

STARACE™

STAR TEAM WILDERNESS BRIEFING MANUAL



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PROLOGUE

I sight the Tamillan freighter as soon as we pop out of translight. Against the giant gas planet's turbulent surface, she looks like a silver beetle crawling through space. She's right on schedule for our little rendezvous, and so are we. This little girl has enough andilinium concentrate aboard to mint money for an entire system, and to keep my entire crew in Stalitsan heaven for the rest of our lives. The boys know what to do: two quick missiles to her fat belly, a few bursts at her rear laser, a quick scuffle with her crew when we board, and she's ours.

As I bring us to missile range, the sensor alarms break into a scream. I glance down at the ultra-wave radar and see a blip coming around the far side of the gas giant. I slap the alarms off and turn back to the freighter. The rear gunners will handle the blip; it's just an IMP fighter or two escorting the freighter. Nothing for a Spade Ace like me to worry himself about.

The freighter swells up in our viewing screen like a great big whale just waiting for a harpoon. "Tag" and I launch our missiles at the same second, and I swing the ship around to our prey's hindquarters.

The ship intercom crackles, and Leo, the rear gunner, yells, "Step on it, Ace—you've got a frigate on. . ." Suddenly, the whole craft shudders and lurches. Damage alarms ring like church bells. Leo doesn't finish his sentence.

Tag flips the viewing screen to rear and we see an ICE frigate five sectors away, her heavy lasers blazing away. Her next hit takes out our translight drive. "I've got big negatives about this," Tag growls, his cat-like ears lying flat.

Maybe "Duck" Tasha was right, after all. The scoop on this freighter had come too easy; it must have been an ICE plant. As usual, I should have listened to the Trakan. But my poor manners won't matter in another five seconds.

The scanners show four IMP fighters dropping out of the frigate. Looks like we're all dressed up with no place to go. There's only one thing to do: dive for the gas giant and hope for the best. If I can put the planet between us and the frigate, we might take out a few of the interceptors before we become cosmic dust pollution.

As we whip into orbit around the planet-sized ball of gas, my scanners pick up a huge explosion from the frigate's direction. Curiosity gets the better of me—it's a chronic weakness. I pull out of the planet's gravity well and swing around to establish visual contact.

There's the Imperial cruiser Baron Gruy, drifting through the ICE frigate's wreckage, her big plasma guns still glowing. Pretty odd: even Baron Gruy doesn't play games with ICE, and certainly not to help a guy like me.

"Wheeeaaa!" The voice comes from inside my head. It has a Kleibor accent. "Where you going, good buddy? The freighter's over there! We'll take care of those mosquitoes for you." I could kiss that big dumb-sounding noetic bear, whoever he is. How he got his paws on an Imperial cruiser is beyond me, but I'm not complaining. Tasha probably had something to do with it. All I know for sure is that when we get back to Marauder's Landing, I'm going to buy that Kleibor the weekend of his life!

As new recruits, you've still got a lot to learn before you hijack an Imperial cruiser. You're holding the STARACE™ Wilderness Region Briefing Manual. Learn well what is inside; the knowledge could save your life.

Star Team Wilderness Briefing Manual

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Chapter 1: THE EMPIRE

Permit me to introduce myself. I am Yasik the Traka. They called me Yasik the Wondrous when I was the High Storyteller to the Imperial Court at Cairn. Times change, and each person's story is a long one; now I'm a Star Ace, Free Order of Diamonds, and assigned to brief you about the Empire, the Alliance, and some folks in between. This time, I'll keep my story short but true.

As far as we know, the Galactic Empire is the largest military, political, and economic force in the galaxy. It covers over 8000 inhabited worlds in almost as many star systems, including the worlds of all PCs and NPCs (except, of course, the Xenophobes). The Emperor holds complete power, and rules through a group of hereditary "high-born" nobles who control all positions of influence. Until recently, the Empire offered its provinces military security, but the Imperial thugs took an arm and a leg in return—the provinces supplied nearly all their resources to the Imperial military machine, and most of their young folks served in the front lines of the Imperial Army as nothing more than laser fodder. The Empire still bleeds its provinces, but the military security it once promised is now threatened—by the mysterious Xenophobes from the galactic core and by those of us in the Star Teams (not to mention those in the Alliance and resistance movements on occupied planets, who help us on the sly).

HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE

Strange as it may seem, the seeds of the Empire were sown on the planet Earth—that same Earth that fought the Empire for nearly 500 years and which is still a hotbed of rebellion against Imperial authority. But Earth is the home planet of the human race, and the Empire is a human institution. No non-human has worn the Imperial crown, nor can the few non-human nobles expect to rise to the throne.

One thing I'll have to grant humans: they're a race of survivors.

Those on Earth recovered rapidly from the nuclear holocaust of 2054, aided by the ancient Kleibor and Tarsan civilizations who contacted them in 2145. In the six centuries from 2200 to 2800, the aggressive human race spread throughout the inhabitable worlds of almost a tenth of the galaxy. Though they weren't the oldest (nor by any means the wisest) race in this section of the Milky Way, humans became the dominant race.

Founding and Expansion

Human cultures varied greatly from world to world, and in some cases—maybe because of isolation, war, or economic collapse (who really knows why?)—humans turned back to an almost primitive barbarism, which I suspect is their natural state. That's what happened on the planet Cairn, where in 2899 a young barbarian named Leo used sword and flame to seize planetwide royal power.

Leo's bloodthirstiness was unusual, even for a human. Soon he caught the attention of some neighboring Crassites. Always after the quick money, the Crassites backed Leo with hard cash and high tech, using him as a strongarm man to "convince" nearby worlds that dealing with the Crassites on Crassite terms was in everyone's best interest. The arrangement was right up Leo's alley: he took over six worlds in six years. Then in 2905, he turned on his Crassite bosses, wiped them out and sacked their two home planets, then proclaimed himself Leo I, Emperor of the Galaxy.

Well, the worlds nearby didn't take Leo and his eight-world empire all that seriously; most never heard of it, and those who did were right to think that it would take all the brains a hoodlum like Leo could muster simply to keep his worlds in order. But they overlooked Leo's son.

Educated by the finest means Crassite wealth could buy, but still a gangster at heart, Young Leo did away with his father in 2910, blaming the murder on a Crassite separatist plot and assuming the "Imperial throne." In a rare show of humor,

Young Leo renamed himself Innocent I, and in 2911, began the greatest career of conquest in recorded galactic history.

He must have inherited his genius from his mother, but at any rate, Innocent knew what he was doing. He applied high technology equipment and advanced administrative theories to the needs of his barbaric but numerous forces, and increased his empire from eight planets to nearly 7600 star systems in the 64 years of his reign. After his first few military conquests, the rest of these planets simply surrendered.

Innocent's empire was feudal: he granted control of star systems and planets to his relatives, followers and non-human allies, all of whom received titles of nobility. Each overlord ran his provinces much as he wished: all the Empire demanded was loyalty, money, resources, and manpower to continue its conquests.

Empire and Alliance

When Innocent I died in 2974 (peacefully, and of natural causes), a welcome quiet settled over the galaxy. A number of short-lived successors struggled for 85 years to tighten Imperial power in the vast number of conquered systems. Meanwhile, the systems still free from the Empire began a series of long negotiations, more out of terror than anything else. In 3059 some of these systems formed the Federal Alliance, for the sole purpose of preventing further Imperial aggression. Ironically, the Alliance's strongest supporter and its first and foremost military headquarters was—once again—Earth.

The Four Hundred Years War

Forming this Alliance merely stirred things up again. Under Emperor Leo II (a brilliant general in his own right), the Empire declared war on the Alliance in 3081. You know most of the story of the next four centuries: wars and rumors of wars, the early Imperial victories, all the truces broken by the Empire, and the formation of the Alliance Star Teams.

Let's just say that the tactics of the Star Teams gave the Empire fits until the final Battle of Sol (3480), in which the Alliance main fleet was destroyed by the massed might of the Imperial Navy. Imperial losses, however, were so severe that the Empire couldn't follow up its victory. In fact, it welcomed the Alliance's request for an armistice, demanding only control of Earth. Both sides agreed not to interfere in the area of the galaxy called the Wilderness Region, although as usual, the Empire's word was as worthless as a deed to Tamillan farmland.

The Xenophobic War

Negotiations following the armistice failed to produce a peace treaty. Not only did the Empire gain the Sol system, including Earth, but it soon broke the non-interference agreement and occupied several systems in the Wilderness Region: Sepa Green, Emniyet, and Shamba. Things looked bad for the Alliance; the Empire, with all its resources, could rebuild much faster than the Alliance and would probably attack as soon as it was able.

The Alliance was saved by the appearance of the Xenophobes in 3503. We'd never heard of them before, and we still don't know much about them: they're not human, and they're from somewhere near the galactic core. At any rate, they know how to make a strong first impression: they announced their arrival in this section of the galaxy by blowing two entire planets to cosmic dust and attempting to grab three more. Naturally, this caught the attention of the Empire, and with many of their forces dispatched against the Xenophobes, they no longer could carry on a full-scale war against the Alliance. As for the Xenophobes, they're still a major Imperial headache, but they haven't bothered the Alliance...yet. At any rate, theirs is not what you'd call a mission of mercy.

THE EMPIRE TODAY

Enough of history. I spent some time on Cairn not so long ago. They asked me to leave, for reasons I won't go into

at the moment. I've been kicked out of better places before, so good ride-dance! Here's the lowdown on the way they work things on Cairn, and throughout the Empire.

First of all, the current Emperor, Frederick Constantine II, is a complete incompetent—can't handle the Star Teams, much less the Alliance or the Xenophobes. The court is one big shark tank, with each advisor out for himself. Life near the Emperor is dangerous; those who displease him have been known to end up pushing rocks on Tamilla or floating face-down in a swamp on Sepa Green.

Beneath the Emperor himself are three roughly equal ruling classes: the heads of the Imperial bureaucracy, the Council of 100, and the Emperor's direct vassals. It is possible for one person to be a member of all three groups at once.

1. The Imperial bureaucracy has five branches; one individual, appointed by the Emperor, heads each branch:

Administration (headed by Duke Metellus) has offices and agents on

almost every Imperial planet. It handles the daily operation of the Empire and carries out Imperial policy.

Revenue (headed by Duke Metellus) is the Imperial tax collecting agency, responsible for raising and guarding Imperial funds.

Legal (headed by Count Sillith) is the Imperial court system. All trials are conducted by its appointed judges. These officials can command testimony, inflict torture to obtain information, waive any or all the rights of the accused, and impose penalties, including death. They seem to enjoy all these duties. The legal branch keeps voluminous records and has facilities for almost any type of research related to Imperial law or law enforcement.

Imperial Military Forces (headed by Grand Duke Otto IV) includes all regular military forces of the Empire. The head of this branch, the High Admiral/General, reports directly to the Emperor who is Commander-in-chief of the Imperial forces.

Only the highest and most trusted officials know the exact size of the Imperial Navy and Army (and since *this* Emperor trusts no one, even those officials aren't sure), but these forces are certainly enormous. All occupied planets have a garrison, usually numbering several thousand at least, and the navy's vessels patrol all major space routes. In addition to patrol and occupation forces, there are the main battle fleets of the navy and the assault units of the army.

Imperial Command Enforcement (headed by Duke Yanayir) is composed of fanatically loyal elite troops who also function as the Imperial secret police. ICE has priority and authority over other branches when in the field, and answers only to the Emperor.

2. The Council of 100 is an advisory body with no legal authority. However, its members have the right of access to the Emperor; he must agree to see them personally about any grievance or problem they have. The Council advises on Imperial law and policy. Its members include all nobles with the rank of Grand Duke or

IMPERIAL TITLES	
Title	Notes
Crown Prince	Son of an Emperor; first in line to succeed to the throne.
Grand Duke	Brother of an Emperor
Duke	Member of the Imperial family by blood or marriage; usually has several systems as personal fiefs.
Count	Noble with at least one star system as a fief.
Viscount	Any holder of a planet or system from a count.
Baron	Lowest rank of nobility, holds as fief one planet or portion of a planet

Duke, and anyone the Emperor feels like appointing: when a member dies or retires, the Emperor simply appoints another to fill out the 100. Duke Metellus is the present President of the Council.

