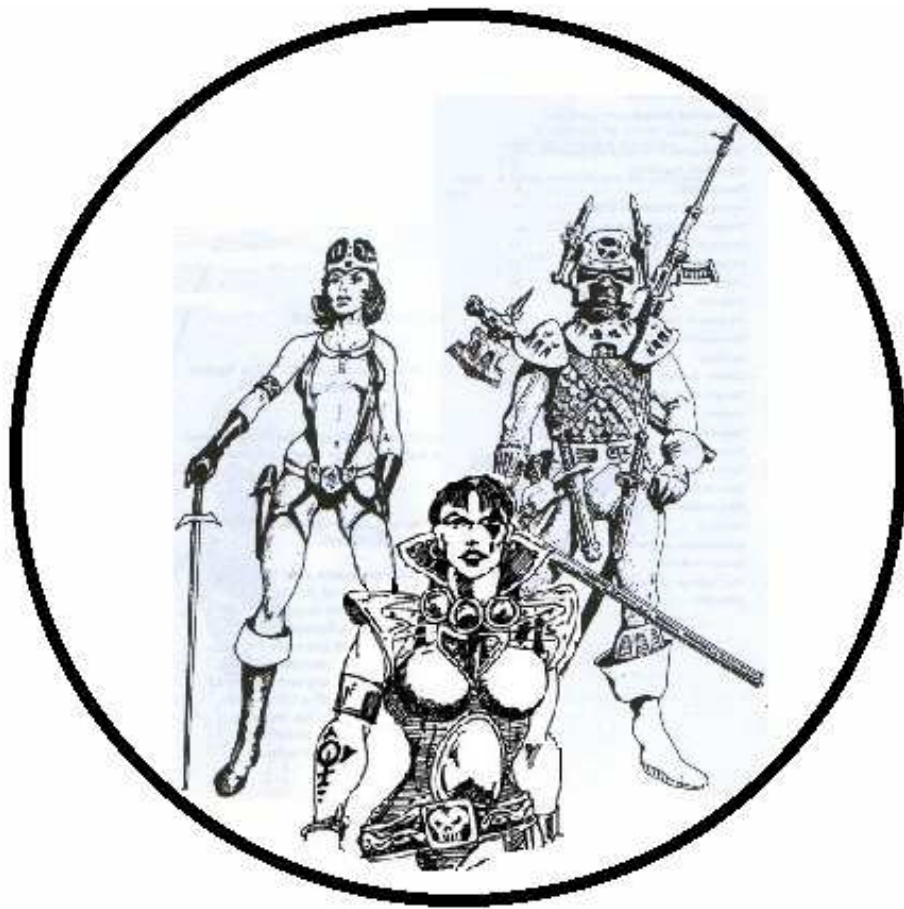


FORCES OF THE MERCHANT BARONS

**A FREE UNOFFICIAL LASERBURN
SUPPLEMENT
BETA 1.1**



by Neil Cooper 2006

**Artwork by Tony Yates and Neil Cooper
Additional art from original laserburn rulebooks by Ian Terry and Tony Ackland.
Further images from the Internet, unknown artists.**

FORCES OF THE Merchant Barons

Being details of the organization, equipment and vehicles of the forces of the Merchant Barons of the outer and fringe/ frontier worlds, and their attached bodyguards, mercenaries and spaceways scum.

The forces of the Merchant Barons tends to vary significantly from world to world, and in size and complexity. Allegiance and legality of methods also vary considerably, some merchant barons really are noble descendants and landowners of honour and integrity, who trade peacefully for the benefit of not only themselves, but of the local citizens, however others are nothing more than tyrants and leeches, sucking the resources out of a world or system just for profit and to satisfy the greedy demands of the ever expanding and ever watchful Imperium of Mankind.

This booklet sets out the background, structure, ranks and techniques of the Merchant Baron hierarchy and how conflicts may arise between various groups and regions.

For use with Imperial Commander and Laserburn.

INTRODUCTION

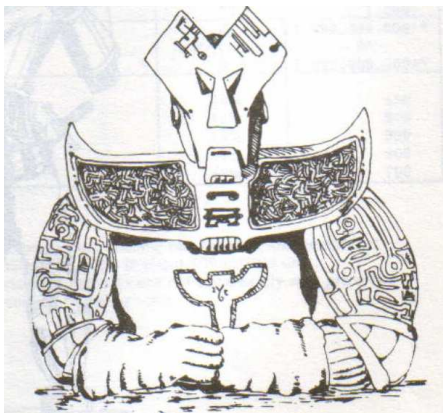
Far from the core Imperial sphere of influence on the inner worlds, the Galactic Imperium of Mankind still maintains a stranglehold of control over its citizens by way of the High Lords, who rule single worlds or systems. This tentative control, however, is slowly slipping as frontier worlds develop and question the need to be sucked dry of their resources to feed and provide for the mega-city drones of the inner worlds.

