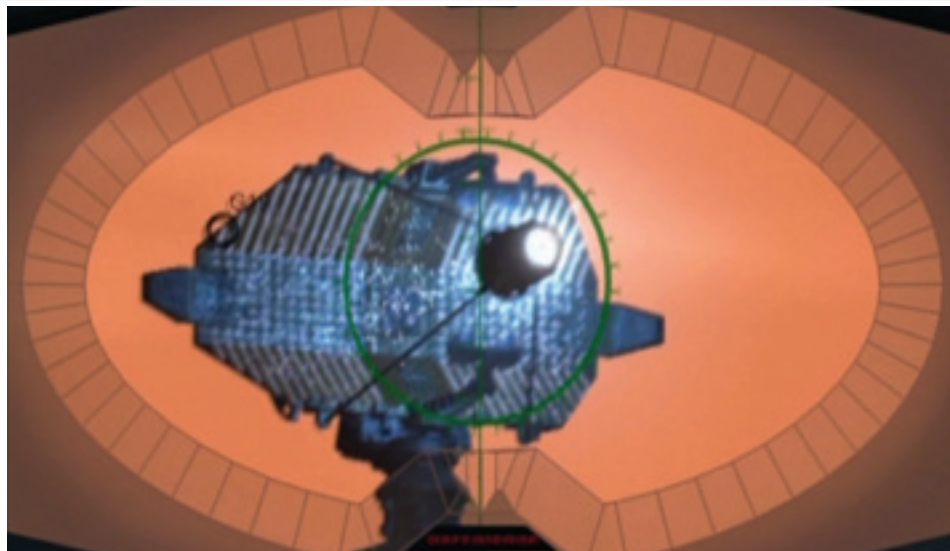
- Character's position or social status would be eroded by the idea (Corporate executive, EarthGov employee) : +8
- Character's upbringing or background makes him hostile to the idea (Family has served in EarthForce): +5
- Idea is complicated or nuanced: +5
- Idea is socially unacceptable or currently unpopular: +2 to +10 depending on degree of disapproval
- Character's status or position would be improved by widespread acceptance of the idea: -2
- Idea is popular among character's social group: -2 to -5
- Idea attempts to justify or excuse violence: +5 to +20 depending on degree of mayhem

For example, a Free Mars activist is concerned that people are growing used to Earth oppression and produces a 20-minute tri-vid consisting of interviews with innocent people harassed or beaten by EarthGov officials for petty or nonexistent crimes. This goes out via the *samizdat* network and is transmitted on a lot of underground comm links so many people are exposed to it. The activist has Craft (propaganda) +15 and rolls a 12 on his Craft check for a total of 27. If someone who is Indifferent to EarthGov views the video, the viewer must make a Sense Motive or Knowledge (politics) check (DC 27) in order to resist being swayed to Agreement with the idea that 'EarthGov is oppressing innocent people!'

Terrorism

Or, if you prefer, 'direct action'. This is a very difficult subject for many people, in large part because it can be very subjective. The adage that 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' is both timeworn and true. The 'Who Are the Good Guys?' section addresses this topic generally. This section discusses some of the issues in more specific terms and then goes on to discuss some of the basic acts that might be undertaken.

Fighting a war of resistance is never easy and is rarely morally simple. Clark's tyranny is evident and obvious; it is not difficult to consider fighting against it to be a moral and righteous course of action. However, the complexities of the situation are many. During the time Franklin and Marcus are on Mars, one agent of the Resistance bombs a hotel, killing a dozen civilians. While this is against the direct orders of the leader of the Resistance, it is nonetheless typical of the actions



some Resistance members consider to be justified. To most citizens of the Earth Alliance, oppression began with Clark's coup; to the Martians, though, Clark is just the latest phase of a war they have been fighting for generations.

The stances which Player Characters may take towards terrorism can be varied. Some may insist terrorism is never justified, no matter the provocation. Others may accept the need for terrorism against purely military or government targets if care is taken to minimise loss of life - targeting property rather than people. Some may feel that anyone wearing the uniform of an enemy is a legitimate target even if he is just a clerk at a supply depot or a guard at a police station. Still others may take the route of extreme fanaticism - anyone who is not with them is against them, and if innocents or allies die in the war, they are simply martyrs (willing or otherwise) for the cause. All of these concepts have been expressed in word and deed throughout human history.

If a campaign is set on Mars during the Clark era (or to a lesser extent in the years directly preceding it) and at least some of the characters are members of the Resistance, this issue has to be dealt with. No matter the choices made, there will be consequences. Refusing to engage in any violence at all effectively gives EarthGov a free rein. Innocents will die as the characters pontificate about morality. Trying to minimise casualties is fine but doing so can hamstring operations and place agents

of the Resistance at risk - and sooner or later, something goes wrong and the 'empty' computer centre that is blown up turns out to have contained a group of schoolchildren tourists. Insane fanaticism simply turns people against you and increases the acceptance of the 'security verses liberty' tradeoffs used by tyrants throughout the ages. This kind of complexity leads to

great roleplaying and wonderful challenges but it can also place strain on real-world relationships. Some people do not play in order to explore complex moral issues and while the *Babylon 5* universe is never simplistic, there are places where the morality is much more clear-cut than on Mars in 2260. If players or Games Masters are uncomfortable with the idea of confronting the issue of terrorism from the side of the terrorists (and are, presumably, uncomfortable playing Clark's jackbooted thugs), a Martian campaign should focus on non-Resistance themes, with the Resistance omnipresent in the background but not a direct part of the Player Characters' lives.

That said...

Terrorist activities consist of violence directed at people and property with the intent of causing a lack of faith in the controlling government, so as to force a change in that government's policies or the withdrawal of the government itself. They can also be used against non-governmental factions, for the same reasons. Terrorism is distinct from normal war in that it is perpetrated not by armies but by individuals acting alone or with only a few others. The terrorist does not wear a uniform, have a headquarters or rely on a complex chain of command. He vanishes into the populace at large. He is not interested in a straight-up fight - he knows he will lose. His goal is to destroy the ability of the ruling authority to rule. Forcing the government to act in an exceptionally draconic fashion in order to 'fight

terrorism' is a key part of this, even though this will result in more short-term suffering. Indeed, the more people the government harms in its quest to destroy terrorists, the more radicalised the population will become.

However, this requires that the population generally support the terrorists' cause and oppose the government. Otherwise the reverse may happen – the government may gain support as the only defence against the random violence of the terrorists and the population will accept restrictions on its liberties and even demand more if security is promised. Under such conditions the terrorist is often forced to ratchet up the scope of his actions to prove no security can come from the government. Typical terrorist actions, in the context of a Mars Resistance game, include:

Hoaxes

This category is for actions that cause serious panic and disruption, not harmless pranks. The intent here is to undermine the credibility of the government and to instil fear, to remind people that it could be real next

time. Planting fake bombs (which proves a real bomb could have been there), unleashing 'nerve gas' which is just harmless mist (and which shows how vulnerable air supply systems are to attack, *terrifying* on dome-encased Mars!) or inciting crowds to panic with harmless 'noisemaker'-type explosions are all typical examples. Such actions usually result in little loss of life or property damage but are not totally without risk. People who are panicked can do stupid things, trample each other or suffer heart attacks out of fear. Should such events occur, government propagandists will play them up, and even if they do not, the possibility that they *could* will certainly be mentioned. Such hoaxes usually carry stiff penalties if caught – years in prison in places like Phobos or the north polar ice mines.

Destruction of Property

This is the wilful destruction of property by violent means, usually property which belongs to the government or which is part of the infrastructure. Transit tubes, shipyards, military bases, guard posts, government offices, date centres and so forth are typical targets. If loss of life is to be avoided, the

Civilian Attacks

The purpose of these attacks is random violence with the intent of causing terror – indeed, such attacks against wholly civilian targets are what define terrorism in most people's minds. The point is not to disrupt a service or eliminate a powerful politician – it is to send a clear and absolute message that the government cannot keep the population safe. It is a thug's message – submit or die. Yet for many of the most desperate, it is the only message they can see getting through. To them, any mode of operation that leaves the common citizens relatively safe means that while there may be discontent, there will not be revolution. Only if faith in the government is totally undermined can change happen. From the terrorist's perspective, such random attacks serve two purposes – they discredit the government and they force it into irrational and short-sighted action that only makes people angry at it, not at the terrorists. This cynical and murderous calculation is sometimes accurate and sometimes not; the balance can easily shift the other way to impel a surge of patriotism and support and a willingness to endure any deprivations. On Mars, which has suffered for a decade under a government uncaring at best and oppressive at worst, the scales do tend to shift as the terrorists would wish them to – which can impel many to risk such grossly immoral acts.

This level of activity is best left to Non-Player Characters, with Player Characters reacting to it. While it may be interesting to some to try to get into the heads of those who would bomb hotels or restaurants, such topics are likely to lead to the dissolution of a gaming group and a lot of hostility. The morality and consequences of such actions can be brought into play without the Player Characters themselves being directly responsible for the deed.

terrorist may issue a warning before the bomb goes off or target a building when it is presumed to be empty. Of course, accidents happen – the bomb goes off early or there is a large late shift at work. EarthGov makes the most of such things and fervent after-the-fact denials of intent to kill rarely assuage those who lose friends or relatives. A darker thread often seen in such post-bombing propaganda wars is the implication or direct assertion that people were left in a building known to be a target for attack. Given the presence of spies and provocateurs within the lower echelons (and possibly the higher echelons) of the Resistance, this is not entirely impossible.

Attacks on property are often seen as morally ‘clean’, even if there are accidents, but even people not killed are harmed. A tube destroyed can strand people for hours and the delays while traffic is rerouted and the tube repaired can mean weeks of annoyance for commuters. Workers at a shipyard are laid off while it is reconstructed – or in some cases fired if it is determined to be safer to build ships somewhere else. A government office that is destroyed cannot provide services to those who need them, forcing them to travel across the dome or even to another dome entirely. The Resistance believes such consequences are a small price to pay for liberation and would not happen at all had EarthGov not seized control of the planet in the first place.

Assassination

The deliberate targeting of either specific individuals or individuals serving a specified role can both be classed as assassination. The object here is to kill, both to remove people from positions of authority and to frighten those who might seek to replace them. While the most desirable targets are those at the top of the power pyramid, they are also the hardest to kill; as a consequence, it is those in the middle and the bottom who are most likely to die. This can be anything from a sniper picking off a minor functionary in the Census Bureau as he leaves for work, to a suitcase bomb planted at a military base or police station. To those of the Resistance who are willing to kill, anyone working for the government is a ‘legitimate’ target, though some are more legitimate than others. Those working directly in law enforcement or oversight are primary; those who ‘oil the gears of oppression’ are secondary; those who merely provide fundamental social and infrastructure services are tertiary. Schoolteachers and welfare caseworkers are as much government employees as

EarthForce security officers or the Chair of the Anti-Terrorist Activities Committee but no one outside of some of the more lunatic members of the Ares League would be both fanatical and foolish enough to target them.

Attacks on those who work in any sort of enforcement of EarthGov law – including civilian police – are one of the most difficult issues the Resistance has to deal with in terms of internal debate both political and moral. Without effective control, EarthGov cannot govern. However, police do far more than enforce draconian edicts; they serve the public in a variety of ways and the same cop who beats a suspected Free Mars member to unconsciousness may be a hero who nearly died taking down a lunatic who had opened fire on a crowd. Furthermore, most civilian police are Mars-born, even if they enforce EarthGov law. Some of the Resistance see nothing but ‘collaborators’; others see a moral dilemma made much easier by the arrival of Nightwatch and the purges that followed. That anyone with a Nightwatch armband was a legitimate target was something nearly all the Resistance could agree on except those wholly committed to non-violence.

Joining or Finding the Resistance

It is relatively easy to find a group of angry young people fuming about EarthGov oppression and wearing ‘Free Mars!’ armbands or elcee (liquid crystal) implants that display anti-Earth slogans. It is equally easy to find some committed group of activists, from student radical groups with grandiose names (‘The Martian People’s Popular Front for Liberation and Justice’) to more sedate and effective political organisations. It is much harder, however, to find the true hardcore Resistance. With spies, telepaths and provocateurs lurking everywhere and with the failed uprising of 2258 a lingering reminder of how fragile its chances are, the true Resistance does not freely reveal itself to anyone who can spew out a handful of revolutionary phrases and flash the ‘Free Mars!’ hand sign.

The Resistance operates through a maze of indirection and secrecy. The public face of Martian Independence – ‘legitimate’ political activists, commentators, pundits and advocates – often, but not always, have ties to the Resistance. These organisations, which vary greatly in their demeanours and activities, serve to collect eager would-be revolutionaries and determine their worth.



revolutionaries do not wait to be recruited or to find the Resistance. They *act*. A group of committed friends forms a small cell of their own and begins to take down targets of opportunity. Often the Resistance ignores these groups, seeing them, at best, as a distraction for EarthGov security that keeps it from penetrating the real Resistance too deeply. However,

when a cell is especially successful, cunning or skilled, the Resistance brings it in. This is the main means by which the current Resistance formed, by allying independent groups under a common leadership.

Not every faction of Free Mars operates this way. The Ares League, for example, would consider an *unwillingness* to engage in mundane political work to be a good sign. The League protects itself from spies primarily by forcing would-be recruits to commit criminal acts far outside most spies' mandates.

Player Characters who need to contact the Resistance may not be able to endure six months of paper-filing or be willing to blow up some buildings to get attention. Networks of contacts and connections can be used but even this has risks. Asking questions draws attention. The Resistance may decide the character is up to no good and simply attempt to kill him. Nightwatch or other organisations might lay a trap, leading to an arrest on charges of treason. A simple scammer might exploit the character in some way, such as demanding money for necessary bribes and expenditures, then vanishing. Anyone who has a Contact specified as being in touch with the Resistance may use it. Otherwise Gather Information checks are needed. A Gather Information check (DC 25) will get the Resistance to become aware that the character is looking for them. How

The willingness of someone to do tedious work such as signature drives, fund raising and other such non-'revolutionary' activities helps to test their commitment and time spent in conversation with others helps reveal their true intentions. Skilled spies and agents can slip through this net, of course – indeed, they are trained to penetrate precisely this type of first-line security – but this does weed out a lot of the uncommitted or the many untrained, self-appointed 'spies' who seek to protect Earth by undermining the Resistance. Nightwatch attracts a number of such self-proclaimed deep cover infiltrators; in most cases they are ignored or turned into unwitting double-agents, being carefully fed false data which they can then report as 'vital intelligence'.

Once a likely candidate has been found he is slowly introduced to the Resistance with careful tests of his commitment. Would he be willing to deliver this data crystal to a given address, knowing the contents are illegal? Would he place a package in a numbered locker at a specified tube station? Would he break into a poorly guarded government office and leave a nonlethal smoke bomb behind, timed to go off during the next business day? Meanwhile, his background is thoroughly vetted for inconsistencies. Presumed friends and contacts are checked, apartments are searched and so on.

This method is generally safe but slow. Other times the Resistance will seek people out. Many would-be

the Resistance responds after that is up to the Games Master. The following modifiers apply to the check:

☞	Character is a Mars native	+2
☞	Character has lived on Mars for more than six months	+1
☞	Character is new to Mars	-2
☞	Character is non-human	-5
☞	Character has gained at least one level as a lurker or agent while on Mars	+3
☞	Character is a telepath	+2*

*This is designed to reflect the results of accidental scans and 'overheard' thoughts during the process of searching. If the character plans merely to deep scan anyone who might have knowledge until he finds what he is looking for, that should be played out rather than using a Gather Information check.

This process will take 1d4 days in a major dome or the underdome and 1d6 days in a smaller dome.

Of course, doing this may attract attention. Avoiding those who might entrap or fool the character requires other skills. A Bluff check (DC 25) must be made at the same time as the Gather Information check. Failing this check means that whether or not the character's query reaches the Resistance, someone hostile to the Resistance and/or the character knows he is looking.

Cell Structure

The Resistance is composed of many factions, each of which has its own internal organisation. In general, though, a faction can be described as a collection of cells, each with from five to ten members, which have only limited contact with other cells or with the leadership.

Within a cell, organisation is simple. There is a single leader and, in larger cells, a lieutenant. Everyone else is technically equal, although there is often an unspoken pecking order in all but the smallest groups. The leader is usually the only one with the information needed to contact other cells. Such contacts are almost never made in person. Most occur via scrambled comm signals with voices and faces blurred or disguised. Some contacts occur via drops – a data crystal is placed in a locker at 01:00 am, picked up and a reply returned in a different locker at five AM, with both locations changing

according to a complex code which is based off a shared and unguessable keyword. Still other contacts occur via secondary carrier signals on innocuous broadcasts or on carefully coded advertisements or public notices. By not relying on a single methodology for connecting cells, the Resistance reduces the odds of a single strike taking out or compromising the network.

There is a great deal of redundancy built into the system. Cell A will be in touch with Cells B and C. Cell C can contact Cells A and D. D can contact A and B and so on. Specialised AI systems juggle the contact chains continuously in order to keep the network hard to trace. 'Dropped nodes', or cells which fail to respond in a given period of time to contact attempts or which use outdated or invalid codes, are worked around. It would take several well-aimed raids to seriously damage the network. The systems that co-ordinate the cells are not part of any network; communication is routed to them through gateway machines via physical links with no connections to other systems. Only those who know the locations of the actual hardware can access the data stored there. A number of dummy systems with meaningless databases have been set up to throw EarthGov off the scent.

Rarely are specific orders given to individual cells. Rather, general goals are set (undermine transportation, gather information on security strongpoints) and cells act according to their own plans. With no specific plans going out, they cannot be intercepted or traced. Cells are encouraged to do their planning in face-to-face meetings in secure locations, again to minimise interception. Sometimes greater coordination is necessary – a strike against a well protected building or simultaneous attacks on a dozen targets scattered throughout a dome. In such cases the risk of failure due to interception is considered less than the risk of failure due to a lack of communication.

Cell leaders designate replacements to be contacted in the event they are captured or killed. In addition, cell members usually know a distress signal – a code to type into a public terminal or a symbol to spray on a particular wall – which indicates the cell has been compromised. Other Resistance members investigate upon detecting the code and take appropriate measures. This is done with great care – a spy might use the code to lure others into a trap, after all.

The strongest cells, the ones trusted with the most vital missions for the Resistance, are those composed of

long-time acquaintances – a solid core of people who have worked together for a while and ideally have bonds beyond politics, such as blood ties or a friendship which predates the Resistance. The weakest and most suspect cells are those which are composed of strangers who are joined only by their stated goals – such groups are frighteningly easy to infiltrate and are kept far outside the core until they have proven themselves time and again. Most Player Character cells will likely fall into this category.

Player Character Cells

A goal for Resistance campaigns is to win the trust of the Resistance leadership and become a key part of the struggle. One concept for a campaign is to have most or all of the Player Characters belong to the same Resistance cell. This gives the characters a solid reason to work with and support each other, as well as a structure that makes it easy for the Games Master to initiate scenarios – the cell is assigned to do this or that and the story begins! However, many players dream of being more than small cogs in a large machine. Another more complex but possibly more rewarding option for Resistance-centric gameplay is for players to be the leaders of one of the many factions that form the organised Resistance...

Player Factions

The Resistance is a fairly cohesive entity comprised of many formerly independent factions. A lot of different people wanted Martian Independence and were not about to wait around until someone else got it organised. Over the ninety years between the Carter assassination and the final liberation of Mars, many groups of people banded together to work for the cause. Most of these groups either quickly dissolved or lasted for years without ever growing or accomplishing anything of note. A few prospered and continued to expand, often changing or splitting as they did so. Following the Food Riots, the disparate factions working for independence began to work much more closely together, realising that cooperation was required for victory.

In a Player Faction campaign, some or all of the Player Characters are the leaders, founders or members of an organisation dedicated to Martian liberation that has joined the organised Resistance. This can be handled in several ways.

1. If the campaign begins with characters at 1st level it is likely they *are* the faction. 1st level characters are individuals with little practical experience of the world, having basically just completed their initial ‘training’, formally or informally. They are not yet great leaders, though the seeds of greatness may be visible to those with keen perception. A group of Player Characters can declare themselves the Coalition for Martian Freedom but at least at first it is going to be just them.
2. A second option is to have characters as up-and-coming members of an existing faction, with the leadership roles held by Non-Player Characters. In such a setting the general intent is for the original leadership to fall – to be captured or killed or to resign – and allow the Player Characters to take over when the time is right. Such a set-up provides a richer framework for beginning play - the faction will contain several interesting Non-Player Characters to interact with, contacts, connections and a history - but some players prefer to have their characters build things from scratch.
3. Another possibility is to begin characters at a higher level and establish that the faction they control is one they built up over the course of their past. This works well with experienced players who understand both the game mechanics and the *Babylon 5* universe well. Some work will need to be done to detail the ‘jumped’ levels and this will form the backstory for many adventures yet to come. To some degree this is how the *Babylon 5* program works – Sinclair, Ivanova, Garibaldi and the others begin their adventures on the TV show not as neophytes but as experienced individuals who have earned positions of leadership. While it can be fun to guide a character from his first steps in the world onward, it can also be fun to jump right into the real action and not spend several months of real-world time on the fringes of the main event.

Regardless of what method is used to get the players there, this section discusses what to do when they arrive – they are in command of a faction.

Faction Design

Other than the basic goal of Martian independence, factions differ greatly in their organisation, methods, attitudes and final visions of Mars. This section

discusses some options that should be considered before a faction is formed. Of course, individual Player Characters within a faction may differ, often greatly, on what the faction should be – see Internal Dissent below.

Faction Purpose

Obviously factions which are parts of the Resistance have, as at least one purpose, liberating Mars from Earth. However, most have other goals. Martian liberation may be a side effect of a larger plan. For example, some factions may wish to shatter the Earth Alliance altogether and believe *every* world should be independent. Others wish to establish a specific form of government on Mars – old-style Soviet communism, anarcho-syndicalism, fascism, monarchy or something else – and need Mars free before that can happen. Martian freedom may be only a secondary or tertiary goal, one which the faction supports because it tends to be part of a ‘package deal’ of anti-establishment ideas, or it may even be that Martian liberation is supported only via lip service as means of tapping into the resources and connections of the Resistance while doing as little as possible to actually help it with its goals. The Resistance leadership is fairly savvy in this regard and will either cut such groups loose at the first opportunity or use them as bait or patsies.

Factions may also have a very specific focus in terms of *why* they wish to liberate Mars. Some follow ideologies that demand it. Others do not love Mars so much as they hate EarthGov and would do anything to hurt it. Still others have more cynical motives – they see themselves as gaining power on a free Mars that they cannot gain while EarthGov rules. Some are dome-secessionists and wish to return to the days when each dome or small cluster of domes was quasi-independent.

Methods of Organisation

A given faction can be organised however the leadership sees fit. Often the method of organisation reflects the political or social ideals of the leadership but sometimes this is not the case. The Ares League, for instance, espouses as an ultimate goal a near-anarchic society, but the League itself is brutally hierarchical with no dissent permitted – this is, according to League literature, a ‘necessary precondition during times of counter-revolutionary domination.’ Some possible modes of organisation include:

Every Man for Himself: The faction is more a group of mutually supportive friends or allies than a true organisation. Each member acts as he sees fit, drawing on shared resources as needed. This usually leads to total dissolution or a shift to some other type of organisation, as two members might end up working at cross-purposes very easily. Such an organisation gains a -2 penalty on Internal Dissent rolls but also a -2 penalty on all actions taken and an increase of +1 temporary Resources per action due to general inefficiency.

Pure Consensus: No one is in charge; the faction determines its course of action by talking about it until everyone agrees or no one seriously objects. It is worth noting that such systems tend to either result in total inaction or else (more often) one or two natural leaders will appear and be ‘in charge’ via unspoken but understood concurrence. Stress can occur when a newcomer to the group asks ‘Why do we always decide to do what *she* wants?’ or when two equally charismatic individuals vehemently disagree on goals but there is no formal way to establish a decision so the debate goes on unendingly. Factions with this style of organisation cannot perform any more than one action every three weeks, no matter how large they are.

Democracy: In a democratic system, goals or plans are proposed and the faction votes. In some cases every decision is made this way; in most, as a practical matter, day-to-day operations follow an agreed-upon protocol, with voting occurring on major issues or where a change of plan is called for. As groups get larger, voting becomes more and more burdensome. Factions with this organisation may perform no more than one action per week.

Elected Officers: This is the most common means of organisation, as it tends to balance efficiency with the need of many to feel as if they are true parts of something. The faction is headed by a small group of officers (the exact number tends to vary widely based on faction size and breadth of operations) who make all major decisions. The rest of the faction obeys or quits. Elections may be held only at scheduled times, or it may be possible for anyone to call for new elections if the leadership seems to be working at odds to what the majority wants. Usually the faction will have some form of charter or statement of principles that limits the power of the officers. This is the ‘default’ form of faction organisation, and has no modifiers associated with it.

Authoritarian: There are leaders and there are followers. The former decide if and when to promote the latter. Such groups usually have a militaristic or ‘struggle to the death’ outlook, where any hint of compromise or dissent means weakness in the face of the enemy. An authoritarian leader may be wise, just and compassionate or may be a raving madman but he rules via a mix of charisma, intimidation and skill. He is usually surrounded by a small cadre of loyal officers. Some groups are extremely hierarchical, with everyone having someone to report to (save for those on the very bottom of the pyramid); others have a simple division between the leadership and the bulk of the members. These groups can be very efficient if the leadership maintains loyalty but can fracture violently if there is a serious challenge to their power. Factions with this organisation suffer a +3 on Internal Dissent events, but also gain a +2 on all action result rolls due to strict discipline.

Means and Methods

One of the most important and defining decisions that can be made about a faction is how it will accomplish its goals. Some believe that goals should be achieved by any means necessary, while others cling to a moral high ground and decree that ‘we must not become what we oppose’. Many take a somewhat pragmatic approach, holding to high principles in general but making exceptions on an as-needed basis. This has a tendency to be a slippery slope... once the first compromise is made, the second becomes much easier.

While there is a wide range of possible ‘We will...’ and ‘We will not...’ credos available, the following offer some guidelines:

No violence: The group will not engage in any actions that harm others or destroy property. Such groups tend to be heavily involved in civil disobedience and non-violent protest and are likely to chain themselves to doors, blockade buildings or engage in other such activities. Some are purely focused on propaganda, planting messages into government broadcasts or committing non-destructive forms of hacking to get their messages across. Some consider assaults on computer systems not to be violent *per se* and will take down networks, plant viruses or otherwise electronically harass the enemy, though they will take pains not to impact flight control systems, hospital computers and other such places where a computer failure will mean the loss of life.

The Legality of Resistance

It should be noted that for these purposes, groups are unconcerned with EarthGov law and act according to what they believe is *right*, not what EarthDome has declared to be *legal*. Groups that act wholly within the law are not considered part of the Resistance but are mainstream activist or advocacy organisations. Of course, when Clark comes to power, many formerly-legal groups either disband or join the Resistance, swelling its ranks and giving it a wealth of mainstream political knowledge and contacts which greatly aid it when it finally wins.

Violence against property: The group will engage in everything from vandalism to bombing, provided there is little to no chance of human (and sometimes animal) life being lost. This includes serious electronic attacks such as destruction of data, ‘hardware hacks’ which can fry systems and other such assaults. Property damage may be limited to minor sabotage such as jamming locks or draining vehicles’ power cells or it may be extreme, resulting in millions or tens of millions of credits’ worth of damage. However, the more spectacular the property damage, the greater the risk of injuring or killing a bystander.

Violence against people: The group will engage in actions that harm or kill humans. This may be tolerated as a side effect but not as a goal – that is, a group may accept collateral damage when taking out a tube station or stealing weapons from an EarthForce base but will not set out with the intent of killing or it may view humans as the weakest link in the chain of EarthGov oppression and target them directly. Another issue which such groups must consider is the question of who represents a legitimate target – some factions will take pains that only those actively supporting or working for EarthGov be targeted, while others consider all Earthers to be ‘legitimate’ and often focus on tourist locations such as hotels in order to achieve the maximum amount of psychological damage.

Membership

For purposes of determining faction membership, a single Player Character should be declared the leader of the faction. Even if leadership is shared among several characters, a single recruiter or figurehead should be selected. The initial size of the faction is determined by the leader's calculated Leadership score, which is initially equal to character level + Charisma bonus + other modifiers described below.

This score determines the number of faction members who appear after one month of active work building the faction. This is an abstracted process and is assumed to occupy most of the faction founders' time for that period. The Games Master may wish to run specific scenarios reflecting this ongoing activity, or may just skip ahead to 'I suppose you're wondering why I called you all here...'

Faction members come in two varieties – lieutenants and members. A lieutenant is a highly skilled individual who is personally loyal to the faction leader. Members are the rank and file of the organisation and have fewer skills.

A character should be at least 6th level to become a faction leader. The Games Master may waive this at his discretion, but it is not advised. A lieutenant must always remain at least two character levels lower than the leader.

Before the recruitment process begins, the leaders of the faction must make some decisions about how selective they will be in bringing in recruits. The more careful the screening process, the less the chance of infiltrators and spies, but the fewer overall members the faction will have.