3. Vassals of the Emperor are all who govern planets or star systems. Direct vassals hold their territories by direct grant from the Emperor himself; other vassals hold territories by grant of these direct vassals. For example, Baron Silva is a vassal of Countess Livia, who is a direct vassal of the Emperor. Only direct vassals are of equal rank with Council Members and heads of the bureaucracy, but all vassals have certain privileges: the right to legal authority in all non-Imperial affairs in their possessions, the right to tax their planets or systems, and the right to raise personal military forces.

Conditions on Occupied Worlds

Of course, occupied planets differ widely, but the Empire leaves its calling card on all its possessions. The populations are viewed as a resource for the use of both the Empire and the local noble who governs the planet. Seizure of property, military drafts, and citizen relocation are common practices on occupied planets.

Attitudes toward the Empire vary from system to system, planet to planet, depending on the policies of garrisons and officials. However, most people (and non-humans) in most of the occupied worlds take part willingly in the scramble for fame and fortune, believing the Empire's lie that "anyone can better himself under our guiding hand."

Planetary economies always benefit the Empire and the nobility, but sometimes enough profits trickle down to allow for a fairly well-to-do middle class. On more advanced worlds, the merchant class does especially well for itself. These people play the Empire's game—make their money under its "guiding hand"—so they aren't likely to support the Alliance, much less the Star Teams. Those on the poorer planets live with

IMPERIAL MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Imperial troopers wear reflector plate armor and carry laser rifles. Officers usually carry laser pistols.

The smallest Imperial Army unit is the fireteam; larger units are built from fireteams. The unit commander's rank is listed in parenthesis.

1 Fireteam=5 troopers, 1 w/grenade launcher (Cpl.)

4 Fireteams=1 Squad (Sgt.)

5 Squads=1 Platoon (Cpt.)

3 Platoons + 1 special Fireteam w/ PPRs=1 Company (Col.)

3 Companies + 1 platoon of 3 IM Tanks=1 Battalion (Brig. Gen.)

3 Battalions + troop transports troops=1 Brigade (Lt. General)

2 or more Brigades, + 3 extra platoons of IM Tanks=1 Division (Maj. Gen.)

very few comforts: the struggle to keep those comforts and not to sink to day-by-day survival keeps people busy, so there is little thought of rebellion.

Attitudes towards the Alliance and the Star Teams vary, but as a rule the Alliance is seen as an enemy; after all, many folks in the Empire lost several generations of family members in the Four Hundred Years War. We're considered pirates, terrorists, or (at best) desperados. Face it, there's some bad publicity out there.

Every major city and installation on every occupied planet swarms with the Imperial military in their shiny white armor. In addition, troops of the local overlord patrol everywhere, dressed in anything from the fanciest uniforms to old animal pelts. These two military groups serve as the primary means of law enforcement and control. Of course, everyone lives in great dread of the ICE secret police and "special duty" squadrons: their techniques have made them famous.

Despite the iron grip of the Imperial hand, resistance movements

are quite...lively on several occupied planets. The organization, strength and success of these groups vary from planet to planet. The resistance may spread anti-Imperial propaganda, spy for the Alliance, furnish information, shelter, or even bases to Star Team members, or maybe even tinker with a few Imperial gadgets, if you catch my meaning. ICE fights the resistance by taking it out on the locals, or by trying to infiltrate the resistance groups. As to what they'll do when they catch a resistance fighter or a Star Team member...well, you've seen the wanted posters, and I don't think you'd care to hear the details.

MAJOR IMPERIAL NPCS

Now for the inside story on a few of the most important Imperial officials. You may never meet up with any of them: if you do, your CM should make sure it happens rarely. But rest assured that whatever plot or scheme is in the air, one of these fellows may well be behind it.

His Imperial Majesty FREDERICK CONSTANTINE II, Emperor of the Galaxy



RACE: Human

STR	48	DEX	46	AGL	54
WPR	74	PER	42	PCN	62
STA	52	UMS	51	WNDS	13

SKILLS: Gambling, Rookie, 71; History, Rookie, 83; Investigation, Rookie, 75.

At the age of 23, Frederick is vain, spoiled, cruel, and decadent. I don't think he'll grow out of it. He loves to be flattered (that's why he got tired of having me around) and he loves to use power on a whim (that's why he threw me off of Cairn). Frederick doesn't give a Crassite's snout for the real responsibilities of rulership.

A lot of the older nobles remember Frederick's father, Frederick I, rather fondly, and they think the youngster has, as they say, a few holds empty in the cargo ship. Frederick would rather be alive than popular, so he uses ICE and its current head, Duke Yanayir, to help him to keep the nobility divided. The Emperor rarely leaves the pleasures of his court on Cairn, and seems to think that the Empire will handle the Xenophobe threat without any personal effort on his part.

The Grand Duke OTTO IV High Admiral/General of the Empire

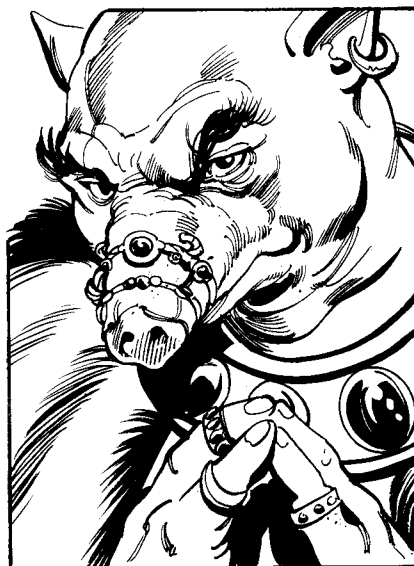
RACE: Human

STR	62	DEX	56	AGL	54
WPR	70	PER	58	PCN	78
STA	64	UMS	58	WNDS	14

SKILLS: All contemporary ranged weapons, Rookie, 71; Sword, Vet, 88; Martial Arts, Ace, 116; Advanced Self Defense, Ace, 116; History, Vet, 104; Investigation, Vet, 99; Military Leadership, Ace, 119.

The 63-year-old Grand Duke Otto disapproves of his nephew the Emperor. Otto is loyal to the Empire, and the Xenophobe threat worries him. He is a tough, realistic soldier, not afraid to use brutality when he needs to. He stays in power despite his nephew because of his extreme competence, the influence and respect he receives from the military, and the wealth he's stockpiled from the 100 star systems he governs. All in all, he's a crashing bore, but a tough enemy.

Duke YANAYIR MORLETH Overlord, Imperial Command Enforcement



RACE: Crassite

STR	36	DEX	34	AGL	62
WPR	70	PER	76	PCN	78
STA	32	UMS	49	WNDS	11

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Vet, 64; Computers, Vet, 94; Investigation, Ace, 130; Forgery, Vet, 86.

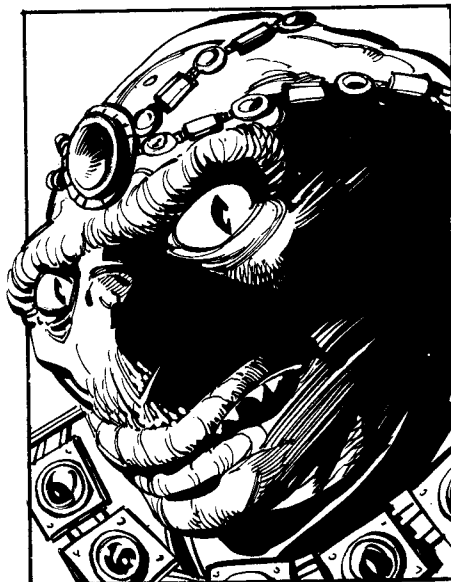
After the Emperor himself, Yanayir is the most dreaded Imperial official. His ICE troops and secret police seem to be everywhere at once; the duke sees himself as the real power behind the throne, and he's probably right. This old Crassite is completely corrupt, and all the humans in the high nobility hate him. Rumor has it he's trying to get the Wilderness area by marrying off his daughter Nisha to Count Sillith's only son, then arranging an "accident" to dispose of the rather hefty bride's husband and father-in-law, both at once.

Count GRIL SILLITH Grand High Vizier of the Empire

RACE: Gorlon

STR	78	DEX	56	AGL	64
WPR	62	PER	44	PCN	70
STA	76	UMS	71	WNDS	15

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Vet, 86; Investigation, Ace, 114; Computers, Vet, 90; Bargaining, Vet, 83.



Count Sillith recently acquired the planets of the Wilderness area as a reward from Duke Metellus; it seems that all those Gorlon mercenaries under Sillith's personal command come in handy. His influence with the Emperor is based on his proven ability to deliver "convicted traitors" for public execution at the Emperor's court. He is aware that Duke Yanayir covets his Wilderness territory.

Duke AURELIUS METELLUS Administrator of the Empire, Master of Imperial Revenues, President of the Council of 100

RACE: Human

STR	42	DEX	50	AGL	40
WPR	64	PER	68	PCN	74
STA	52	UMS	41	WNDS	13

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Vet, 80; Computer, Vet, 92; Bargaining, Vet, 96; Investigation, Ace, 124; Forgery, Vet, 92; Gambling, Vet, 92; Sword, Ace, 96.

At 55 Duke Metellus has decided to rest on his past achievements and play up to the young Emperor. Despite his laziness and dishonesty, Metellus is a first-rate plotter (you'd have to be to hold so many Imperial offices!). His current goal is to stop Duke Yanayir's rise to power by promoting the fortunes of Count Sillith.

Chapter 2: THE ALLIANCE

Now for the “good guys.” They support your Star Teams, and they’re against that bunch of Imperial thugs, but I’ll tell you one thing: the little welcome their Admiral Freze gave me when I came home to Stalitsa after my stay on Cairn wasn’t what I’d call warm: 12 hours of interrogation is more than even a Trakan wants to talk. At any rate, here are the facts.

The Federal Alliance is the second largest known power in the galaxy (remember, we still aren’t sure about those Xenophobes). At present, 2000 planets in only slightly fewer star systems are members. The Alliance isn’t a nation or an empire, but a loose confederation of worlds which share one common interest: avoiding Imperial conquest.

Political Organization

Membership in the Alliance is voluntary: your planet can withdraw from the Alliance at any time without penalty. They always welcome new members, and require only that the planet’s government (or whatever controls the planet) be “committed to mutual defense against any act of Imperial aggression”—that’s straight from the Alliance Charter.

The policies of the Alliance are set by a Senate. Each member planet is represented by one Senior Senator; if a planet pitches in a good deal of money, materials, or manpower to the Alliance, it can also have up to three Junior Senators. Things get bulky and quarrelsome in an assembly this large, but at least it’s democratic. Carrying out Senate policies is the job of an Executive, chosen by the full Senate, and a special Committee of 50, chosen by the Senior Senators.

The main concern of the Alliance is military and economic defense of its member planets. Each member planet runs its own internal affairs, trade agreements, and relations with other planets. You can deal with the many neutral planets, or even with the Empire (though the Alliance gets pretty ruffled if you deal arms or high tech to an Imperial planet!). The Senate passes no “laws” except those concerning defense or espionage.

Military Forces

The military forces of the Alliance consist of the Alliance Space Navy and Space Marines. Member worlds contribute troopers, weapons, and spacecraft to these forces. The Alliance itself builds some ships and recruits some military personnel, using funds from members who do not have the capability to build ships or train forces themselves.

All forces operate under a unified Alliance Command. The Executive appoints the top officers of Alliance Command from a list of volunteers from the member planets. Navy commanders in each system near the Wilderness Region are responsible for keeping contact with the Star Teams operating in the area. Further contact with Star Teams takes place when necessary.

Current Military/Economic Posture

The Four Hundred Years’ War was a complete disaster for the Alliance, although the Battle of Sol did stop Imperial aggression for the time being. However, the cost of the war drained the Alliance economy, and the destruction of its fleet meant it had to rebuild its navy from scratch.

From the time of the Battle of Sol to present-day 3512, the Alliance has taken on the slow task of rebuilding, concentrating first on economic recovery for member planets. This takes most of their money and time; as a result, the military buildup is mostly limited to the quick and cheap construction of starfighters, an extra cruiser or dreadnought when money and time are handy. In short, they don’t stand too much of a chance against a full-scale Imperial invasion.