Merchants and Traders

Merchants and traders of the Galaxy range from enterprising single individuals acting with a small group trading in a starship, to the head Executives of large commercial organizations like those listed on page 37 of Advanced Laserburn and Aliens- Beldon Manufacturing Consortium springs to mind. The merchants trade, barter and negotiate their profits from their allocated areas, ever mindful that the Imperium always takes its 'cut' or 'percentage' from their earnings.



Merchant Barons



Merchant Barons, appointed by the Lord Knights, are those in overall trading control of specified trade areas and routes. The Merchant Barons have a few things in common:

You cannot buy merchant baron status (except in a few, notoriously public cases), you are either a nobleman, an existing rich landowner and trader, or a very talented trader, who has caught the attention of the local Lord Knight and thus the Empire. Seeing the opportunity to make money or retrieve resources, the individual is elevated to 'Merchant Baron' status by the Imperium, and given license to trade and operate between planets, shipping and moving goods of all types, from luxuries to raw construction materials and foods.

The merchant barons are financially ruthless, and quosh any threats to their monopoly in a particular area. Imperial patrol vessels are usually at hand to assist in the apprehension of smugglers and under-traders who eat into the Barons (and the Imperiums) profit margins. Particularly harsh, unfair or just plain criminal Merchant Barons earn the title of 'robber barons'.

Robber Barons

A disparaging term dating back to the 12th century which refers to Unscrupulous feudal lords who amassed personal fortunes by using illegal and immoral business practices, such as illegally charging tolls to merchant ships that passed through their land. Or modern-day businesspeople who allegedly engage in unethical business tactics and questionable stock market transactions to build large personal fortunes. An example from popular science fiction would be Jabba the Hutt from the star Wars universe.



Robber Baron History Quote:

Due to their unethical business practices, such as the exploitation of labor, the general citizenship typically regards these aggressive capitalists with disdain. However, some Galactic historians argue that the late-38th century entrepreneurs usually referred to as "robber barons" - including Donovan Slaan and Jenno Cranvoll - are responsible for building a large portion of the Imperiums current economic clout, because of their large investments in burgeoning Trading organisations. Some also went on to become high-profile pan-galactic philanthropists.

MERCHANT BARON CHARACTER CREATION CHART

Characters for this supplement may be rolled using the original laserburn rules. The table below adds some other troop classes/ character types:

Figure Type	Weapon Skill		Combat Skill		Initiative Level		Points Value	Skills Dice
	Standard	Variable	Standard	Variable	Standard	Variable		
Trader/ Merchant	80	(2D6+1)x10	40	D6x10	5	D6+2	100	
Scout trader	110	(4D6-3)x10	55	3D6x5	10	4D6-1	200	
Merchant Baron	130	(4D6-1)x10	65	3D6x6	12	3D6+2	300	D6*
Pirate Merchant	150	(4D6+1)x10	70	2D6x10	15	4D6+1	450	D6**
Baron bodyguard	100	(4D6+3)x10	80	3D6x8	15	4D6	350	D6***
Senior Bodyguard	200	(4D6+4)x10	110	4D6x8	18	4D6+3	600	D6***
Merchant Hero	180	(6D6-3)x10	100	3D6x10	20	5D6+2	700	D6#

New skill for the Merchant Barons: Barter

The barter skill is similar to 'streetwise', as well as doubling the chance of obtaining restricted weapons, it gives 70% chance of decreasing the price of black market goods by a quarter.

In addition, it gives a 30% chance of decreasing the cost of ANY other equipment/ weapons/ vehicles and ships by 3d10%

New skill for the Merchant Barons: Pickpocket

This merchant skill allows the character to pilfer small items from other people without them noticing. Useful not only for stealing valuables, but also getting keys, ID and other small trinkets

At first level gives a 20% chance (minus initiative level of person pick-pocketing from) at each close contact of pick-pocketing small items/ valuables. There is a chance equal to the victims Combat skill that they notice the attempt.

At second level the base chance increases to 50%, and the chance of noticing drops to victims combat skill divided by 2.