Careful Screening: The faction takes extra steps to reduce the risk of spies, the uncommitted and those who are likely to disagree with the faction's goals and

Leadership Score and Membership Table

Leadership Score	Lieutenant Level	— Number of Members by Level —					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1 or lower	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1st	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	2nd	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	3rd	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	3rd	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	4th	5	—	—	—	—	—
7	5th	8	—	—	—	—	—
8	5th	10	—	—	—	—	—
9	6th	12	1	—	—	—	—
10	7th	15	1	—	—	—	—
11	7th	18	1	—	—	—	—
12	8th	20	1	—	—	—	—
13	9th	22	1	1	—	—	—
14	10th	25	1	1	—	—	—
15	10th	27	2	1	1	—	—
16	11th	29	2	1	1	1	—
17	12th	30	3	1	1	1	—
18	12th	35	3	1	1	1	—
19	13th	40	4	2	1	1	—
20	14th	50	5	3	2	1	—
21	15th	60	6	3	2	1	1
22	15th	75	7	4	2	2	1
23	16th	90	9	5	3	2	1
24	17th	110	11	6	3	2	1
25 or higher	17th	135	13	7	4	2	2

Other Modifiers: The initial Leadership score is modified as follows:

- ☛ Each faction leader of 6th level or above: +1
- ☛ Faction leadership has performed significant acts for the Resistance: +1 to +4
- ☛ Faction leadership is generally well known or infamous: +1 to +4, but Faction visibility is increased by two over base, as is Notoriety.

Reach Table

Reach Score	Description
1-5	The faction is active or has influence within a small part (up to 50%) of a dome
6-10	The faction is active or has influence within a large part (50% to 100%) of a dome
11-15	The faction is active or has influence throughout one main dome and several sub-domes
16-20	The faction is active or has influence within several major domes
21-25	The faction is active or has influence across Mars
26+	The faction is active or has influence across Mars and has some extraplanetary contacts as well

methods. For each -1 to the effective Leadership score, the faction gains a -1 modifier on all Infiltration and Internal Dissent events.

Open Door: Some factions will accept anyone, preferring bulk to risk. For each +1 to the effective Leadership score, the faction gains a +1 modifier on all Infiltration and Internal Dissent events.

Faction Attributes

A player faction has several attributes that define many of its characteristics. These are as follows:

Reach

How far does the organisation's influence spread? Is it restricted to a sub-dome or one dome, or does it have tendrils across Mars or even interstellar contacts?

Factions begin with a Reach of 3, +1 for every four points of Leadership. This may be increased as detailed in the Leadership Score and Membership table on page 62.

Reach effects where a faction can act – specifically, it can only act within its Reach. Furthermore, if Notoriety is ever more than five points higher than Reach, all Crackdown events are at +3 and Visibility increases by one for every two points over that limit (so that if Reach is 5 and Notoriety is 15, Visibility increases by 3).

Loyalty Table

Loyalty Score	Description
0-5	Very poor morale or outright conflict between the rank and file membership and the leadership. All Internal Dissent events are at +6.
6-15	Members feel little attachment to the faction's leadership and often place their own goals above those of the faction. Grumbling in the ranks is common; spies and infiltrators are working actively. All Internal Dissent events are at +3.
16-25	Most members believe in the faction's aims and work to advance them. Still, many members relent if offered bribes or other chances at personal gain over the good of the faction or may quickly jump ship to another faction that seems to be more powerful, active or likely to achieve the goal of Martian liberation.
26-35	The faction's membership is well led and strongly dedicated to the cause. A few malcontents may spurn the organisation's values, but the average member is a believer. All Internal Dissent events are at -2.
36+	The faction's members are fanatics who are ready to die in the name of the cause. All Internal Dissent events are at -4.

Activity Table

Activity Score	Actions needed to sustain organisation	Description
0-5	One every month	The faction keeps to itself and exists primarily to facilitate social contact among its members. It rarely if ever organises official activities.
6-15	Two per month	The faction takes irregular actions.
16-25	One per week	The faction is involved with several regular activities.
26-35	Two per week	The faction is very busy. Most members of the organisation work for it full-time.
36+	More than two per week	The faction is always active. Nearly all members are expected to devote all or most of their time to it.

Resources

How much wealth does the faction have and what sorts of access to exotic resources (weapons, alien technology, unique information) does it have? Resources range from 1 (the faction has trouble being able to afford printing leaflets) to 30 (the faction has resources on par with a major corporation and can afford to bankroll complex operations). Factions begin with a Resources level of 5. If any founding member has the Independently Wealthy feat, this increases to 10.

Resources represent both cash flow, which remains roughly constant from week to week and deep reserves, which can be depleted. Most operations cost a decent amount of 'standard' Resources and a small amount of 'permanent' Resources.

Loyalty

How devoted is the average member to the faction? Is he just involved for a momentary benefit or is he wholly committed? Fear of the consequences of leaving is, for game purposes, the same as Loyalty born from true devotion to the cause. Loyalty determines how willing the members are to betray the group or to fight to the death to protect it.

Individual members may be more or less loyal; high-ranking members, for example, will be more loyal (usually) than the rank and file. It is easier to bribe a beat cop than the chief of police. The Loyalty score should be seen as an average; the Loyalty of individual members can be assigned as needed.

A Faction begins with a Loyalty score of 16. This may be changed by the initial recruitment methods or other factions.

Activity

How busy is the organisation? Does it regularly engage in activities to further its aims or is it more of a social club with big aims but no concrete plans? The Activity rating shows how much effort the organisation actually applies to its goals.

The initial Activity level of the faction is up to the founders but sustaining high levels of Activity is both costly and likely to raise Notoriety to dangerous levels.

Visibility

How well known is the organisation? Has everyone heard of it, is it merely rumoured to exist or does the name bring blank stares even from the well informed? The Visibility rating is used to determine the ease with which information can be gained on the group or the difficulty of contacting a member of the organisation. For obvious reasons most factions prefer a low Visibility score but this can be difficult when taking constant actions.

The Gather Information DC column is the difficulty any character has if they wish to learn something about a faction.

The result of the check reveals how much the player learns (see the Information Learned table, below): High visibility has several drawbacks, especially if a faction is involved in highly criminal activities. On

Visibility Table

Visibility Score	Description	Gather Information DC
0-5	The faction is virtually unknown. It is a legend at best, something whispered about in dark rooms and dismissed by rational folk as mere superstition.	30
6-15	The faction is secretive. A few people have heard bits and pieces of information about it and a few titbits of the truth can be found, but detailed information is scarce.	25
16-25	The faction is visible. Members can be identified by distinctive badges or clothing. The basic goals and methods of the organisation are well known to those within its area of control.	20
26-35	The faction maintains a well-known headquarters and its members regularly interact with outsiders on behalf of the organisation. Members are identifiable by sight, and everyone in the region is familiar with the organisation's name and apparent goals.	15
36+	The faction is an integral part of daily life. It operates openly, and anyone in the region who claims not to know of the organisation might be considered mad, or at least severely uninformed.	10

the other hand, high Visibility aids in recruitment and fund raising, while low Visibility can cripple efforts to expand.

Default visibility is 6. It increases as a side effect of actions taken.

Notoriety

Notoriety measures how many resources the authorities will dedicate to attacks on the group – which may range from counter-propaganda to infiltration to all-out assault on any suspected faction strongholds. A low notoriety means the group is known to exist and is casually monitored but is not the focus of any intense scrutiny. At higher values, the government considers the group a significant threat to the public order and will

Information Learned Table

Result	Information Learned
DC+0 - DC+4	Name and typical operations
DC+5 - DC+9	Goals, identification of 1d4 low-ranking members
DC+10 - DC+14	Organisation's recent history, basic information on leadership
DC+15 - DC+19	Location of organisation's headquarters (or the nearest HQ, if there is more than one), identification of leadership
DC+20	Some secret about the organisation such as a planned activity, the fact the organisation is controlled by some other, more secret organisation, or the like.

Notoriety Table

Notoriety	Description
0-5	EarthGov does not care. Group members may consider themselves to be striking a great blow against the oppressor with each leaflet they print or each bit of graffiti they leave on the wall but the faction is completely off EarthGov's sensors.
6-10	EarthGov cares, just not much. A bored intelligence agent might try to run down the group's leaders or a random sweep of an area known to be a faction stronghold might be ordered but nothing too serious is likely. Even the Clark Administration considers the group's members to be annoying malcontents.
11-15	EarthGov is taking notice. Known group members are tailed and full dossiers on suspected leaders are compiled. Association with the faction is considered a 'red flag' – not grounds for immediate arrest but a sign the individual is likely to be involved in serious criminal activities.
16-20	The faction is outlawed and membership in it (or association with known members) is illegal. There are few focused efforts to bring the faction down but any time an opportunity to strike at its members arises, EarthGov will likely take advantage of it.
21-25	The faction is seen as a major threat. There are resources dedicated full-time to watching it, infiltrating it and planning strikes against it. EarthGov will strike first when the perfect opportunity arises but will otherwise play a reactive rather than proactive game.
26+	No time to wait for the right time. The faction will be brought down as soon as possible by any means necessary, even if this means pulling resources from other operations or endangering civilians. Political fallout is not even a remote consideration.

pull resources from other assignments in order to focus on eliminating the faction. If a group's Notoriety grows faster than its ability to resist government attention, it is likely to be snuffed out. Many promising factions are destroyed in just such a fashion.

Notoriety is similar but not identical to Visibility. An organisation may be very visible but if it limits itself to primarily legitimate activism or rarely does anything more than marginally illegal, the government is likely to focus on more dangerous foes. Putting the same resources against a mostly-harmless student organisation which stages sit-ins as are used against a terrorist faction which regularly bombs civilian targets is both wasteful and likely to result in neutrals coming to side with Free Mars.

Events

Even as the faction leaders make their plans and carry out their schemes, the world continues to move and people react to their actions. If a tube station is destroyed or a major government leader killed, EarthGov is not just going to write it off. Furthermore, the nameless, faceless masses of the faction have lives. Some of them may begin to dissent from the faction's

goals; others may be spies or provocateurs. Other Resistance factions will likely react as well – some will seek to merge with the player's faction, while others will consider it a potential threat. Having a common enemy does not mean total uniformity and as the day of liberation comes closer many factions jockey to be in power when it is time to form the new government of Mars.

The Games Master should roll once per week to determine the number and type of events. Note that the severity of an event will increase based on a faction's actions – a faction with high Notoriety is likely to suffer more from a Crackdown event, while one with poor recruiting policies will incite significant Internal Dissent. These tables are used to help play out the consequences of the group's actions. They are not substitutes for planned scenarios but they can serve as inspirations or additions.

The Events Table offers specific events; however, they should be considered examples, not absolutes. The Games Master should feel free to create variants or wholly new events of roughly the same intensity.

Events Table

1d20 Roll	Event Type
1-10	No event this week
11-14	Crackdown
15-16	Internal Dissent
17	Infiltration
18	Countermeasures
19-20	Two events, roll 1d8+10 twice on this table.

Sometimes players may wish to counter or respond to an event as it is happening, rather than accept the consequences as written. This is up to the Games Master. In general, the events described impact the faction as a whole, not the Player Characters directly, and are intended as abstractions. However, if the Games Master wishes to play any of them out as full scenarios, he is of course welcome to do so.

Crackdown

These events cover the government taking direct action against the faction.

Crackdown Modifiers

Item	Modifier
Notoriety	+1 for every 2 points of Notoriety
Counter-Espionage	-1 for Minor Success, -2 for Success, -3 for Major Success

Internal Dissent

People willing to rebel against a government which controls over a dozen star systems and is a major player in galactic politics, standing equal to races which have been in space ten times as long, are not about to 'sit down and shut up' when talking to fellow Martians. Every faction is often wracked with disagreement about what to do, when to do it and how to go about it, as well as deeper disagreements about long-term goals. Often this amounts to little more than grumbling or extremely minor acts of

Crackdown Table

D20 roll	Event
1-10	No crackdown this week
11-14	<i>Counter-Propaganda:</i> A concerted effort is made to counter the group's claims via editorials, press releases, talk show appearances and so on. Faction leaders and group members suffer a -2 penalty to Diplomacy or Bluff checks made when dealing with neutral citizens. This does not apply if faction affiliation is unknown.
15-18	<i>Observation:</i> The government is stepping up tracking and watching the faction. This has no direct effect but results in a +2 bonus to Infiltration or Countermeasures events rolls.
19-21	<i>Spot Arrests:</i> The government has begun picking up known or suspected faction members. Membership drops for a week as if the Leadership score has been reduced by 1. It returns to normal as a result of most of those arrested being released without charges and via people responding to the sudden surge in Notoriety and joining up.
22-25	<i>Financial Attacks:</i> The government shuts down dummy accounts, ends money-laundering operations or puts pressure on known supporters to curtail their aid. The group's Resources drops by 2.
26-29	<i>Significant Arrests:</i> Group members are picked up on charges that stick. Membership drops as if the Leadership score has been reduced by 1. Gaining new members will need to be done via normal means. Checks on Internal Dissent for the next week are at +1.
30-33	<i>Assault:</i> Open attack on a meeting place or stronghold with the intent of capturing or killing faction members. The membership of the group is decreased as if Leadership has been reduced by 2 (this reflects people leaving in fear as well as those captured or killed) and Resources are reduced by 2 as well. Checks on Internal Dissent for the next week are at +2.

Internal Dissent Table

D20 roll	Event
1-10	Nothing more than minor grumbling in the ranks. Indeed, if things were any more peaceful, the faction leaders would really begin to worry...
11-14	<i>Minor Dissent:</i> Several members of the group have begun expressing strong disagreement over current plans, and this is undermining morale. A single operation within a week of this event suffers a -1 penalty on its success roll. The faction's leaders may choose which operation it applies to, representing them assigning the malcontents where they can do the least harm.
15-18	<i>Widespread Dissent:</i> While it is still nothing more than complaints and grumbling, it is much more broad-based. Many of the rank and file are unhappy with recent events. All operations within 2 weeks suffer a -1 penalty on their success rolls.
19-21	<i>Significant Dissent:</i> Not out-and-out rebellion, but close. All operations in the next week suffer a -2 penalty to their success modifiers, and all operations suffer a -1 penalty for the next three weeks after that.
22-25	<i>Desertion:</i> People are fed up and are quitting. The size of the organisation is recalculated as if the Leadership score has been reduced by one. Furthermore, the organisation's permanent Wealth score drops by 1. This undermines morale considerably, resulting in the same effects on operations as Significant Dissent, above.
26-29	<i>Mass Desertion:</i> As above, except that organisation size is reduced by 3 and Wealth by 2.
30-33	<i>Et tu, Brute?:</i> The organisation is torn apart as a new leadership clique emerges – led by the leader's current trusted Lieutenant! If this seems wholly implausible, the Games Master may create any other leader he wishes. The Games Master should play this out as a scenario; if this is not desired, the organisation is reduced in size as if Leadership has been reduced by four, and Wealth is reduced by 4. In addition, all counter-espionage efforts for three months suffer a -5 penalty to their success checks, as many ex-members spill secrets and exploit known loopholes.

rebellion but it can sometimes lead to a faction splitting or even to the faction's leadership being seized.

Modifiers:

- ☪ Loyalty 1-5: +4
- ☪ Loyalty 6-10: +2
- ☪ Loyalty 20-25: -2
- ☪ Loyalty 26+: -4

Infiltration

One of the omnipresent fears of the Resistance is that of infiltration. Anyone can be an agent, even the most seemingly loyal. The Resistance is structured so as to keep information isolated in small groups of people, making sure that no one knows too much but a well-organised infiltration network can piece together the individual bits which each agent knows well enough to form an effective model of Resistance activities. Many agents are in deep, even partaking in terrorist operations in order to keep their covers, waiting for a

signal that will activate them. A rare few find that they come to sympathise with the Resistance and become double agents but most retain their loyalty to EarthGov and feel not even a twinge of guilt at betraying those who have called them friends for months or years.

Countermeasures

EarthGov is not merely reactive. When faced with an ongoing threat, it also acts proactively, seeking to stop operations in progress or 'harden' likely targets as well as going after the support structures which allow a faction to operate. A countermeasures event represents EarthGov acting first.

Modifiers:

- ☪ Each Activity the faction has undertaken in the past month: +1
- ☪ Faction Visibility 6-10: +1
- ☪ Faction Visibility 11-15: +2
- ☪ Faction Visibility 16+: +4

Infiltration Table

D20 roll	Event
1	<i>Seen the Light:</i> An existing infiltrator has realised that the faction is right after all, and openly reveals his role, offering himself as a double agent who can feed false information to EarthGov and bring back valuable intelligence. For as long as his change of heart remains undiscovered by EarthGov, all Espionage (EarthGov) and Counter-Espionage actions gain a +2 bonus to the result roll. How long this condition lasts is up the Games Master, but a high roll on an Infiltration event could be interpreted as 'Double Agent Found' rather than the stated event.
2-10	<i>Nothing:</i> Presumably there are some less than loyal members in the organisation but they are not doing anything noteworthy this time around.
11-14	<i>Some Problems:</i> Agents have infiltrated a few key areas of the faction and are being trusted with material not for general knowledge. This imposes a -1 penalty on a specific class of activity (Games Master's choice) for one month.
15-18	<i>Solid Plant:</i> An agent has been trusted in a position of some authority within the faction. This will result in either a -1 penalty to all operations for the next month or a -3 penalty on a single operation.
19-21	<i>Communications Network Bugged:</i> The ultra-secure system of codes and ciphers used by the faction... is not very secure at all. Several people with access they perhaps should not have been granted have compromised the network. Each week, a Technical (electronics) check (DC 20) must be made by whoever among the faction's leadership is responsible for such things. Until this happens, all operations suffer a -2 penalty and all Infiltration and Countermeasure events gain a +2 bonus.
22-25	<i>Double Agents:</i> Several key personnel are working for the other side and have begun to link up, creating a secondary network inside the faction. All operations are at -4 penalty until this network is discovered, which required a Great Success on a Counter-Espionage action. All Counter-Measure events gain a +4 bonus.
26-29	<i>Deep Agent Activated:</i> A single upcoming operation (Games Master's choice) is guaranteed to fail due to a deep-cover operative taking actions to prevent it – which reveals the spy's identity. All infiltration events for the next month suffer a -4 penalty as the organisation enters a paranoid phase; however, this same paranoia causes all actions to suffer a -1 penalty.
30-33	<i>Telepathic Spy:</i> Someone high up in the organisation – a Player Character or a prominent Non-Player Character – is a victim of Psi Corps and has had his personality modified to suit their needs. The full ramifications of this should be played out by the Games Master.

Faction Activities

Anything which the Player Characters wish to do 'hands on' should be handled by the Games Master as a normal scenario, played out in full detail. However, the faction leaders may give general orders to the faction that are handled abstractly. The number of actions a faction can engage in over a given week is determined by the faction's effective Leadership score, which determines the faction's size. Every four points of Leadership allow for a single action.

The system is designed to run without direct player input; however, players can specify more details. For example, for 'Espionage (EarthGov)', a character might say that the main goal is to find out the schedule of Clark's 'Peace and Prosperity' tour of the major Martian domes and that he will give the Centauri black market code breaker he bought during a recent scenario to the best hackers in the faction. The Games Master would then assign a bonus or penalty based on this to the Activity Results check.

Countermeasures Table

D20 roll	Event
1	<i>Bungled!</i> : Somehow, instead of hindering the faction, EarthGov has made things easier – for example, by pulling guards away from the actual target to place them around a suspected one. The next operation the faction undertakes gains a +2 bonus to its success roll.
2-10	<i>Nothing</i> : There are no meaningful roadblocks set up but there is no serendipitous aid either.
11-14	<i>Slight Difficulties</i> : The next activity the faction undertakes suffers a -2 penalty to its success roll.
15-18	<i>Diverse Measures</i> : The next two activities the faction undertakes suffer a -1 penalty to their success rolls.
19-21	<i>Good Countermeasures</i> : Either a single activity suffers a -4 penalty to its success roll, or two activities each suffer a -2 penalty to their success rolls. Internal Dissent events gain a +1 modifier.
22-25	<i>Surgical Strike</i> : A single activity is deftly countered. Automatic failure.
26-29	<i>Murphy's Law</i> : A single activity is not only countered, but the result is a Disaster. Internal Dissent events gain a +4 bonus.
30+	<i>When It Rains, It Pours</i> : As above, but the next 1d4+1 activities will result in Disaster. After the final failure, immediately trigger an Internal Dissent event with a +6 bonus.

Cost of Actions: Money makes the world go around, and even the most anti-capitalist revolutionary factions must acknowledge this fact, at least prior to the revolution. Each week a faction may spend up to its total Resources score. This 'recovers' at the end of the week unless an action has long-term costs. Long-term costs reduce the Resources score by the noted amount and the score can only be recovered by actions designed to improve it.

Bonuses: If an operation is successful a bonus will be provided. The meaning of this bonus is generally explained in the text for each class of action; in the event the specific action performed does not entirely match up, the amount of the bonus should serve as a guide for the Games Master to use when evaluating the consequences of the operation and the impact on both the abstracted faction management system and fully played-out scenarios.

Possible actions are:

Espionage (EarthGov)

Members of the faction are assigned to checking out EarthGov. This can include such activities as simply watching the comings and goings of specific individuals, attempting to hack into secure files, inserting a number of faction members into menial but useful positions inside EarthDome, planting listening devices in the

planetary governor's shuttle or finding and cultivating a 'mole' within EarthGov, someone willing to spy for the faction. Espionage can be general, or it can be specific. Specific espionage orders can include:

Spy on a person: If the result is moderate success or better the bonus is applied to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate or Sense Motive checks made against the person for the next week.

Cost: Espionage is usually pretty cheap. In some cases it is nearly free, if all that is being done is to watch public activities such as guard changes or who visits a certain building regularly. Actions such as breaking into computer systems, planting agents or bribing EarthGov employees are slightly more costly. The Games Master should assess a cost of between one and six Resources with no long-term costs. For each long-term Resource spent, a +1 bonus is granted on the results check.

Modifiers

- 🔍 Any Contacts within EarthGov: +2
- 🔍 Reach 8 or less: -2
- 🔍 Reach 15 or more: +2
- 🔍 Visibility 5 or less: +2
- 🔍 Visibility 12-15: -2
- 🔍 Visibility 16+: -4
- 🔍 Espionage (Free Mars)

Espionage (EarthGov) Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> False plans are fed to the faction and believed absolutely. All operations against EarthGov for the next month will suffer a -3 penalty on the success roll and all Crackdown events for the next month gain a +3 bonus.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> No intelligence is gained but nothing much is lost, either.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> A few minor secrets are ferreted out or a better understanding of current operations is gained. Nothing great, but it is useful background information. Bonus +2, -1 penalty to any Infiltration events for the next month.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> Significant information is gained. A major secret is revealed or a useful hole is found in EarthGov security. Bonus +4, -2 penalty to any Infiltration events for the next month and +1 to all Espionage or Counter-Espionage checks for the next month.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> Very significant information is gained. Several major secrets are revealed and large holes are found in security. Bonus +6, -3 penalty to any Infiltration events for the next month and +3 to all Espionage or Counter-Espionage checks for the next month.

It is a sad fact that many of the factions that comprise Free Mars view each other as nearly as much of an enemy as EarthGov. Espionage against other factions has two justifications; to make sure no one else has been compromised or is working against the interests of Martian liberation and to make sure *they* are not spying on *us*. Added to this is the more common motivation of being sure that when the day of liberation is at hand, it will be one's own faction which ends up setting the agenda for the new, free Mars.

Cost: These activities are similar to those of Espionage (EarthGov) but are more costly, because such actions cannot pull on the shared resources which all Free Mars

factions can make use of. The base cost should be determined by the Games Master based on the specific goals of the spying but there will always be at least one point of permanent cost.

Use the Espionage (EarthGov) results table but the information gained applies specifically to the targeted rival faction.

Counter-Espionage

Preventing people doing unto the faction what the faction is doing unto them is very important and successfully preventing infiltration can keep a faction alive, reducing the risks of both government action

Counter-Espionage Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> Leak! Counter-espionage efforts not only do not stop espionage, they actually expose the faction's secrets to spies.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> No effect
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> Some plans foiled – counter-espionage efforts locate some bugs, identify some agents and curtail the use of cracked codes. Bonus +2, -1 to rolls on Crackdown and -2 on Internal Dissent
20-25	<i>Success:</i> Operations thwarted – serious leaks in the faction's information infrastructure are plugged and false data is fed to undercover agents. Bonus +4, -2 to rolls on Crackdown and -3 on Internal Dissent
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> Major victory – opposing intelligence plans are undermined completely. Bonus +6, -3 to rolls on Crackdown and -4 on Internal Dissent

Sabotage Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> The sabotage is stopped in the act. Notoriety is increased by 2 and Visibility by 1 and all Infiltration and Internal Dissent events gain a +2 modifier. Furthermore, other Resistance factions may react badly to this display of incompetence.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> For whatever reason, the operation is scrapped at the last minute.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> The attack does not go off as planned – the bomb detonates too early, the computer hack runs for only a few minutes before being detected and blocked and so on. Still, the operation at least annoys EarthGov a bit. +1 Notoriety.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> Everything works according to plan. +2 Notoriety.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> Better than expected. The timing is perfect, and the failure is spectacular and public. +3 Notoriety and -2 on all Internal Dissent checks. +2 on the next Recruitment action.

and internal dissent. Counter-espionage consists of scanning for listening devices, assigning the most trusted members of the faction to watch other, less-trusted members, running extensive background checks on members to make sure their stories line up with the facts and so on.

Cost: Counter-espionage is inexpensive; no more than one Resource need be allocated. If particularly intense measures are desired, a +2 bonus on the results table can be had for the expenditure of one permanent Resource.

Sabotage

Sabotage consists of somewhat subtle attacks against the inanimate mechanisms of oppression. This including

tampering with engines, planting computer viruses, damaging the power systems in a distant tube so as to cause trains in it to come to a dead stop and the like. Such actions serve as constant irritations to EarthGov, making its rule inefficient, costly and frustrating, but are unlikely to attract too much attention. It is worth noting that actions which inconvenience the ‘Martian on the street’ may result in more anger being directed at the Resistance than at EarthGov, so most sabotage is aimed squarely at government targets. A few factions, though, feel sending the message that EarthGov is helpless is worth a few grumbles and complaints.

Cost: Sabotage costs at least one permanent Resource and from two to eight normal Resources depending on the scope and scale of the actions. Tampering with

Public Relations Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> The campaign is an utter failure. If the goal is to increase Visibility, it fails to attract any positive attention but does result in a +2 on any Crackdown rolls for the next month. If the goal is to decrease Notoriety, it increases by 2; if the goal is to increase it, it decreases by 2.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> No effect.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> Some plans foiled – counter-espionage efforts locate some bugs, identify some agents and curtail the use of cracked codes. Bonus +2, -1 to rolls on Crackdown and -2 on Internal Dissent.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> Operations thwarted – serious leaks in the faction’s information infrastructure are plugged and false data is fed to undercover agents. Bonus +4, -2 to rolls on Crackdown and -3 on Internal Dissent.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> Major victory – opposing intelligence plans are undermined completely. Bonus +6, -3 to rolls on Crackdown and -4 on Internal Dissent.

Property Destruction Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> The plot is stopped and the perpetrators captured. This is a major propaganda coup for EarthGov and a major blow for the Resistance. Notoriety and Visibility are increased by 2, all Crackdown events are at +3 for the next two months and all Internal Dissent events are at +3 for one month.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> The operation is cancelled at the last minute or the bomb is found and disarmed but not traced back to the faction, or some other 'neutral' outcome occurs.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> The attack is not entirely successful – the damage is less severe than expected or the wrong targets are hit. Notoriety is increased by 1 and all Crackdown events are at +2 for the next two months. Internal Dissent events are at +1 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by 1 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> The attack goes off as planned. Notoriety is increased by 2 and all Crackdown events are at +2 for the next two months. Internal Dissent events are at -1 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by up to 2 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> The attack goes off better than expected. The property of an important EarthGov official is damaged in the blast or a live broadcast occurs right at the point of the attack, preventing any attempts to hush it up. Notoriety is increased by 3 and all Crackdown events are at +3 for the next three months. Internal Dissent events are at -2 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by up to 4 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.

the engines of a single shuttle is inexpensive; rigging a series of timed explosions which shut down all tube transit between MarsDome One and New Vegas for 12 hours is costly.

Public Relations

Public relations consists of the faction selling itself – its goals, values and ideals – to the masses. This can be done to decrease Notoriety, either by denying responsibility for some heinous act, or by claiming - correctly or incorrectly - that EarthGov is lying about the act: 'We bombed an illegal Psi Corps interrogation facility, not a home for the mentally disabled!' It can be used to increase Visibility, which can make Recruitment and Wealth-gathering actions more effective. It can also be used to *increase* Notoriety if that is desired, by taking credit for actions the faction has not actually performed.

Before undertaking this action, the faction leaders must decide on the goal – to increase Visibility or to increase or decrease Notoriety.

Cost: Public relations costs a little money: 1-3 temporary Resources.

Property Destruction

Somewhat more violent than sabotage, property destruction involves brute force attacks against property with the intent of inflicting maximum damage in a very visible manner. Sabotage, on the other hand, is not intended to be noticed until it takes effect. Typical missions of property destruction include arson, bombings, undermining of supports (tunnel collapses and the like) and so on. The use of vehicular bombs is also common.

Cost: Bombs, information-gathering and so on all cost money. Property destruction costs two permanent Resources (more for major targets – attempting to go after EarthDome or IPX Dome will cost at least 10), and five to ten normal Resources, but never less than twice the permanent cost.

Note: In any action of this sort, if it is successful there is always a chance of unexpected casualties. If a 'Success' or higher result occurs there is a flat 10% chance that there were unintended victims of the attack. This raises Notoriety by 2 and adds +2 to any Crackdown events.