The Marines are also rebuilding; manpower is short, and only the Alliance capital and those systems nearest to the Empire’s borders have Alliance garrisons. If there’s an all-out Imperial attack, the first worlds attacked will have to rely on their own defenses while the Alliance scraps together what reserves it can.

The Alliance obviously can’t afford another war with the Empire;

luckily, the Xenophobes are on the top of the Empire’s dancecard right now. However the cause of the Alliance—resistance to the Empire—must continue on the worlds lost during the war. Further, the Alliance must take what steps it can to disrupt the powerful economy of the Empire. So, Star Team members, just think of yourselves as . . . economic advisors.

Covert Actions

The Alliance is counting quite a bit upon the Star Teams which were so successful during the war. Secretly, while denying any such activity, the Alliance is smuggling funds to the Star Teams, giving them free rein to hit Imperial shipping and damage the Empire’s economic and military power whenever and however they can.

In addition, the Star Teams have both espionage and counter-espionage duties. The Alliance especially wants any information on Imperial military positions, and on the power struggles within the Court on Cairn (believe me: they kept asking until they learned everything I knew). Star Team raids often influence the political struggles within the Imperial inner circle.

Finally, the Star Teams are used by the Alliance to maintain contact with resistance groups throughout the Empire. Star Team members can become rich by smuggling, but often their actions help the Alliance and the resistance, too.

Advantage and Vulnerability

The Alliance has one great advantage (in addition to the Star Teams) in its ongoing struggle with the Empire: the planet Ruoka, home of the Crystal Folk, is a member of the Alliance. This planet is the single best source of Xantium crystals in all explored star systems.

Xantium crystals are necessary to maintain interstellar communications and hyperspace astrogation (see Chapter VII: Equipment, in the STAR ACE™ Training Manual). The Empire has only limited natural supplies of these crystals, and synthetic pro-

duction is very costly and time consuming.

So you can be sure: the Empire is very interested in Ruoka. For now, they're adopting a political and economic strategy designed to lure Ruoka out of the Alliance. If war breaks out, Ruoka will be a primary Imperial objective.

Both the Empire and the Alliance are handling Ruoka with kid gloves. All kinds of schemes center on this planet and its valuable crystals and many plots are actually hatched, since the planet lies in the non-interference zone agreed to by both sides in the Armistice.

Attitudes of Member Planets

Most member planets of the Alliance have their own forms of political and economic organization. These are wildly varied: some planets have a representative, democratic form of government, others are popular monarchies, and some are theocracies ruled by the leaders of some particular religion.

Since the Alliance worlds are so very different, it's natural that everyone is tolerant in matters of race, religion, trade, and politics. This doesn't mean that a local system will allow itself to be undermined, or even that visitors never find themselves in a barroom brawl because of a difference of opinion. It does mean that characters of any race can think, and perhaps say, about anything they want to as long as it isn't subversive, dangerous, or very insulting to the local majority. Remember, this tolerance stuff has to work both ways.

The Star Teams are popular folk heroes on almost all Alliance worlds. The adventures of Star Teams and their blows against the Empire are the subjects of countless barroom songs, holodramas, and popular novels and histories. Human children grow up playing "Star Team" just as their ancestors on Earth grew up playing "cops and robbers."

Star Team members visiting an Alliance world can expect to be treated as popular heroes, according to the customs of that world.

MAJOR ALLIANCE NPCS

Now for a couple of the major Alliance officials. Although you may never meet them in your adventures, the CM must be aware of their backgrounds and keep their goals in mind when running a STAR ACE campaign game.

JOSEPH RANDALL Executive of the Federal Alliance



RACE: Human

STR	58	DEX	56	AGL	48
WPR	72	PER	68	PCN	78
STA	66	UMS	53	WNDS	14

SKILLS: Boxing, Ace, 109; Sword, Vet, 83; All firearms, Vet, 86; All beam weapons, Vet, 86; Thrown Weapons (Sensory Knife), Vet, 87; Spacecraft Piloting, Ace, 116; Computers, Vet, 94; Investigation, Vet, 103.

At 62, Randall is in fine shape—doesn't look a day over 35, same as they said he did when he was an Earth Space Marine Colonel. He's a good Executive of the Alliance, although he's a bit gruff and impatient of failure. I guess even that impatience has its reasons: failure is something the Alliance can't afford in its weakened condition. Randall likes to chart a plan of action and carry it out, letting others worry about the political consequences.

DIANA FREZE Admiral, Alliance Space Navy



RACE: Crystal Clone

STR	44	DEX	76	AGL	52
WPR	64	PER	54	PCN	66
STA	42	UMS	48	WNDS	12

SKILLS: Spacecraft Piloting, Ace, 120; All beam weapons, Vet, 106; Computers, Vet, 88; Deep Space Navigation, Ace, 121; Investigation, Vet, 92; Emergency Spacecraft Repair, Vet, 99.

Admiral Freze commands the small forces available to the Alliance Navy near the Wilderness sector. This command, its headquarters on Stalitsa, is the most sensitive in the Alliance Navy: defending Ruoka against Imperial attack depends heavily upon a delaying action by Freze and her forces.

Freze, at 52, is already somewhat old for her race, but still has a strong fighting spirit. Randall is annoyed by Freze's neglect of day-by-day government, but the Crystal Clone is an aggressive commander. She believes that Star Team raids into Imperial territory are the best defense the Alliance could have, and takes pains to make sure the Star Team base on Wilderness is supplied with everything it needs.

Chapter 3: THE WILDERNESS REGION—

Now your good friend Yasik's going to give you the inside story on the place where the action happens. Take a look at the color map in your STAR ACE™ game. What you see is an area that we in the Star Teams (and the folks in the Alliance) call the "Wilderness Region." The Empire calls it "the Non-Interference Zone," or some other kind of military doubletalk which really means they want to take it over. But more about that later.

As you can see, the region includes not only the Wilderness system, but other systems nearby: Asfalia, Tamilla, Emniyet, Sepa Green, Shamba, Earth, Stalitsa, and Ruoka.

To help out your navigators, the map divides the Wilderness Region into a number of smaller areas called *Grand Strategic Sectors*. These Grand Strategic Sectors are the hexagons (or "hexes") on the map.

Each Grand Strategic Sector on the map contains a million *systems*. Now what's a system? Simply one star and the planets, asteroids and other astronomical bodies which orbit that star. (There are a few binary or trinary systems, in which two or three stars orbit each other, with a few planets thrown in for good measure.) Most of the systems in the Wilderness Region are not shown on the map; only those systems we know to be inhabited are shown. Inhabited systems are named, for convenience, for the major inhabited planet in the system. So, for example, Earth's solar system is called the "Earth system," even though it also contains planets such as Venus, Mars, and Bacchus (the 10th planet, discovered in 2011).

The Wilderness Region will most likely be the setting for your first few STAR ACE™ adventures. In fact, there's enough happening in the Wilderness Region alone for it to serve as a complete campaign setting. You may want to adventure in the Wilderness region, or use this information as a model for your own campaign settings.

After the defeat of the Alliance at the Battle of Sol, the Star Teams chose the planet Wilderness as a location for several top secret bases. They picked it for three reasons:

1. The Wilderness sector contains a million tightly clustered systems, many of which are unexplored. If that's not enough, the whole sector is filled with gas clouds and galactic storms. The Wilderness system itself is the old needle in a haystack in this sector. Even if the Empire suspected that our bases were located in the sector, they'd search for centuries before they found us.

2. The Wilderness system itself contains asteroid belts, strangely orbiting small planets and moons, and other hazards to sublight navigation: getting near the planet Wilderness is no treat for even a top pilot.

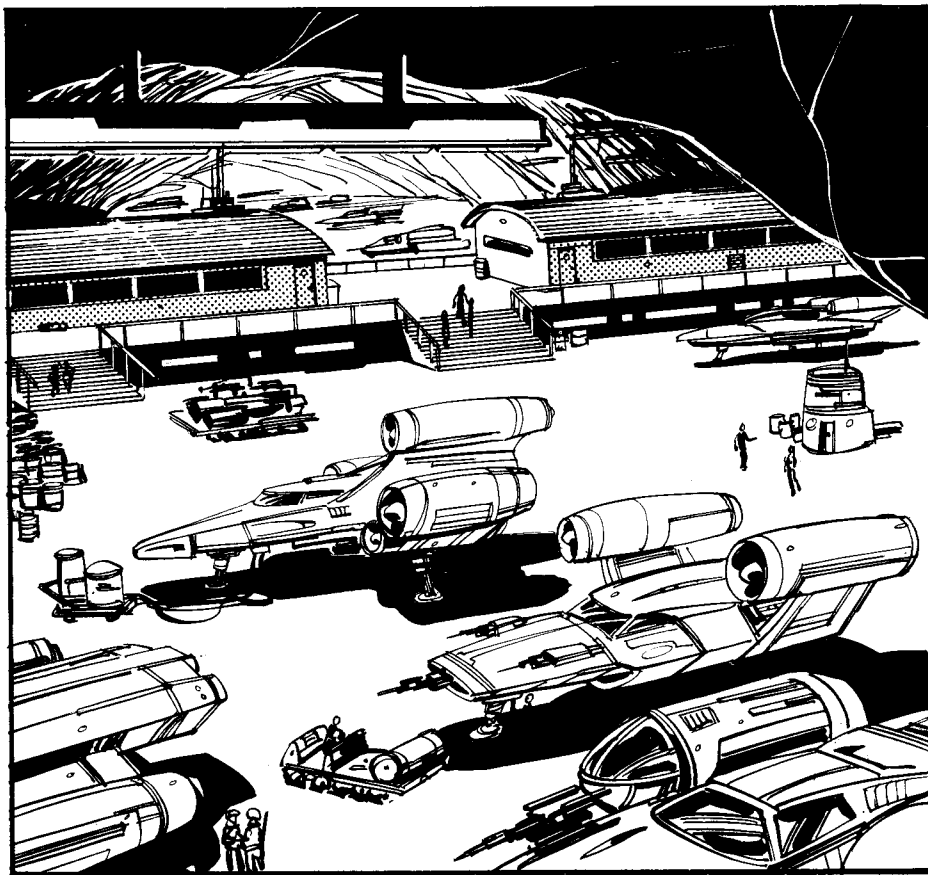
3. Most Imperial authorities think the Wilderness sector worlds are uninhabitable.

All in all, it's a good setup, and a great cover. There are drawbacks—but more about those later.

Communications in the Region

How do we know what's going on in a region filled with so many stars and planets, not to mention vast, empty stretches of space? Thanks to Xantium crystal technology, it's possible to relay communications at translight speeds. Translight communications travel on tight beams broadcast between Communications Relay Points (CRPs for short). Your Wilderness Region map shows the location of these CRPs. There are also CRPs on every inhabited planet in the region. The maximum distance over which a message can be relayed from one CRP to another is three Grand Strategic Sectors.

These CRPs make it possible to have almost instant communication between any point in the region; it is even possible for a ship in hyperspace



to communicate with other ships and planet bases.

The CRPs indicated on the map as “shared CRPs” are used by both the Empire and the Alliance for standard commercial communications. Both Alliance and Imperial military ships use these CRPs for communications, but have a scrambled beam to avoid enemy decoding. In addition, the Star Teams have placed secret Star Team CRPs in the region; these are used only by Star Team ships on a beam unknown to both the Empire and the Alliance.

The “shared CRPs” are actually space stations, manned by Imperial troops, usually guarded by Imperial fighters, and patrolled by task forces from the Imperial fleet at Asfalia. Imperial pilots may get their ships repaired at shared CRPs; we have to go to our secret CRPs to get our ships repaired. Of course, knocking out any CRP makes communications relays through it impossible.

Planetary Scanners

Each garrisoned planet in the region has a series of planetary scanners—an early warning system to prevent raids or invasions. These devices have an 80% chance to detect any craft that approaches within interceptor range of the planet. The scanners all tie into a central control at the chief planetary spaceport.

Imperial planets always ask for a code phrase—a password—to allow landing without interference. Any craft that tries to land without giving the code phrase is subject to interceptor pursuit, fighter pursuit, or both. The Empire changes the code from time to time, but it's available to everyone except the Star Teams. We can, however, bribe other pilots to find it out.