At third and final level, base chance is 70% and chance of noticing drops to victims combat skill divided by 3.

Merchant Baron Infrastructure

Traders and Merchants, in their millions, across the empire, trade and jostle for power all the time, some of these individuals obtain a starcraft, or access to one and become known as **Scout traders**. Those Imperially appointed individuals, often powerful and in control of large geographical areas, are known as **Merchant Barons**. Many merchant barons employ their own loyal retainers and personal **Baron bodyguards**, some, known as **senior bodyguards** are very skilled and fearsome warriors. Particularly heroic or notoriously good barons are known as **Merchant heroes**. Those skillful merchants who operate outside of the law are known as **Pirate Merchants**

SCENARIO/PLOT IDEAS WHY MERCHANT BARON FORCES MAY FIGHT EACH OTHER / THE REDEMPTION/ THE IMPERIUM/ THE ALIENS



Skirmishes, battles and small wars are common on the frontier worlds of the outer fringe where many rival traders and merchants jostle for power and trading opportunities. The politics and disposition of merchant barons varies greatly, some sympathise with local rebel groups, while others may back the Imperium or Redemption. Pirate forces frequently attack shipments of goods, either in space or on the land/ oceans of a worlds surface.

Certain goods attract more attention than others, cargo such as narcotics, firearms, computers, gemstones and precious metals fetch a high price anywhere in the galaxy and any merchant baron trading in these items better have forces protecting them!

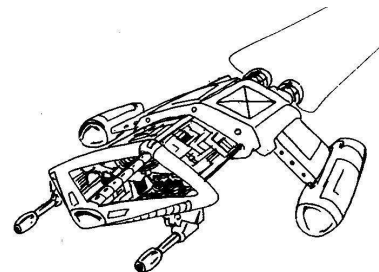
Some Merchants now trade with some of the Alien races which have made themselves known to man. Froogs, Szithks and Centulons are quite keen to trade with Humankind, and the vicious Calmin and Pohe-neds just take what they come across.

NEW RULES

CARGO SPACE AND TRADING

Cargo space for all vehicles, whether ground, sea, air or space faring is measured in standard cargo units. Each cargo unit is a space measuring 1mx1mx1m, with a maximum weight in that space of 500kg. For the beam-strike spacecraft rules, each 'block' of space for cargo is equivalent to 8 cargo units, this includes the space to maneuver cargo to and from the ship by ramps etc, and handling cranes etc.

It is outside the scope of the Laserburn game to provide detailed rules on trading and cargo prices in different regions of the universe, but considerations such as tech level of the planet trading on, the nature of the cargo and any risks involved will help the umpire determine what rewards are available for players wishing to trade/ smuggle goods within single systems or across the galaxy.



Having said this, the table below lists some common cargo types and typical credit price ranges per standard cargo unit (1x1x1 metre). Some cargo types, such as gemstones are measured in different units.

D100	Cargo Type	Units	Risk Factor	PRICE HIGH	PRICE AVE.	PRICE LOW	? perishable	Notes	Legality
1-5	Food Rations	Std	L	300	100	20	N	Stable dried food ration kits	L
6-10	Textiles	Std	N	250	150	50	N	Clothing, blankets, bedding etc	L
11-15	Minerals	Std	N	70	50	40	N	Ores and minerals used in construction	L
16-20	Fruits	Std	L	400	200	40	Yes	Various fresh produce	L
21-25	Metals	Std	N	60	40	25	N	Raw metals for construction/ building	L
26-30	Vehicular parts	Std	L	400	300	200	N	Parts for ground, air and sea vehicles	L
31-35	Spaceship parts	Std	M	2K	1K	700	N	Spacecraft parts and components	L
36-40	Luxury goods	Std	M	15K	10K	5K	Yes	High end luxury goods like art, alien artifacts, tobacco etc	L
41-45	Appliances	Std	L	300	200	150	N	Portable electrical appliances	L
46-50	Electronics/Quantics	Std	L	500	300	200	N	Electronic/ quantum computer parts and components	L
51-55	Fuels	Std	N	2K	500	200	N	Atomic batteries, liquid fuels	L
56-60	Computers	Std	L	5K	3K	2K	N	Handheld PCs and computer components	L
61-65	Construction	Std	N	200	150	30	N	Building materials	L
66-70	Radioactives/ wastes	Std	H	5K	1K	50	N	Radioactive, waste material from warp cores and FTL drives	D
71-75	Household goods	Std	L	400	200	100	N	Furniture, soft furnishings etc	L
76-78	Pharmaceuticals	Std	L	4K	2K	1500	Y	Medicines, medikit items, bandages, medical equipment	L
79-81	Beverages	Std	N	60	40	15	N	Various soft drinks and beverages	L
82-83	Ammunitions	Std	M	8K	5K	3K	N	Various calibres/ types	D
84-85	Light armours	Std	M	1000	700	500	N	2 light armour suits and 2 flak suits	L
86-87	Medium armours	Std	H	3000	1000	700	N	2 power armour	D
88-89	Heavy armours	Std	H	4000	1300	700	N	1 suit dreadnought	I
90	Slaves	Std	H	5K	1K	100	Yes (!)	1 individual	I
91-92	Small arms/ personal defence items	Std	M	7000	3000	2000	N	Pistols/ swords etc	D
93-94	Shoulder arms	Std	H	8000	3500	2000	N	Shoulderarms	D
95-96	Heavy weapons	Std	H	20K	3500	2000	N	Heavy guns	I
97	Drugs	1KG	H	1500	500	100	N	e.g:sting, cringe,steam	D
98	Liqueurs	Std	H	8K	1K	300	N	Various alcoholic beverages	D
99	Gemstones	1KG	VH	100K	70K	40K	N	From zirconians to diamonds	L
00	High class drugs	1KG	VH	100K	10K	500	N	Exotic, highly illegal drugs	I