Violence against People

This category includes any attacks designed to kill, including attacks on both military and civilian targets. Because of security concerns, attacks against military targets suffer a -4 modifier on the success roll, while attacks against civilian targets *double* the Notoriety gain and the bonus to Crackdown events.

Cost: These attacks can be expensive, at least if they are intended to overcome tough security measures (and most of Mars is somewhat paranoid at this point) and allow the plotters to get away without leaving vital clues behind. These attacks cost two permanent Resources and five to ten temporary Resources, with the same modifiers for major targets as noted for property destruction, above. The Games Master may wish to get exact details on the targets from the players, or he may just allow them to specify a general target type and let their underlings sweat the details.

As a somewhat grisly option, the cost can be reduced by three temporary Resources by the use of kamikaze attackers or suicide bombers. This also reduces the size of the organisation by one, as many individuals will quit if it seems they are going to be asked to make that kind of sacrifice. This is waived if Loyalty is over 25.

Violence Against People Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> The plot is stopped and the perpetrators captured. This is a major propaganda coup for EarthGov and a major blow for the Resistance. Notoriety and Visibility are increased by 2, all Crackdown events are at +3 for the next two months and all Internal Dissent events are at +3 for one month.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> The operation is cancelled at the last minute or the bomb is found and disarmed but not traced back to the faction, or some other 'neutral' outcome occurs.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> The attack is not entirely successful – the death toll is less than expected or the wrong targets are hit. Notoriety is increased by 2 and all Crackdown events are at +3 for the next two months. Internal Dissent events are at +1 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by up to 2 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> The attack goes off as planned. Notoriety is increased by 3 and all Crackdown events are at +4 for the next two months. Internal Dissent events are at -1 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by up to 3 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> The attack goes off better than expected. Important EarthGov officials are unexpectedly caught in the blast or a live broadcast occurs right at the point of the attack, preventing any attempts to hush it up. Notoriety is increased by 4 and all Crackdown events are at +4 for the next three months. Internal Dissent events are at -2 for the next month. Visibility may be increased by up to 5 if the group publicly claims credit for the attack.

Groups may attempt to disguise their involvement. For every two temporary Resources spent, the Notoriety increase for any degree of success is reduced by one, as is the Crackdown event modifier. This may not be reduced below zero.

Recruitment

The faction begins to actively recruit new members, increasing in size. This is sometimes risky as wide recruitment can expose the faction to several threats but without it the faction is unlikely to achieve much of significance.

Cost: The base cost is three temporary Resources plus one permanent Resource. Each additional permanent Resource spent gives a +2 on the result roll *or* reduces any modifiers to Internal Dissent and Infiltration checks by one. If there is money to burn, both of these can be chosen; a rich faction can spend five permanent Resources on recruitment: one for the base, two to give +4 to the result roll, and two to reduce any Event modifiers by two.

Event modifiers cannot be reduced to less than zero.

Recruitment Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> Not only does the recruitment effort fail, the group actually shrinks in size. The group's Size is reduced by 3.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> No effect.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> The group's Size is increased by 1.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> The group's Size is increased by 2 but all Internal Dissent and Infiltration events gain a +2 modifier.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> The group's Size is increased by 3 but all Internal Dissent and Infiltration events gain a +3 modifier.

Recruitment drives may be held only once every two months.

Enrichment

The faction works to fill its coffers via a variety of means – demanding money from members, engaging in criminal activity which may not be directly related to the Resistance, hacking financial databases, appealing to wealthy Resistance backers, smuggling operations and so on. The faction leaders should spell out a general plan to the Games Master, who can then apply appropriate modifiers.

Modifiers:

- ☞ Visibility 1-5: -3
- ☞ Visibility 6-8: -1
- ☞ Visibility 12-15: +1
- ☞ Visibility 16+: +2
- ☞ Reach 1-5: -2
- ☞ Reach 15+: +1

Of Terrorists and Telepaths

One of the difficulties of running a terrorist cell in the 23rd century is the common availability of telepaths. While the accused has extensive protections, it is often the case that the technicalities of law are ignored when lives are on the line (and sometimes when they are not). Psi Corps is a common target of terrorist activities and it has no qualms about ripping information from the guilty (or the suspected guilty) or innocent bystanders mistakenly grabbed by overzealous Psi Cops. Nonetheless, terrorist movements such as Free Mars are successful. That is, they exist and continue to organise and strike at their targets despite continued efforts to stamp them out. Both those who oppose terrorism and those who practise it need to understand how and why. Following are the techniques used by terrorist organisations to survive in the age of telepathy.

What You Do Not Know, You Cannot Reveal: This is the first and most common technique. Few if any members of a terrorist cell know anything about anyone other than their immediate contacts and they are kept from

Enrichment Table

Roll	Result
1-5	<i>Disaster:</i> The faction's efforts are blocked or a promising source of funds turns out to be false - 'But he assured me he was the heir to House Refa's fortune and just needed our help to transfer it to an Earthside account!' The faction's permanent Resources score is reduced by 3, and the temporary Resources score is halved for the next month.
6-15	<i>Failure:</i> No effect.
16-19	<i>Moderate Success:</i> The group's Resources are increased by 1.
20-25	<i>Success:</i> The group's Resources are increased by 2.
26+	<i>Great Success:</i> The group's Resources are increased by 4.

learning more. This lack of knowledge goes all the way to the top; even the leader of the Martian Resistance knows the true names and faces of only a relative handful of operatives. This is accomplished by many means. All communications go through secure channels with scrambled voices and no video. Gender is often neutered or even flipped; a computer can transform a female voice to a male one with a trivial effort and can even add accents and inflections. A British man can sound like a Japanese woman with ease and even common slang or idioms can be translated on the fly by sophisticated masking software. This is done, in part, to create a strong mental image in a listener's mind, so that deep probes will find that image and be confused by it.

Trained to Resist: Most cell members above the most basic level are given extensive training in blocking techniques. While a non-telepath cannot keep even a relatively weak mind probe out indefinitely, such training can help resist casual scans. Psi Corps often use illegally 'un-gloved' agents in areas with high concentrations of suspected terrorists, performing casual scans on dozens or hundreds every day. A whisper of thoughtcrime results in Psi Cops moving in to perform more invasive scans.

False Information: Many cell members, especially at the lowest levels, are fed a steady stream of totally false data – often mixed with tiny smidgens of the truth. AI systems actually manage the blend of lies and truth to create plausible, internally consistent networks of invalid data, so that scans of many people cannot easily pull out what is true and what is not.

At higher levels, telepaths loyal to the cause – most of whom have left Psi Corps, because the constant scans endured by Psi Corps telepaths would quickly reveal their true allegiances – implant false memories constructed so as to seem real to any scan and which are believed by the person carrying them. Sometimes these memories are designed to be collapsed by a trigger. For example, a terrorist plotting to blow up a police station may be given a false memory that he is there to see his wife, who works there. Any casual or focused scans performed on him as he approaches and enters the station will only pick up the desire to find his spouse. Only when he is inside the station and sees a particular door sign will the false memories vanish, at which point he will remember that he has a bomb in his backpack and that he is going to use it.

More than Terrorists

While the above guidelines focus on terrorist cells with special attention to how Free Mars operates, they work for *any* clandestine group facing organised and telepath-equipped opposition, including the Mafia, the Yakuza and the 'dirty tricks' units of the intelligence services of most governments.

'I'll Die Before I Tell You Anything!': Despite all of the above, some people need to know more than is safe for anyone to know or the organisation loses all coherence and becomes fatally vulnerable to cracks in the cell structure – if A knows B and B knows C, then if B dies A and C can no longer communicate. While most cell structures are much more complex than this, with multiple levels of redundancy, there still must be a few who know the big picture and give guidance to the organisation as a whole. These people, while well protected both physically and psychically, represent the greatest threat to the organisation of a terrorist cell. Thus they are given psionic death triggers. If a probe reaches too deep or penetrates certain walls or if a trigger phrase is sent, the trigger goes off, shutting down the body's vital systems while simultaneously wiping the mind blank. Some of the best and most complex triggers are designed to attack a telepath scanning the mind, flooding his brain with images of terror and horror sufficient to cause madness or sometimes death.

Allies on the Inside: There is one more reason why telepathy has not broken the Resistance as easily as, in theory, it should – Psi Corps Mars has an interest in a Mars not controlled by EarthDome. A free Mars is one where the Corps would have much greater power. Thanks to its large base at Syria Planum, an independent Mars has more telepaths as a percentage of the total population than any other world in the Earth Alliance. Furthermore, Psi Corps has no great love of EarthGov, which uses telepaths as weapons or tools while denying them equality and political power. The Earth branch of Psi Corps suspects this but can prove nothing and the concept of support for independence is never spoken or even thought aloud at Syria Planum. It is an unspoken, unsought conspiracy, an agreement of shadows and inferences, which is why efforts to advance it are so subtle that few even know it exists.

Places to See

Mars is the second-oldest human world and the most populous world in the Solar System after Earth. The relatively low requirements for dome construction (they do not need to withstand pure vacuum, unshielded solar radiation or Mercurian or Plutonian extremes of hot and cold) have enabled many different groups to settle Mars in their own ways. The major dome cluster at Hellas Planitia is not the result of conscious planning but of dozens of separate colonisation efforts slowly becoming a single tenuously united civilisation.

Typical Dome Architecture

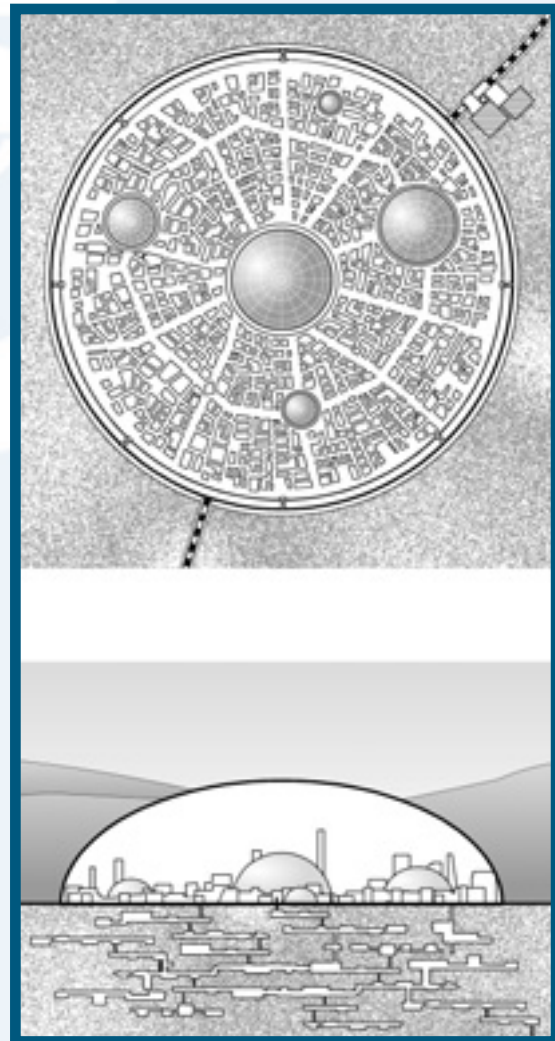
Major Domes

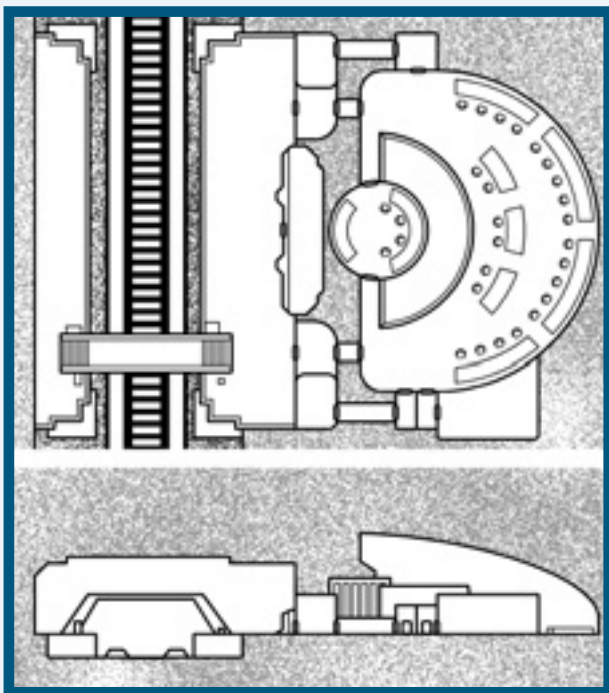
Major domes hold thousands to hundreds of thousands of citizens and are designed for security and permanence. Those who dwell in major domes rarely worry about atmosphere leaks or other hazards; they often forget that only a thin shell separates them from the frozen, choking realm that is Mars.

A typical major dome has a height at its peak roughly equal to its radius. It is composed of transparent tripoly carboweave reinforced by thick vertical struts of ditanium alloy and ringed with thinner bands of the same metal. The base ring of the dome, where it touches the Martian surface, rises to an average of 10 to 20 feet above the surface and extends to an equal distance below ground with several airlocks set around its circumference. It is molecularly bonded to the local soil.

Each panel of a dome is triple paned with an array of vertical and horizontal struts containing motors and pressure sensors. The middle pane is immovable and provides a great deal of structural integrity but the interior and exterior panes are designed to be 'adaptive' in the event of a dome breach. Should one of the panes be fully breached, the nearest pane from a horizontally adjacent panel slides into place, sealing the gap within seconds. Each pane is DR 10 with 50 hit points. As soon as a pane takes damage exceeding its DR, an alarm sounds and tracking systems in the Dome Command centre pinpoint the likely source and type of the damage. Meteor infall or other natural causes are generally ignored; anything that seems to be artificial (such as PPG fire) is tracked down by security even as maintenance teams are dispatched to repair the dome.

Within the dome, temperature is maintained at roughly 70 degrees Fahrenheit year-round, though individual dwellings can of course adjust their temperatures via heaters or air conditioner units for personal comfort. Day and night cycles are not adjusted; the natural sunlight is what lights the dome. At night, normal artificial lighting clicks on, consistent with the nature of the dome – purely residential domes, or residential regions of mixed-use domes, have minimal lighting (primarily along the streets and for security purposes), while industrial or commercial domes may be as brightly lit during the night as during the day. Each of the struts supporting a dome is lined with lights; any dome can be flooded with light on command. This is done primarily in the event of emergencies such as a full-scale evacuation or a dome-wide riot. It can also be done for holidays and celebrations; in such cases the dome lights are often tinted appropriately, such as patterns of red and white for Christmas or blue for Alliance Day.





Dome Command

Each major dome has a structure, usually underground, which serves as a nerve centre for the entire dome. This is Dome Command. Dome Command has control over lighting, power, life support, airlocks, tube stations and more. As such, a Dome Command centre is one of the most secure places in the dome. After the Food Riots made it clear that Mars stood on the brink of anarchy, most of the major domes established a policy of multiple Dome Commands, each located in a separate place. Which Dome Command is 'live' on any given day is determined randomly. Workers are given their work locations in the morning and report to their assigned workplaces for the day, while the other Dome Command centres taken offline for the day are staffed by skeleton crews. Until he actually arrives at work, no worker knows if he is at a 'live' Dome Command or a 'dead' one. In the event that terrorists locate and seize the live Command, control can be switched to an understaffed decoy command. If two Dome Commands try to be active at once – if, for example, terrorists seize control of a dead Dome Command and then try to make it live – a 'voting' system is used to determine which is the real Dome Command.

The bulkhead doors to Dome Command are DR 15 with 60 hit points. The access corridors approaching the structure are capable of being flooded with knockout gas (Fortitude save (DC 18) or full unconscious for 1d4 hours; successful save results in being nauseated for

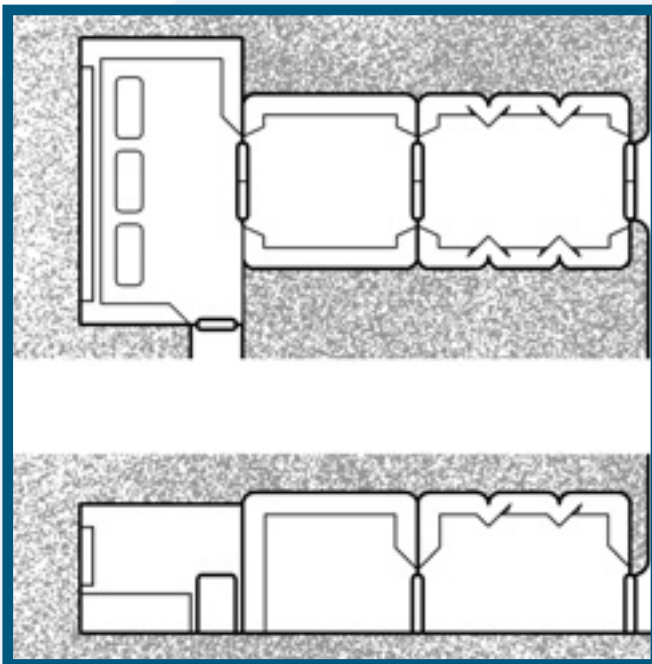
1d4 rounds), poisonous gas (Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer primary damage of 1d6 Constitution, followed by secondary damage of 1d6 Constitution), or PPG bursts (+4 attack (targeting computer), 2d8 damage). Which method of defence is used is determined by those inside the centre.

Airlocks

Each major dome has several airlocks in the base ring. These are primarily used by maintenance personnel who need to get outside the dome to do their jobs. As such, access is restricted to those with appropriate identicards. This is based on job status, not an approved list – anyone whose job might reasonably take them outside the dome will be permitted to pass. Exceptions might occur during times of martial law or when a dome is in 'lockdown' for some reason.

Each airlock consists of three chambers and there are ID checkpoints at each chamber. Scans occur at each one and constant communication between the scan computers helps make forgery or hacking difficult – since each terminal must be hacked separately, the odds of an error triggering an alert are higher. Hacking a terminal is a Computer Programming check (DC 22). If someone has false ID that matches biometric scans, of course, no hacking is needed provided the forgery is good.

The inner two locks must be sealed before the outer lock is opened. A group of up to ten people may use





the lock simultaneously; all ten are processed in first one chamber, then another. Bioscanners count life signs to make sure no one is added or left behind. Each airlock door is DR 10 with 20 hit points. If one door is breached, all the doors seal and an inner bulkhead door (DR 20 with 35 hit points) slams down and locks.

Breather masks can be picked up in the innermost chamber of the airlock. An identicard is all that is required to collect one; if it is returned with 24 hours no costs are assessed. Otherwise a 120-credit fine is levied against the person who signed out the mask. Most Martians have their own masks; this is a courtesy function aimed at visitors or at workers who are required to go out unexpectedly.

All airlock chambers are monitored and records of use are kept for seven days.

Underdome

Every dome, with the possible exception of newly installed domesteader sites or temporary shelters, has some underside. Tunnelling provides a number of benefits – a tunnel can easily be sealed off should the dome breach, it is easy to insulate and fill with air, it is necessary to access the water-rich permafrost, it provides much-needed storage space and so on. In general a dome will have at least as much space below as above and in the case of the largest and oldest domes they will have many times more space. Beneath the surface of Mars the tunnels sprawl, forming a three-

dimensional spider web of inter dome connections; no one can claim to have mapped or charted them all. The Underdome regions can be roughly categorised as follows:

Finished

Finished regions are generally indistinguishable from building or space station interiors. They consist of corridors, rooms and open spaces which are smoothed off, covered with insulating foams and plastics, then panelled to taste – polished sandstone is common in recreational or living areas, as are other native stones, but industrial or storage areas are usually metal- or plastic-walled. Essential components such as air pumps, wiring, electronics, crystal fibres and so on are hidden behind access panels. Doors are fully electronic.

Transportation within finished regions is by lifts or, in some of the larger underdomes, by tubes. There are ladders and crawlways but they are for emergency use only. Finished regions generally include such amenities as fire sensors (and fire suppression systems), security cameras in public areas, emergency generators, public access terminals and comm units and up-to-date maps that are readily available for printout or download.

Finished areas are usually found directly beneath the major domes and form the portion of the underdome that most residents are comfortable and familiar with. The major domes have shopping malls, working-class and lower-middle-class apartments, vehicle

hangars, recreational facilities, theatre complexes and other things which are space-intensive but which can flourish away from the sun in the finished regions of the underdomes.

Unfinished

Unfinished regions are hollowed and shaped but only partially completed. They are hooked up to sources of air, heat and water but the connections are either exposed or concealed behind makeshift panels – pieces of construction plastic, metal sheeting hammered into the rock and so on. Floors are generally smooth but not paved or sealed. Electric power conduits run throughout the region but there are places where the power is sporadic or even nonexistent.

Unfinished regions should not be inhabited but are. Many represent areas slated for future expansion that were left half-done until they were needed but, much like Downbelow on *Babylon 5*, the space has simply been taken over by those who need it now. Unfinished regions are a ‘twilight zone’ between the civilised, public Mars above and the true underworld of the tunnel rats below. The unfinished regions are where makeshift casinos, ask-no-questions bars, unlicensed brothels and ad-hoc dwellings are found. Portions are used as warehouses for illegal or suspect goods (or sometimes for legal goods that need very cheap storage). The Resistance makes great use of these areas as bases – they are sufficiently connected to the life support system that no bulky or maintenance-heavy additional equipment is required, yet they are easily hidden from casual scans and are disconnected from the main security systems.

Ownership of any portion of an unfinished region is highly transient. The official owner is usually EarthGov or a corporation that has constructed the tunnels for its own purposes but unless the owner asserts its authority by force, the de facto owners are anyone with the guns or influence to claim an area as their own and keep it. Most of those running businesses in these areas owe explicit or tacit loyalty to a major criminal power that extracts a certain percentage of the take and provides rough security in exchange. The Resistance is one such player in this game and quite a few bars, gambling dens, brothels and the like owe their continued existence to the stream of money and, more importantly, information that they funnel back to the Resistance.

Raw

Raw regions are nothing but rough tunnels and chambers, unshaped and unsmoothed. Hollowing out and buttressing the space is all that is done. In most raw regions there is not even minimal life support – at least not by design. Air often leaks in from finished and unfinished regions, as does some ambient heat. Beyond that, those who live in the raw regions make do. Cables snake in from other zones bringing electricity. Complex jury-rigged systems of pipes and conduits feed in water and air siphoned off from above. Portable generators, emergency air recyclers extended far past their operating lifespans by ‘bailing wire and chewing gum’ engineering, laboriously patched and tended water extraction pumps and other such devices clutter the dimly lit halls and rooms, a testament to human ingenuity and the will to survive.

If the finished zones resemble enclosed cities and bases and the unfinished zones are somewhat akin to Downbelow, then the raw zones are much like refugee camps. There are no ‘businesses’ as such here but there is a vibrant barter community. Families and clans have staked out various territories and boundaries are generally respected lest a clan war add more crimson to the omnipresent reddish hue of the walls and floors. There are few monitors here, though some of the more electronically inclined have set up their own systems. There is also a wide range of improvised security measures, from simple pit traps to minefields. Those who trespass into these regions without guides and good reasons to be there place themselves at extreme risk.

MarsDome One

Founded by John Carter and officially home to 300,000 people (most estimates indicate that the population is at least half a million when all of the unofficial residents are counted), MarsDome One is sometimes called Capital City, Capital Dome, or just ‘the Dome’. Carter’s small community of a few hundred was rapidly engulfed by the settlers who landed near him during the Mars Rush in the late 2100s and his original dome is now merely ‘SubDome One’, which has actually been rebuilt several times since the landing. The current dome boundaries were laid in 2225 and at the time about one-quarter of the space in the dome was ‘reserved for future development’. The future, it seems, is now; by 2262 the dome is packed to bursting.

Life in MarsDome One

Life in MarsDome One is not much different from life on Earth or in other domes. In general things are better in 'the Dome' than elsewhere on Mars. It is the most commonly visited dome, so EarthGov takes pains to put on the best possible face. The dome-level buildings are clean and well maintained. Security forces are omnipresent but not obvious – they are trained in the techniques of quiet arrest and surreptitious use of force, especially in the upper class or governmental districts. The tunnel rats are kept in their tunnels, with the unkempt and the dishevelled carted off to holding cells or mass shelters as needed. Prices for Earth-made goods are somewhat lower here, as this is the primary shipping centre for the planet. Food is slightly cheaper and much more varied, thanks to the several agrodomes directly linked to the city. In general, those who live in the Dome get first grab at goods from offworld; the other domes get what is left. New Vegas is something of an exception to this.

'Domers' tend to be pro-Earth, as they get the most from Earth. They are more likely to have Earther friends or co-workers and so are likely to think of Earthers as distinct individuals, not as faceless 'others' who exist only to siphon off Martian wealth and productivity. Many support political independence as a future ideal, not as a short-term goal. Of course, there is also a large minority of pro-Mars extremists among the Domers. They see themselves as living in the capital of what should be a free world, not merely a colonial seat of power. They tend to be drawn, oddly, from the extremes of wealth – the 'Old Reds' who became wealthy during the early colonisation period and see no reason to share their prosperity with Earth, and the 'sanders' – the slum dwellers from Redsands Row, who know Earth only as the source of oppression.

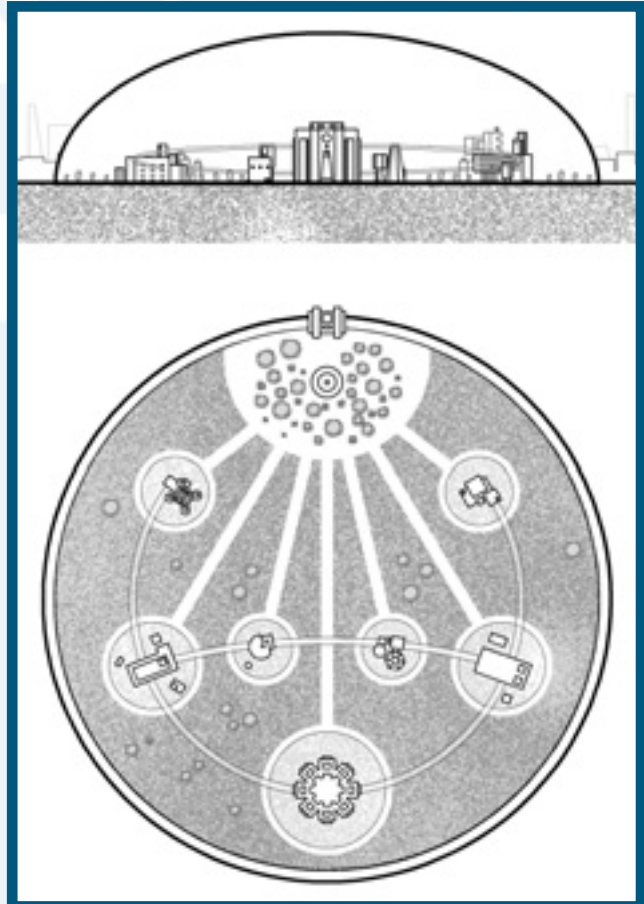
As with all the domes, MarsDome One is crowded, with small dwellings, few open public spaces and little personal space. Every public area is monitored by all manner of security devices. Only in the underground passages is there any privacy and so this is where the real life of the city lies.

EarthDome Mars

Located at the very centre of MarsDome One, EarthDome Mars is the official centre of government for the entire planet. It is the physical embodiment of the Earth Alliance on Mars. Every major aspect of government is run from within this dome – from the

Office of Martian Affairs, the titular head of the planet, to the military command staff, to the Psi Corps Liaison's offices, to the pettiest bureaucratic departments. There are full-time residences for 100 people and temporary housing for 500. Others dwell in 'Earthtown', the cluster of hotels and temporary residences that surround EarthDome. There is a school, a well-staffed hospital, a small shopping mall, a theatre complex and many other amenities. The administrators of Terran rule need never leave the dome – and though few would publicly admit it, many would not consent to live on Mars, even in the relatively Earth-friendly confines of MarsDome One, if it were any other way.

Walking into the dome can be shocking for those not prepared for it. The inner surface of the dome shows a computer generated representation of the sky over Lake Geneva, mimicking second-by-second the real Martian sky over EarthDome itself. Everything within the dome is designed to reflect Earth rather than Mars, from the colours used in decoration to the building materials. Rooms and passages are even larger than they need to be, wasting precious space in order to make the area feel like Earth.



The entrance plaza is home to a large fountain that is surrounded by displays of foliage drawn from the six inhabited continents of Earth. During working hours the plaza is filled with all manner of people – corporate lobbyists seeking audiences, harried citizens of Earth and Mars trying to find out where to file their forms, activists demanding attention for their causes, Psi Cops, military personnel coming and going, bureaucrats and officials in expensive suits, and so on. There is a near-constant murmur of communication and a continual orchestra of electronic beeps and pings as terminals are accessed, links chime and holographic maps are summoned and dismissed.

Surrounding the plaza is an expanse of parkland surrounded by buildings. Each building is connected to the others at the fourth floor level by a small tube system. Once inside a building it is possible to travel to any other point within the complex without stepping outside into the dome proper.

Security is generally tight. Entrance to the dome itself is via a corridor lined with scanners of all sorts and while it is generally a brisk 30-foot walk down the corridor (which is 15 feet in width, so it is rarely jammed), this exposes all those walking in to the equivalent of a Search check with a +15 modifier. The scanners detect not just metal but biological weapons, explosive traces, unusually dense plastics, radioactives, cybernetic enhancements and other potential threats. Material in an isocube cannot be scanned but isocubes themselves are easily detected.