WILDERNESS: THE PLANET

To the average PC or NPC, Wilderness is a nightmare planet. The atmosphere is usually breathable, and the gravity a comfortable 1 g, but there the resemblance to Earth, Stalitsa, or

any of the other PC races' homeworlds ends.

Weather and Terrain

The first thing you notice about Wilderness is the howling winds that whip across the planet's surface. They reach speeds of up to 150 miles per hour, so they're kind of hard to overlook. Most of the surface of the planet is affected by these storms for 1 to 5 hours each day. (There is a constant 20% chance per hour of such a windstorm beginning any time characters adventure outside on Wilderness.) No PC race can withstand these winds; several Star Team members, dumb enough to be outside when a storm suddenly arrived, have been injured or killed by the windstorms. (Treat as 175% catastrophic damage.)

The temperature on Wilderness ranges from 180 degrees Fahrenheit during the day to -90 degrees Fahrenheit at night. These extreme temperatures, coupled with the gravitational pull of the two barren moons that orbit the planet, probably cause the storms. All in all, there's plenty of reasons to stay inside.

Most types of familiar terrain can be found on Wilderness, along with some things that probably aren't so familiar. Most striking are the Alliance Mountains, which run over two continents and soar to heights of over 60,000 feet. The planet also has its share of dust-bowl like plains, hills, rocky deserts, meadows of tubernet plants, bumbershoot forests, and arctic wastes.

Plants and Animals

I really can't begin to list all the various types of plant and animal life on Wilderness; in fact, nobody's really studied the wildlife on the planet. I suppose that's because nobody cares all that much. Still, it might be good to talk about a very few of the more common lifeforms found on the planet.

Tubernet

There are quite a few types of tubernet plants; all of them, however, are green,

and all have an unusual root system. The roots extend over 3' into the ground, and they're connected by tough, fibrous tendrils to the roots of other neighboring tubernets. In fact, a meadow of these plants could be considered a single, enormous plant. Tubernets grow only a few inches above the surface of the ground, spreading their tough, broad, waxy leaves to gather what little light falls from the dusty sky. Like the roots below ground, these leaves grow together, joined by tough, vinelike fibers.

Tubernets have countless sharp thorns along the edge of their leaves to defend against small predators who live in their shelter. These thorns are poison to all PC races, not to mention Crassites, Grolons, Tarsans, and Zoe.

Watch out if you walk through an area covered by tubernets; you're likely to become entangled in the plants. A character must make a general Agility check each round he moves through tubernets at any speed faster than a walk. Failure means he trips and falls on the thorny plants, automatically being stuck by some of the poisonous thorns.

Airbags

STR	30	DEX	NA	AGL	60
PCN	40	STA	46	UMS	45
WNDS	12	Move:	Wind speed		

“Airbags” is a general term we use for the numerous species of air-dwelling creatures that float in the windy atmosphere of Wilderness. Some of them look like jellyfish without tentacles, others like toadstools or mushrooms. Airbags ride the winds of Wilderness, feeding on wind-carried plant spores and smaller airbags. They're transparent and nearly invisible, which makes them particularly dangerous. All characters suffer a -40% modifier to their Perception when trying to spot airbags. When an airbag accidentally floats or flies into you, it panics and attacks fiercely, once per round, fighting for life. Unfortunately, a person who's bitten by one of these things has a 50% chance of getting “Wilderness syndrome,” a really nasty disease I'll explain shortly.

Grubbers

STR 20 DEX 26 AGL 60
PCN 60 STA 30 UMS 40
WNDS 11 Move: 75'/round

Grubbers are four-legged mammals that live in burrows beneath the planet surface. Grubbers are omnivorous: they burrow under tubernet plants to feed on the roots, and they also eat various other small animals. They look quite a bit like gophers do on Earth, but they have keener eyesight, spending several hours each day on the surface seeking small prey. Adult grubbers average two to three feet in length.

On the surface, grubbers usually run in packs of up to 100. They seem to find marvelous strength and courage in numbers; a pack of grubbers can take down large prey. That makes for a dangerous situation during the Wilderness day (by night they're almost always underground): a pack of grubbers will just as soon attack one or two Star Team members as burrow for tubernet roots. Unlike Earth pack hunters, grubbers aren't afraid of fire; come to think of it, they aren't afraid of much of anything (part of that comes from being not very bright in the first place). When they begin an attack, they keep at you and at you, regardless of the losses they suffer. An attacking grubber bites each round for full armed combat damage.

Wilderhogs

STR 110 DEX 26 AGL 60
PCN 60 STA 110 UMS 85*
WNDS 18 Move: 175'/round

**To be used only for defense column; a wilderhog will not fight in any situation; if cornered, it tries to burrow into the ground to escape its enemies.*

The wilderhog is a larger, more gentle cousin to the grubber. It stands over 4' high at the shoulder, looks like a large gopher or groundhog, and has huge hooked claws, once used for burrowing,

but now used to grab and dig into the planet surface during the fierce Wilderness windstorms.

The wilderhogs can be used for transportation, ridden much like a horse. Their ability to anchor themselves in the midst of a windstorm, plus their strange immunity to the poison of tubernets, make them a very convenient and useful mount.

The only drawback to using a wilderhog as a mount is its slight tendency to freeze in the middle of a stressful situation (5% chance per situation), such as combat. The paralyzed state lasts for 2d10 minutes, during which time the wilderhog can do nothing but stand still and shiver.

WILDERNESS SYNDROME

Wilderness syndrome is a peculiar disease which nearly wiped out the original Star Team settlers on Wilderness, and which still threatens anyone who lives there. First the good news: we do have a vaccine against Wilderness syndrome, which all Star Team members in the region receive upon recruitment. Now the bad news: the vaccine is only partially effective. Each player character runs a 01% chance each game year of catching Wilderness syndrome.

The symptoms of Wilderness syndrome are:

1. You gradually lose all body hair over a period of 1d10 weeks. For all PC races, this results in a permanent modification of -10 to the Personality score;

2. You might suffer uncontrollable convulsions. There's a 02% chance of convulsions occurring in any stressful situation, such as combat. These convulsions last 1d10 minutes;

3. You might suffer a sort of berserk battle lust. There is a 05% chance that this condition will arise in any combat situation (that is, if you haven't gone into convulsions first). Once triggered, the battle lust drives you to attack as relentlessly as a grubber, regardless of your own safety or any battle plan you might have had.

This description of the symptoms of Wilderness syndrome assumes that

the disease is being treated at least monthly by a character with Medical skill. Untreated Wilderness syndrome quickly leads to death, as per the normal disease rules.

THE STAR TEAM BASES

There are five major Star Team bases on Wilderness. Each of them is more or less the same as the others, and each is loyal to a principal leader or base commander. In addition, there are a number of smaller bases, begun by smaller groups who have chosen their own commander. To give you an idea as to what these places are like, I'll detail Marauders' Landing, one of the five major bases.

Location and Physical Layout

Marauders' Landing lies in the northern hemisphere of Wilderness, near a large tubernet plain, right at the foot of the Alliance mountains. The base itself has been tunnelled out of the mountainside, and has an interior surface area of over one square mile.

There are two entrances to Marauders' Landing. The one most often used is the fighter landing entrance. Huge, 30' high sliding double doors open here onto the landing strip for starfighters. Pilots making this approach must come in extremely low over the tubernet plain, ready to set down as soon as their craft has passed the doors. The second entrance is a small, narrow tunnel located a half mile north of the landing entrance.

Inside, to the south of the landing entrance, are the huge hangar areas where Star Team craft are stored, refueled, rearmed, repaired, and modified. There's enough hangar space to store and work on slightly over 1,000 single-seat starfighters, or fewer, larger craft.

North of the landing entrance are the commander's office, the computer control center (always staffed by two Crystal Clones), the base medical bay, and the living and recreational facilities. The power supply for the base lies further underground, beneath the landing entrance.

Base Defenses

Because of its hidden, secret location, Marauders' Landing doesn't need some sophisticated, high tech base defense. The base does have a shield generator, but shields are down unless the base comes under actual Imperial attack; they'd be a dead giveaway to any randomly passing Imperial ship that something big was happening on the planet. Sentinels are posted on sensory monitoring equipment which monitors activity in the Wilderness system, and all base personnel are trained in a scramble drill designed to put a swarm of spacecraft into space as quickly as possible, just in case the base is attacked. Of course, all incoming craft must identify themselves to Computer Central before entering the base. Beyond that, the base's best defenses are the skills and talents of the Star Teams.

Life At Marauders' Landing

Marauders' Landing currently serves as the main base of operations for 300 Star Team members under the leadership of base commander Malako, a Trakan Diamond Ace. As you might imagine, Malako runs a loose ship, which, if you ask me, is the only way to command; any Star Team member can use the base facilities for a small donation: 05% of any income from plunder, ransoms, smuggling, or whatever. This donation goes to meet the base's expenses. Those who fail to make the donation don't stay around Marauders' Landing very long, and they don't come back a second time. In addition, each Star Team member at the base is required to put in three days out of every 30 in various random duties: helping in the mess, running the computers, serving on the emerg-

ency security squad, or at whatever else needs fixing or mixing.

Each Star Team member who makes Marauders' Landing his personal base of operations is entitled to personal living quarters, food service from the base mess (which is currently run by an excellent Kleibor chef), hangar space, storage space for captured plunder, and use of the recreation facilities.

Aside from performing their duties, Star Team members are free to come and go as they like. On occasion, Malako may assign some group to a special mission for the base (usually something the Alliance wants done) or ask for volunteers for a particularly dangerous assignment. Beyond that, each individual shifts for himself, although the Star Team members are a tight-knit group and usually go out of their way to help a fellow member.



WILDERNESS REGION POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Under the terms of the armistice which ended the Four Hundred Years War, the Earth system was surrendered to the Empire. Asfalia and Tamilla had been under Imperial control before the war, and remained so. Emniyet, Sepa Green, and Shamba were to become "border planets," accessible to both Imperial and Alliance ships, while Ruoka and Stalitsa remained Alliance planets.

Of course, the Empire moved at once to take advantage of the Alliance's weakened condition and snatched control on Emniyet, Sepa Green and Shamba. These planets now have Imperial overlords, and all the trappings and hoopla that goes with Imperial control. However, all three planets are still open to merchant ships and small craft from the Alliance. The Empire started allowing this when the Xenophobes turned up in this part of the galaxy. The Xenophobes are a handful, and the last thing the Empire would want is another all-out war with the Alliance thrown into the new problems. Non-Imperial citizens travelling to the occupied worlds are closely watched by the local government and by ICE. Of course, Star Team members discovered here are immediately arrested as privateers.

Stalitsa, of course, the "party planet" of the region, is open to traffic from all comers. Although Stalitsa remains loyal to the Alliance, and is the site of the only Alliance Navy base in the Wilderness region, its economy would probably collapse without the tourist money pumped in by Imperial Army, Navy and ICE personnel who spend their leave time in its bright lights and...countless attractions.

The "open" status of Emniyet, Sepa Green, Shamba and Stalitsa make the spaceports and cities of these planets hotspots for smugglers, spies, black marketeers, and dealers in information.

Ruoka's another matter: at the request of the Crystal Folk, the Alliance has declared it totally off-limits to the Empire. However, if I were a betting

Trakan (and there's no such thing as a "non-betting Trakan"), I'd lay good money that the place is crawling with Imperial spies and saboteurs who've worked their way onto the planet in the guise of workers in the Alliance controlled Xantium mines.

Earth is strongly occupied by Imperial forces, but that certainly doesn't mean the resistance has rolled over and died. Open guerrilla warfare against the Empire is being waged from secret bases in the Rocky Mountains, the Carpathians, and the Urals, as well as in the jungles of Southeast Asia and South America.

Imperial Forces In The Region

The main Imperial force in the region is the fleet based at Asfalia. It's a big one:

Three dreadnoughts, the *Conquest*, *Leo I*, and *Cairn*, each with a complement of 12 starfighters.

12 cruisers, each with a complement of 4 starfighters.

36 destroyers, each with a complement of 2 starfighters.

3 troop transports.

All Imperial occupied planets in the region are equipped with planetary shields, to be activated in the case of an Alliance attack. In addition, each Imperial planet has based on it:

1. 12 squadrons of interceptors, with three craft per squadron (a total of 36 interceptors).