PRICE GUIDES (All costs in credits, 1K=1000 credits)

The low price would be about the lowest price per unit you can get the cargo. This would be from a planet whose main export is this type of good. The average price is the generally expected selling price on most planets, and the high price would be the maximum you could sell, to a planet in dire need, or with a huge market for such items.

Other cargo items can be slotted in as required, using those listed as a guide.

Note for particular listed cargo items, like for instance a crate of 10 personal force bubbles, which would have a retail value of 10,000 credits (10K), the cargo value would be lower, to allow profit margins, transport costs etc, so the force bubble crate may have a cargo value of say, 5,000 credits per unit.

RISK FACTOR

Risk category	Chance of trouble	Number of chances per shipment	For each shipment of this type of cargo, roll for number of chances of potential trouble, then for each chance, roll equal or less then percentage noted for trouble actually happening. This could be a hijack attempt, police trouble, Imperial checkpoint etc....
None (N)	5%	1	
Low (L)	15%	1d4	
Medium (M)	20%	1d6	
High(H)	30%	2d6	
Very high(VH)	50%	3d6	

PERISHABLE

Perishable goods must be delivered as quickly as possible, or will start to 'go off' or loose value. For each 10% over the ideal deliver time the shipment takes, deduct 5% from the value of goods. Example, 5 units of fruit were being delivered in 10 days. The journey took 13 days, (30% longer) so the goods are worth 85% of their original value.

LEGALITY

Category	Notes	Code used on Cargo Table
Legal	Completely legal to trade on >90% planets	L
Dubious	Legal or frowned upon on 70%, Illegal on rest.	D
Illegal	Illegal to trade on >90% planets	I

You may wish to throw to see if a particular dubious item is legal on the planet you intend going to, however, most traders have access to vast libraries of data on systems, listing which items are legal and which are likely to get the merchant into a spot of local trouble!

NEW WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

Trade Computer

A small, handheld device containing information on trade routes, cargo prices , legality of various trade items in a particular region, as well as a full range of personal computer functions.

Cost: 70 credits, Availability 80%, Encumbrance :-0.3 initiative level.

Trading License

An electronic permit , obtained either from the Imperium or local Government, which allows trading over a specified area/ region. The goods licensed to trade are also specified, (usually only legal goods up to medium risk). A general, open license for a region, is the best type, allowing shipping and trade in almost all goods.

Cost and availability are dependant on goods you want to trade in, area, local government type etc....Trading without a suitable license is called smuggling

Lightweight Forcebubble

Incorporated into a fashionable belt or bandolier, the luxury lightweight forcebubble is exactly as the standard model, but it only has an IL modifier of -2, and only has enough power for 6 turns. No extra batteries may be loaded ready for use. Used by merchants, barons and other traders, this concealed protection is ideal if a deal goes wrong and a quick getaway is needed.

Cost: 1500 credits, Availability: 50%, IL modifier: -2

Merchant Armour

A fusion of light and mesh armour, woven into a fashionable and durable, yet comfortable outfit. Often brightly coloured, or highly decorated, the price is for a suit individually tailor made. Body counts as light armour, limbs count as flak/ mesh. No head protection.