Within the dome, security is somewhat looser, as the hundreds of workers and thousands of visitors cannot be strip-searched every ten feet and it is not feasible to mount and monitor scanners everywhere in the dome. Heavily armed guards are plainly visible and are authorised to check anyone who seems even slightly suspicious. Openly wearing pro-Mars propaganda, though completely legal (except during the Clark years) is an invite to a pat down at best. Some Resistance members exploit this paranoia, sending in teams with one member looking openly ‘dangerous’ – Free Mars tattoos, a disreputable demeanour and so on – and allow the guards to focus on him while they go about their business. Access is restricted; a person who has business with EarthGov states who he wishes to see and why and is given a short-term pass which allows him to get to the designated section of the dome and no other. Since there are information panels providing directions in several languages nearly everywhere in

the public space of the dome, claiming to be lost is likely to raise suspicions. There are six major buildings located within the dome. These are:

Planetary Administration

The tallest structure in the dome and the most desirable target for the more violent members of the Resistance. This building houses the Earth-imposed government of Mars, including the living quarters of the Martian Provisional Governor. The co-ordinating apparatus of the government is handled here, including tax collection, planetary courts, intelligence services and so on. This is the primary link between Earth and Mars, politically speaking. For this reason it is also the most secure. The original building was not designed as a fortress but as the risk of terrorism has increased it has become ever more secure and foreboding. Corridors that were once spacious and open have narrowed as scanners and security doors have been added. Open lobbies and elegant staircases linking floors have been closed off in order to funnel transit through confined areas. Security booths have been added at many locations, further constraining travel, and much extraneous décor has been removed to reduce the number of places a bomb might be hidden, giving the building a sparse look more like that of a prison than of a government office. This building also houses the school that teaches the children of government staffers assigned to Mars, the hospital complex for the dome, and a small barracks for the elite guard units assigned to EarthDome Mars security. The Psi Corps Liaison’s offices are also located here.

Defence

The Department of Defence building contains the Martian command and control structure, directing ground and space forces stationed on or around Mars. It is from here that everything from the orbital defence platforms that guard the planet to the various military bases scattered across the sands are monitored and administered. Technically EarthForce has little role in civilian law enforcement but during times of emergency it is often called out to maintain order on Mars, as during the Food Riots. Below the main tower of the administrative complex are several barracks levels and a good-sized armoury, with access tunnels leading throughout MarsDome One and to the sands outside. At a word, a squadron of Loki tanks and other support vehicles can pour out into the dome or outside of it to deal with enemies ‘foreign and domestic’.

Population

The Department of Population is responsible for the census, tracking the location and population of individual domes and performing demographic projections. It is generally considered inoffensive by the locals and security is light. Many workers at the Department are Mars natives and at least some of them have strong separatist leanings. This has given the Resistance a high degree of access to the demographic and population data stored in the computer banks here.

One of the more dangerous jobs the Department of Population has to perform is to try to track the tunnel rat and domestader populations. Both groups are notoriously hostile to any pretence of authority and both are located in places where it is easy for a snoop to be made to disappear. As a consequence, such jobs are performed under heavy guard or are farmed out to private contractors whose reliability is somewhat suspect. This leads to wildly swinging population estimates year by year.

Alien Affairs

Mars has a significant number of non-human visitors and temporary residents as well as a small expatriate population. The Department of Alien Affairs manages all such contacts, smoothing over diplomatic issues, providing translators, dealing with the insane maze of jurisdictional conflicts, monitoring currency transactions and running a small but well-equipped MedLab designed to deal with a wide range of non-human ailments. There is even a residency wing with customisable atmospheres and temperatures to accommodate visitors not comfortable in the domes.

Because of the great embarrassment that would occur if a visiting dignitary or tourist were injured or killed, this building is also a prime terrorist target. Several incidents have been thwarted by fast-acting security but EarthGov privately worries that sooner or later someone will get through and there will be hell to pay. There is regular talk of decentralising the functions of the Alien Affairs building to provide a less tempting target but the expense and time required would be considerable – and those who would have to authorise such a transformation are not those whose careers would be at risk if an incident occurred, so the motivation is not there.

Social Services

While there are branch offices for all of the various social services provided by EarthGov scattered throughout Mars, mostly in the poorer neighbourhoods, this is the administrative centre and the place where Martians unable to find relief or settle disputes at local offices invariably go. It has the drab authoritarian look of such buildings throughout time and space; there is little budget for the main function of the department, much less to spend on lobby art or wall hangings. The halls always seem to need a new coat of paint, furniture is worn and computer terminals are a few years out of date. The staff consists of chirpy young idealists eager to help the helpless and bored cynics who have long since given up on making the system work and are now just marking time until retirement; the transition from the former to the latter usually takes a few months.

Transportation

This building is fairly new, as it was added to the EarthDome Mars complex less than a decade ago, when the issues of maintaining the internal and external tubes became too vast to be subsumed under Planetary Affairs. Transportation is responsible for maintenance and control of the vast network of above - and below - ground tubes, as well as in-dome monorails and atmospheric shuttles linking widely separate regions of the planet. While there are no direct mechanisms for transport control in this building – this is an administrative, not engineering, complex – the databanks in the building *do* contain records of security override codes, planetary transit schedules and maps of secret or private-access tubeways which are not located on other charts. Resistance agents and tunnel rats have charted many of these but it is always suspected there are more, especially given the ability of Psi Cops to appear and disappear seemingly at will.

The Museum of the Earth Alliance

This building has relatively minimal security, as it is hoped that not even the most radical Free Mars activists would strike at a location usually occupied by schoolchildren. It is a well-maintained museum documenting the history of the Earth Alliance, focusing on the struggle of warring nations to come together. It has many exhibits that showcase international cooperation, from the League of Nations to the United Nations to the Earth Alliance. It also has a wing dedicated to the exploration of Mars, with a lot of emphasis on the EA *Ares* flights and a lot less on the independent colonial movement that truly made modern Mars what it is.

EarthForce Mars

EarthForce maintains a very large presence on Mars and, contrary to some Resistance propaganda, it is not there entirely or even primarily to suppress the Martian people. Indeed, the use of military forces to put down civil uprisings is something senior EarthForce officers are very uncomfortable with and many file private but strongly worded protests against being used in such a capacity. Those who do so are purged during the Clark Administration and replaced with more 'loyal' personnel. Thus the willingness of the military to open fire on rioters varies; during the pre-Clark years, only extreme circumstances can cause troops to open fire (such as being fired upon by rioters), while during the Clark era troops are ordered to fire at will.

The main function of the large EarthForce contingent on Mars is the defence of Mars. As the second most populous world in the Sol system and Earth's oldest planetary colony, Mars is a very important world, both economically and symbolically. An invader would have much to gain by seizing it, including an advanced industrial base and a launch point barely a few hours' hyperspace jaunt from Earth itself. If any enemy could hold Mars, Earth would be at grievous risk. Furthermore, the light gravity and thin atmosphere of Mars mirrors that of many similar worlds, worlds GROPOS are expected to fight on. The harsh terrain, temperature extremes and gaspingly thin atmosphere are useful for teaching survival techniques; they harshly instruct recruits in the reasons why every last step of the 36-part Encounter Suit Maintenance Drill is required, while doing so at a relatively low risk of killing trainees in the process. Many do end up seriously hurt, but at least they are not dead.

Mars is also the home base of the Viking Squadrons, GROPOS units trained intensely in 'cold desert' operations. They take their name not from the ancient seafarers but from the Viking Base located near the landing spot the original *Viking 1* probe. The Viking Squadrons have a number of specialised 'cold desert' equipment variants available to them, designed to operate in low-temperature environments and to remain sealed against dust and sand which can clog engines or block visibility. Viking Squadron members can, it is said, hollow out an underground base in the time it takes other troops to dig a privy pit. In addition to GROPOS units, there are usually four *Hyperion*-class ships along with support squadrons in permanent orbit.

Much of the composition of EarthForce Mars, especially at the 'grunt' level, is Martian-born. Some members of the Resistance see them as traitors or collaborators but they think of themselves as patriots working to protect their planet.

In the main entrance hall of the museum is the Pathfinder landing craft, recovered from its original landing site and restored.

'Earther Row'

This is not an official name – indeed, the region is technically known as Cratertown, since long ago this

area was a cratered dome built next to Carter's original Dome One. Now the dome is long gone and the crater filled in. The region serves as housing for Earthers – not due to any law but due to its proximity to EarthDome Mars and the tendency of people to cluster together with others of their culture. The population is about 25% short-term transients (businessmen on extended

visits and the like), 50% long-term residents (Earthers who have moved to Mars but view it as a temporary lifestyle change lasting a few years at most) and 25% native Martians, some of whom work closely with EarthDome or with Earth-based corporations, others of whom just happen to live here.

The region reflects the makeup of its inhabitants. It is high-class and luxurious, with many specialty shops selling Earth imports. Architecture often mimics classical Earth styles such as Roman-style columns in front of buildings or 'old country' facades on the ground levels of towers. Gardens, where they can be found, feature water-hungry Earth plants as opposed to the genetically modified cacti Martians prefer.

The area operates under an unspoken layer of tension and has ever since 2258, when the Resistance fighters who blockaded EarthDome marched through here first, doing considerable damage to the homes and stores of 'Earther parasites' and 'traitorous collaborators'. Since then security has been greatly increased, with many residents voluntarily contributing to a community fund to hire top-notch private guards to patrol the area. Said guards, not directly answerable to anyone but

Three members of the Martian Census Bureau were playing darts. The first one hit three meters to the left of the target. The second one hit three meters to the right of the target. The third one called out 'Bullseye!'

Ancient joke oft repeated among EarthGov employees.

their employers, have a reputation for casual brutality towards anyone in the area who cannot prove residence or name a person he is visiting who will vouch for him.

Market Dome

There are stores of all sorts throughout the Dome, from the boutiques of SubDome One to the pawnshops of Redsands Row, but the main shopping district is the Market Dome, a shopping Mecca that rivals the Mall of Earth in Canada or the Mercantum on Centauri Prime. While few of the locals shop here for daily goods or services, many visit when looking for a unique gift or special item and of course tourists from across Alliance space flock here, where they can have the privilege of



shopping at the same chain stores available on their own worlds but at a higher mark-up.

The dome is divided into 10 ringed levels with a central elevator column and scattered local elevators. There are few thematic ties between stores on a given level; apart from the top-level 'Galaxy of Foods' restaurant area, each level contains almost random stores. A store selling the latest VR entertainments lies next to a store selling Centauri footwear, which is next to a fine jeweller, which is next to a store selling Minbari meditation oils and incense. This is deliberate; customers looking for specific goods need to pass by many other stores in order to comparison-shop and this increases the chances of an impulse purchase. Likewise, the mall is laid out so as to maximise the number of stores that must be passed to get from one point to any other point.

Market Dome is kept pristine and the stores within it generally sell only the highest-end merchandise. There are no random junk dealers or street vendors here; rental rates are exorbitant and prices are commensurate. Those looking to experience a more authentically 'Martian' shopping atmosphere would be better off leaving the sub-domes behind and wandering the streets of the Dome.

Market Dome is another location where security needs to be tighter than is practically possible. Shoppers do not wish to travel through endless rows of scanners, have bags and boxes searched randomly or be surrounded by heavily armed guards at all corners. The entire mall is monitored – every place from the entrance area to the changing rooms is under surveillance – but there are only so many people to watch the monitors and security thus rests heavily on uncertainty, on the hope that if a would-be terrorist is not sure he is unwatched he will refrain from acting. This is of course a tenuous hope. A much stronger measure of security is provided by the need of the Resistance to be 'freedom fighters', not terrorists, in the eyes of Mars and sympathisers on Earth and elsewhere. Attacking purely civilian targets such as shopping malls will erode years of propaganda work justifying Martian independence. It is for this reason that many within the Resistance fear that EarthGov may actually perform such a strike and pin it on the Resistance; it is also feared a 'lone nut' with little concern for the long-term consequences of his actions may also engage in such an attack.

Redsands Row

Redsands Row was an experiment in community planning during the 2010s. The idea was to use natural materials to create low-cost dwellings for the planet's burgeoning underclass. In the original plans this was to be a well-designed community with parks, schools, hospitals and libraries. Housing units would be small but comfortable, providing the lower classes with a stable environment that would help them to climb out of poverty.

The reality fell far short of the plan. Redsands Row needed much more living space than was originally conceived, so one by one, the planned amenities were axed; this was easier to do than to expand the allotted space, as many corporations had their eyes on the unclaimed areas. Corners were cut again and again – on the size of living quarters, on security features – and when the place finally opened it was already a slum. No one wished to live near it, so local businesses and living complexes were abandoned and sold off to vulture-like buyers and the original development project simply became the heart of a sprawling mass of low-value land.

The Row is one of the most dangerous places to travel in the upper city. Those who live there are often too violent and sociopathic to survive in the tunnels, as tunnel rat culture places a premium on co-operation and community. A goodly percentage, though, are families trapped between two worlds – they have jobs and a sense of place, so they cannot retreat to the tunnels, but they also earn too little to live any place better. These unfortunates are the prey that the many predators of the Row feed upon.

Large portions of the Row do not even have electricity or piped-in water; the connecting infrastructure has been demolished and no one has bothered to fix it. Technically the core Row development is an EarthGov project but management of it has been passed off to private corporations that collect ludicrous fees while doing little to maintain the property. Actual ownership is through a tangled mess of shell corporations and dummy accounts, so filing lawsuits to force needed repairs is almost impossible.

Life in the Row is hard. Even in the portions with power, daily living is a struggle. Gangs control most of the streets and even a walk to the tube station is fraught with risk. Those who do not have any gang allegiances

are the easiest targets, so everyone either belongs to a gang or offers some sort of fealty or allegiance to one. Reformers or activists who take it on themselves to 'clean up' the Row are often found dead or are driven out. Redsands Row is also home to quite a few blips and many of them, especially the young and easily manipulated, are quickly recruited into the gangs. It can be assumed most major gangs will have at least a P 5 working for them. Such telepaths are likely to be unstable in a variety of ways ranging from split personalities to odd phobias.

The outer Row, consisting of various apartments, hotels and stores built apart from the primary settlement, is a typically seedy area. Most of the businesses here cater to the destitute and desperate, from pawnshops to cut-rate rental stores that bleed their patrons by inches. The stores serve those who live on the fringes of the system – they deal in cash at a small mark-up, so those with no bank accounts can have the privilege of eating. The restaurants and food vendors often have connections with the agro-domes and buy discarded or unfit bulk food and sell it for inflated prices.

The Martian Mafia is actually not very strong here; they have little interest in such paltry pickings. They do keep an eye on the gangs, though. If any gang leader starts showing a great deal of skill or initiative, he is either recruited or killed.

SubDome One

While this dome is officially designated SubDome One, it is better known as Carter's Dome, Founder's Dome or First Dome. It is the final iteration of the original dome built by the Carter mission, though it is considerably larger and more populous than the true original dome whose outlines are still marked within it.

This dome is home to many of the oldest families on Mars and many of the buildings still retain an early colonial feel. The architecture in much of the dome is often a century out of date and engineers who need to install new computer systems or other facilities in the dome often complain about interfacing with ancient electronics. Zoning regulations limit new construction within the dome and regulate the style of changes that can be made to existing buildings, in order to preserve the unique character of the dome. The 'Old Rich' of Mars are here, the ones who made their fortunes when day-to-day survival on Mars was difficult. The descendants of John Carter mostly live here and the

Carter House is located at the centre of the dome with some of the original structure still standing. These historical portions of the house are not active living quarters but are available to tourists and students.

SubDome One is even more crowded than is typical for a dome, as few who have homesteads there wish to leave but many families continue to expand. In-dome transportation is limited to a few overburdened monorails, leaving much of the traffic to work through narrow streets on foot. This creates a strong community atmosphere, as the locals are likely to meet each other in the course of going about their daily business.

SubDome One is almost never the site of terrorist attacks. Indeed, it is suspected that a large part of the Resistance's funding flows through the quiet streets and ancient towers of this settlement but that has never been proven. The movers and shakers of SubDome One do not act without subtlety.

The Underworld

The surface of MarsDome One – the tall buildings, the clean streets, the well-lit parks and plazas – is not the real Dome. The real Dome lies beneath the surface. Here is where most of the residents work and shop and where nearly twice as many people as live in the upper dome make their homes. Tourists do not go down here; they are cautioned away from it and there is little down here they cannot find more conveniently on the surface anyway.

The tunnels of MarsDome One are a vast maze with few signs or maps. Natives know where they are going; know which tube stops in the upper dome to exit at in order to be close to their goals below. Anyone without a native guide or an up-to-date map programmed into their personal map box will be rapidly and inexorably lost and will likely end up drifting into very dangerous territories. The upper half of the undercity is the 'commercial' centre. Here businesses, bars and apartment complexes have been shaped from the red rock of the planet, fitted with life support and power, hooked into water and waste systems and tied into the data networks. There are no streets here but there are broad networks of tunnels, some large enough to support vehicular traffic. Most, though, are pedestrian passageways.

Longtime residents can tell where they are by the age of the tunnels. As with the dome above, the tunnel complex did not appear all at once but is the consequence of a merger of the sub-worlds of the

2260-2261

In April 2260 Mars refused to implement martial law, placing the appointed Provisional Government at odds with the Clark Administration. In July 2260 Clark struck back, bombing the outer dome and seizing control of EarthDome Mars. While the initial bombing raids only lasted for a few days, it was weeks before the upper dome could be repaired, weeks in which the population stayed entirely indoors and mostly underground – while the above-ground buildings sealed themselves against the sudden rupture of the dome, such measures were not fully secure, especially given damage to the structures themselves from the attack. The crowded undercity of MarsDome One grew even more packed as desperate refugees flooded into the tunnels.

MarsDome One was ‘liberated’ fairly quickly as it was the primary focus of Clark’s efforts and a new military governor, General Clay Haulden, was placed in command. The dome was repaired and life returned to semi-normal. The degree of security and control was overwhelming. Armed guards were everywhere, even in the slums of Redsands (which some there considered something of a blessing) and any hint of dissent or rebellion was stamped out ruthlessly. MarsDome One was the showcase of Clark’s control over Mars.

During this time, if using the faction system in Chapter 5 to model Player Character control of a Resistance faction which is active in MarsDome One, all Crackdown event rolls gain a +3 circumstance modifier and all Espionage actions against EarthGov suffer a -2 circumstance modifier.

many smaller domes that fused into MarsDome One over the decades. Furthermore, many of the tunnels are ‘unofficial’, carved by various factions and then hidden behind facades. The Resistance, the Martian Mafia, various tunnel rat clans and Psi Corps have all made their own thoroughfares beneath the dome and trespassers on these private highways are usually not permitted to tell of them. A small subculture of spelunkers makes it their life’s work to map each and every such passage, regardless of the risk. Beneath MarsDome One, finished, unfinished and raw regions of the underdome are often easily mixed. The upper areas are primarily finished, of course, though there are a few patches, mostly near the Redsands Row slum zones, which are unfinished. The further down one goes, the more the region roughens, becoming primarily unfinished, then raw. The same transitions apply radially – as the tunnels extend beyond the edges of the dome on the surface they degrade in quality, until nothing is there except newly hewn rock or, sometimes, links into natural caverns.

New Vegas

New Vegas is the second-largest dome on Mars and one of the most famous. People go to MarsDome One to see Mars; people go to New Vegas to see New Vegas. It has the highest concentration of alien visitors of any dome on Mars, as well as being the single most popular tourist destination in the Earth Alliance. Earth, as a general goal, is more popular with human colonists but no single city on Earth garners as many tourists as New Vegas does.

New Vegas was founded in 2180 during the great Mars Boom and was modelled on Las Vegas in the Nevada desert on Earth, as it was in its peak during the early 21st century, before the Neo-Puritan era which controlled American politics during the first decade or so of that century made it impossible for the ‘City of Sin’ to continue to operate. While the pendulum eventually swung back the other way, it was not possible for Vegas to recover and today it is a wasteland containing a few thousand people. New Vegas, however, is everything Las Vegas was at its peak – and much more.

This is 'The Dome That Never Sleeps'. The Martian sky is never visible; the entire inner surface of the dome is an endless panoply of advertising, a gargantuan display screen continuously alive with images and words. Newcomers often stare transfixed at the unending gaudy display – and while they are looking up, someone is most likely picking their pockets. Fortunately police and private security are omnipresent in the dome. The powerful factions that run New Vegas prefer that all theft be done by them and that the victim be a willing, even eager, participant.

There are 70 thousand people who call New Vegas home but at any given time the dome holds as many as half a million transients, visitors from across Mars or across the galaxy. Centauri are of course omnipresent, but Drazi, Narn, Brakiri and many others are common sights. Minbari are relatively rare but the sight of a young acolyte, warrior or worker concentrating intently on poker cards or meditating while tossing coins into a slot machine is not entirely unknown – though they would claim their presence to be part of a spiritual quest to either better understand humanity or learn more about the whims of chaos in the universe. Bartenders are warned about the dangers of giving alcohol, even in trace amounts, to a Minbari. Once a professional gambler sought to improve his odds by surreptitiously spiking a Minbari player's drink during a high-stakes poker tournament; the resulting injuries were such that no other gambler, no matter how desperate, ever tried that again.

Casinos

There are literally hundreds of hotels and casinos in New Vegas, many of which are barely blips on the map – a dozen sleeping tubes and as many holographic slot machines account for the extent of most of them. A small number, though, are legendary – megahotels which lure tourists and gamblers from across the galaxy.

These megahotels tend to be centred on a specific theme or concept which is used to make them distinctive and memorable, a necessity when, in essence, all offer much the same thing in terms of amenities. Beneath the surface glitter, the hotels are fairly interchangeable. Each has endless banks of holographic and VR slot machines to gull the curious, tables offering the standard card and dice games, 'high stakes' areas where real gamblers can congregate, second-by-second feeds from the tachyon network updating sporting events

across the galaxy and cheap food and drinks. Most feature a smattering of non-gambling entertainments such as holobrothels, theatres, VR arcades and the like but the intent is to make sure patrons remain within the hotel at all times.

If there is one area where New Vegas falls short of old Vegas, it is in the food. Las Vegas on Earth was known for inexpensive but lavish buffets, again a means of keeping patrons (and their money) inside the hotel. The expense of shipping in real prime rib, lobster or well-aged spoo is such that this is not feasible on Mars. Patrons must content themselves with either very expensive meals made from authentic ingredients or well-stocked and inexpensive buffets featuring the best synthetics that can be locally produced. Such food is always inferior to the real thing but many acknowledge that New Vegas chefs do outstanding jobs of making the artificial taste, if not authentic, then at least palatable. Some of the better-known major casino/hotels are:

The Imperial Palace

Centauri visitors are either offended or amused by this gaudy 'recreation' of the style of the Centauri Imperial Palace at the height of the First Empire. The architecture is drawn from across two millennia of Centauri history and jumbled together - the Centauri writing on the signs and walls is often hilariously mangled. The hotel is not intended to appeal to native Centauri touring Mars, of course – it is designed to appeal to Earth tourists who would never be able to afford a ticket to Centauri Prime. Few Centauri ever stay at the Palace but it is considered a requirement that visitors from the Republic to New Vegas walk in and sneer for a bit.

Babylon Casino and Hotel

Imagine the *Babylon 5* station shrunk to perhaps one-tenth its size, then stood on its end (so that the cargo arms and C&C were at the top), and then covered top-to-bottom with gaudy neon. That in a nutshell is the Babylon Casino, which opened in 2262. It has a bit of a history... the developer had begun construction three times, only to have backers pull out just as the ground was being broken. The fourth attempt resulted in a nearly completed casino, but a quake demolished it days before it was scheduled to open. The fifth attempt succeeded. Much like the *Babylon 5* station, it is strongly focused on interplanetary trade and offers the widest variety of alien games, food and entertainments, as well as accommodations designed to meet the life-support needs of various species.



The Monument

This complex consists of a hotel/casino shaped roughly like a human head in profile, surrounded by smaller pyramids. It is based on the legendary Face on Mars, long since revealed as a natural phenomenon, and its attendant 'pyramids'. In the main lobby is an 'educational' exhibit detailing the 'alien monuments' left behind by 'unknown forces'. It is worth noting that IPX maintains a small but significant stake in this hotel and considers it useful for keeping people looking for alien artefacts everywhere but where they truly are.

The major casinos are all located inside sub-domes, allowing them to control even the appearance of the sky itself. In addition to the usual advertisements and inducements, all stage spectacular shows at various intervals, such as the thrilling space battles shown about the Babylon Casino (featuring Starfuries attacking wholly fictional ships, so as not to offend any visitors).

The Martian Mafia

The Mafia runs New Vegas, of course. This almost goes without saying. New Vegas is its biggest source of power, its true home base on the planet. Most of its other activities tend to be quick seize-and-grab

operations where they see an opportunity, exploit it, then get out before the heat gets too hot. But New Vegas? New Vegas is *home* and they treat it well. The skim is light but constant and any crime that could scare off the tourists is ruthlessly squelched.

Other Attractions

New Vegas has a few other unique features. It is the location of the Centauri Embassy on Mars and unlike the other non-human Mars-based embassies this is actually considered a plum assignment, for obvious reasons. Very little diplomacy gets done but given the high number of Centauri who visit New Vegas each year the consulate actually serves a valuable purpose, as it can help destitute Centauri find their ways home and provide trained Centauri doctors to deal with medical crises involving their kinsmen as needed.

New Vegas also plays host to a region that has become known as Gourmet Dome, even though the area is not actually a sub-dome but an open section of the city. This is the centre for fine and expensive dining on Mars, where the half-dozen or so premiere restaurants pride themselves on a no-synthetics policy. Food here costs at least five times what an equivalent meal made primarily of textured plant matter and vat-grown meat would cost but true gourmards consider the experience worth it.

The Undercity

As with all the major domes, New Vegas has a thriving undercity. The upper finished regions are generally where the locals live, shop and play. There are casinos here, including a few rather large ones, but they cater to natives and very 'in the know' tourists. These levels tend to be much more sedate and mundane than the omnipresent noise and light of the main dome; a quick lift ride places a visitor in what is almost a different city. Only the very rich or the very poor live in the dome above; the members of the middle class that serves the drinks, cashes the vouchers and programs the accounting software all live here.

Beneath this level of neo-suburbia, though, is the true undercity of New Vegas, a realm offering sins and seductions that the gaudy but ultimately harmless upper levels cannot. There are brothels specialising in exotic and borderline-illegal practices featuring real, not holographic, partners. Drugs of all sorts are readily available, as are all manner of other illicit goods from weapons to milspec electronics gear. Rumours of slave

2260-2261

New Vegas joined in the refusal to implement martial law, something which surprised many. New Vegas had always attempted to avoid politics and the Earth-appointed dome governor had traditionally been extremely lax in his control over the dome – as long as taxes were paid and organised crime stuck to its usual activities, New Vegas was left to run itself.

However, such business as usual could not go on under martial law, so an informal consensus was quickly reached to defy it. Granted, said consensus was based on the belief Earth would not dare attack one of its own colonies but by the time it was obvious that this was not the case it was too late. The dice had been tossed; all that remained was to see how the numbers came up.

EarthGov never bombed New Vegas but it did send in the troops. The casinos and hotels nearly drowned in red ink as guerrilla warfare raged in the streets. People were willing to gamble their money but not their lives and by the time New Vegas was officially ‘liberated’ by forces loyal to Clark, the city was financially devastated. It would be years before it recovered, even with support from both the new independent Mars government and some enlightened self-interest on the part of the mobs, who realised that they would be a lot better off letting the casinos slide a bit on ‘protection’ when the alternative was to have them go out of business altogether. Such a decline in fortunes may have been what led one Mafia group to perform the very risky kidnapping of Lise Edgars in late 2261.

During this time, if using the faction system in Chapter 5 to model Player Character control of a Resistance faction which is active in MarsDome One, all Crackdown event rolls gain a +2 circumstance modifier and all Espionage actions against EarthGov suffer a -1 circumstance modifier.

markets or assassins for hire abound, though they are difficult to track down and are often traps, either by law enforcement or by more mundane criminals.

Even the unfinished regions of the underdome have a much more criminal bent here than elsewhere. There is a sense that corruption has a sort of gravity and it flows downwards, accumulating in the deepest pits beneath the neon mountains above. The tunnel rats here are more gangs than clans and tend to viciousness even towards each other. There are fewer scraps to be had and thus more battles over who shall have them.

Gambling in the 23rd Century

Most of the old standbys of gambling remain unchanged. Roulette, craps, poker, blackjack and others are still available at the casinos of New Vegas. They have been joined by new games, many of alien origin. Some of these include:

Centaury Poker

This term is somewhat misleading, to say the least. It is a common human practice to append a racial name to a human activity, as if Earth were a Platonic ideal and all other cultures’ sports, games and food were mere inferior copies of the one true form. However, such conventions make it far easier to ‘sell’ a concept and ‘Centaury Poker’ is, as an idea, more easily grasped than simply calling it Moncar Koloni, the actual Centaury game the common Terran casino game is loosely based on.

It is considered a master’s game, played with a six-suited deck patterned after Centaury decks (the two additional suits are circles and stars). It is a complex game of hand building but it relies on ever-shifting partnerships to reach a winning hand – however, only one player can win. To win, then, a player must be willing to strengthen his opponent’s position for a

time, risking giving them the victory. Many have commented that the constantly changing patterns of alliance mirror those of the Royal Court. Expert players will spend endless hours reviewing classic games and contemplating strategies, while those who favour more fast-paced entertainments consider the game overly complicated and slow moving. It is to ordinary poker what contract bridge is to Go Fish.