2. Four squadrons of Imperial starfighters with three craft per squadron (a total of 12 starfighters).

3. One destroyer, with its complement of 2 starfighters, which randomly patrols the planet's system.

Finally, the Imperial Command Enforcement regional center on Asfalia maintains a fleet of 12 ICE frigates, which are often on secret ICE missions in the region.

In addition to Imperial forces, the feudal overlords of the occupied planets keep their own little private space forces.

The planet's feudal overlord and his personal troops usually handle the on-planet defense, although there's at least one company of Imperial soldiers in every city of over 250,000

on each of the occupied worlds. Personal troops of the overlord tend to hang around the cities as well: there's usually one division in each city of 250,000 or more.

IMPERIAL RULERS IN THE WILDERNESS

All Imperial planets in the Wilderness region (Asfalia, Tamilla, Earth, Emniyet, Sepa Green, and Shamba) are under the overlordship of the Gorlon Count Gril Sillith, Grand High Vizier of the Empire. He holds these worlds, in turn, from Duke Metellus. Thus, if you mess with these worlds, you mess with Sillith and Metellus. Count Sillith has divided up his Wilderness region holdings into several subfiefs, which have been distributed to the following bunch of degenerates.

Viscount THASSAS

RACE: Gorlon



STR	60	DEX	52	AGL	64
WPR	58	PER	40	PCN	58
STA	76	UMS	62	WNDS	15

SKILLS: Spacecraft Piloting, Vet, 80; Sword, Ace, 117; All beam weapons skills, Ace, 107; Investigation, Rookie, 67.

HOLDINGS: Asfalia

FORCES: 10 divisions Gorlon mercenaries; cruiser *Thassilith*, four destroyers with 2 starfighters each, 24 planet-based starfighters (8 squadrons).

Viscount Thassas, at age 43, is an extremely ambitious Gorlon noble. His biggest headache is the current Zoe uprisings against the Empire. What he'd really like to do is discredit Baron Rissil and receive the additional subfiefs of Sepa Green and Shamba. He's got a good shot at doing this, if he can just get solid evidence of Rissil's illegal black market activities. It wouldn't take much to start sparks flying between the forces of Thassas and Rissil. Count Sillith would almost certainly award the winner of such a test of power the subfief of the loser.

Baron RISSIL

RACE: Gorlon

STR 68 **DEX** 42 **AGL** 50
WPR 72 **PER** 32 **PCN** 78
STA 68 **UMS** 59 **WNDS** 14

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Vet, 72; Bargaining, Ace, 107; Forgery, Ace, 115; Gambling, Vet, 94; Sword, Vet, 89.

HOLDINGS: Sepa Green, Shamba
FORCES: At Sepa Green, 8 divisions Gorlon mercenaries, cruiser *Rissilith*, two destroyers with 2 starfighters each, 9 planet based starfighters (3 squadrons); at Shamba, 17 divisions Gorlon mercenaries, cruiser *Arillith*, three destroyers with 2 starfighters each, 12 planet based starfighters (4 squadrons).



Baron Rissil, age 32, is one of the up and coming young Gorlon nobles. Although he's not as strong as the average Gorlon, he makes up for it with smarts. He not only tolerates the illegal black market on his worlds; he encourages it and protects those who give him a piece of the action. He knows about Thassas' plots against him, and secretly plans to crush Thassas if he can lure Thassas' fleet out of the Asfalia system. In addition, Rissil is trying to win Regional ICE Commandant Jub'el's favor for a coup on Earth against Viscount Amin, who hires his Gorlon mercenaries through Rissil. Paying court to Jub'el is risky business for Rissil: Sillith and Metellus are rivals of ICE Overlord Yanayir. With all his politicking, Rissil is unaware that the Tarsans of Shamba have built a secret Star Team emergency base right under his nose.

Baron GRUY

RACE: Human

STR 50 **DEX** 74 **AGL** 54
WPR 52 **PER** 56 **PCN** 60
STA 66 **UMS** 52 **WNDS** 13

SKILLS: Sword, Ace, 107; Spacecraft Piloting, Ace, 118; All beam weapons, Vet, 104; Emergency Spacecraft Repair, Vet, 92; Bargaining, Rookie, 69; Mechanics, Rookie, 82.

HOLDINGS: Tamilla

FORCES: 2 divisions of elite Human mercenaries, 2 destroyers with 2 starfighters each. Secret forces that include cruiser *Baron Gruy*, 3 destroyers with 2 starfighters each, and 12 additional starfighters (4 squadrons) hidden in underground base.

Baron Gruy is 32 years old, and just about as militaristic, ruthless, and ambitious as they come. Overlordship of Tamilla has given him the chance he wants to make a bid for real power in the Empire. Tamilla is a prime source for the minerals madinium and altinium, both of which are vital to all types of starship construction. While the mining operations on this planet alone are making him rich, Gruy is carrying on a con game as well. In secret underground factories



and bases, he is skimming off the highest grade ores from the mines and using them to construct his own personal, secret fleet. The lower grade ores he sells to the highest bidder in the Empire—and sometimes to Star Team members. Of course, Sillith, Metellus and the Empire get a percent of the profits, but not from the ore Gruy is stealing. Gruy is often willing to trade with Star Team members in exchange for damaging information about Viscount Ligl of Emniyet. Gruy actually enjoys the harsh environment of Tamilla, and feels that Emniyet should be his next acquisition.

Viscount AMIN

RACE: Human

STR 44 **DEX** 42 **AGL** 48
WPR 58 **PER** 78 **PCN** 70
STA 50 **UMS** 46 **WNDS** 12

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Rookie, 57; Spacecraft Piloting, Rookie, 69; Sword, Rookie, 61; Sensory Knife, Vet, 73; Bargaining, Vet, 98.

HOLDINGS: Earth

FORCES: 12 divisions Gorlon mercenaries, 2 cruisers, the *Imperial* and the *Frederick Constantine II* (both on personal loan from the Emperor himself), each with 4 starfighters, and 15 starfighters (5 squadrons).

Viscount Amin is a silver-tongued weakling who owes his current fief



from Count Sillith to the fact that Sillith wished to please the Emperor; Amin is an Imperial favorite, and spends every possible hour at court on Cairn, away from what he calls "the dreadful guerrilla war" on Earth. Amin knows his position at court could change with the whim of Frederick Constantine II, and he's trying to enlist other noble allies in the Wilderness region, most especially Baron Rissil. He doesn't know that Rissil is stringing him along, planning to use the Gorlon troops he has hired out to Amin to be the means of Amin's own downfall. Only Amin's current standing with the Emperor, and the neutrality of Jub'el, prevents his immediate overthrow.

Viscount LIGL

RACE: Gorlon

STR 44 **DEX** 62 **AGL** 50
WPR 62 **PER** 32 **PCN** 60
STA 70 **UMS** 47 **WNDS** 15

SKILLS: All beam weapons, Vet, 92; Sword, Vet, 77; Spacecraft Piloting, Vet, 88; Outdoor Survival, Vet, 88; Investigation, Vet, 82.

HOLDINGS: Emniyet

FORCES: 12 divisions Human mercenaries, 6 destroyers, each with 2 starfighters, 15 planet based starfighters (5 squadrons).

Viscount Ligl is an older Gorlon who controls Emniyet as a reward for his loyal service to Count Sillith through the years. Now, at the age of 120, he is considered a fossil by the younger Gorlons. Ligl has little time to worry about the schemes of Baron Gruy against him; the Kleibors of Emniyet are making his life a nightmare. Ligl is famous for his love of creature comforts: if there's anything he hates more than Kleibors, it's the climate on Emniyet. Perhaps his constant discomfort goes a long way toward explaining why he's so brutal toward the occupied population.



Count VON HELMUTH
Admiral, Commander Imperial Fleet, at Asfalia

RACE: Human

STR 56 **DEX** 54 **AGL** 50
WPR 78 **PER** 60 **PCN** 72
STA 52 **UMS** 53 **WNDS** 13

SKILLS: Spacecraft Piloting, Ace, 114; Emergency Spacecraft Repair, Ace, 123; Deep Space Navigation, Ace, 127; All beam weapons, Vet, 84; Sword, Vet, 83; Mirage Missiles, Vet, 93.

HOLDINGS: None in Wilderness Region

Admiral von Helmuth commands the Imperial fleet at Asfalia. His principal duties are protecting ore shipments from Tamilla, suppressing the

Star Teams, and defending the Imperial occupied worlds of the region. He hates Jub'el, the regional overlord of ICE, and is involved in countless plots against this Crassite. Otherwise, the admiral, in his mid-50's, spends his time on administrative duties and drowning his sorrows in Asfalian wines.

Count JUB'EL Regional Overlord, ICE

RACE: Crassite

STR 60 **DEX** 44 **AGL** 48
WPR 62 **PER** 48 **PCN** 72
STA 38 **UMS** 54 **WNDS** 12

SKILLS: Investigation, Ace, 116; Computers, Vet, 91; All beam weapons, Vet, 74; Sword, Vet, 84; Disguise, Vet, 76; Impersonation, Vet, 87.

HOLDINGS: None in Wilderness Region

This fat old Crassite is a wily operator, dedicated solely to his own financial and political advancement. He is involved in schemes with almost every noble in the region to increase his cut from black market activities. He knows about Baron Rissil's designs against Viscount Amin, but keeps carefully neutral on the subject. He hopes to polish his reputation by stunning victories over the Star Teams.



Chapter 4: NPC ALIEN RACES

Yasik the Traka, ladies and gentlemen—back again and at your service, this time to acquaint you with some of the folks you're likely to meet on your Star Team adventures.

There are several hundred known intelligent species within the boundaries of the Empire and the Alliance (some of these—believe me—more intelligent than others!). Of these, five, aside from the PC races covered in the *Training Manual*, play important roles in Imperial and Alliance affairs in the Wilderness region. I'm going to give you a little background on these five major alien races, and also what little we've figured out about the Xenophobes, that mysterious race of murderers who are invading the Empire from somewhere in the galactic core.

THE CRASSITES

Crassites are short, fat humanoids with tapirlike snouts. Their knack for business and trade has made the phrase “bargain like a Crassite” a part of the Universal language.

Physical Characteristics

Crassites measure height to the shoulder, rather than to the top of the head, because a Crassite always stoops forward from the shoulders. The average Crassite measures about 4'10" to the shoulder, although some are as tall as 5'3".

Crassites are extremely fat by human standards—I mean, we're talking sideshow fat! Carnival fat! At any rate, this layer of fatty tissue just below their grainy, stubby, gray skin protects them against the cold on their home world, Fal'el. Of course, their size has its disadvantages, too: they become uncomfortable in most temperate settings. Temperatures over 60 degrees Fahrenheit cause a Crassite to sweat like a Kleibor in a sauna, and they can't stand temperatures higher than 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Crassites have small hands and short, stubby fingers. Their bodies are hairless except for a few greasy black locks at the top of the head,

which disappear when the Crassite gets to be about 70 years old.

Despite their ugliness, the physical makeup of Crassites isn't that different from that of Humans. Crassites are omnivores, although they tend to eat meat sparingly; they share the same senses as Humans, and Crassite females bear live young. The average life expectancy of a Crassite is about 100 Earth Years.

Social and Cultural Background

There's no doubt that the ancestors of the Crassites were grazing herd animals. Crassite society and culture still have a herdlike structure.

Crassites organize themselves socially into large clans (called *muir'im*), which consist of at most a few dozen adult males, and 3-10 female Crassites for each male: the wealthier the *muir'im*, the greater the number of females. Sounds like a bad deal for the females, doesn't it? Well, both male and female of the species are so wretchedly ugly that everyone's a loser in my book.

Still, being male is an advantage among Crassites: all males carry both a personal name and the name of the *muir'im* into which they were born; females have only personal names until they are sold or bartered to a *muir'im* in which they will breed. Males are the valued members of the *muir'im*; females are seen as bargaining chips or breeding stock.

For most Crassites, the good of the *muir'im* is more important than the individual. Because the “good” of the *muir'im* is seen purely in terms of money, a “good” Crassite may sell his own son or daughter into slavery if the price is right. Almost all property and goods owned by members of a *muir'im* are considered the property of the *muir'im*; when you deal with a Crassite, you're actually dealing with the “family business.” Quarrels within a *muir'im* are often settled suddenly and violently.