Cost: 400 credits, Availability 75%, IL modifier: -1

MERCHANT BARON VEHICLES

Individuals engaged in the merchant trade use a wide variety of cargo vessels, from the huge star tanker transport spacecraft to the small Gecko runabout transport.

Most of the following ground vehicles are available from Old Crow Models in 15mm scale (<http://www.oldercrowmodels.co.uk/>) who also make 15mm tanks, drop ships and other scale models suitable for use in Laserburn.



GECKO Runabout

TYPE: Runabout		MR Acc: 4	MR decel: 6	Cost cr: 800
		MR Speed: 18	Seats: 2	Cargo units: 2
Armour pen: 40%	Availability: 100%	Turn circle: 1/2	Power: VABx4	
Locomotion: Wheeled		Weapons: none		
Notes: Small all terrain runabout class light vehicle with extended cargo capacity compared to city versions.				



OUTRIDER APC SCOUT

TYPE: Partisan car equivalent		MR Acc: 4	MR decel: 4	Cost cr: 4000
		MR Speed: 28	Seats: 3	Cargo units: 2
Armour pen: 10%	Availability: 20	Turn circle: 1/2	Power: VABx 3	
Locomotion: Wheeled		Weapons: 1x roboturret		
Notes: Small medium armoured troop/ VIP transport or security vehicle.				



GOANNA SCOUT

TYPE: Utility van equivalent		MR Acc: 3	MR decel: 5	Cost cr: 2500
		MR Speed:25	Seats:2	Cargo units: 4
Armour pen: 40	Availability: 85	Turn circle:1/4	Power: VABx4	
Locomotion:Wheeled		Weapons:None		
Notes: Larger version of the Gecko for extended cargo capability, retains excellent off road capability and rugged build.				



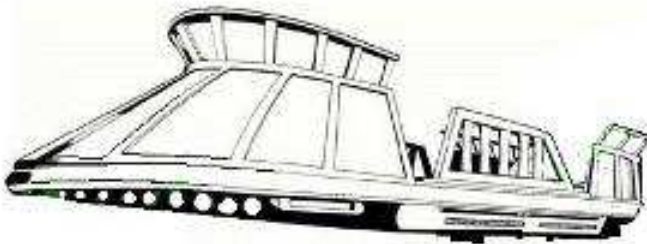
PROVIDER TRANSPORT

TYPE: Hover van equivalent		MR Acc: 2	MR decel: 1	Cost cr: 3000
		MR Speed: 13	Seats:3	Cargo units: 8
Armour pen: 40	Availability: 90	Turn circle:1/2	Power: VABx6	
Locomotion:Wheeled		Weapons: none		
Notes: Found everywhere, from spaceports to cities, the workhorse of the trading companies.				



GLAIVE APC/ Armoured Transport

TYPE: Glaive APC		MR Acc:	MR decel:	Cost cr:
		MR Speed:	Seats:	Cargo units:
Armour pen: -10%	Availability: N/A	Turn circle:	Power:	
Locomotion:		Weapons:		
Notes:				



CARGO SKIFF/ AIR RAFT

TYPE: Air raft		MR Acc: 1	MR decel: 2	Cost cr: 1000
(These stats for medium skiff, 5 metres long)		MR Speed: 10	Seats: 4	Cargo units: 4
Armour pen: 40%	Availability: 100%	Turn circle: 1	Power: VAB x 4	
Locomotion: Anti grav generators		Weapons: None		
Notes: Floating antigrav cargo platform in several variants, from the small troop skiffs used by the Imperium (See diagram page 18, forces of the Imperium), to large 50 metre long spaceport skiffs, used for carrying cargo unloaded by space transports.				

MERCHANT BARON CYBORGS AND ROBOTS:

Many of the standard types found in the 'robot' supplement are in widespread use, as they are across the whole Imperium. Of particular popularity are the protocol droid, the utility robot and social droid.



MERCHANT DROID

An android (true artificial brain), used to take the place of a merchant baron or scout trader if they cannot complete a deal in person (either because it is too dangerous or they are elsewhere). Seen by some as an insult if a droid is sent in place of the trader, some use them extensively, others not at all. Droid has extensive trading knowledge imprinted on its neural circuits, and can often get a superb deal because of this knowledge.

Merchant droids are often 'dressed' to look the part, with expensive satins and furs, especially if the droid is owned by a wealthy Baron.