Lentai

This is another Centauri game, played with cards and 8-sided dice. The game is somewhat similar to classic poker forms in that it consists of drawing, pattern-building and bluff-heavy betting but a secondary form of chance is added in the form of the dice. Players may pay cards from their hand to call for a *Lentai* or Divine Favour, which involves rolling the dice and accepting sudden shifts in the game, such as all players drawing an extra card or a random card becoming 'wild'. Serious gamblers despise Lentai because the extra randomness nullifies careful strategy; they consider it more akin to roulette or slot machines, a game of pure luck masquerading as a game of luck and skill.

Volesh'tah

This is a Minbari 'game' – in reality it is a meditative aid, somewhat similar to *I Ching* on Earth, in which a number of faceted crystals marked with different symbols are tossed and the pattern they form is then contemplated. During some of the cultural exchanges following the Earth/Minbari War these crystals were copied, modified slightly and used by humans for various purposes. A canny casino operator worked out a more complex form of craps that could be played with them and the allure of an exotic new game brought many to his tables. His attempt to claim sole ownership of the concept was thwarted in 2254 and the game is now a common attraction throughout New Vegas.

Kivrah-pock

A Brakiri game that has an auction-based concept. Much as in poker, cards are drawn to build a winning hand; however, the cards (other than those in the initial hand) are shown face up and all players place a secret bid to purchase the card. The final pot consists of the money bet on each hand and the money bid to buy cards. Strategy becomes complex, with players seeking to fool opponents into thinking they are building one sort of hand while working for another or bidding low on cards they actually hope to win in order to confuse the opposition. Because of the two modes

of spending – betting on the strength of one's current hand and bidding on cards to add – the pot can increase rapidly and a credit-ante game can quickly ramp up an impressive payoff.

Slimtown

Slimtown began not as a dome (and some would argue it is still not truly a dome) but as a number of primarily-underground settlements which existed to support mining operations, most of which were operated by Earth corporations under charter from a variety of national governments and staffed by 'involuntary expatriates', as those deported from Earth under the 'Botany Bay' programs of the late 22nd century were sometimes called. They were not quite prison camps but not quite free colonies either. Over time, as shipping troublemakers offworld slid from favour (in part because of the terms of the Macintyre-Carter Treaty) and as terms of service expired, the population became more and more composed of natives who felt they had a stake in the mines. Tensions between the workers and the mine owners, many of whom had never been to Mars, rose precipitously until they culminated in the Mine Wars of 2110. These vicious tunnel fights, pitting well-armed Earth-based security forces against poorly armed but Mars-trained miners, resulted in over 200 deaths before EarthGov intervened. Citing numerous incidents in which the corporations had violated both their charters and the Earth Alliance Constitution in the running of the mines, ownership of most of the colonies was turned over to a provisional miners' government which then proceeded to miss deadline after deadline to produce a functional constitution that a majority of those in the affected area could agree on. In 2112, angered by the lack of progress (and the lack of minerals needed for the ever-expanding EarthForce navy), EarthGov appointed a governor and imposed a constitution which included considerable penalties for the long years of non-productivity, during which Earth had continued to make regular supply runs of food. There was more than a little grumbling over this but the population eventually accepted it – the terms of the new charter were not perfect but they were better than the old corporate charters.

Slimtown earned its name in 2120 when a large oblong dome was built over the main habitats. This opened up a great amount of previously unusable surface area. Since much of Slimtown's life and industry was underground and since worked-out mines could be easily converted

to living space, there was no great rush to build on the ground. Instead the residents chose to dedicate a large portion of it to agriculture – mostly food plants in hydroponics but a quarter of it went to pure decoration – to trees, flowerbeds and lawns. Slimtown is one of the greenest places on Mars.

It is also one of the reddest. All of the rocks torn up from the mines need to go somewhere and much of the debris is used in construction. In addition, cliff habitats line the east and west sides of Slimtown, with the uppermost apartments having spectacular views of the city below and commanding exorbitant rents. Culturally, Slimtown has developed in two very interesting directions. The majority of the population still works the mines and has a blue-collar rough-and-tumble culture that extols simple virtues and hard work. A second, smaller culture has grown up around the precious metals and jewels extracted from the mines, a culture of crafters and artists. Would-be jewellers and metalsmiths from across Mars and other worlds in the Earth Alliance flock to Slimtown's Beta Sector, which has become the artistic centre of the city.

Beta Sector

Better known as the Bay, this region of Slimtown is home to about 4,000 people, many of whom are directly involved in the arts. It is the 'bohemian' section of Slimtown and one of the few true 'artsy' areas on practical, survivalist Mars. The streets are narrow and closed to ground vehicles, though microgyros and other flying craft can make rooftop landings. A monorail runs down the main street. Otherwise traffic is pedestrian only. The close streets are lined with cafes, boutiques and galleries, as well as - somewhat illegally - artists with street carts or even just blankets draped over the sidewalk selling their wares, which range from mechanically polished rocks with glued-on pins to truly exquisite pieces of metalwork. Minbari tourists are more common here than anywhere else on Mars, as the rockwork of the Slimtown artisans is both



similar to the Minbari's own crystal sculptures and yet, to the Minbari, exotically alien.

Those with an ear to the ground in Slimtown might hear some grumblings. Artists tend to be independence-minded and many tacitly support the Resistance, though most disapprove of violence. Furthermore, many of the smaller artists complain about being priced out of 'their' community. As the Bay becomes trendy the wealthy move in and begin to drive prices up and the native artists out. Vandalism directed at the homes or vehicles of these intruders is becoming increasingly common, leading to increased security, leading to more conflicts over the direction of the community. There are also a number of Resistance safehouses in this area.

Old Mine Town

This is the name given to the complex of sub-dome shops, apartments and utility buildings where a large portion of the Slimtown locals live. The name comes from the fact that this area was once all mines – but the tunnels have long since been emptied. This gives the region a distinct architecture, as the tunnels were not carved as passages for transport but to follow veins of precious metals or rich ores. The twisting and interlocking passages are easy to get lost in, and visitors are advised to have a good map, a good guide or both. Historical markers adorn the walls here, many noting various accidents that occurred during the original digging of the mines.

Narn Town

There are more Narn living in Slimtown than in all the other domes of Mars put together, or so the common wisdom holds. The majority of them live in the area which has become known to humans as Narntown, a region a few blocks square whose population is roughly 90% Narn. Within this small patch of dome, signs are primarily written in Narn, warm spoo is served at roadside carts and breen prepared in the finest Narn fashion (ignoring the fact that it is still reconstituted vegetable protein) is available at countless small eateries. There are Narn-language book dealers, small temples for followers of the major Narn faiths and a Narn consulate. Many of the Narn who live here were born here and know no other home. They yearn to see Nar'shal someday, but consider Mars their rightful place.

Slimtown Undercity

The undercity of Slimtown is huge and sprawling, as the lines between abandoned mines, living and working areas are blurred beyond recognition. Even by Martian standards it is a maze, with an insane hodgepodge of facilities and establishments clustered around each other in no order. Other than one or two areas where tremendous amounts of money and energy have been spent to beat back the entropy, there is no discernible pattern to the layout. A cheap motel abuts a high-class dining area; an illicit casino operates two doors down from an elementary school. Corridors widen and narrow again without apparent regard for the amount of traffic that flows through them and it often happens that pedestrian congestion is so great as to result in virtual immobility. The distinctions between finished, unfinished and raw areas are likewise nonexistent; a corridor can go from finished to raw in 100 feet and vice versa.

The natives love it. They tend to view other undercities, chaotic as they are, as 'sterile' and their own as embodying the true Martian spirit of freedom. Non-natives are advised to avoid the area, even more so than other underdome regions. It is easy to get lost and to wander quickly into areas that are not merely confusing but extremely dangerous and not only because of the human predators that tend to lurk in tunnels. The old mines that surround the city are prone to collapse and explorers find a good dozen bodies there every year, some of which show signs of having survived for days after falling into pits or being trapped by rubble.

Syria Planum

In 2173, just as the first wave of colonists reached Mars in the wake of John Carter's flight, Psi Corps laid claim to a vast swath of land on Syria Planum, far from the rapidly growing dome complex on Hellas. Originally this was nothing more than a few semi-permanent domes set up; it was claimed, to study the effects of long-term exposure to alien environments on telepathy. By 2193, though, when the population of Mars was booming and Earth-Mars hostilities were nearing their first - but by no means last - great conflict, Psi Corps rapidly expanded its presence here.

Construction was swift over the next 20 years. The complex continued to expand, becoming ever larger and more advanced, a testimony to the growing power of the Corps. It is the second largest Psi Corps complex in the entire Alliance and some would claim it is more important than the Earthside facilities. This is where the Psi Corps' darker face dwells - it is in the domes and tunnels and secret lairs throughout Syria Planum that the most terrible experiments are conducted and the most heinous conspiracies are plotted. It is also home to 20 thousand telepaths, a place for them to live, work, shop, raise their families, enjoy a play or a trivid or indulge in a few rounds of golf or tennis. It is a thriving city, one of the largest on Mars.

Currently there are no tube connections between the Syria Planum complex and any other location; all transport is by shuttle or ground vehicle. There are persistent rumours of a single very deep tube linking Syria Planum and Bethesda (and from Bethesda, the B-H line can be used to reach the main centres of Martian civilisation) but such rumours are disregarded. For the Psi Corps to have secretly constructed a tube thousands of miles in length is as ludicrous as supposing that it maintains its own private fleet of starships.

There are three main domes in the Syria Planum complex - the Science Dome, the Habitation Dome (Carter Dome) and the Administration Dome. There are also several other complexes associated with the facility. All are described below but are given more detail in *The Psi Corps* sourcebook.

Science Dome

This was the first dome completed and it is dedicated to the advancement of telepathy. While some experiments of a dubious nature are performed here, the worst of them take place in the buried Department Sigma complex (see below). The Science Dome often

houses mundanes whose specialties the Corps needs – neurologists, biochemists, neurosurgeons, genetic engineers and so on. While the Corps really prefers to keep such matters ‘in the family’, the small number of existing telepaths sometimes means that the most skilled individuals in certain fields are mundanes. Keeping them in the dark as to the true nature of much of what goes on is a matter of careful manipulation, both normal and psychic. On rare occasions the ‘natural hazards’ of life on Mars must come into play...

The Science Dome consists primarily of labs equipped with the most advanced hardware available in the Alliance and sometimes beyond. Alien tech ranging from Centauri gravitational centrifuges to Minbari multiphase subelectron microscopes has ended up here. In addition to the labs, there is a well-equipped hospital wing that serves to provide medical services to the Syria Planum community as well as to conduct certain surgical experiments.

Carter Dome

Carter Dome, named so as a propaganda measure aimed at the Hellas colonists, is the main living area at Syria Planum. It resembles any other moderately sized Martian city, with shopping malls, factories and apartment complexes. Unlike most of the Syria Planum facility, there are many mundanes living here – the extreme security offered by the Psi Corps is appealing to the Martian elite and they have purchased apartments here, trusting - perhaps unwisely - in Psi Corps regulations to keep their secrets free from prying minds. A large portion of the dome remains undeveloped, intended for future expansion.

Administration Dome

This is the location of the Psi Corps’ Martian headquarters, where all local operations are overseen. It has second-by-second backups from the main systems on Earth and *vice versa*, so if either HQ is ever destroyed virtually no records will be lost. The Martian branch of the Corps also focuses heavily on all of the Corps’ offworld interests, leaving the Earth branch concerned solely with Earth – and thus increasingly less relevant as the game of power is played on an interplanetary scale.

Metapol Mars

This is not a dome but a bunker-fortress, mostly underground, with the lowest levels secured against even nuclear weapons. It contains armouries, Psi Cop

residences, Bloodhound unit barracks, interrogation chambers, secure cells and much more. It is also fantastically secure, with continual scanning of all who approach and a ‘take no prisoners’ (or rather ‘release no prisoners alive’) attitude towards uninvited guests. While tunnels connect this building to the other domes in the complex, it would be sheer insanity to attempt to sneak into the building via such means.

Spaceport

There is an advanced spaceport at Syria Planum with tubes connecting it to all the other major buildings. It is used primarily for Psi Corps business, though with the increasing number of mundanes dwelling in Carter Dome, there is some slight civilian traffic as well.

Places on Mars

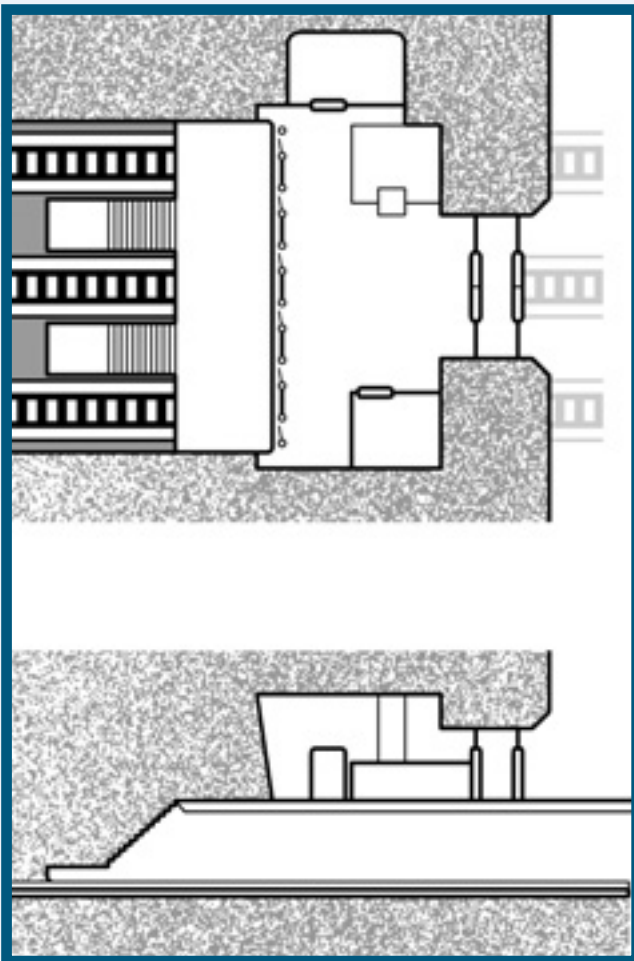
This section includes descriptions of common types of places – tube stations, apartments, hotels, security posts and so on - which can be found throughout Mars. While most of these locales have a great deal of individual variety (few hotels, for example, all follow the exact same floor plan), a generic description is sufficient to provide a ready-to-run baseline, with the Games Master able to add detail to any locale which is likely to become a recurring backdrop.

Tube Stations

All major domes are connected to the tube network. Tube stations are of two sorts – inner stations, used for getting around inside the larger domes, and exit stations, where tubes leave the domes to traverse the dusty Martian surface.

Inner Stations

Inner stations may have between one and five outgoing tubes. The simplest stations consist of nothing but a raised platform and a ticket machine, with the tube cars stopping at the platform, opening doors and moving off. Each individual who wishes to board slides his identicard into the ticket machine, which marks the station as his entry point. A gate (DR 4 with 8 hit points) then opens, allowing him to enter. Bioscanners verify that only a single lifeform passes through, though children under three years of age are permitted to enter without paying. There is usually a bored human attendant watching for cheats and dispensing information. An interactive wall map shows the locations of all cars in the area, the estimated wait for the next car, notices of disruption in service and so on.



Major in-dome terminals offer a few more amenities – benches to sit on, two or three small and very overpriced food and beverage vendors and so forth. Security at inner stations is light except during periods of high alert. There is a base 10% chance of a single guard (use the Security Officer stats from page 145 of the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*) during normal times. Such guards are ‘wanderers’, travelling from station to station on a randomised schedule. During times of higher alert, use the table below:

D100 roll	High Alert	Martial Law
01-25	No guards	1 guard
26-50	1 guard	2 guards
51-99	2 guards	4 guards
00	3 guards	4 guards plus Bloodhound

Outer Stations

Outer stations join dome to dome. Sometimes the connection is a direct straight line; most of the time, though, the connection runs through several switching stations. In most ways they are much like inner stations. Security is, however, tighter – there are too many places where a terrorist could open a serious dome breach. Even during times of light security, there are always guards present. Furthermore, during times of high alert or martial law tubes are randomly stopped and searched for known terrorists; sometimes members of the Psi Corps conduct random surface scans looking for people thinking about terrorism, bombs or other hazards.

Outer stations are generally larger than inner stations and contain more amenities. Since some inter-dome journeys can take several hours (it is faster to fly but cheaper to ride), there are usually several stores selling items of interest to travellers – print-on-demand books and magazines, food ranging from candy to truly vile concoctions masquerading as pseudo-meat (many stations have a McBari’s franchise), drinks or one-use holoivid crystals and players, all at vastly inflated prices (at least 10% more than normal). There are also waiting areas with tables and chairs and often a bar serving watered-down overpriced drinks. To determine guards on duty at an outer station, use the table below:

D100 roll	High Alert	Martial Law
01-25	1d4 guards	1d4+1 guards
26-50	1d6 guards	1d6+2 guards
51-99	1d6 guards	1d6+3 guards plus Bloodhound
00	1d6+2 guards	1d6+4 guards plus Bloodhound

General Station ‘Colour’

The following table can be used to add colour to any station. To generate a number from 1-30, roll 1d10 and 1d6. On a roll of 1-2 read the d10 as 1-10, on a roll of 2-4 read the d10 as 11-20, and on a roll of 5-6 read the d10 as 21-30.

1. Fight! A brawl has broken out between two patrons waiting for their tubes. If no one intervenes, one patron will beat the other into submission in 1d4 +2 rounds. The motive for the brawl is:

1. One patron suspects the other of an affair with his spouse.
2. Politics – one patron is Free Mars, one is Pro-Earth.
3. A drug deal gone wrong.
4. Theft – one patron claims the other has pickpocketed him.
5. Distraction – while the ‘fight’ is going on, a pickpocket works the crowd. -2 to all Spot checks against the pickpocket.
6. Mistaken identity.
7. A pro-Earth or Free Mars advocate finds a soapbox and begins loudly proclaiming the wisdom of his views.
8. An evangelist of a minor faith begins to expound on the One True Way.
9. A tunnel rat wearing smelly rags and clearly months past his last vibe shower harasses one of the Player Characters for change.
10. A tunnel rat wearing smelly rags and clearly months past his last vibe-shower staggers up to a Player Character and spews forth a Kosh-like cryptic statement such as ‘Beware the man of three worlds’ or ‘I know you are...but what am I?’ This may be a meaningful clue or insane babble.
11. A nervous-looking man is suddenly jumped by two security guards and hauled off while a smug-looking woman in a Psi Cop uniform watches approvingly.
12. A waiting patron suddenly begins screaming about voices in his head. His rants describe a Shadow perfectly.
13. A small child escapes its mother and dashes into the maintenance level below the tube tracks.
14. A new fast-food chain has opened up and is offering half-price specials.
15. A pickpocket (1st level lurker) attempts to ply his art on a Player Character. He has a total Pick Pocket bonus of +6.
16. A drunken patron makes a pass at a Player Character of the appropriate gender.
17. A security officer begins checking identicards. He will not say what he is looking for or why.
18. A bomb alert is announced. After 1d4 hours, the station is pronounced ‘All Clear’.
19. A patron who has been coughing fitfully begins hacking up blood and twitching. If he is ignored he will die in 1d6 rounds. If first aid (Medical check, DC 15) is applied, he will stabilise until an emergency medical team can pick him up.
20. Breach! Outer stations only. A mechanical failure has allowed air to begin leaking out; the station will be sealed off in one minute. All patrons must be evacuated before that time.
21. A Narn and a Centauri, both tourists, begin arguing loudly over some trivial issue. If no one intervenes a brawl will begin.
22. A man rushes across the station pushing Player Characters out of the way, and then disappears down an access passage. A few seconds later three security guards follow. One of the Player Characters then discovers the running man has apparently dropped an encoded data crystal in his pocket.
23. A Psi Cop enters the station, apparently just waiting for his tube like anyone else.
24. One of the Player Characters notices a small, unattended package. It could be anything from a week’s supply of groceries to a bomb about to go off.
25. A young tunnel rat begins spraying ‘Free Mars!’ graffiti on a wall.
26. Two Rangers enter the station, silently look it over and then shake their heads and leave.
27. A drug dealer approaches a Player Character with an offer.
28. A Pak’mara hands a young tunnel rat a credit for a group of dead rats and begins eating them with gusto.
29. A very well dressed and well-groomed man approaches the Player Characters and says he is a high-ranking IPX executive who just had his wallet

stolen and he needs a credit for the tube. Whether he is lying or telling the truth is up to the Games Master.

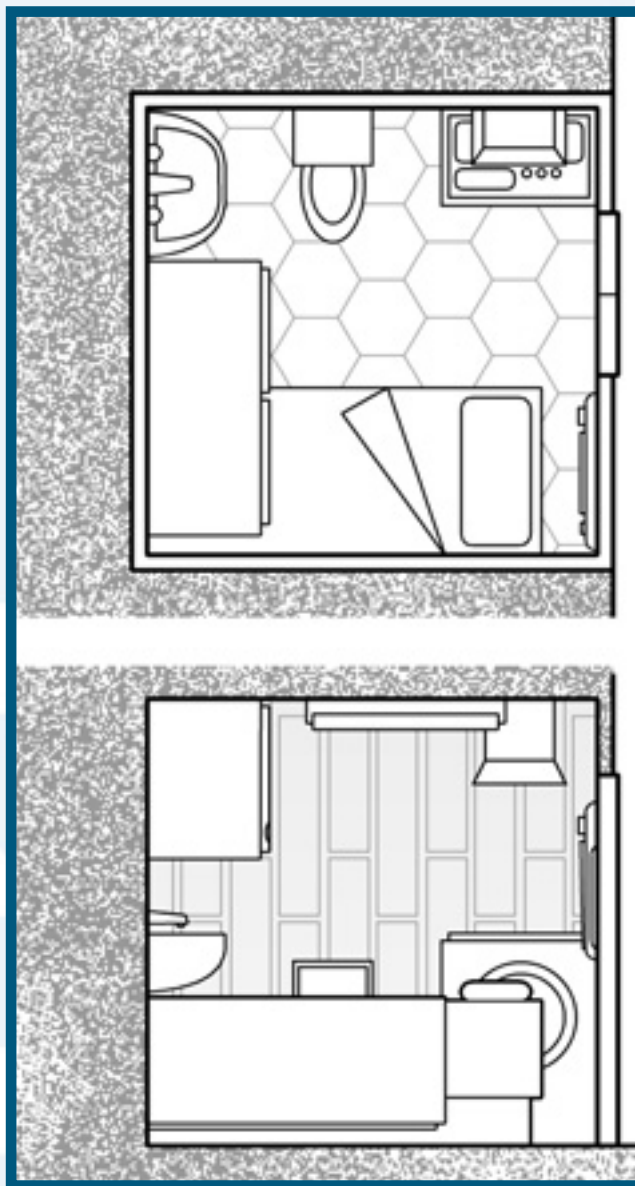
25. A group of six heavily armed masked individuals announce they are liberating the station in the name of Free Mars and give all within one minute to clear out. A minute later the station explodes. No one with Resistance connections was aware of any planned attack of this sort.
26. A drunken beggar who claims to be a veteran of the Battle of the Line begins loudly harassing a worker caste Minbari who is employed by IPX as consultant.
27. A member of a rarely seen minor race (Cascor, Descaran, Yolu) enters the station.
28. A news report touching on recent events in the *Babylon 5* universe (Games Master's choice) interrupts the normal broadcasts.
29. A patron at a food stand becomes violently ill.
30. An extremely large brown insect, perhaps eight inches in length, scuttles out from the shadows and dashes across the floor. Two maintenance personnel chase after it firing jets of insecticide.

Typical Dwellings

One thing characterises all dwelling places on Mars. Size, or rather, the lack thereof. At every social level, living space is less than what would be expected anywhere else except for space stations or other domed colonies (and few of either have anywhere near the population or diversity of Mars). The lowest classes, other than the tunnel rats, live in rooms that are barely more than sleeping tubes, while even the wealthiest make do with 'mansions' a fraction of the size that the wealthy on Earth possess.

Toobicles

This term, a blend of 'tube' and 'cubicle' with a spelling change to match the pronunciation, describes the style of apartment favoured (or rather accepted by necessity) by the working poor, students, business travellers on extended stays and contracted expense accounts and others with only a little money but no desire to join the underdome population.



A typical toobicle is about eight feet by eight feet. The sleeping tube is set into the bottom of one wall and slides out for easy entry. A typical tube is seven feet long, three feet wide and two feet high, with a commscreen located above the area of the head. Above the tube are cabinets for storage, offering about 50 cubic feet of total space. An extremely miniaturised kitchen area (a typical arrangement has a waist-high refrigeration unit which is topped with a heating surface and a small counter workspace) occupies a good portion of the remaining space, and a toilet (with no stall – toobicles are single-occupancy) takes up the rest. What little floor space remains is usually covered with a cheap rug or a very small desk and a single table. The vast majority of toobicles are located in the sub-domes and have no

windows. Toobicle complexes holding hundreds of the units exist under every major dome and the best of them have some shared facilities such as lounges or exercise rooms for the tenants. The worst have no such luxuries and are often filth-ridden and decrepit. Urban legends abound of people dwelling at such cut-rate complexes being devoured alive in their tubes by rats or trapped by faulty eject mechanisms to suffocate (or even more gruesomely, starve).

Toobicles range from 75 credits a month for the worst complexes to 1,000 credits a month for the 'luxury' units built in the dome proper and equipped with a small window.

Small Apartment

One step up from a toobicle, small apartments are the homes of most of the working class and newly-employed white collar workers. A typical small apartment on Mars is about 10 feet by 15 feet, sometimes designed so as to have a few nooks or corners to create a little less of the 'living in a box' feel. A microkitchen unit similar to a toobicle's is commonplace. A vibe shower and toilet will both be located in a very tiny bathroom with a sliding privacy shield. Most such apartments are underdome but the more luxurious can be found in the upper regions. Single people often opt for sleeping tubes to preserve a few more feet of floor space; couples or singles with an active social life make room for a bed. Storage possibilities include a small closet (about six feet tall by two feet wide by one foot deep) and in-wall cabinets offering 75 cubic feet of storage.

Small apartments range from 200 credits a month for slum units to 2,000 credits a month for units in luxury complexes.

Medium Apartment

For many working-class families this represents the best that can be expected on Mars. A typical medium apartment offers two rooms, one 15 by eight feet and the other nine by nine feet. The second, smaller room is usually the parents' bedroom, while children sleep on beds or bunks in the larger room. A bathroom (though with a vibe shower, not a bath) completes the ensemble. Up-and-coming young executives also go for this level of dwelling, as it is fairly spacious for a single occupant, by Mars standards. As with other living choices, apartments of this sort can be found in a wide range of locales, from sub-dome slums to luxurious domescraper towers. In general, this size

unit is considered slightly upscale, thus the sleazier places in the underdome depths do not have them. A medium apartment usually bespeaks a modicum of respectability.

Standard decoration consists of a comm unit surrounded by chairs and a small dining table. Bookcases are found on occasion though they are considered luxurious affectations in this age of data crystals. Plants are very common, though the cost of watering them makes them a bit of a luxury too, albeit one many people view as a psychological necessity.

There are hundreds of different layouts for medium apartments; the above should be considered average. Some are one-room, while some have three very small rooms. The square footage remains within 10% of that specified.

Medium apartments range from 400 credits a month for the lower-end units to 4,000 credits a month for the best, which may feature water showers and spectacular views of the dome.

Large Apartment

This level of spacious luxury belongs to the upper middle class and above. Most have three rooms totalling roughly 700 to 900 square feet. A water shower is almost always included and many such units have enough room for a bath. Even among the well-off, few purchase or rent a dwelling of this size unless they have large families (at least two children and a spouse, often three or four children).

Large apartments are found in the upper dome and in high-class areas of the underdome – the most finished sections, close to shopping districts, tube stations and other luxuries. In the upper dome they usually have views ranging from fairly dull views of the nearest tower to spectacular across-the-dome vistas. The buildings in which large apartments are located include a range of luxuries such as recreation facilities, exercise rooms and small parks. The best even include such wastes of precious water as fountains (though such are usually tied into the water recycling system, so little water is actually lost save to evaporation).

In many areas population pressure has caused large apartments to be subdivided into two or more smaller units, leading to bidding wars for those that remain. Once an apartment of this size has been secured, the inhabitants will do anything short of murder (and

sometimes even that) to keep it. Wealthy couples with children or plans to have them employ real and AI agents to scan obituaries to keep informed on an available space.

Large apartments start at 1,000 credits a month for those located in the seedier parts of the underdome (there are still a few left in most of the larger domes) to 10,000 credits a month or more for units in the more elegant and full-featured towers.

Hotels

Tourism is big on Mars, from those who spend half their fortunes to get to Mars so they can lose the other half at New Vegas, to those who come to see the spectacular natural features, to those who wish to leave Earth behind but cannot afford to travel further than Earth's nearest planetary neighbour. Furthermore, many citizens of Mars must often travel to distant domes on business, staying for days or weeks. To some extent, hotels are hotels. A Martian hotel has all of the features one would expect from a hotel but the nature of life on Mars does impose some conditions. These also apply on other domed colony worlds, so this information is broadly applicable anywhere space, air and water are in limited supply.

Rooms are *small*. At cut-rate places used by travelling businessmen on a budget or desperate tourists, there are no rooms, only sleeping tubes, and even they are somewhat smaller than average. The 'horizontally enhanced' are often very uncomfortable on Mars. Even in mid-range and high-end hotels, the rooms are tiny. A typical room has a single bed with perhaps two feet of clearance on either side and a very tiny bathroom featuring a toilet and a vibe shower. There is no sink but a small spigot for drinking water is inset into the wall; the water is metered and billed to the room. Walls separating rooms in such hotels are often designed to be removable, creating double or triple-sized rooms for families or couples if necessary. A comm screen in the wall and a small end table form the rest of the furnishings.