During the annual breeding season, the males of the Crassite *muir'im* compete fiercely for the attention of the clan's females; this is probably the reason Crassites love to show off



their riches. Most of the time, Crassite males wear their wealth: heavy, jewel-encrusted gold nose rings, diamond lensed monocles, all kinds of rings and earrings, extremely expensive black robes of silk or crushed velvet, silver or gold brocade, and ornamental weapons, worn more for show than for use.

Crassite males are as cold in business as they are with their females and families: it doesn't bother them a bit to ruin someone financially, have someone roughed up, or even hire an assassin to get their way. However, aside from the lower class Crassites, whose love of plunder makes them fierce (but unruly) mercenary soldiers, most are cowardly in the face of violence; they much prefer to hire others to do their dirty work for them, and agree to almost anything when threatened (not that they keep promises when the danger has been removed). Crassites are noted for their long memories and ability to nurse grudges for decades.

Creating Crassite NPCs

To create a Crassite NPC, use the method for creating Human PCs, but make sure Ability scores follow these restrictions (see Chapter 5 for more information on creating NPCs):

1. The maximum Stamina for a Crassite is 60;
2. The minimum Perception for a Crassite is 60.

The following statistics are those of a standard Crassite NPC:

STR	64	DEX	46	AGL	46
WPR	60	PER	40	PCN	72
STA	38	UMS	55	WNDS	12

Crassites In Play

Crassites receive a +30 modifier to their Personality and/or Willpower scores, as appropriate, when engaging in any type of business or trade negotiations. See "Chapter 5: Dealing With NPCs," for more details.

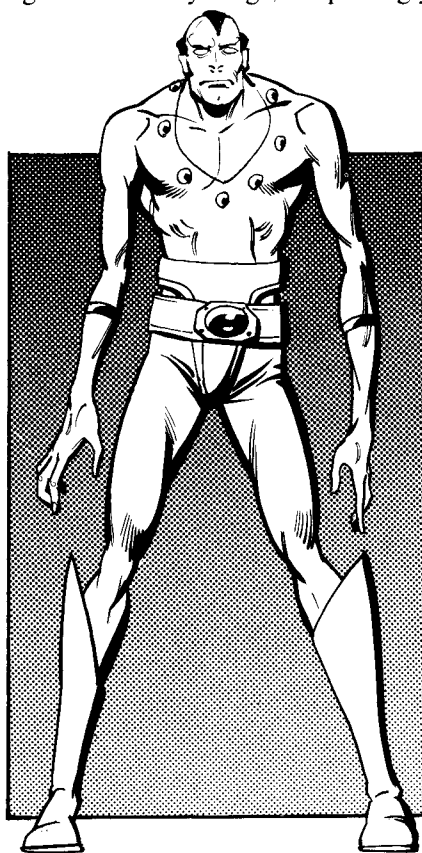
THE TARSANS

Tarsans are extremely tall, thin, intelligent humanoids. They're one of the oldest known races in the galaxy,

and spend much of their time in meditation and thought—a lifestyle now threatened by the Imperial occupation of their homeworld, Shamba.

Physical Characteristics

Tarsans look a lot like tall, spindly Human giants, usually between 8' and 9' tall. Their heads are long and egg shaped; the face has large, child-like eyes, a flat nose, and a small mouth. The two arms are long, extending almost to the knees, and ending in extremely large, surprisingly



nimble hands. The average life expectancy of a Tarsan is about 70 Earth Years.

Social and Cultural Background

Tarsans are similar to Humans in so many ways, and their way of life embodies so many Human ideals, that Humans sometimes call them the "giants of Eden." We Trakans are more inclined to label them "big dopes," for reasons that should become obvious.

Tarsan history was similar to the Human until some 150,000 years ago. At that time, the race developed the technology that transformed its homeworld, Shamba, from a struggling, dog-eat-dog society to a virtual garden paradise. Now that they no longer had to struggle for daily survival, the Tarsans unified their planet and went on to develop the high tech needed for space travel.

The Tarsan "Space Period" lasted some 100,000 years, while the race explored almost a quarter of the galaxy, including most the territory now covered by the Empire and the Alliance. As luck would have it, the Tarsans came across some kind of plague that even their advanced medical knowledge couldn't handle. Spread by their trade ships, the disease destroyed the Tarsans on planet after planet, and came close to wiping out the entire race. The few survivors returned to Shamba.

Now, 50,000 years later, the Tarsans themselves know almost nothing about their Space Period. They lost interest in exploration after the plague, and most of the records of the great Tarsan galactic civilization were destroyed. Now they have a quiet, stable society, limited to Shamba, where they rear their children strictly and study theology and philosophy. And that's it.

Sure, the Tarsans did undertake a few more space voyages from time to time, but they were friendly voyages, to contact intelligent species in what is now known as the Wilderness region.

Well, Imperial occupation has made for trouble in the Shamban paradise. Now Tarsan children are being taught "good Imperial citizenship" by state schools under the authority of Baron Rilh. The occupying Gorkon troops stage gladiatorial games in which Gorkons and Tarsans fight to the death; the apparent purpose of this is to bring out the Tarsans' fighting spirit, making them fit material for the Imperial military.

The Tarsans haven't taken well to the new regime on Shamba. Most of them are more thinkers than fighters, and philosophy doesn't defend you

all that well against a beam saber. So the Tarsans have developed a philosophy of passive resistance, which basically gets them beat up all the worse. A few Tarsans, however, have realized that lemonade and flowers don't work with the Gorlons, so they've taken up the high tech weapons their occupied economy can still produce. Gorlon troops are engaged in an active campaign to stamp out these Tarsan guerrillas, who have been quite a bit tougher than the Empire cares to admit. Still, Tarsan violence is an unusual thing, strictly limited to dealings with the Empire; a Tarsan seldom, if ever, attacks a being not affiliated with the Empire.

Creating Tarsan NPCs

To create a Tarsan NPC, use the method for creating Human PCs, but make sure Ability scores follow these restrictions:

1. The minimum Tarsan Strength, Dexterity and Stamina score is 70;
2. The maximum Tarsan Willpower score is 50.

The following scores may be used for standard Tarsan NPCs:

STR	74	DEX	78	AGL	60
WPR	30	PER	56	PCN	50
STA	74	UMS	67	WNDS	15

THE GORLONS

The Gorlons are a warm-blooded, intelligent reptilian race. They're basically smart bullies, and that made them first valuable allies and now valued servants of the Empire. Still, not all Gorlons are Imperial goons: a few live in and are loyal to the Alliance.

Physical Characteristics

Gorlons appear so obviously reptilian that they've received the very proper nicknames "lizard men" and "slime crawlers." There are two distinct type of Gorlons: brown and green.

Brown Gorlons are descendants from the lower class, desert dwelling Gorlons of the race's homeland,



Srith. The typical brown Gorlon has a thick brown hide, a flat head, and large eyes set well back in the side of the head. Its sharp teeth are those of a carnivore. The creature has a large, thick tail, once used for balancing itself, but now evolved into almost a prehensile limb, capable of grasping and clutching. Brown Gorlons stand between 6' and 7' tall.

Green Gorlons are descendants from upper class dwellers in the tropical forests of Srith. They are very similar in appearance to their brown cousins, but are about 8' tall and no longer have tails.

Gorlons have senses similar to Humans. They are egg layers, and although the brown and green types could breed together, it is against Gorlon custom and law. The average Gorlon life expectancy is about 150 Earth Years.

Regenerative Powers

Both brown and green Gorlons have a limited ability to regenerate lost limbs, and tend to heal extremely

rapidly. A successful armed combat called shot to any limb of a Gorlon severs that limb from the creature's body. The limb regenerates completely in 2d10 days. Gorlons can heal wounds at double the normal rate for PCs.

Social and Cultural Background

Gorlons have only a limited family structure. Young are reared by females especially chosen for the duty. These duties consist mainly of education, for a newborn Gorlon is fully capable of caring for its basic needs on its own. Brown Gorlons may learn only the "socially acceptable" subjects of reading, writing, basic economics, basic science, and warfare. Green Gorlons may have an advanced education including most of the topics normally covered in Human universities.

The social wall between brown and green is found everywhere in modern Gorlon life. Brown Gorlons are the underclass, and serve the greens as slaves and soldiers. The society is

strict in keeping a policy of “separation of the races,” and for some strange reason, the brown Gorlons seem to buy this garbage! Well...not all of them. A few have made their way to Alliance worlds and established new, racially equal Gorlon societies. These Alliance-based brown Gorlons are particularly friendly toward Crystal Clones.

Racial problems aside, Gorlon architecture is probably the weirdest thing about their culture. Their extremely tall buildings, similar to skyscrapers on 20th Century Earth, are made of lightweight metals. These structures usually have glass walls and sides, and are open to the light—Gorlons love to bask. The buildings are framed in light metal latticework, an ideal structure for Gorlons to climb, a form of exercise they prize. A typical Gorlon dwelling in such a building contains a public area with doorways about 9' tall, and private areas with doorways only 3' tall; the Gorlons go through the smaller doors by crawling on all four limbs, a form of movement used only in the presence of other Gorlons.

Most Gorlons under Imperial domination believe that power is the greatest good and the highest goal in life. Green Gorlons, especially, believe that the powerless life is not worth living. They believe you get power by force, and show power through continuing to push other folks around. That's why Gorlons make excellent planetary occupation troops. Green Gorlons tend to be involved in many plots and schemes for power within the Empire.

Creating Gorlon NPCs

To create a Gorlon NPC, use the method for creating Human PCs, but make sure Ability scores follow these restrictions:

1. The minimum score for Gorlon Stamina and Agility is 40.
2. The maximum score for Gorlon Personality is 60.

The following statistics may be used for a standard Gorlon NPC:

STR	58	DEX	50	AGL	76
WPR	50	PER	32	PCN	48
STA	76	UMS	67	WNDS	15

Gorlons In Play

Gorlons have the regenerative powers described above. They are also natural climbers, and can climb walls, cliffs, trees, and other obstacles at a rate of 20' per round.



THE ZOE

You couldn't tell by looking at them, but the Zoe just may be the most ferocious race in the galaxy. They haven't done anything culturally important or new for thousands of years; in fact, they just want to be left alone—a policy the Empire isn't all that good at following. Asfalia, the Zoean home planet, has been occupied since the Armistice, and the Zoe are giving the Imperial garrisons a pretty rough time of it.

Physical Characteristics

Zoe are much shorter than most intelligent races: both sexes average

3'4" in height, although the Zoe tell stories about 5' tall “giants.” An average Zoean weighs only 45 pounds in normal (1g) gravity.

Zoeans are quite thin and frail, with unusually large heads. They are completely hairless, and their eyes are huge and black. The mouth and nose are similar to Humans', but the Zoe have no outer ear; instead, they have small entry canals to an inner ear on each side of the large head. Zoeans all have very pale skin; their veins and arteries show clearly through the skin. The Zoe appear to have no upper skull: the top of the head looks like a large, skin-covered brain, throbbing in rhythm with the Zoean's pulse.

The average life expectancy of a Zoean is about 120 Earth Years.

To the casual observer, there is no apparent difference between the Zoe sexes. Only another Zoean, or a trained medical observer who has conducted a thorough examination, can tell them apart.

Individual Zoe dress in simple, seamless robes. They tend to be rather blunt and honest. They show no emotions, even in battle.

Social and Cultural Background

The Zoe population is controlled by the nature of their extended family, or *mazi*, system. A *mazi* consists of up to 100 related Zoeans. Zoeans born into the *mazi* stay there until the age of 30, at which time they are expected to take a spouse from another friendly *mazi*. The couple joins the smaller *mazi* of the two who arranged the marriage. Should both *mazis* be “full,” that is, have 100 members, the couple is granted permission to start a new *mazi*. Seem like a blueprint for overpopulation? The Zoe have solved that problem by their rather curious Wars of Vigilance.

Every 50 years (Asfalia's year is 370 days—very close to that of Earth) each *mazi* engages in a ritual war against another. The war lasts for 100 days, after which each *mazi* arranges its opponent for the next war. It is considered an honor to die in the Wars of Vigilance, for the greater

good of the mazi and the “larger mazi that is Asfalia.” The next War of Vigilance begins in 3514.