Cost: 3000 credits, Availability: 60%. Android, so hits as human, chassis counts as flak/ mesh armour. Droid incorporates dreadnought armoured 'black box' recording and communication device in its chest area, used to transmit back the progression of the 'dealings', and to protect information on the transaction should anything untoward happen. No weapons are included as standard, but a pistol may be mounted in chest area for concealed fire if needed.

Statistics are: WS: 60, CS:20, IL:3

MERCHANT BARON TACTICS:

MERCHANT BARON CHARACTERS:

Neiolos Supranomicon (Human/ Cyborg)



WS: 200

CS:140

IL:24

Skills:

Donovaan Slaan (Human)



WS: 180

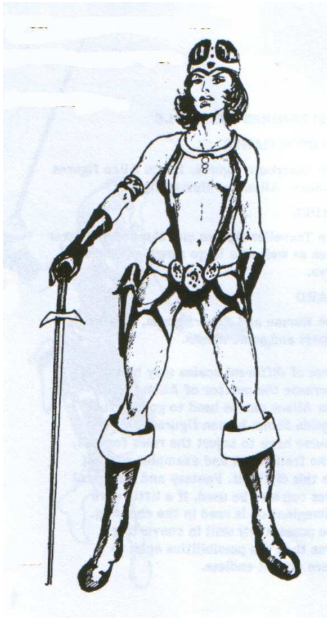
CS:110

IL:22

Skills: Fastdraw x2
NOS, Ambidextrousx3

Equipment:
2x custom hvy laser pistols 'blasters'

Princess Ann-eeta (Human)



Sex: Female

Age: 27

WS: 190

CS: 90

IL: 27

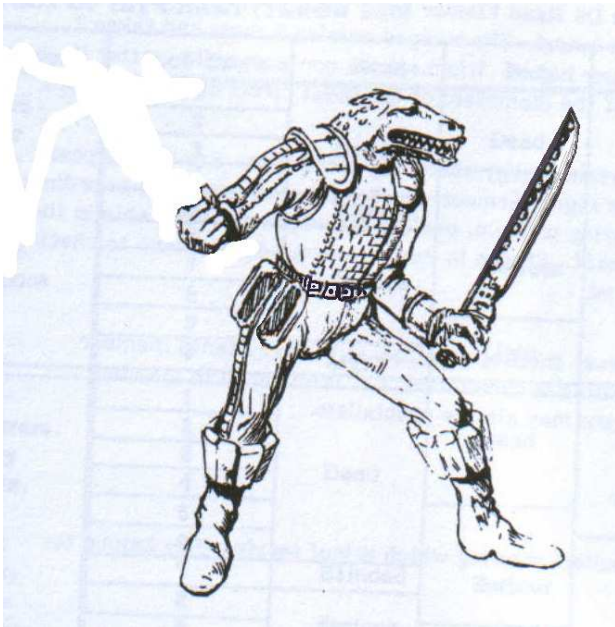
Skills: Swordsman (or woman!), Lightning rcns x4, Fast draw, Martial skill, Streetwise, Barterx2.

Equipment:

Mono longsword, Standard equipment, Gauss pistol with autoranger, Lightweight forcebubble, light armour helmet (crown), scanty outfit, force dagger.

Story:

Schaan Smickk (Szithk)



WS: 300

CS: 200

IL: 27

Skills: All basic laserburn skills.

MERCHANT BARON FORCE ORGANISATION:

Attached Mercenaries:

Use is exactly as detailed in Forces of the Imperium page 12-18

UNIFORM COLOURS:

Merchant Baron INFANTRY:

UNIT DIFFERENTIATION:

Stripped large sleeves will be coloured with the Barons household theme.

Bodyguards

Black synthisuits/ armour or drab unremarkable colours to help blending into the background/ crowd until needed.

WAR ROBOTS/ Droids:

As seen fit.

VEHICLES:

Gunmetal grey and black for trikes and scouts. Chocolate brown and gunmetal grey for skimmers, tanks and other vehicles, occasionally with darker brown or black camouflage pattern.

RANDOMLY ENCOUNTERED MERCHANT BARON FORCES:

In skirmish type games, Roll 1d100 and consult the chart below:

Dice score	Merchant Baron associated troops and Equipment
1-20	
21-40	
41-50	
51-60	
61-70	
71-80	
81-85	
86-88	
89-95	
96-97	
98-99	Merchant Baron with 1d6+2 Bodyguards armed with Machine pistols
00	Merchant Hero with retinue/ bodyguards armed with assault rifles