Even high-end rooms are roughly half the size of an equivalent room on Earth. Only the most luxurious and expensive rooms have water showers and water is still metered closely – no place on Mars has free or flat rate water.

Because of the extreme space restrictions, hotels on Mars tend to have more features in common areas – large vidscreens surrounded by couches to form mini-theatres, cafeteria-style dining areas in preference to room service, and rows of small work cubicles which can be rented for a nominal fee in place of desks and workspaces in the rooms. About the only thing a customer is really expected to do in his hotel room is sleep and attend to bodily functions; all other activities are best performed in the common space. With the exception of romantic interludes, which can be difficult in the cramped quarters. Floating around the networks is the well-known datafile entitled the *Kama Mars*, a guide to making the most of small spaces.

Hotels are often targeted by extremist Resistance factions – attacking tourists is an assault on an economic mainstay, which undermines the government and most hotels are owned by Earther corporations, so the profits from Mars tourism tend to feed Earth rather than Mars. Most of the Resistance opposes such attacks – for one thing, Martians are the main workers at such hotels, serving as busboys, maids, desk clerks, day managers and the like. For another thing, a year's worth of propaganda protesting Earth's oppression of Martians can be undone by one second's footage of a child killed in a terrorist attack. The majority of the Resistance also oppose killing innocents on purely moral grounds, of course – they think of themselves as liberators and freedom fighters, not terrorists. However, where moral arguments fail to sway the fanatics, pragmatic arguments sometimes can.

Thus hotels are very concerned about security. All public areas are monitored. Rooms can be monitored at the guest's behest, but most guests do not want spy cams in their rooms. There are persistent rumours that the guest controls for the security systems do nothing and the cameras are always on regardless. Whether or not this is true, the systems can be hacked and are in fact compromised by both EarthGov and the Resistance far more than the Mars Hotel Association will ever admit. Hacking into the system requires a Computer Use check (DC 20 from within the hotel's control centre, DC 25 from outside the network).

In addition to monitoring, the better hotels are designed to seal off in the event of a dome breach, switching to internal life support for up to 24 hours. They may also have security stations in the lobby areas and sweep the lobby and entrance areas regularly with sensors, scanning for chemical or biological signatures that

raise red flags. Most terrorist attacks on hotels that have been successfully traced have been found to be at least partially inside jobs. It is impossible to tell which cleaning person or cook might be an active Resistance member who can easily help his friends bypass security or find the perfect hiding place for a bomb.

Red Sands Resort

This is a typical hotel catering to tourists, mostly Earthers or visitors from the human colony worlds and can be used as a model for many such places. The Red Sands Resort is located at the edge of Earther Row in MarsDome One. It is a 25-storey structure with an outer surface of white metal plates and red Martian rock arranged in asymmetric rectangles that give it a pleasant if slightly unbalanced appearance. It has the 'inverted funnel' look common to the architecture of the 2220s, when it was first built, with four concentric circular lower levels rising up to meet the residence tower, which is a perfect cylinder except for the oversized roof which serves as a shuttle and in-dome aircraft landing pad. Windows line the residence tower and ring the lower levels.

There are two basement levels. The first holds banks of 200 sleeping tubes along with secure areas that can be used as emergency bunkers and several storeroom and supply areas. The staff recreation room and lounge is here as well, as are the offices of several members of the administration staff. The second basement level is where emergency power generators are kept, along with life support systems including water and waste reprocessing. These areas are kept behind secured doors (DR 15 with 50 hit points, with a Computer Use check at DC 20 to crack), with all access carefully monitored. There are also connections to the underground portions of the in-dome tube network and, not on the official maps, further connections to the maze of tunnels in the underdome.

The ground floor is the main lobby. There is a holographic fountain splashing merrily in the spacious courtyard area, a number of couches, public access comm screens and a check-in area. One new addition is a team of several armed and very visible guards. A sensor control panel, hastily added to the area behind the check-in counter, is manned constantly. Greenery is placed at aesthetic locations around the lobby but close inspection shows it to be synthetic or holographic. A curved walkway leads to the second floor and there is

a central column of elevators that reaches to the top of the spire.

The second floor is the primary dining area. Small tables are packed close together, leading to some delicate manoeuvring dances on busy days. The food service and preparation area occupies one-quarter of this level. Food is normally billed to rooms but non-guests can eat here as well. Security is present here too, though it is not as visible... a guard sweeps the room every half-hour or so. A sensor station is hidden in the kitchen.

The third floor is a lounge area featuring rows of work cubicles and a number of areas where groups can watch tri-vid broadcasts, usually sporting events or news. Only hotel visitors or their guests are permitted access.

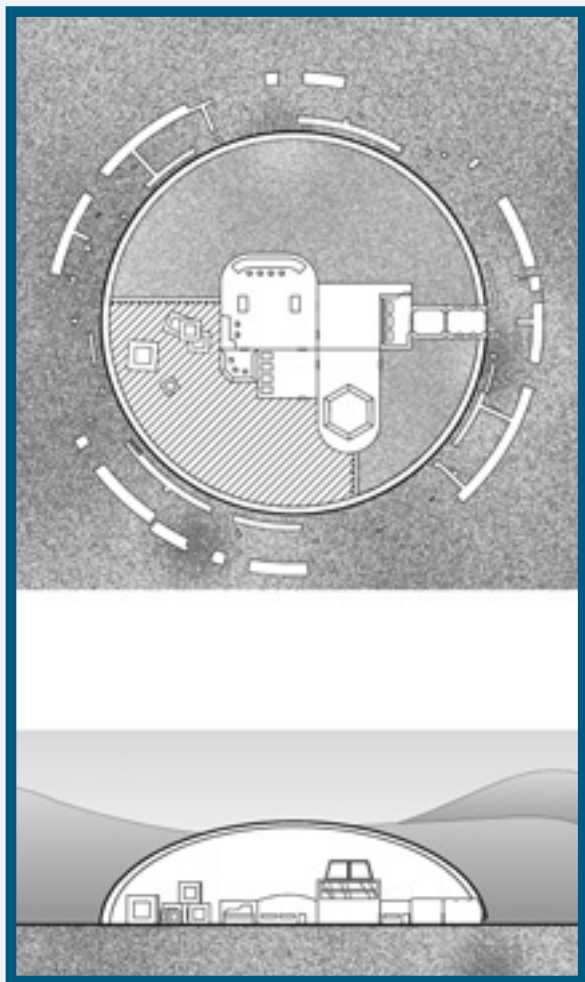
The fourth floor has a number of meeting rooms for rent. All can be resized from tiny to 'full floor' by means of sliding panels.

Above this is the residence spire. Each floor is the same – 15 rooms, each of which can be increased in size by the removal of a dividing partition and a column containing four lifts in the centre. There are 21 such floors, giving the hotel a maximum occupancy of 315 people plus 200 more in the sleeping tubes.

Abandoned Domes

Scattered across Mars are the corpses of colonies, domes that failed. Some never attracted enough colonists; some were inhabited by individuals who could not manage the dome machinery well enough to live; some fell to violence, either inter-dome rivalry in the earliest days of colonisation or riots and EarthGov attacks in the later years. Most are in a state of dispute as to proper ownership, preventing reclamation. Others are of no apparent value, located far from the main tube networks or in otherwise inhospitable regions.

Few of these domes are large. Many are domesteader domes, slowly falling apart in the dust. Occasionally scavengers sweep over these ruins for raw materials. Many domesteaders feel it is right to take necessary replacement parts from the abandoned dwellings of those who could not make it, legalities be damned, others are motivated by pure greed and strip out useful electronics and raw materials for resale.



Of more interest are the abandoned domes closer to the main places of habitation. Often these domes contain the remnants of buildings, offices, factories and more. Most have been stripped, but this process has often been done hastily, leaving behind occasional valuables. Most lack obvious wealth, but the tunnel rats have learned to make use of every part of the corpse of a dome, from the metal in the ventilation system to whatever wires and circuitry lie buried in the abandoned life support or airlock control systems. The space itself is often valuable – in a world where storage is a luxury, an abandoned dome offers simple emptiness. The price, of course, is risk. Abandoned domes are not de facto unsealed, but without maintenance they slowly break down. Air is often stale and thin. Countless pinprick leaks, areas where the sealant has peeled or the dome glass is chipped, pull the air from the dome. If general life support senses unusual air loss from a dome that is still connected to the tunnels and tubes, work teams are dispatched to close all known connections to the dome. Any tunnel rats in the dome when this is done may find

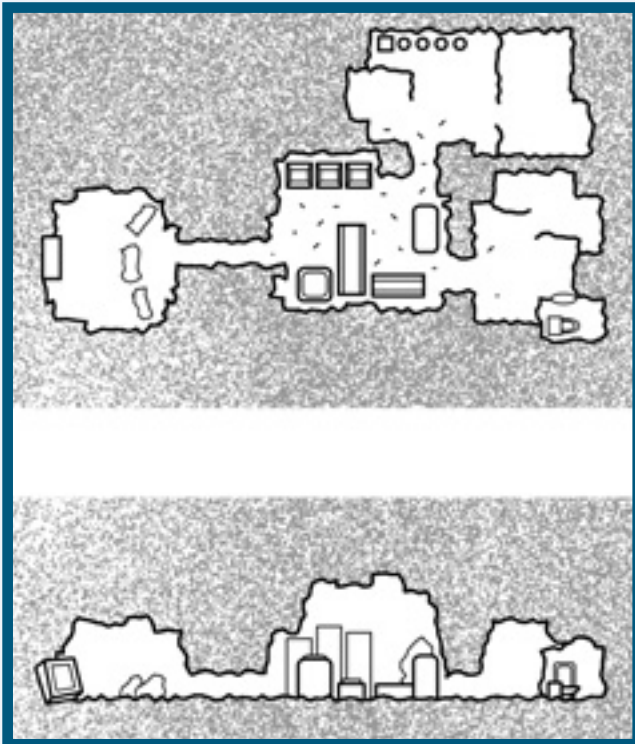
their routes back to safer areas cut off, leaving them to die from starvation or oxygen deprivation as the dome bleeds out the last of its air. Often, though, a ‘sealed’ dome is less secure than thought and hidden passages can still lead into it. Such expeditions require breath masks, of course.

Abandoned domes are also havens for the Resistance. It is a small matter to seal off one or two buildings in such a dome and put working life support gear in place. So long as energy signatures are kept low and the infrared is masked, it can be difficult to detect that an apparently ‘empty’ dome holds some life. Several Resistance safehouses can be found in such domes, which can lead to problems when tunnel rats stumble onto them. The assumption that any underdweller is a friend to the Resistance is risky and many are willing to sell information for money or just to have a bargaining chip if arrested.

The largest abandoned domes are no more than a half-mile in diameter and those are rare. Most are under 1,000 feet across. The underdome regions of abandoned domes are rarely finished – if they are, it is only in a few key areas. Most areas are unfinished or raw. Furthermore, with the power off even the finished areas lack regular heat and life support, though if they have not been stripped bare they can be reactivated relatively easily.

A small number of abandoned domes are better classed as ‘destroyed’ domes. Such places are exposed to the Martian environment and are very dangerous to explore. What remain of the structures are usually burned and weakened from the initial destruction, then partially eroded from the dust storms that sweep the plains. While scavenging opportunities sometimes exist, the dangers involved are great. Rarely, such ruins serve as shelter for those travelling the Martian wilderness. Any connections between destroyed domes and the tunnel network sealed if they are known. Some unmapped connections may exist, hidden behind makeshift tunnel rat airlocks (a series of sliding barricades which can serve to slow air leakage to unnoticeable levels).

Exploring an abandoned or destroyed dome should be eerie. Such domes are silent and still, places where life is not welcome. Odd relics of the prior habitation – an abandoned toy or a scrawled message on a wall – remind visitors this was once a place of life, not a mausoleum. Those used to the crowded spaces of



Mars may find the emptiness unnerving or intoxicating but it is unlikely they will be unmoved by it.

Shuttle Ports

Outside all of the major domes and most of the minor ones are complexes of flat low-lying buildings, storehouses and landing pads. These are the shuttle ports, links between Mars and the larger universe.

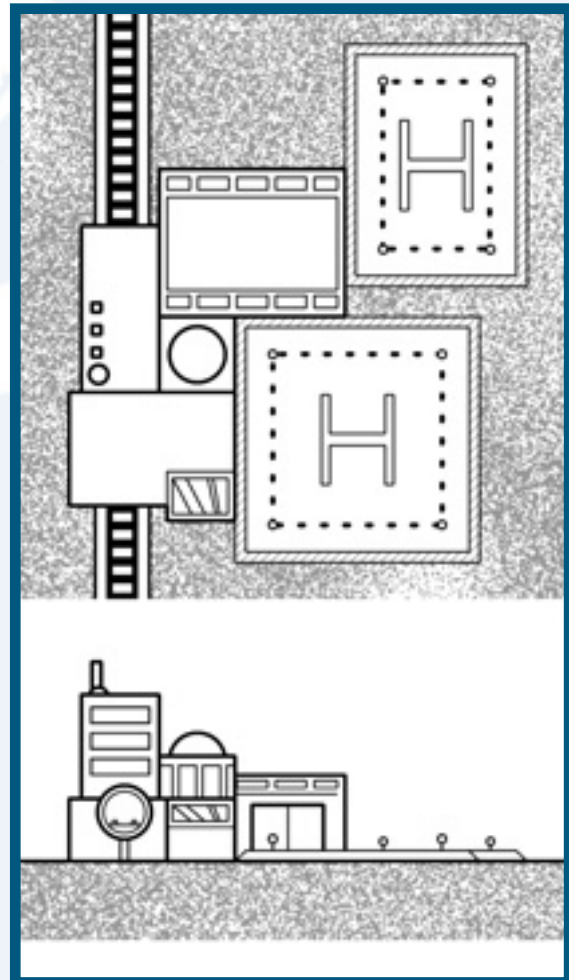
The domes, obviously, cannot admit shuttles. So a dome must either have an adjacent shuttle port or be, in essence, secondary – interplanetary traffic can only arrive via tube. Granted it is possible to land a craft on the surface near a dome, then suit up and hike to an airlock but this is generally done only in emergencies. For the purposes of general trade, no port equals no regular connections equals no outside trade.

Shuttle ports consist of a number of landing platforms (one or two for the smallest domes which sport a port, over 20 at MarsDome One and New Vegas) and several outbuildings. When a shuttle lands, a tube extends to hook up with the shuttle's airlock and passengers disembark. Connections to non-human shuttles are slightly more complex, involving attaching appropriate couplings, and take an extra half-hour to perform. Cargo, except for live animals in non-airtight

containers, is unloaded onto vehicles and driven to the main hangar.

The main hangar has much in common with a 21st century airport. It is linked to the dome via a number of tubes and, in many cases, contains direct tube links to other nearby domes. The interior of the port has waiting areas, overpriced food vendors, souvenir stands and so forth. Many of the larger ones have sleeping tube banks for those passengers whose connections are missed and who cannot or will not enter the dome to find a hotel. During some periods of the Shadow War, a fair number of Narn ended up 'trapped between worlds', virtually living in the MarsDome One and New Vegas shuttle ports.

The port interiors also contain security. A major terrorist attack on the shuttle ports could kill hundreds as well as crippling a dome's economy for months. The disembarkation tubes are lined with sensors and scanners. All luggage is scanned as it is unloaded from a shuttle and again when it enters the port. The



tube stations connecting the hangar to the dome proper are also filled with scanners. In the hangar itself armed security is omnipresent, as are security cameras. Still, no system is perfect. Free Mars has never destroyed a shuttle port but the MarsDome One port was seriously damaged in 2261 by a three-part bomb, each part smuggled in by a different person and the bomb assembled in an underground storeroom. Due to good fortune there were only injuries, not fatalities, but the revelation of vulnerability and the damage done to the cargo loading mechanism reduced the station's functionality by one-quarter for a month. A more powerful, better-placed device could easily keep a port offline for six months.

Parks and Recreation Areas

Humans need more than air, water and food. Psychological needs are as vital as physical ones, something sometimes forgotten by the number-crunching engineers who design habitation areas. Fortunately some spectacular disasters in the early days of prolonged spaceflight taught the planners to make room for the softer side of life. Mars has little room for frivolities but it makes room where it can, because the short-term cost of losing space for one more factory or apartment complex is far less than the long-term cost of a society slowly going mad.

Scattered through all the major domes are small set-aside areas where no development is permitted. These parklands are rare patches of open space in an often-cluttered world. Some are covered with luxurious but mostly false foliage, while others seek to create beauty from living vegetation that can thrive without much water – the cactus gardens of Mars are considered prime examples of this form of horticulture. In a few places cunning design runs water-recycling tubes directly through the soil, with the tubes made slightly porous so as to keep the soil moist while losing only a small portion of the flow, much of which is recaptured by condensers hidden in the flowerbeds. These patches of brilliant colour, a mix of rich greens and the brilliant hues of dozens of flowers, easily stand out against the rusty browns that dominate Martian cities.

Beyond mere aesthetics, though, the parks provide gathering places and recreational zones. Small court games – badminton, racquetball, handball, gar'klan and ashay-val – are preferred, although the much lower Martian gravity can mean that some of these sports are very different to their Earth counterparts. There

is no golfing, baseball or football on Mars. The use of embedded displays can reconfigure the lines of a field in an instant, so a single court area can be used for many games. Private clubs and public areas alike require advance notice to reserve such spaces.

Some common activities are not possible on Mars. The perennial outdoor 'sport' of barbeque, for example, is not possible when strict pollution controls mandate no open fires. Fireworks are forbidden for obvious reasons. Fishing does not exist outside of virtual reality simulations. The open spaces are generally too small for riding activities such as bicycling. On the other hand, the lack of both rainfall and insects means that picnics are commonplace, at least if space can be reserved.

Minor Domes

There are thousands of domes on Mars. Most are very small indeed – domesteader settlements or temporary domes set up in various places in the wilderness, existing to provide shelter or bases as needed for the military, Psi Corps, IPX or other corporations. There are others, however, which hold true communities ranging from a few dozen to a few thousand people. Many are known as little more than an identification number and not even the census bureau really knows them all.

Minor domes of more than a thousand people are always linked to the tube network unless they are far from the Hellas settlement areas, but smaller domes are often wholly isolated. About three-quarters of the domes with populations of 500 to 1,000 are linked up; about half of those with populations of 250 to 500 are and a quarter of those with populations of less than 250 are. Even among those that are linked, trains often run rarely, sometimes as infrequently as once a week. While there is no formal nomenclature, the terms in the table below are often used:

Term	Population
Small Dome	1,000 +
Minor Dome	500 to 999
Lesser Dome	250 to 499
Outpost	250 or less

Some have commented that the tube network is something like hyperspace. There are major routes with regular travel, minor routes with less frequent travel and restricted routes where travel occurs on an 'as needed' basis. For game purposes, tube travel times

can be determined abstractly as shown on the Tube Travel Times table below.

The above assumes that there are tube connections and that the domes are far apart. Obviously an outpost connected directly to a major dome can be reached quickly. This also assumes tube travel. In many cases air travel or direct driving is faster; use of the tubes to reach isolated domes is usually done for economic reasons. The clusters of supporting domes around a major dome can be reached easily, as well – for purposes of these rules, they are considered part of the major dome, with perhaps an additional half-hour of travel tacked on for transfer and waiting for a shuttle. That it can sometimes take longer to go from one distant outpost to another by tube than to fly to Centauri Prime and back has often been noted.

Specific Minor Domes

There are some 250 minor domes on Mars, not counting the domesteader enclaves. The majority are on Hellas, but there are other clusters of civilisation, especially on Argyre Planitia, which has some 25 small domes and is becoming a true centre of civilisation in its own right, developing a distinct cultural identity. The following can be considered representative of the diversity of dome culture on Mars.

Elysium Dome

Elysium Dome is located on Elysium Planitia, between the Viking Base and Elysium Mons. It was originally planted as the seed for a growing community of domes and still has several tubes radiating from it but these are unfinished spurs. The Elysium settlement never grew as planned but those who built the dome chose to remain there and the dome's economic life is now heavily tied to the military base to the north. This has created a distinct love - hate relationship with EarthForce. If EarthForce flees Mars, Elysium

Dome will die... but the side of EarthForce which the Elysites (as they call themselves) see is certainly not its best. The dome is used primarily for R&R and the soldiers who come through are not always on their best behaviour. Centuries ago, Rudyard Kipling noted that 'single men in barracks don't turn into plaster saints' and little has changed in the behaviour of off-duty soldiers since then, save perhaps that women are now just as prevalent as men in the mix.

This has caused something of a change in the layout of the dome. In most domes the dome-level society is the 'clean' side, the face the dome wishes to present to the world, and the seedy, disreputable or downright criminal can be found mostly in the tunnels. Elysium Dome's surface areas are an array of cheap hotels, brothels, casinos, bars and other enterprises pandering to baser instincts, while the normal day-to-day life of the dome is conducted below ground where the 1,000 or so residents mostly live and work. They resent the ways their dome has been usurped but also acknowledge that without that steady flow of EA credits Elysium Dome would be one of the uncounted abandoned domes that litter the surface of Mars.

The ease of gathering information from drunken soldiers makes Elysium Dome a major intelligence source for the Resistance and some have commented that Number One knows more about goings-on at Viking Base than the base commander does.

Quebecneuve

The Quebecneuve dome was founded in 2188 as a combination of voluntary and involuntary resettlement. A number of Quebecois still yearned for independence, even though that movement had long ago faded from the political mainstream. A side effect of the Centauri contact was the growth of what some called 'neo-isolationist' or 'cultural preservation' movements on Earth, from people who feared that the new

Tube Travel Times Table

From/To	Major	Small	Minor	Lesser	Outpost
Major	1d4 hours	1d6+1 hours	2d6 hours	3d6 hours	1 day
Small	1d6+1 hours	2d6 hours	3d6 hours	1day	1d2 days
Minor	2d6 hours	3d6 hours	1 day	1d2 days	1d2 days
Lesser	2d6 hours	3d6 hours	1 day	1d2 days	1d2 days
Outpost	3d6 hours	3d6 hours	1 day	1d2 days	1d4 days

understanding that Earth was one world in a galaxy filled with other species might cause the concept of 'human' culture to supersede the diverse individual cultures which composed the planet. This possibility turned out to be false over time but in the few decades following interstellar contact the idea had a strong hold. The Neo-Secessionist movement in Quebec was one outgrowth of this. By the mid-2180s this small but very vocal group was a

perennial thorn in the Canadian government's side and it decided to help solve the problem by funding a Mars colony where the culture of Quebec could be preserved as needed.

Most rejected this, correctly recognising that a Martian colony would be a new culture, not the preservation of an old one, but some felt this was the best compromise possible. Others, facing a variety of criminal charges stemming from their activism, were given the choice of Mars or prison. So it was that some 1,500 folk landed on Mars on June 24th, 2188 to found Quebecneuve Dôme.

The dome has since prospered. A steady stream of the disaffected from Earth and, of course, native-born children have swelled the population to nearly 10,000. The dome level is clean and the temperature inside the dome is synched with Earth temperature in Quebec – if it is cold in Quebec on Earth, it is cold in the Dôme, leading to the rather odd phenomenon of people bustling around a sealed environment in heavy clothes. Such winter garb is available for purchase or rent at inbound tube stations. All signs are in an archaic, 20th century version of French, rejecting many of the changes (or 'degradations') of the language that occurred due to increasing globalisation and the influx of words from foreign tongues. This gives many visitors a feeling of quaintness akin to seeing signs in Middle English or the like.

Despite this, Quebecneuve is a modern, fairly rich dome which is economically self-sustaining, with



local industries ranging from ore processing to food production. Cultural goods – art and music, for example – are also major exports, as Quebecneuve remains a primary source for works that hew closely to their traditional roots. The dome's inhabitants are almost all bilingual, speaking English and French, though they use an archaic form of the latter that might be hard for modern speakers to understand. French is a first language; English is taught in schools and used only when necessary.

The people are generally friendly to visitors but are loath to accept immigrants who do not share their cultural values.

Martian Institute of Technology

This dome holding some 5,000 students, staff and professors is the most prestigious technical and engineering university on Mars and shares more than its initials with the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Earth – it was founded by Earth's MIT and was, until fairly recently, a subsidiary school. It has become the most famous university on Mars, and one that attracts a fair number of the best and brightest from other worlds, including many non-humans, who find Mars a slightly more welcoming place than Earth.

The school is funded by student fees, grants, trusts and corporate donations. The ties between MIT and IPX, Edgars Industries and other Mars-based corporations are very tight and the line between pure science and



corporate R&D is extremely blurred, a fact which rightly disturbs many of the teaching staff.

The Resistance rarely actively recruits here; unlike most college campuses, this is not a hotbed of political activism. However, a fair number of skilled chemistry and engineering students who do have a political bent have lent their talents to improving some of the Resistance's tools of destruction and of course the anti-authoritarian 'hacker' mentality is alive and well, providing endless annoyance – and a few serious nightmares – for EarthGov.

Military Bases

EarthForce has a large presence on Mars for many reasons. It is close to Earth, close enough that troops and ships can reach Earth in a handful of hours. This prevents the EA from keeping all of the homeworld's defences in a single basket. The environment of Mars is similar to that of many other worlds in the galaxy and experience in conducting operations in such environments is vital. The political situation on Mars is such that having troops stationed around the planet is a good thing. The many scattered bases mean that EarthForce soldiers and officers often visit the main domes on leave or assignment, so there is always a uniformed military presence visible... even if it is just buying refreshments or looking for a night on the town.

Viking Base

The largest GROPOS base on Mars is Viking Base, located near Utopia Planitia, close to the northern pole. This frigid complex of small domes and scattered outbuildings is considered one of the harshest but most prestigious in-system assignments in EarthForce. While many spots on Mars are de facto punishment detail – places where the incompetent or politically inconvenient are assigned to serve out their careers

in boredom – Viking Base is where the elite Cold Desert units train, and where a great deal of military hardware scheduled for deployment in such environments gets its first field tests. In other words, the Vikings get to play with the newest toys first, and if there are often casualties as a result, well, it is part of the job. Some consider those who request assignment to this base to be slightly mad.

The Resistance would love to strike at Viking Base, as most of the troops there are Earthborn and the Viking Squadrons were responsible for some of the more vicious acts of reprisal and oppression during the 2258 and 2260 uprisings, but the distance and tight security makes this almost impossible. Elysium Dome, a small community of 1,500 or so that is the nearest civilian dome to the Viking Base, has a Resistance cell which is charged with gathering as much information as possible from visiting soldiers. See Elysium Dome under 'Minor Domes' for more information.

Viking Base holds 25,000 soldiers plus two full squadrons of Starfuries modified to perform optimally in the thin Martian atmosphere, as well as 30 heavy shuttles. There are no direct tube links connecting the base to other locations on Mars.

Fear and Terror – Phobos and Deimos

The twin moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, are barely more than specks in the Martian night sky, unlikely to inspire any future poets or give rise to great myths and legends. They are believed to be captured asteroids and are both irregular ovoids, not spheres. Both are, however, inhabited.

Deimos

Deimos, all of 11 miles long, is little more than a barren rock of unremarkable composition. It houses an EarthForce supply base and a small scientific outpost, giving it a total population of about 50 people, none of whom are stationed there permanently. Indeed, being posted to Deimos for more than six months is considered a sign that someone, somewhere, has been deeply offended by your presence in the galaxy.

Deimos Lab

Some have wondered precisely how much science the Deimos base can be doing. After a century, almost anything that can be learned about Mars from orbital observation has been learned and the other uses of the Deimos facility – low-gravity manufacturing and biological research – can all be performed more efficiently somewhere else. Deimos Lab's equipment is reputed to be old and the scientific staff there third-rate at best. Most assume the base is a bit of EarthGov pork, a small bonus for a Senator's home country or a bit of corporate welfare for IPX or Edgars.

In truth, Deimos Lab is an example of hiding in plain sight. The scientists there are experts in their fields but they are posted there under false names, names with created and decidedly third-rate biographies. The primary focus on Deimos is the study of organic technology, especially biological weapons, with Deimos being considered a safe place in the event of a containment breakdown. Shuttles from the IPX headquarters on Mars make regular trips to the base, ostensibly to rotate out staff serving on this punishment detail but in fact the same people usually work on Deimos for years at a time with IPX filing false change-of-personnel forms. This bit of subterfuge is not known to the EarthForce overseers who back most of IPX's black projects; Deimos Lab is a secret within a secret, a place where IPX studies what it does not want even EarthForce to know about.

Near Mars Supply One

Sometimes called NMS-1 by the staff and more often the scatological Enema 1, this small EarthForce base with a staff of 40 does not hold any dark secrets, hidden agendas or surprises. What it does hold is fuel, rations, spare parts and other emergency supplies and two shuttles. It exists to provide a secondary backup to the orbital stations that provide most of the support for the Mars fleet and also to get emergency aid planetside if local bases are unable to comply. It is almost entirely unnecessary and if it gets one genuine call a month, the soldiers stationed there are likely to throw a party in celebration. Some fleet officers put in there for minor requisitions out of pity; such 'mercy stops' are acknowledged for what they are but received gratefully nonetheless. The crew of NMS-1 are so fantastically bored that they are likely to bend regulations just to get some visitors; this can be helpful to Player Characters looking for a place to dock in an emergency.