It may be surprising when you consider their bloodthirstiness, but the Zoe are vegetarians. Only a low technology level is needed to keep the controlled population well fed. There is (or was until Imperial occupation) very little work required of the average Zoean.

Perhaps as a result of this life of ease, the chief pursuit of the Zoe became entertainment (if you can call it that). Zoe theatre and drama were highly popular on Asfalia, but the plays always teach support and submission to “the will of the mazi.” All in all, boring stuff—no match for a Kleibor dort game or a Trakan comedy.

The sudden arrival of the Empire on Asfalia changed much about Zoean life. Totally used to submitting to “a larger power,” the Zoeans surrendered immediately, and soon found themselves slaves to an Imperial overlord.

When they saw that the Empire was disrupting the ancient traditions of the mazi, a few Zoeans began resistance activities, aided heavily by Star Team smugglers who managed (and still manage) to get weapons to them under the nose of the Imperial Navy base on Asfalia. Even veteran Star Team members marvel at the ruthlessness, the complete disregard of their own safety, with which the Zoe resistance wages war against the Empire. Although physically weak, the Zoe are almost foolishly brave: they fight to the death, neither asking nor giving mercy.

Creating Zoe NPCs

To create a Zoe NPC, use the method for creating Human PCs, but make sure Ability scores follow these restrictions:

1. The maximum Zoe score for Strength and Stamina is 40;
2. The minimum Zoe score for Perception is 70.

The following scores may be used for a standard Zoe NPC:

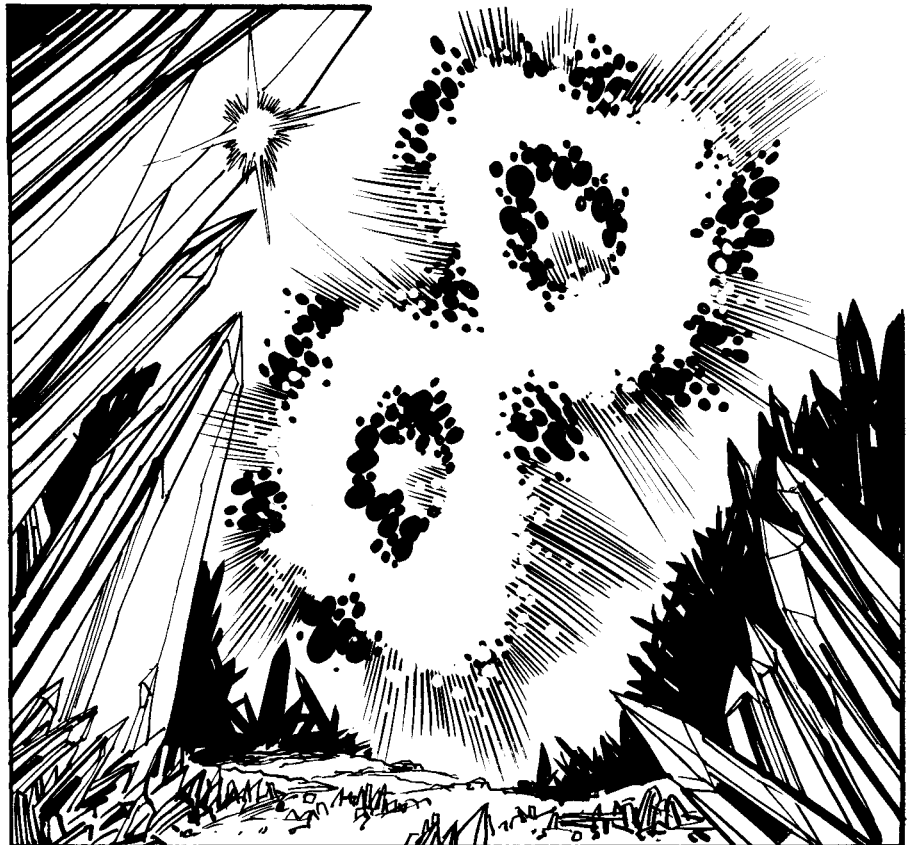
STR	20	DEX	46	AGL	58
WPR	54	PER	40	PCN	76
STA	20	UMS	39	WNDS	10

THE CRYSTAL FOLK

The Crystal Folk of Ruoka are unique among the intelligent races of the Wilderness region, in that they are not a carbon based life form. The Crystal Folk keep much about themselves secret; however, here's what we know for sure.

Physical Characteristics

The Crystal Folk are living, intelligent fields of energy, combined somehow with a small amount of matter. Crystal Folk are very hard for other races to detect by sight, sound, or any other normal sense except touch. Barely visible to the naked eye, they appear as a shimmering, transparent, hourglass or figure-eight shape, floating a few inches above the ground. New-born Crystal Folk are spheres; they gradually take their adult hourglass shape.



Crystal Folk are native to the planet Ruoka, and apparently are the only life form to have evolved there. Crystal Folk arise (or are born) when certain forms of radiation from the Ruokan sun pass through a Xantium crystal, releasing a stream of highly charged light energy and ions into the peculiar Ruokan atmosphere. The resulting reaction produces a Crystal Folk sphere. This sphere, drawing further energy from the passage of Ruokan sunlight through Xantium, rapidly evolves, within a few weeks, into an adult Crystal Folk.

Crystal Folk communicate using varying electromagnetic frequencies beyond the perception of most races. They can manipulate physical objects by generating and controlling electromagnetic force fields within about 2' of their own “body.”

Social and Cultural Background

The age of the Crystal Folk, and their history as a race, is unknown to all except themselves. We have learned a bit, however, about their social organization and values.

“Food” is the single most important element in the life of the Crystal Folk. The same energy that creates them feeds them—Ruokan sunlight passed through Xantium crystal—and they guard this energy source jealously.

Crystal Folk construct their dwellings out of Xantium crystals. These appear to be nothing more than a pile of huge crystal shards with an opening leading to a space underneath the pile. While the Crystal Folk remain in these dwellings, they constantly absorb energy during the daylight hours.

If you were to look closely, however, you’d notice that these dwellings, or “crystal mounds” as Humans call them, are always near a hill or other area that provides shade. You see, the Crystal Folk arrange things so that the dwelling is exposed to the direct light of the Ruokan sun for no more than 8 out of the 14 Earth hours of daylight on Ruoka; creating a spheroid infant requires a longer period of sunlight than this, so by design, the Crystal Folk prevent accidental increases in population.

New Crystal Folk arise only from the designated breeding fields, where Xantium crystals are placed in predetermined numbers in the open. Population growth is regulated; no Crystal Folk is allowed to be created unless there is some purpose to be served by the birth.

The young Crystal Folk are taught their “purpose” very early in life. These various purposes remain a mystery to us, but that’s not unusual; we don’t know anything about their technology or economics, either. The Crystal Folk guard these secrets in natural underground caverns on Ruoka, where, apparently, they work in rotating, short shifts.

Aside from food, most important thing to the Crystal Folk is symmetry, or order. Of course, Crystal Folk don’t seem to understand the symmetry or order of carbon based lifeforms any more than one of us can understand the electromagnetic order in a Crystal Folk dwelling. As a result the Crystal Folk seem to think that, at best, all the other known races (yours and mine included) are ugly things better left

alone. Kind of hard to believe, isn’t it? That anyone could find Trakans ugly!

Nevertheless, Crystal Folk must have some notion of kindness or concern; after all, they did attempt to help the first Humans on Ruoka by creating the first Crystal Clones to aid the Humans as technicians (see Chapter III of *Basic Training Manual*). Of course, once the Crystal Folk learned that the Humans were after Xantium, their attitude changed. They now see their “sale” of Xantium mining rights to the Alliance in return for military protection from the Empire as the lesser of two evils.

We don’t know much about the combat abilities of the Crystal Folk. It is certain—I’ve seen it myself—that each individual can generate a directed energy beam, just like the one from a laser pistol, which can really do a number on carbon based life forms. Occasionally, two or more Crystal Folk band together to create powerful fields, capable of lifting a carbon based form (such as a Human, Trakan, or Kleibor) high in the air. We believe that using this ability requires one Crystal Folk for every 100 pounds (at 1g gravity) they plan on moving, and drains 10 points of Willpower from each one involved.

Communication between the Crystal Folk and other races is possible through Crystal Clone translators, or by use of a special computer translation program, which requires the Folk to speak into a computer input.

Creating Crystal Folk NPCs

Adult Crystal Folk all have identical Basic Ability scores. Treat all scores except Personality and Stamina as 60. Crystal Folk have no Stamina score. Crystal Folk have a Personality score of 60 when they are attempting to persuade, negotiate, or otherwise deal with other NPCs; treat them as if their Personality is 80 when PCs are attempting to persuade or otherwise deal with them.

Crystal Folk In Play

Crystal Folk don’t suffer wound damage or Stamina loss like other

characters. Instead, any Crystal Folk who has a metal weapon thrust into its body becomes inactive until the weapon is removed and for 1d10 rounds thereafter; a Crystal Folk subjected to the influence of an electromagnetic field generator is destroyed. Other types of weapons have no effect on them.

THE XENOPHOBES

We don’t know what they call themselves, but we call them the Xenophobes because of their total hatred and fear of all intelligent races except their own. They’re an extremely noetically gifted race, and a few years back, they invaded the Empire from somewhere near the core of the galaxy. The few who have lived to tell of these aliens report that they appear to be ratlike humanoids with extensive noetic talents.

So far, Xenophobes have refused any peaceful contact with other races; instead, they attack on sight. They do keep some of the population of their conquered worlds alive as slaves.

We know almost nothing about Xenophobe technology, but their vehicles seem to be inferior in design to those we have in the Star Teams. We’re glad of that; we’re also glad that Xenophobes haven’t shown up yet in the Wilderness region.

Creating Xenophobe NPCs

Xenophobe NPCs are created just like Human NPCs with one exception: a Xenophobe’s Willpower score is always 1d10+70. In addition to all other talents, each Xenophobe has a minimum of three noetic talents at Rookie level, two at Veteran level, and one at Ace level. The following may be used as statistics for a standard Xenophobe NPC:

STR	40	DEX	60	AGL	60
WPR	75	PER	30	PCN	50
STA	40	UMS	50	WNDS	12

Chapter 5: NPC REACTIONS

It should be clear that, in a galaxy of 100 billion stars, all the folks who play parts in a STAR ACE™ adventure aren't going to be player characters! Nonplayer characters (NPCs) are all the characters in the game who aren't PCs. Some of them play major roles in an adventure; others have only a minor part. But, of course, all of the NPCs are important to the flavor and fun of the game—to the CM's creating a rich and believable world as the background for the adventure.

The CM plays all the NPCs in an adventure. It is his or her job to make these characters "come to life" for the other players in the game. A lot of the time, this means figuring out how the NPCs in the adventure are going to react to what PCs are doing. What's that Gorlon trooper going to do when a PC starts a fist fight with his drinking buddy? What's the Crassite trader going to do when he realizes his gambling opponent has been using loaded Trakan dice? Will that Imperial official at the space port customs office take a quick bribe? This chapter tells the CM how to deter-

mine the reaction of an NPC to almost any situation, quickly and easily.

NPC STATISTICS

NPCs are created just like PCs, using the same basic character generation system. Remember when creating Kleibor, Crystal Clone, or Trakan NPCs that each of these races has a restricted Basic Ability score, and that several of their other Basic Abilities are, as a result, usually a bit higher than the average Human's. In addition, some NPC races have minimum or maximum scores in specific Basic Abilities. In such cases, simply assign and adjust the Basic Ability scores rolled to meet these minimums or maximums. For example, the minimum Perception score for a Crassite is 60. Let's say that, while creating a Crassite NPC, a CM rolls no Basic Ability scores higher than 56. In this case, all he or she needs to do is assign the 56 to Perception, assign the other scores rolled to the other attributes, then

NOETIC SKILLS CHART

Race	Chance	Rook	Vet.	Ace
Human	05%	2	2	1
Traka	03%	2	1	1
Crystal Clone	01%	1	1	0
Kleibor	10%	3	3	2
Crassite	04%	1	1	0
Tarsan	01%	1	0	0
Gorlon	02%	2	1	1
Zoe	08%	3	2	1
Crystal Folk	0	0	0	0
Xenophobe*	100%	6	4	3

Chance = The chance that an NPC of the given race has noetic skills

Rook = The maximum number of noetic skills the NPC may have at rookie level

Vet = The maximum number of noetic skills the NPC may have at Veteran level

Ace = The maximum number of noetic skills the NPC may have at Ace level

* = All Xenophobes have 3 noetic skills at Rookie level, 2 at Veteran level, and 1 at Ace level. More powerful Xenophobes may have additional noetic skills up to the maximums shown.