Phobos

Phobos is both larger and more heavily populated than Deimos but the bulk of the inhabitants would probably prefer the endless tedium of the smaller moon to what they face on Phobos. The small moon is home to the Phobos Outpost, the most secure maximum-security prison within the Sol system. The 500-odd prisoners housed here represent those EarthGov considers the most dangerous who do not merit the fate of death of personality. It is sometimes suspected that many prisoners here were given the 'lesser' sentence of long-term incarceration because it is seen as harsher than the death of personality, which many judges and jurists consider too lenient.

The prison complex consists of three domes. The primary one housing the prison complex itself, a secondary dome holding guard barracks and the warden's residence and a tertiary dome housing the communications centre. Each dome is connected via a single incoming and outgoing corridor.

The inter-dome transit corridors are extremely secure. Each has security bulkheads (DR 40 with 60 hit points) placed every 20 feet that slam shut if an alarm is sounded. Entry into the corridor is via an airlock-like mechanism. DNA and retinal scans are needed to enter the first door. Once inside, further scans establish the number of biosigns. Then a second set of scans is needed to get through the second door and

all those present in the room must pass these checks. Failure results in an alarm sounding and the airlock being flooded with knockout gas (Fortitude save at DC 22, primary damage unconsciousness for 1d6 hours, secondary damage unconsciousness for 1d6 hours). This system prevents a guard being forced to open the door or a second person slipping in after the first has entered. The inner door will not activate so long as the outer door is open. In addition to sensors in the doorframe that determine if the door is closed, there are optical scanners which simply *look* at the door – thus voiding attempts to hack the door circuitry to make the door think it is closed.

Sensor units within the complex are mostly self-contained and accept no input from outside. This makes it difficult to hack them and force them to send false data; physical access to each camera and scanner is required. Information from each sensor is broadcast to several redundant processing systems, all of which continually poll each other for consistency. Inconsistency in sensor reports triggers an alert state. For example, two sensors are trained on a room. One reports two biosigns; the other only one. This is a sign of a potential attack on system integrity and the region goes into lockdown while guards are dispatched to check it out and a full diagnostic is run on the sensors themselves. Only several simultaneous attacks could succeed in getting a false data stream to be accepted by the controlling systems, and the difficulty of this is astounding. In game terms, at least four individuals would need physical access to the sensor systems of a cellblock, and each would need to make a Technical (electronics) check (DC 30) within the space of thirty seconds to fool the redundant systems. A single failure will trigger an alarm. It is frankly easier to perform a commando raid on the Outpost than to try to sneak in via electronic trickery.

Shuttle Pad

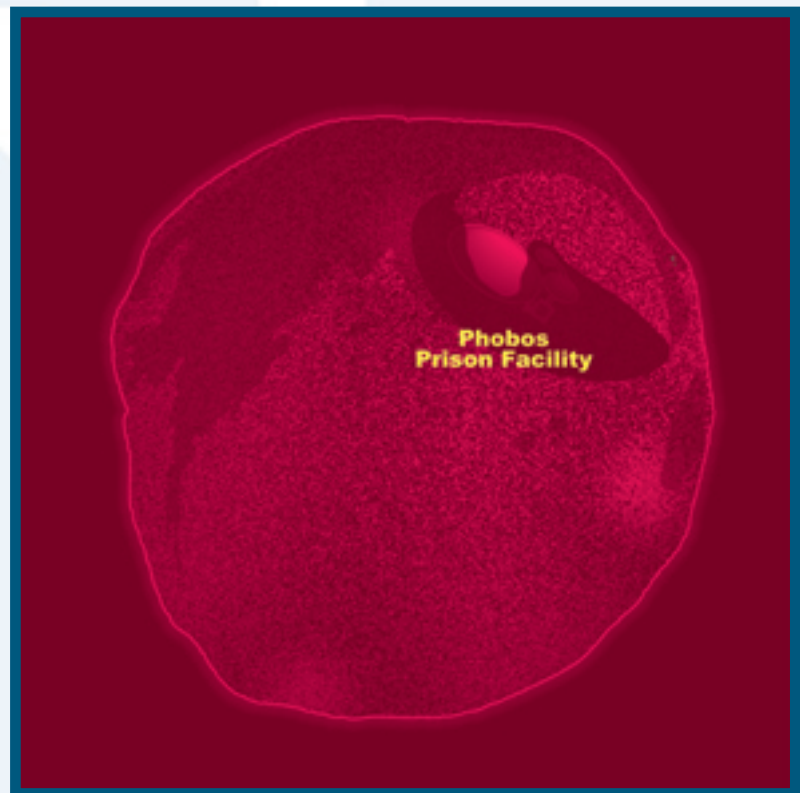
The weekly supply shuttle is fully automated and carries no passengers. If biosigns are detected when the shuttle lands, guards are dispatched to board and search the shuttle and all entries and exits to the other domes go into lockdown mode. In addition, a 'Standby Alert' beacon is sent to all nearby EarthForce craft in case more troops are needed. Once the shuttle

is cleared, grapplers attach to keep it from launching again without clearance; these are not released until all scans show the shuttle to be clear of life. Weight is also carefully monitored; the exact return weight expected is entered when the shuttle is launched and any variance of more than 1% triggers an alert. Such a small variance could indicate a bomb somehow planted on the shuttle, or supplies/equipment removed from the shuttle that could be used to make tools or weapons.

There are no vehicles stored on base. In the event of a critical emergency, such as a power plant overload, which requires immediate evacuation... the inhabitants, guard and prisoner alike, are unlikely to survive. This is noted in employment contracts and is a factor in the extreme hazard pay offered to workers at the facility. At best, the prison can be evacuated in four hours if no security protocols are implemented (just herd prisoners onto shuttles as fast as possible) and 12 hours if standard protocols (full weapon scan, restraints on prisoners and so on) are performed.

Life on Phobos Outpost

Bleak. Whereas most prisons have a miasma of filth, Phobos sparkles. It is shiny, high-tech and sterile, an utterly soulless environment. Everything is made of very strong but somewhat soft plastic – furnishings





The Resistance and the Outpost

To some extent the extreme security measures are almost for show, a way to set up Phobos Outpost as a standing threat to keep prisoners in countless other facilities in line. Because only the once-per-week supply shuttle and the one-per-month guard transfer shuttle offer any hope of escaping the planetoid, any escape attempt other than during those narrow windows would be foolish. However, some

cannot be smashed to form shards with an edge and the plastics used are too light to make weapons. Almost all metal is banned; prisoners who need to shave, for example, are given depilatory creams. Most prisoners are kept in solitary confinement. Every area of the prison is under constant surveillance, including restrooms and other such facilities. There is no privacy. Conversations are monitored as well and AI systems constantly scan the chatter for indications of escape plans or any other criminal activity. All media are heavily censored. All packages are searched and many seemingly innocuous items are confiscated without explanation. Some suspect the guards, many of whom are bored and resentful, simply swipe anything they want for themselves – they have very broad discretion as to what constitutes ‘forbidden’ material, and often exploit this for their own benefit.

Every aspect of life is regulated. Sleep times are not merely hours when prisoners are required to be in their bunks – sleep itself is enforced via the use of subsonic vibrations and the state of slumber is monitored as well lest any prisoner somehow block the sleep-inducers. Meals, recreation periods and such all follow strict guidelines. Unscheduled events – such as personal illness – are generally treated as maximum-security situations, as there is fear that any such disruption could be used to the prisoners’ advantage. There are, of course, no visitors. Prisoners get 15 minutes of comm screen time per day and all calls are monitored and recorded.

Resistance members have contemplated hijacking a normal shuttle and flying it to the Outpost, allowing an unscheduled mass exodus. This would need to be coordinated with an effective internal uprising and such co-ordination is almost impossible, as is staging such an uprising in the first place.

Other possibilities discussed but not implemented include taking over the guard transfer shuttle but doing so would require overriding a half-dozen or more biological scanners designed to verify that only those who are supposed to be on the shuttle are present. The number of redundant sensors and discrepancy checkers make such fakery effectively impossible.

The one small coup the Resistance has managed has been to sneak two Free Mars loyalists into the guard ranks – not as ringers but as actual guards assigned to the station, one of the advantages of having ‘plants’ inside any of the EarthForce bureaucracies that employ Martians. Duty on Phobos Outpost is hard and if a lousy job can be given to a Martian rather than an Earther, it is. The majority of the outpost guards are in fact Mars-born and the two undercover agents are sounding out the possibility of recruiting more members, raising the possibility of an uprising led by the guards, not the prisoners.

Vehicles and Equipment

Humans do not adapt to their environments; humans adapt their tools to their environments. This is as true on Mars as elsewhere. From the tracked crawlers that haul goods across the rocky plains to the improvised gadgets of the tunnel rats, this section covers the tools, vehicles and equipment used on Mars. These items can often be used in other places – the lurkers of Downbelow, for example, have many of the same problems as the tunnel rats and have found many of the same solutions and the vehicles used on Mars are found on many similar worlds.

Ground Vehicles

The dusty, cold and thin-aired conditions on Mars impose some challenges for vehicles, especially ground vehicles. There are no roads except for a few leading from major domes to nearby outbuildings. All other transit is purely ‘off road’ and long-distance ground travel can involve crossing a variety of dangerous terrain. Land vehicles designed for Earth or similar colony worlds fail quickly on Mars. Some require far more oxygen in the air than Mars can provide, while others rapidly fall prey to the omnipresent grit and still others find the sub-freezing temperatures cause delicate machinery to crack or break. Any vehicle not ‘Mars Certified’ is worse than useless – it is life threatening, as a driver or passenger who trusts it may find himself stranded hundreds of miles from a dome. Due to the ongoing terraforming of Mars, the thin air contains much more oxygen than it did when the 20th and 21st century probes landed on the planet. As a consequence, modern vehicles usually include filters/compressors that can provide breathable air to the vehicle’s occupants for as long as there is power – there is no need to carry oxygen tanks. Obviously this does not work if the vehicle is in a confined space; in such cases the Games Master should

judge how long the air would last if the area was filled with normal air and then quarter it, as it takes a lot of the thin Martian air to produce an atmosphere that can sustain a human being.

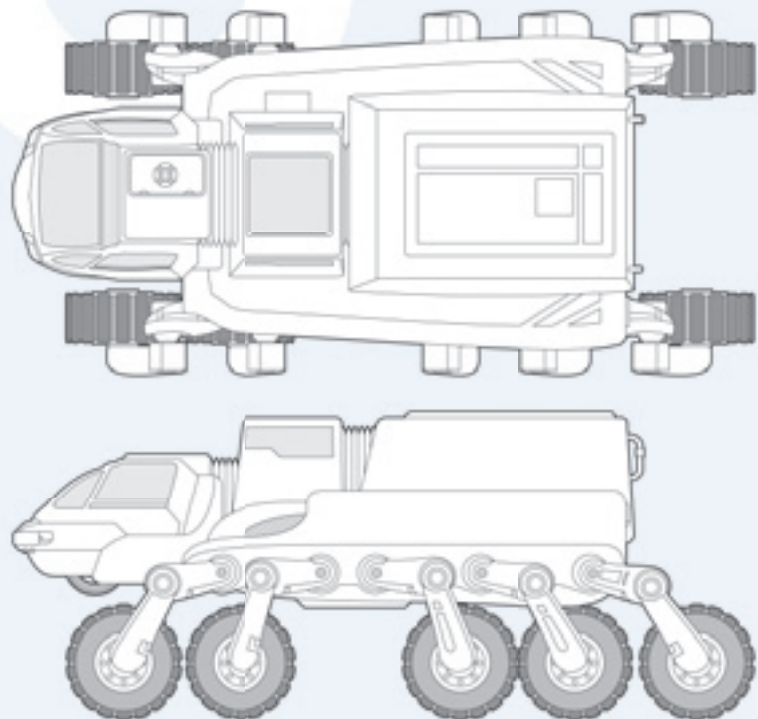
Mars Certified

Any Earth Alliance ground vehicle that does not use an oxygen-burning engine (which is effectively all of them by the 2200s) can be Mars Certified. This adds 5% to the cost of the vehicle and reduces the ground speed by 2 and acceleration by 1 due to the added weight of new components and modifications to the engine. The process takes one day for Small vehicles, 1d4 days for Medium vehicles and 1d4 + 2 days for larger ground vehicles.

Long Hauler

Gargantuan Surface Vehicle; hp 60; DC 6 (-4 size, +0 agility); DR 8; Spd 14; Acc 2; Dec 6; Han +3; Sensor +0; Stealth 0; Cargo 20 tons; 1 driver, 3 passengers

If the covered wagon symbolises the Western expansion of the United States, the Long Hauler symbolises the domesteader community of Mars. These rugged, tough, slow-moving vehicles can



cross almost any terrain and run nearly indefinitely if given a modicum of care and support. They are not cheap but the investment is worth it, as they are reliable and designed explicitly for the Martian environment.

A Long Hauler consists of a cab, a small sealed living area and a large cargo trailer. Each of the three component units is connected to the others by a short flexible tube, tall enough to walk through. The vehicle is treaded, with each unit having its own set of treads as well as its own generator. All of the treads are powered, giving it excellent performance even on very rugged terrain. The units are also capable of being sealed off from the rest of the vehicle and each holds a self-contained life support system as well as an emergency beacon.

The cab holds four people, two in front seats and two in the back. Only a single driver is needed. The vehicle has a decent autopilot and, when supplied with up-to-date mapping data from the countless satellites, can more-or-less drive itself, though it can only go at three-quarters speed when doing so. The cab is DR 8 with 40 hit points, and can provide air and heat for as long as the power holds out provided the seals are not broken. If the cab takes more than five points of damage it can be assumed to have been breached. An emergency supply of food and water can sustain four people for two days.

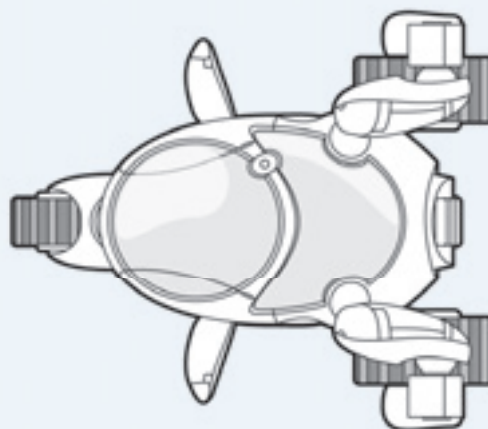
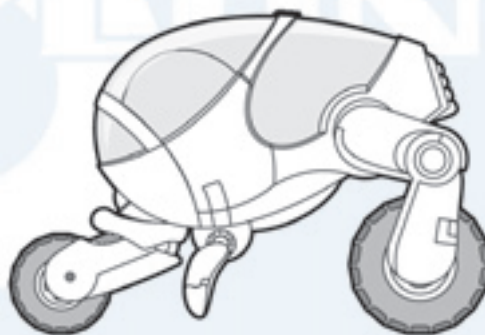
The living area contains two small bunk beds, a food storage unit capable of holding four cubic feet of food and a water recycling system that can support four people for a week, or indefinitely if at the polar regions (where it can refresh itself via ambient liquid). There is also a standard comm unit. A small number of Martians have taken to moving to the permafrost regions and living in their long haulers permanently – this is a cramped and Spartan life but a cheap one. So long as the fusion plant holds out and the equipment is kept in order, air, heat and water are basically free – food is the only ongoing expense and this problem can usually be solved by bartering labour with isolated lesser domes. A small set of controls is also present – in an emergency the living area can move on its own, albeit slowly.

The trailer contains 3,000 cubic feet of storage and can haul up to 20 tons. It contains the same air and heat recyclers as the cab and living area but it usually has no food or water. However, many travellers toss a few days' supply in along with their other goods and gear, just in case.

Dust Buggy

Large Surface Vehicle; hp 25; DV 13 (-1 size, +4 agility); DR 4; Spd 18; Acc 4; Dec 4; Han +8; Sensor +2; Stealth 4; Cargo 250 lbs; 1 driver, 1 passenger

The dust buggy is a standard vehicle used by dome dwellers for their outside expeditions. Those who rarely go outside simply rent them from countless stalls in the outer rim areas of the larger domes; those with regular business on the dunes purchase them and store them in garages located just outside the dome, usually near the shuttle port. Dust buggies are short-range electric vehicles which are designed for trips of a few hours, a full day at most, and have no survival features besides good atmospheric seals, heat and air compressors.



A dust buggy is three-wheeled ovoid with wide tires that contain adaptive materials to maintain stability on the rocky ground. A typical dust buggy holds the driver and a single passenger along with six cubic feet of cargo; larger models can hold four or six people and up to 20 cubic feet. It can run 12 hours on a standard charge. A second battery occupying one cubic foot of storage can be carried for longer journeys.

Mole

Huge Surface Vehicle; hp 35; DV 8 (-2 size, +0 agility); DR 12; Spd 2; Acc 1; Dec 1; Han +2; Sensor +6; Stealth 0; Cargo 150 lbs; 1 driver

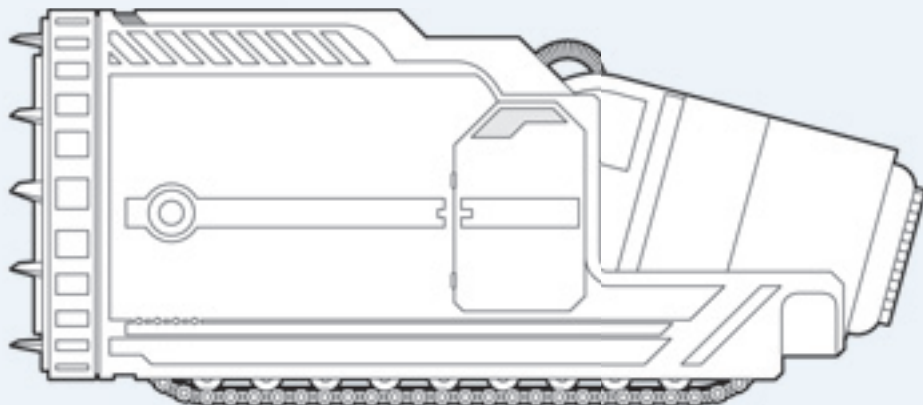
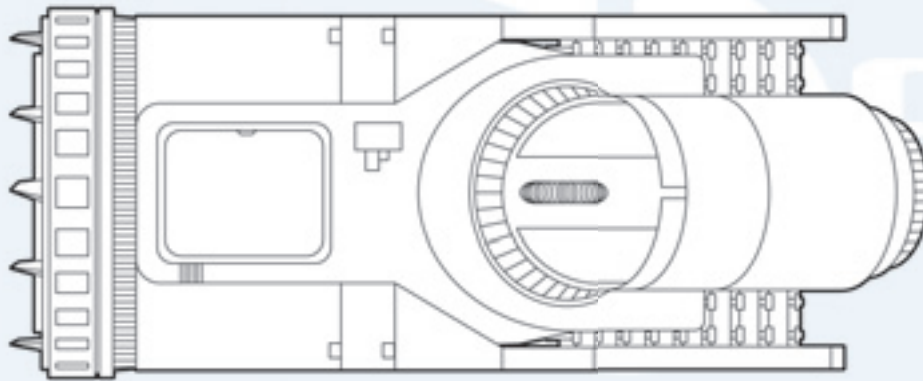
Mars is a world of tunnels... and tunnels must be excavated. The Mole, as the name implies, is an automated digging machine, which a moderately skilled pilot can use to excavate a fairly large tunnel

in a relatively short time. The device uses high-temperature plasma fields to fuse the ground behind it, creating a solid tunnel lining which will hold until true bracing and supports are added; in some cases this lining is all there is. In ideal conditions the mole can dig out over a mile of tunnels per day, though this requires several additional teams of workers and equipment to haul away the excavated material.

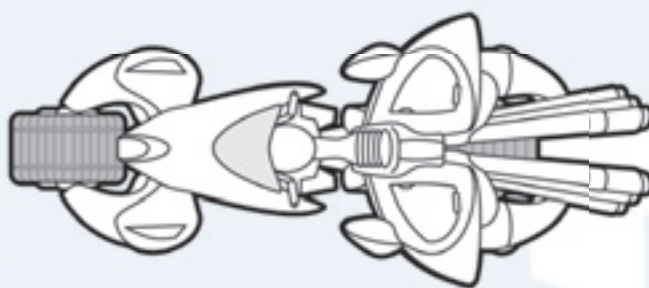
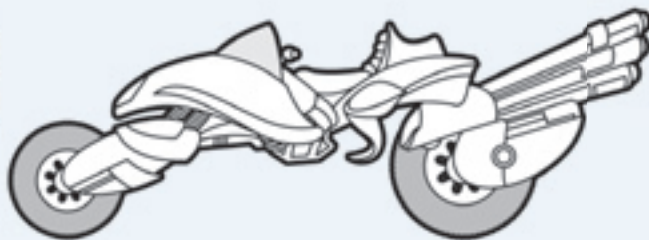
Many moles in various states of disrepair have been seized by tunnel rats that keep them working via ingenious cannibalisation. These 'rogue moles', as they are sometimes called, are responsible for the majority of 'undocumented interconnections' which riddle Hellas and which allegedly stretch into many presumably cut-off regions of the planet.

Rock Cycle

Medium Surface Vehicle; hp 13; DC 16 (+0 size, +6 agility); DR 3; SPD 28; Acc 7; Dec 5; Han +4; Sensor +0; Stealth 12; Cargo 20 lbs; 1 Driver



Many races have commented that humans have unusual relationships with their vehicles and often state this in such a way as to imply that the relationship is not entirely platonic. Of all the known sentient races, only the Cascor share humanity's affection for their devices of transportation, although some members of the Minbari warrior caste come close. For all other races, vehicles exist in functional roles, machines to be used as needed. For humans, vehicles can become ends in themselves



symbolising many virtues but especially power and independence.

The rock cycle is a Martian manifestation of this human drive. Rock cycles started appearing as cobbled-together devices early in the 22nd century using a variety of vehicle parts. The general design was roughly standardised by 2220 but there was no commercial manufacture of finished machines until 2230. Even today many purists feel that a cycle not built from scratch is not a true cycle (though the majority of even that hard core has the work done by skilled engineers). In general design, the rock cycle resembles a 20th century motorcycle crossed with a 20th century army tank. It has two treads set in a straight line, mimicking normal wheels. The chassis of the vehicle is sealed to prevent dust from jamming the works. The driver sits in a saddle atop the vehicle. Beyond that, designs are often customised, with everything from rocket boosters (sometimes taken from discarded Starfury secondary navigational thrusters) to holographic emitters designed to project glowing trails of fire or ice being typical additions.

The vehicles have little or no transport utility. They are built for speed, not endurance, and are intended to be raced up and down the hills and valleys of Mars performing spectacular stunts that only the low gravity permits. Those who own and operate them like to consider themselves outlaws and rebels but few break the law in any way more serious than drunken brawling and minor drug dealing. The Resistance generally has little overlap with the cyclers, despite clumsy EarthGov propaganda to the contrary.

Equipment

Personal Map Box

Mars is not an easy place to get around. The domes are densely packed with buildings and since most major domes grew by accretion rather than design, the internal layout of sub-areas is often maze-like. Below the dome proper it is even worse, an insane three-dimensional maze of tunnels and passages. Outside the domes there are no roads, just endless rocky or sandy expanses broken by the occasional outpost or mini-dome. In wilderness areas such landmarks can be days apart.

This is why most Martians, from a young age, never go anywhere outside their own well-known territories without a map box, a small device which taps into dozens of public information feeds to provide a constant up-to-date map of the local area. It shows tunnels recently opened or blocked off, provides clear directions through the labyrinth of older city blocks, and can guide a dust buggy between two domes along routes optimised for either speed or safety. It stores thousand of favourite locations (for game purposes, the number is effectively unlimited) and usually serves as a personal organiser as well.

Cost: 100 cr; Weight 1/4 lb.

Campaigning

This section discusses several Mars-centred campaign possibilities, with some notes on plot possibilities and the challenges, rewards and options for the campaign. The character-related possibilities for each of these campaigns are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, Characters; this section is primarily intended for the Games Master.

The Resistance

To some extent, the concept of playing in the Resistance is central to this book and thus much of the information required for this is covered elsewhere, especially in Chapter 5, which includes rules for abstracting the running of a Resistance cell by Player Characters. This section, then, simply summarises some key points.

A Resistance campaign offers players a chance to play the underdog rebels fighting an oppressive government, a classic theme in literature, movies and television programs. It also offers the chance to wrestle with serious issues of morality, justice and ethics, issues that have become increasingly relevant in the modern world in this very context. Scenario possibilities for a Resistance campaign include:

The Takedown: A major figure in EarthGov – General Franklin, one of the most famous ‘talking heads’ for the new ISN, possibly even Clark himself – is coming to Mars on a propaganda mission. The Player Characters realise this is a chance to strike a major blow and set up plans for an assassination. Complications include finding out the full details of the target’s schedule, overcoming the security surrounding him and internal dissent as some of the Resistance might oppose this particular move at this particular time. Additionally, from a Games Master’s perspective, if canonicity is to be preserved, either the assassination must be rigged to fail or the target must be someone not known to have survived past this point in time.

The New Recruit: Someone with inside information on EarthGov has turned traitor! He may be a fugitive on the run or he may still have his apparent position but is willing to work as a double agent. Certainly it *could* be a trick or a trap – indeed, it most likely is – but the potential gain is just too great. The Player Characters are asked to do what they have to do to verify the would-be turncoat’s bona fides.

The Traitor: The opposite of the above – someone deep in the Resistance, ideally someone the Player Characters know well and like, has switched sides, revealing a lot of vital information. He is being spirited off-Mars in a day and is being held in a secret location until then. The Player Characters must find him and confront him. If there is any chance he was forced to act against his will, it is a rescue mission, otherwise this is an assassination, a warning to others whose loyalty may waver. This scenario offers a lot of roleplaying opportunities. It can also be the case that a *Player Character* is the traitor...one of the key tenets of *Babylon 5* is that ‘No one here is exactly what he appears’ and this could be either something planned early on or an agreement between player and Games Master.

The Counter-Resistance

Most of this book assumes a Resistance-centric campaign. However, it is certainly possible to play the other side – to play loyal citizens of the Earth Alliance fighting to protect Mars from the terrorist threat, to put down the secessionists who wish to fragment the Alliance and protect Mars from itself.

Just as the Resistance draws from all social strata and professional backgrounds, so too do the forces opposed to it. Many are directly employed by EarthGov – as EarthForce soldiers and officers, as intelligence operatives or as cops. Others are independents, often working with EarthForce in advisory capacities, lending their special skills to the task. One key difference between the Resistance and the opposition is that those who uphold the rule of EarthGov will, almost by definition, be reticent to act as wholly independent agents. While anyone can declare himself to be part of the Resistance and start striking back, the other side is at least theoretically bound by the law.

One model for such a campaign is the elite team of experts, a concept familiar to any fan of genre television. Such a group would consist of individuals from several backgrounds, called together to battle terrorism, often working outside the formal command structure and sometimes outside the law. ‘If you are captured, President Clark will deny any knowledge of your existence...’ This offers a lot of potential. Characters can have very different motivations, leading to conflict – civilian versus military, ‘the ends justify the means’ versus ‘by the book’ and of course the token

alien (Drazi work well here) to offer wry insights on humanity or just to hit things.

The moral issues in such a campaign can be ignored, with Free Mars portrayed as nothing but comic-book bad guys but this negates a lot of the potential. The anti-terrorist Player Characters see themselves as heroes; so do the people they are fighting. It is easy to justify rounding up a bunch of masked thugs with guns who are planting a bomb in an orphanage – but what happens when the ‘terrorist threat’ is a bunch of 14-year-olds whose careless boasting got them noticed by Nightwatch? Or an esteemed journalist who had the audacity to publish a harsh – but true – investigation into EarthGov malfeasance with funds slated for Martian development? Or a man whose motive for planting a bomb at a police station was that his wholly innocent sibling died there while being ‘questioned’ for alleged Free Mars activities? All of the moral issues raised in the discussion of the Resistance can come up from the other side in a counter-resistance campaign. Some possible counter terrorist scenarios include:

The Mad Bomber: A classic of the genre; while it should not be overused, any game in this style should probably use it once. Someone has planted a bomb somewhere and has dropped cryptic hints as to where it is. The Player Characters must locate and then disarm the bomb. For maximum effect, the location should be somewhere especially dramatic – a school, tourist hotel or other ‘innocents are at risk!’ setting. To truly model this clichéd-but-fun scenario, a Non-Player Character strongly linked to one of the Player Characters (a spouse, child, close friend or parent) should be present at the location.

My Brother, My Enemy: Another classic but one with more true roleplaying potential. The leader of a new and activist Resistance faction turns out to be a sibling, former lover or other close associate of one of the Player Characters, ideally one who is the most gung-ho and least conflicted of the group. Many of the issues raised in the Civil War arc of the *Babylon 5* series can come into play here – what happens when the enemy is not a faceless stranger but someone you know and care about?

Deep Cover: One or more of the Player Characters is assigned to infiltrate a Resistance faction. Doing so is very risky – if the truth is known, the character will almost certainly be tortured, interrogated and killed.

There are other risks too – spending time with the terrorists might make the character stop seeing them as insane madmen and start seeing them as human beings fighting for a cause they believe in. This does not mean the character will switch sides and agree with them but it can add some depth and nuance.

Ends and Means: Something bad – the release of a bioweapon, the detonation of a nuclear device inside a dome – is about to happen and the Player Characters have their hands on someone who knows what, when and where... but he is not talking. Telepathic scans show his brain is trapped – a deep scan will trigger a cascade that will wipe his mind before killing him. Old-fashioned ‘persuasion’ may be necessary. How many lives is one’s own sense of ethics and conscience worth? What will a character do in the name of serving the greater good?

The Martian Mafia

If a game with few moral issues is desired, then this concept can work. The Player Characters are the bad guys, period. They steal, bully and murder, not because they are hoping to liberate a world or stop a terrorist threat but because there is money in it. The model for this style of campaign is every organised crime movie or book ever made, from *The Godfather* to *The Sopranos*. The best which can be hoped for in terms of morality is that the Player Characters cling to some form of honour among thieves while their enemies do not.

An appeal of this style of game is the chance to play the bad guys without the complex overtones of a Resistance/Counter-Resistance style of game and furthermore it provides a framework within which criminal characters can still plausibly work together and trust one another... to some extent. The sudden betrayal is a hallmark of this genre, after all. A chance to indulge in the dark side after years of saving the world or the galaxy can be appealing to some players. There is also a great deal of freedom in such campaigns, as the characters are not tied down to EarthGov or some other authority but have a great deal of leeway in taking initiative. Usually.

Drawbacks to this campaign are many and should be considered before beginning it. Games of this type can sometimes result in a ‘race to the bottom’ as the characters seek to out-do their last crime. Such a

tendency can result in bringing out aspects of someone's personality best left hidden. In addition, the characters tend to be much more proactive than reactive, as in the Resistance campaign, putting the Games Master in the role of designing scenarios in response to Player Character actions rather than setting up scenarios for them to respond to. This can be a challenge and requires a great deal of improvisational skill. One way to counter this is to place the characters not as the leaders of their own gang but as loyal lieutenants and henchmen to a powerful crime lord. He sets their agenda – they follow, or else! Individual characters may still take actions of their own, often risking the wrath of the boss, but there is still a somewhat structured framework. Typical plots include:

The Initiation: This is a good way to begin a campaign. The Player Characters have earned a modicum of respect from the capo and he is almost ready to bring them fully into the organisation. However, there is a little business he would like them to take care of first. This will be a trial by (PPG) fire for the characters, putting them into direct conflict with the law, a rival gang or both and likely setting up plot threads for the rest of the campaign. Ideally it will give the characters some sense of trust in each other and their respective skills as well.

The Payback: Some dirty rat just offed the boss's brother and now he has to pay! The Player Characters are told to find the scum that did this and make him suffer. However, when they track the weasel to his hole they find he has an airtight alibi. The easy thing to do is kill him anyway, since that is what the boss wants done... but if he really is innocent, this will mean the true killer got away with it and is off somewhere laughing at them.

The Big Heist: The Imperial Palace casino in New Vegas is supposed to be getting a collection of rare Centauri artefacts worth about 20 million credits to show for a month on display, apparently as part of a deal made when a Centauri noble there for a lark was drawn to the high-stakes tables and lost badly. The Player Characters are told by their boss to *protect* the exhibit at all costs. The Palace pays its protection on time and has always shown more than the proper respect. If something bad happens there it makes the capo look bad and if the capo looks bad... someone will be found fertilising the agrodome. Apparently some Narn are hoping for a little payback on their own and they have a

mix of Thenta Makur and human tech experts working with them to bypass security and pull off the heist of the millennium. The Player Characters have to stop them without alerting the authorities or letting anyone know how at-risk the artefacts are.

Tunnel Rats

This is a campaign about survival at the bottom. The characters are the scavengers, spies and survivalists of Mars, the dwellers in the deep undercities. Living by their wits and off the books, they rely on their friends and their skills to stay alive. From time to time they venture out of the tunnels, up to the bright lights and glistening technology above but their real homes are below.

This type of campaign appeals to those who like to play lower-powered characters, or who prefer to focus on personal survival, not galactic events. The relatively limited scope of such a campaign can be problematic for Games Masters; the campaign will rely heavily on detailed Non-Player Character interaction rather than on exotic places and endless action. Much of the focus will be on the personal journeys of the Player Characters, especially those who were not born to the underdome society. The story of fall and (possible) redemption is a powerful one but it requires skill and patience to play out. Typical plots include:

The Hunters: EarthForce troopers, accompanied by Bloodhounds, have infiltrated the deep tunnels, something they rarely do... usually once someone has buried himself deeply enough, EarthGov writes him off. This time, though, they will not let him get away. The hunters are using a typical carrot-and-stick approach to getting information from the underdwellers, bribing those who seem amenable and threatening those who are not. The overarching promise, though, is simple; give us the man we want and we will leave you alone. The Player Characters are in a position to turn him in... or to make sure he escapes.

Trapped: During an expedition to an abandoned dome, something goes wrong. A mining operation nearby triggers a collapse of the ancient and unsupported tunnels leading to the dome, and the way back is sealed. The dome above is holed through and cannot sustain air; only in the partially closed tunnels is there a breathable atmosphere but it will not last long. The Player Characters and a fair number of Non-Player

Characters must find a way to survive – to tunnel out, improvise longer-term shelter or somehow make a trek across the surface to a tube station or a functioning dome.

A Second Chance: Many of the Player Characters in a Tunnel Rat campaign will be those who have fallen from positions of power - someone who is like Mr Garibaldi but who could not control his drinking, for example, or EarthForce officers drummed out of the service for reasons true or false. In this scenario, one such character is given a chance to return. He is found by someone with power and influence and offered redemption – all charges cleared, reinstatement at an old job or reconciliation with a lover or child – but at a price. The character is asked to commit some act of betrayal - turn in a friend, reveal a confidence or give false testimony at a trial. Failure to do this can mean the loss of any hope of returning to the life he once knew.

Integration with the Series

While *Free Mars* can be used to run a Martian campaign at any time, it is likely that the main focus of a Mars campaign will be during the five-year arc of the *Babylon 5* TV series. This allows for ‘special guest appearances’ by characters from the series, helping make a Mars campaign seem much more a real part of the *Babylon 5* universe. Following are some suggestions for bringing in the major characters from the series.

Jeffrey Sinclair

Sinclair is Mars-born and would likely be a ‘favourite son’ were it not for his absolute loyalty to EarthForce, including his participation in the suppression of the Food Riots and his general unwillingness to use his position as commander of *Babylon 5* as a pulpit to press for Martian rights. Rather than being proud one of their own has been given such a high post, many Martians, especially those active in the Resistance, see him as the quintessential Uncle Martin, a sell-out to Earth interests. This makes him a target. Other factions on Mars, however, praise Sinclair for showing that to be Martian is not to be a criminal or a terrorist and consider him an example of the fact that a Martian can achieve anything an Earthborn can.

Sinclair may visit Mars almost any time in 2257 - 2258 when he is not otherwise occupied. He may well show



up for a visit in the wake of the 2258 uprising, perhaps asked by EarthGov to act as a mediator between Martian and EarthGov groups or to simply make some PR appearances. Of course, Sinclair is not the mindless puppet his detractors make him out to be and if asked to speak he may well say some very impolitic things. Once Sinclair has gone to Minbar he is unlikely to visit Mars again but he may need to use contacts on Mars, especially as he begins recruiting humans for the Rangers. Any Martian Player Character who knew Sinclair in the past, such as a childhood friend, a relative, a fellow EarthForce officer or the like, might find a data crystal shoved into his hand by a Minbari tourist or a scruffy brown-uniformed human. The message could lead to almost anything, from a chance to join the Rangers to a warning about Shadow activities deep in the tunnels of Mars.

Michael Garibaldi

During the timeline of the series, Mr Garibaldi only rarely travels to Mars prior to 2261, but that hardly means he has no influence there beforehand. Any of the Player Characters in a Mars campaign may have known him as a friend or as an enemy or as both, depending on the circumstances. He ran a shuttle transport business on Mars during 2253 and worked for Mars security in



2255. Garibaldi's network of contacts on Mars may have become frayed but it is not fully dissolved and he never forgets a favour owed or blackmail information to be used. In his role as Head of Security for *Babylon 5*, he may well need to trace something back to Mars – a package, a person or a rumour – and he will contact someone he can either trust as a friend or whom he has some other means of influencing. By the same token, getting Mr Garibaldi to 'owe you one' is extremely worthwhile and anyone who manages to earn his favour has a powerful asset.

In late 2261 Mr Garibaldi returns to Mars to work for Edgars Industries as a troubleshooter/consultant, after being in this role for some time earlier on Babylon 5. Player Characters can be involved in this, as well – they may be part of either the shipping or receiving ends of the packages Garibaldi escorts through station security or they may work for Edgars either on or off the books. Once Garibaldi returns to Mars he may make direct contact with individuals he knew previously, which can be problematic for those who felt it was safe to snub him when he was light-years away and unlikely to return.

Post-2262, Garibaldi's marriage to Lise Edgars and his takeover of Edgars Industries makes him one of the most powerful men on Mars and unlike many with such

power he has a solid moral core, albeit one balanced with a ruthless pragmatism. That latter will cause him to seek out and use people who can do things which he, now permanently in the public eye, cannot.

Susan Ivanova

Commander Ivanova never went to Mars 'on the air' but that does not mean it never happened. While she has no known major contacts or connections on Mars, she may well have visited for any number of reasons, especially prior to Clark's takeover of EarthGov. A Player Character might reasonably have known her prior to her assignment to the station, or might at least be a friend of a friend. Another possibility, one never addressed in the series but which could be 'retconned' in, would be Susan coming to Mars on her own initiative, possibly incognito, in order to try to find out what happened to Talia Winters.

It is also possible for Ivanova to have spent some time on Mars prior to her assignment to the Babylon station – she may have been an officer on one of the ships stationed there for defence or had some other part of her EarthForce training conducted on the planet.



Dr Stephen Franklin

Franklin has many contacts and connections on Mars, part of his long association with the telepath Underground Railroad, which has also put him in contact with the Resistance. Most of this was done through intermediaries – such as the Player Characters – but it is certainly possible that he made several visits to the planet to deal with some issues hands-on. Furthermore, in his wandering youth Franklin may have met and befriended almost anyone but especially those who come from the lower echelons of Martian society, such as tunnel rats, the working poor and others who needed help.

It is known that Franklin visited Mars late in 2261 when he contacted Number One of the Resistance and spent considerable time there working with her and strengthening the relationship between Babylon 5 and Free Mars, culminating in the final liberation of Mars. Much of this time is only scantily documented and any Resistance members among the Player Characters may logically have worked with him or helped him in some way. It is very possible for Player Characters to have been instrumental in sneaking the frozen blips aboard the Earth Alliance destroyers, for example.



Londo Mollari

It is somewhat unlikely that Londo would have visited Mars during the timeframe of the series – his attention was very divided between the Babylon station and Centauri Prime. However, years earlier he was part of the Centauri consulate on Earth and during that time (just prior to the Earth/Minbari War) it is certainly likely that he would have seen Mars, whether on a diplomatic goodwill tour or taking a little personal time at the New Vegas casinos. During such a period he may well have made a few friends or contacts.

Still, very few if any of Mollari's plans and schemes obviously impacted Mars. If he is going to contact a Martian confidante or ally, it will be due to something not known to be a major part of the series but which could be tangentially linked. For example, he may need to find a Centauri noble who fled to Mars due to a falling-out at the Royal Court and who has information Mollari needs (or fears getting out).

G'Kar

Much as with Londo, G'Kar is unlikely to have visited Mars during any 'unoccupied' time in the series. As Ambassador G'Kar, his concern was with Narn; as Citizen G'Kar he could not freely travel to Earth without fearing arrest at the behest of the Centauri;



and as G'Kar of the Interstellar Alliance his attention was again focused elsewhere. However, also as with Londo, it is at least possible he spent some time there prior to the events of the series, and may very well have active contacts there during the time of the series. The Narn have a large presence on Mars, and any Narn on the planet may well have known G'Kar in the past. Furthermore, as the Narn Ambassador to Babylon 5, G'Kar can bring the concerns of Narn living on Mars to the attention of EarthGov, as embodied on the station by Sinclair or Sheridan. The strong sympathies which the Narn has towards the Resistance indicate other, more surreptitious contacts; weapons may have been sold by the Narn to the Resistance or, during the War of Retribution, the reverse. Narn on Mars are cut off from Narn on Nar'Shal during the War, and G'Kar's position on Babylon 5 allows him to act as an intermediary, shuttling messages back and forth.

Alfred Bester

Mr Bester *lives* on Mars, so he can show up almost anytime and almost anywhere to inflict his special brand of charm on any group of Player Characters. If any of the characters are blips, they can be certain of his coming for them eventually, especially if they have outwitted or even killed other Psi Cops. Loyal Corps



members may have the opportunity to work with him and to see him as an ally and skilled compatriot, not as an arch villain. Less-than-loyal Corps members may also work with him, keeping every thought closely guarded.

Characters who work for IPX (which was likely involved in the telepaths-as-weapons-components plot) or Edgars Industries (which was developing an anti-telepath drug) may also run into Bester when he is acting... off the books. Bester publicly performing his duty as a Psi Cop is bad enough; Bester unconstrained by the need to keep up appearances, acting solely to protect his beloved Corps from those who would use it for their own purposes, is a nightmare.

If Bester and Psi Corps are likely to be a major part of a Mars campaign, *The Psi Corps* sourcebook is strongly recommended.

Lyta Alexander

Lyta Alexander is also a likely encounter for Martian Player Characters. After her recall from Babylon 5 in 2257 and prior to her heading to Vorlon space in 2259, she was a fugitive fleeing the Psi Corps. Because the Resistance tends to be very distrustful of telepaths, she kept her identity as one hidden. Teep Player Characters





might easily detect her as one of their own or might simply know her from past encounters; if they too are involved in the Resistance this can bring up some interesting issues.

Lyta will most likely be encountered using a false name and identicard. If none of the Player Characters are likely to have met or known her, it might do well for the Games Master not to reveal her identity, especially if the players themselves are familiar with the series. Good roleplayers can always ignore out-of-character information, but it can still be difficult to separate what the player knows from what the character knows. A few elements of disguise and Lyta can appear as a typical lurker-on-the-run with a solid story about fleeing the Corps because she did not cooperate with a Psi Cop.

Post-2262, Lyta is a fugitive with a major grudge against the Corps on Mars, as well as near-epic powers. However, for various reasons (detailed in the *Wheel of Fire* sourcebook) she operates primarily off world, through a network of Martian contacts partially orchestrated and organised by Mr Garibaldi. Any Player Characters with reasons to hate the Corps – or a willingness to commit criminal acts against them if the pay is good – might find themselves in her indirect employ. There is another side to this – post-2262, the

new government of an independent Mars is as unlikely to condone terrorism as the old government was and while Psi Corps is not necessarily beloved on Mars, direct assaults on its members or property are still crimes. Former Resistance members turned anti-Psi-Corps operatives might find their old allies coming after them.

Anna Sheridan

While John Sheridan's documented schedule keeps him mostly off Mars, at least prior to his internment in 2261, the same is not true of his wife. As an IPX employee involved in studies of organic technology, she is very likely to have spent some time on Mars, during which she may have met the Player Characters, though her most likely contacts would have been scientists and their associates. Such connections could be used to form a tenuous but plausible link to Captain Sheridan, allowing him to be brought into a storyline in a minor capacity – he is unlikely to leave Babylon 5 because a casual acquaintance of his late wife needs his help but he might be able to pull a minor string or otherwise offer some slight aid.

Mr Morden

One of the nice things about Mr Morden, from a Games Master's perspective, is his near-ubiquity prior



to his demise in 2261. He can show up anywhere doing the bidding of his shadowy associates – in an office at EarthDome Mars, in a casino in New Vegas, or in the undercity of a minor dome a hundred miles from anyplace seemingly important. He generally poses as a good friend of EarthGov but the Shadows preach strength through conflict, so it is not beyond the pale that he would aid the Resistance as well. Morden was quite happy to play factions in the Centaurum against each other; he will do so elsewhere.

This is, of course, dangerous. Mr Morden has a special interest in Mars - it is an old Shadow base, after all, and the Shadows do not like it when other races begin to experiment with their abandoned toys. Player Characters who have acquired or stolen organic technology may find that Mr Morden presents himself first as an interested buyer, willing to pay a generous but not ludicrous price but if that offer is not accepted he will become far less genial and will demonstrate the power of his associates to whatever extent it is needed, preferring subtlety to direct attacks.

Mr Morden may have other more personal interests on Mars. His wife and daughter were killed in a terrorist attack against the Io jumpgate and he may believe or suspect the Mars Resistance was involved, as they tend to be at the root of much in-system terrorism. This may cause him to take action against the Resistance, even if doing so does not directly further the Shadows' plans, provided it does not in any way hinder them. The Shadows recognise the value of keeping their servants happy...

Marcus Cole

In addition to his documented time on Mars in 2261 (during which period he had quite a bit of free time while Stephen was engaging in 'diplomatic relations'), it is very likely that his Ranger duties would have taken him to Mars before. He has many contacts on Mars, in high and low places, and even if he cannot make it there personally he can show up on comm channels or via recorded messages. However, Marcus tends to be hands-on and will show up to deal with matters himself if he can.

Marcus may well appear in a Mars campaign prior to his first appearance in the series, either as a Ranger-in-training or on some of his earlier missions. It is also possible to tie him to Commander Sinclair – also known as Ranger One. Characters who had a prior

relationship with Sinclair when he was on Mars might find themselves being recruited by Marcus in the name of helping an old friend.

It is unlikely that Marcus or any Ranger will become too closely linked to the Resistance, at least until the connections between Clark and the Shadows become better known. Rangers are generally above internal politics and if there were ever known to be direct connections between Rangers and acts of terrorism against a legitimate government, the neutrality which allows the Rangers to function in the ISA would be severely compromised. Marcus may work with the Resistance to achieve mutual goals but will not aid them unless it serves a higher purpose.

Laurel Takashima

Laurel appeared only in the *Babylon 5* pilot movie, to be replaced with Ivanova in the actual series. She was Head of Mars Security immediately following the Food Riots and the imposition of the Provisional Government and a friend of Jeffrey Sinclair. It is likely she would have remained working on Mars for some time prior to her assignment to the Babylon station in 2257 but what she may have done after that is unknown. She is rumoured to have been, like Talia, a deep-cover mole, though it is also possible she was acting of her own free will.



Because so little of her history post-2257 is documented, the Games Master is free to bring her into a session or a campaign in a variety of roles – still working for EarthGov or on the run from them, or an independent agent with her own agenda, or seeming to be any of the above while carrying a Psi Corps ‘observer’ buried deep in her subconscious.

Episodes

The following are some of the episodes in which events on Mars play prominent roles and the Mongoose sourcebooks in which they are documented. The inclusion of events from these episodes into Mars-based games can help the campaign feel more closely tied to the series.

A Voice in the Wilderness (*Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*)

During this episode, the 2258 riots on Mars occur. Abel Horn, a major figure in Free Mars, is killed in the fighting.

Chrysalis (*Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game and Fact Book*)

President Santiago and Vice President Clark visit Mars on a public relations tour. Clark remains behind, feigning illness. Elsewhere, the Shadows destroy the Narn base in Quadrant 37, an event that Narn on Mars will certainly react to.

A Spider in the Web (*The Coming of Shadows*)

Many of those who hoped for a peaceful road to Martian Independence felt that the murder of Taro Isagi was ample proof that EarthGov would never permit this to occur. Many in the Resistance felt the use of Abel Horn as an assassin by secret forces within EarthGov was more than mere dirty politics – it was an act of desecration, a pointed reminder that to some of those on Earth, Martians were less than human. These events greatly undermined those factions in the Resistance who hoped for a political solution and strengthened those who believed independence must come by any means necessary. Given how Earth had treated a fighter for Martian independence, showing restraint in violence directed against the Earthborn seemed to no longer be justifiable.



Exogenesis (*Point of No Return*)

During the time of this episode, Dr Mary Kirkish, who was a witness in 2253 to the Shadow vessel being uncovered in the IPX dig and then being blasted free, is smuggled off Mars to arrive at Babylon 5 a week or so later.

Severed Dreams (*Point of No Return*)

Clark orders martial law imposed on Mars; the Provisional Government refuses the order. Attacks on civilian targets begin, with MarsDome One being bombed. This leads to Babylon 5 declaring independence from Earth, as well as to the beginning of a major news blackout.

The Illusion of Truth (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

The Clark-controlled ISN broadcasts a ‘documentary’ about Babylon 5 concurrent with the final ‘liberation’ of New Vegas and Slimtown, the last major holdouts against the military government.

Racing Mars (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Franklin and Marcus arrive on Mars, where they meet with the leadership of the Resistance.

Lines of Communication (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

The Resistance is asked to help Sheridan liberate Earth, with the promise of repayment in kind. This deal will

spread ripples throughout the Resistance movement and any Player Characters involved in it, even tangentially, should react. If they are powerful figures, they may be part of the high-level meetings and planning sessions that lead up to the final deal; if they are minor players, they might simply be told 'Here is what we're doing.' Reactions will not be uniform; there will always be those who feel the deal is unfair or 'selling out'; many will wonder why they should do anything to free Earth, no matter what is promised in return.

From this point until the final liberation of Mars, the official order is that there are to be no attacks on civilian targets – those are Sheridan's conditions. How well this order is obeyed is another matter. Player Characters who support Number One and the alliance with Sheridan may be put in the role of policing other factions, enforcing the truce. More rebellious types may defy the new policy, putting them at odds with both EarthGov and Free Mars.

Conflicts of Interest (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

The Voice of the Resistance begins broadcasting from Babylon 5. The Mars Resistance will be very interested in making sure this news gets to information-starved Mars and Player Characters may become involved in everything from setting up illegal tachyon receivers deep in the desert to mass-producing data crystals containing copies of the latest broadcasts and getting them out on the streets. Furthermore, it is during this time that Edgars Industries begins smuggling operations running through Babylon 5 and Player Characters associated with Edgars Industries may likewise become involved.

The Exercise of Vital Powers (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Garibaldi arrives on Mars. If he has been dealing with any Player Characters prior to this in the campaign, he may take a few moments to meet with them in person. If they have been his allies, this would be simply to thank them or ask them for further help if he needs them. Had he and the characters been at odds across the light-years, however, such a visit is likely to be an implied or blatant threat: *I am here now and I have power*. Given that Mr Garibaldi is currently in a state of Psi Corps-induced heightened paranoia, he is unlikely to be too chummy even with close allies and will be barely able to control his anger if confronted with an enemy.

Face of the Enemy (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Garibaldi betrays Sheridan. Resistance members may have heard rumours of this – the dispatching of elite forces to unusual locations, whispered conversations that Clark is about to score a major coup and so on. Players in a counter-terrorist campaign, if they are still loyal to Clark, may even be asked to participate in this event – they could easily be among those who actually netted Sheridan, whom they would consider a terrorist and a traitor, having been fed a steady diet of Clark's propaganda for the previous two years.

Furthermore, William Edgars and some of his top staff are murdered and his wife goes into hiding. This is an event that will shock most of Mars, both for the prominence of the victim and the brutality of the attack. The Resistance will of course be blamed, and some factions may even foolishly take credit for it. Player Characters linked to Edgars may find themselves under suspicion or may become paranoid – perhaps rightfully so, for if they had any knowledge of the anti-telepath drug, Psi Corps will now know this and will certainly be after them.

Intersections in Real Time (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Part of the reason this episode works so well is that the viewers never see anything else going on in the world – they are as isolated as Sheridan. Still, it can be assumed that wheels are turning all over Mars. People will be reacting to the news of Sheridan's capture, and reactions will range from anger to joy to fear to depression. The Resistance will be wracked with dissent – they backed Sheridan and it now looks as if he is out of the game, meaning the past few months of hard-earned patience were for nothing and may have set back the cause of independence dramatically. Others will plead that Sheridan is just one man and that others – Ivanova, for example – can pick up and lead in his stead. While the actual players will most likely know the future, their *characters* will not, and should treat this turn of events as very bleak, with few signs of hope.

Between the Darkness and the Light (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

The Resistance captures Garibaldi – something which Player Characters may be taking part in. By the same token, they may well take part in the operation to rescue Sheridan or, if working for EarthGov, battle against it.

Canon demands they fail but a campaign can deviate from canon at any time...

Within the Resistance, many who opposed the alliance with Sheridan will be waiting for the rescue mission to fail... and may even be attempting to sabotage it. A lot of the Resistance's top personnel are involved in this – if it goes seriously wrong there will be a huge power vacuum into which anyone who is on record as opposing the current direction can step. This sort of temptation is very strong, especially for those who see themselves as motivated not by a desire for personal power but by the knowledge that what they are doing is right.

Endgame (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Between this episode and the prior one, a lot happens. Frozen telepaths are placed aboard EarthForce vessels and Resistance forces move into position around Mars, preparing to assault several military outposts. Furthermore, some of those outposts have already been infiltrated by Resistance personnel or at least by EarthForce officers more loyal to the Constitution of the Alliance than to Clark. All of this takes considerable coordination and planning, and Player Characters can be involved in many parts of it, from the assault on the bases in the Martian wilderness to sneaking the 'teepsicles' aboard the Earth Alliance vessels. When the actual battle occurs, there is little to do but watch, but it should be emphasised that the final victory, when it comes, is due in part to their efforts. If these events are the focus or climax of a campaign, the Games Master should create a scenario where the Player Characters have a more direct role in the battle – stopping a spy from revealing the plan before it comes to fruition, for example, or convincing a wavering EarthForce officer in a crucial position to 'do the right thing' and lend his support to Sheridan and his forces when the attack begins.

Rising Star (*No Surrender, No Retreat*)

Sheridan keeps his word; Mars is to be freed. Of course, this does not happen instantly. It will take several months before the Mars Provisional Government is formally removed and the planet is turned over to a government led by the former Resistance. These months will be filled with jockeying for power, arguing over the shape and form of the new Constitution and dealing with many issues of rulership, not rebellion. Many on Mars supported Clark; many more supported the old Provisional Government, or at least did not

advocate total independence from Earth. Simply telling these people to leave the planet is neither politically nor diplomatically viable – Mars needs allies, not enemies, and it needs to prove it can exist as a free state. Ordering dissidents to leave not only deprives the planet of citizens, it is exactly the sort of behaviour Clark would have approved of.

In the short term Garibaldi is searching for Lise, who has been kidnapped by the Martian Mafia. Players who are allies of Mr Garibaldi might be asked to help him hunt her down. Players in a 'Martian Mob' campaign may be responsible for the kidnapping (in which case they had best make out their wills), or they may represent a slightly saner family or gang which is willing to help Mr Garibaldi in return for.... certain services to be named later.

The Paragon of Animals (*Wheel of Fire*)

While the rogue telepaths led by Byron gather on Babylon 5, Mars celebrates its official independence from Earth.

The Wheel of Fire (*Wheel of Fire*)

Lyta's anti-Psi Corps movement begins to step up its attacks, including assaults on Psi Corps facilities on Mars. Her old Resistance contacts may be called in to help – of course, now that the Resistance is the Government, they may object to random violence occurring on their watch, no matter how much they may hate the Corps. EarthGov is looking for any excuse to declare that Mars is incapable of governing itself and allowing terrorism to go unchecked is just such an excuse.

Objects in Motion (*Wheel of Fire*)

Number One (Tessa Holland) leaves her position as head of the Martian government, a job for which she is ill suited, to take a post as chief of security for the Interstellar Alliance. The question of who will replace her on Mars is an open one and winning such a position would be a fitting end to any Player Character's career.

Objects at Rest (*Wheel of Fire*)

Mr Garibaldi returns to Mars, having married Lise Edgars and acquired control over Edgars Industries. This power, combined with his various skills, makes him a major player on Mars.

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Mars.

I can't believe I'm back on Mars.

Three times before this place almost killed me. I swore I'd never give it another chance to finish the job.

Humans got no business being here.

No business at all.

— Michael Garibaldi

MGP
3350



Free Mars

‘We’ve had nothing but trouble with Earth since we became independent. They’re treating us as if we were still a colony. *Everything* has to go through Earth: supplies, money transfers, documents. They couldn’t kill us with bullets, so they’re drowning us in red tape. Frankly, I preferred the bullets. At least there I could shoot back.’

Mars, hanging blood red in the sky, has long been associated with war, darkness and death. It has been the imagined source of both alien invaders and ancient wisdom for centuries. Finally, in the 23rd century, there is life on Mars – human life, for the most part. Mars is the most populous planet in the Solar System apart from Earth and the most capable of sustaining itself without outside support. It is also a world that lives up to its name, for it is enmeshed in war. From the slaughter of John Carter, to the Food Riots, the brutal crackdowns of the Clark Administration and the final liberation from Earth rule, Mars has always been the site of constant struggle.

Inside You Will Find

Martian History & Culture: Mars is described in all its glory and muddled history, from the lowliest homesteader dome to the grandiloquence of New Vegas. Every timeline is described, from the cold war periods of unrest, to the ‘freedom fighter’ times of the late 2250s/early 2260s and finally the post-liberation era of a finally *Free Mars*! Terrorists, corporate interests, Earth enforcers, renegade blips, Psi Corps researchers, activists and even the new Rat King prestige class – no matter your cause, you can find a place on Mars.

Rules Additions: *Free Mars* includes detailed rules on forming and running your own Resistance cell, be it an ultra-violent militant branch or a peaceful protestation collective. A simple yet ingenious system allows Player Characters to mould and nurture their organisation, while the Games Master arranges the reactions of the Martian world to the Players’ group and its actions, whatever they may be.

New Buildings, Vehicles and Equipment: All the necessary descriptions and statistics are given for living and adventuring on Mars: Dustbuggies, mobile homesteads, abandoned domes, mapping aids, Mole vehicles and more are all contained within.



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