STANDARD NPCS CHART

RACE: Human

All ability scores: 50

WNDS: 13

RACE: Traka

STR	50	DEX	57	AGL	50
WPR	50	PER	57	PCN	50
STA	40	UMS	50	WNDS	12

Max. STA: 60

RACE: Crystal Clone

STR	50	DEX	57	AGL	50
WPR	50	PER	40	PCN	57
STA	50	UMS	50	WNDS	13

Max. PER: 60

RACE: Kleibor

STR	50	DEX	40	AGL	50
WPR	57	PER	57	PCN	57
STA	50	UMS	50	WNDS	13

Max. DEX: 60

RACE: Crassite

STR	64	DEX	46	AGL	46
WPR	60	PER	40	PCN	72
STA	38	UMS	55	WNDS	12

Min. PCN: 60 Max. STA: 60

RACE: Tarsan

STR	74	DEX	78	AGL	60
WPR	30	PER	56	PCN	50
STA	74	UMS	67	WNDS	15

Min. STR, DEX & STA: 70

Max. WPR: 50

RACE: Gorlon

STR	58	DEX	50	AGL	76
WPR	50	PER	32	PCN	48
STA	76	UMS	67	WNDS	15

Min. STA & AGL: 40

Max. PER: 60

RACE: Zoe

STR	20	DEX	46	AGL	58
WPR	54	PER	40	PCN	76
STA	20	UMS	39	WNDS	10

Min. PCN: 70

Max. STA & STR: 40

RACE: Crystal Folk*

All ability scores: 60

STA & WNDS: NA

All Crystal Folk have identical stats.

Crystal Folk have a PER of 80 when the reacting character in an interaction.

RACE: Xenophobe

STR	40	DEX	60	AGL	60
WPR	75	PER	30	PCN	50
STA	40	UMS	50	WNDS	12

Min. WPR: 1d10+70

Automatically have 3 Rookie, 2 Veteran and 1 Ace noetic skills.

raise the Perception score automatically to 60, the minimum for a Crassite.

Often, the CM has to create an NPC during play, and has to do so quickly so that the players don't get bored waiting for the action to start up again. For example, the PCs may unexpectedly decide to drop in at a local space port bar. Who's the bartender (maybe more importantly, who's the bouncer?) and what are their Basic Ability scores? In such cases, it is often convenient to use a standard NPC. A standard NPC is simply an NPC whose scores are typical for his or her race. For the CM's convenience, the scores for a standard NPC of each race are given on the Standard NPCs Chart.

NPCs And Luck

NPCs do not have Luck as a Basic Ability; only player characters have a Luck score. However, sometimes an NPC may have a skill which uses Luck as part of the formula for computing the skill score. In such cases,



all NPCs, regardless of race, may be assumed to have a Luck score of 50 for purposes of computing the skill score.

NPC Skills

Generally, NPCs may have whatever skills are appropriate to their function in an adventure. For example, Gorlon soldiers would certainly have at least some skill in using their weapons, NPC technicians would have at least Rookie level skills with computers, and so on. The CM should use common sense and the particular needs of the adventure when he or she assigns skills to NPCs.

Noetic skills are another matter. Aside from Xenophobes, only a very few NPCs have noetic skills. The chance that an NPC has noetic capabilities, and the maximum number and level of the NPC's noetic skills, is given on the NPC Noetic Skills Chart. The actual noetic skills an NPC may have are left to the choice and judgment of the CM.

Status Ratings

NPCs who hold military, political or economic power on a planet, in a system, or in even a larger area have a Status Rating that indicates the power they have. Status Ratings range from 1 (the least powerful) to 5 (the most powerful). An NPC's status rating is directly related to his or her Imperial title or Alliance office. Of course, the vast majority of NPCs have no Status Rating. The following chart provides Status Ratings for Imperial and Alliance NPCs.

STATUS RATINGS CHART

Position	Rating
Emperor, Alliance Executive	5
Grand Duke, Duke, Senior Senator	4
Count, Junior Senator	3
Viscount, Alliance planet ruler	2
Baron, Alliance planet major official, family member of any of the above	1

NPC REACTIONS

There are three guidelines for determining how NPCs react in any given situation. These guidelines are given in order of importance: when determining NPC reactions, the CM should use the second guideline only if the first does not apply, and the third only if the first two do not apply.

Guideline One: The story in the adventure scenario. In many cases, the adventure scenario you are playing plainly states how an NPC will react in a given situation. Often, these reactions are a built-in part of the plot of the adventure. They are also usually consistent with the character of the NPC. For example, the commanding officer of an Imperial destroyer is certainly going to respond aggressively to an attack on his vessel; such a response is a natural and basic part of the plot of almost any adventure in which an Imperial destroyer would be introduced.

Guideline Two: The personality of the

SITUATION CHECK RESULTS

Die Roll	Result	DAC Modifier
1	Hostile: Angry that he or she is being disturbed; doesn't want to deal with PCs.	-20
2	Angry: Angry about something which does not involve the PCs; in a bad mood.	-15
3	Scornful: Feels he or she is too important to waste time with the PCs.	-10
4	Hurried: Will grant the PCs very little time; has more important matters to deal with.	-05
5	Bored: Uninterest in what the PCs have to say, unless it sounds novel or amusing.	0
6	Open: Willing to deal with the PCs in a business-like manner.	0
7	Curious: Courteous, but very inquisitive.	0
8	Friendly: Initially friendly to the PCs, willing to provide reasonable service or information.	+05
9	Flirtatious: Attempts to flirt with PC of appropriate race and sex. If no such PC is present, treat as result 8 above.	+10
10	Eager: In a jovial mood, eager to hear what PCs have to say and to be of reasonable assistance.	+15

NPC. The CM should "know" the most important NPCs in an adventure before play begins. He or she should have formed a clear idea about NPC personalities, goals, desires, likes, dislikes, and the probable way they would react to the situations most likely to come up during play. For example, suppose a major NPC in an adventure is a Crassite merchant noted for his smooth talking (and for his cowardice). Obviously, this NPC will try to talk his way out of a dangerous situation, and will appear to give in if he is threatened with violence (only to send a couple of assassins after the PCs later). It is important to keep the reactions of the major NPCs consistent with their personalities; this makes the adventure seem more real to the players, and makes the game more fun for everyone.

Guideline Three: Situation checks and direct action checks. When the CM cannot otherwise decide how an NPC will react to a situation, he or

she can use situation and direct action checks to determine the NPC's reaction.

Situation Checks

Well-played NPCs should have their moods, just like people in the real world do. Those moods can affect the way they react to PCs or other NPCs. The CM can use situation checks to determine quickly and secretly the mood of an NPC just before that NPC is approached by another character.

A situation check is made by rolling 1d10. If the NPC in question has a Status Rating, subtract that rating from the roll of 1d10. Results are obtained on the Situation Check Results Table.

Direct Action Checks

A direct action check is a specific check against a character's Personality score. The results of a direct

action check tell the CM how an NPC reacts to the words or actions of the character who is making the check.

Direct action check results are found in the defense column of the Action Table which corresponds to one of the Basic Abilities of the NPC whose reaction is in question. For example, if several Star Team members are trying to con a Crassite merchant whose Perception Ability score is 72, the CM finds the "61-75" range in the smaller blue numbers at the top of the Action Table; the results will be found in column 5. The following chart shows the possible types of actions by PCs which could result in a direct action check, and the appropriate Basic Ability of the NPC to use when resolving the check on the Action Table.

DIRECT ACTION CHART

PC Action	NPC Ability (Def. Column)
Routine request	Personality
Request for aid, no danger	Personality
Request for aid in dangerous situation	Personality
Lying, conning	Perception
Persuading	Current Willpower
Threatening	Current Willpower

Direct Action Check Modifiers

A PC's Personality score may be modified before the roll of a direct action check by a situation check modifier and a racial modifier.

Situation check modifiers reflect the mood of the NPC at the time the PC begins to interact with him or her. These modifiers are found on the Situation Check Results Chart under the heading "DAC Modifier."

Racial modifiers reflect the relative like or dislike which exists between the PC and NPC race: Kleibor generally like Humans and Trakans, Humans generally like Kleibor and Trakans, and nobody cares too much for Gorlons in general. These modifiers are summarized on the Racial Modifiers chart.

Results

Failure of a direct action check means the NPC reacts negatively. He or she refuses to help, sees through a lie or con, or, if the PC has made a threat, responds with a counterthreat or perhaps even direct violence.

Successful direct action checks yield results which are interpreted on the following key:

DIRECT ACTION CHECK RESULTS KEY

S = Slight positive reaction: The NPC doesn't say "No." Further discussion is in order.

L = Limited positive reaction: The NPC takes some limited action to do what the PC wants. This action must not involve danger or harm, cost the NPC money, or take up much of his or her time.

M = Moderate positive reaction: The NPC is willing to spend time to help the PC as long as that help involves no financial or physical risk.

H = Highly positive reaction: The

NPC is willing to spend some time and money to help the PC, but will not expose himself to physical danger.

C = Charmed: The NPC is quite taken with the PC, and is willing to risk time, money and even moderate danger to aid the PC.

K = Not applicable.

Interaction Among NPCs

Sometimes, a group of PCs may have an NPC along with them, participating in some form of interaction with still another NPC. On these and other occasions, the CM may wish to determine randomly the results of interactions between NPCs. The standard situation and direct action check system is used, treating the acting NPC as if he or she were a PC.

Frequency of Checks

Usually, the CM should limit direct action checks to one per specific encounter. That is, PCs should only have one chance to persuade, con, or

bargain with a given NPC in given situation. The "S" result on a direct action check is the obvious exception: an "S" result demands another direct action check, as the CM determines whether the PC has made inroads in persuading the NPC, or whether he or she has messed up a fairly decent start.

In addition, if the CM feels that the situation calls for it, he or she may allow additional checks as the PCs use different tactics to influence the behavior of the NPC.

LEGAL PROBLEMS

On occasion, PCs may be hauled before an Imperial vizier (the appointed judges in the Empire's legal system) for such violations of Imperial law as piracy, smuggling, firing on Imperial ships, murder (resistance fighting), or simply for being a Star Team member. The penalty for all of these offenses is, of course, death.

All Imperial trials are conducted by a vizier. If the evidence is overwhelming against the PC, the PC will almost certainly be executed at once unless the CM decides to allow a rescue attempt by other Star Team members.

In cases in which the PC might have even a slim chance to avoid being convicted, the CM should allow the PC to make a general Luck check. A successful check indicates the PC is found "Not guilty." Failure indicates the opposite. At the CM's option, the PC's Luck score may be modified by +10 for each piece of major evidence or important witness the PC can obtain on his own behalf. If this system is used, the PC's Luck score should similarly be modified by -10 for each major piece of evidence or important witness brought against him.

Trials on Alliance worlds are generally more fair than Imperial trials, and in some cases the sentences are lighter, but the same game system can be used should PCs commit some great crime on an Alliance world. Both Imperial viziers and Alliance judges can sometimes be bribed; see the bribery rules in "Chapter 6: Economics."

RACIAL MODIFIERS CHART

Race of acting character	Race of Reacting NPC							
	Human	Traka	Clone	Klbr.	Cras.	Tar.	Gor.	Zoe
Human	0	-05	-10	+20	0	+10	-20	0
Traka	+10	0	-05	+15	0	+10	-05	+05
Kleibor	+10	+05	-20	0	0	0	-25	+10
Crystal Clone	-10	+10	0	0	0	0	-10	+10
Crassite	-15	-20	-20	-20	0	-10	+05	-10
Tarsan	+10	-10	0	0	0	0	-20	+10
Gorlon	-20	-20	-05	-25	0	-10	0	-10
Zoe	-10	-05	0	+05	0	-10	-15	0

Abbreviations: Klbr. = Kleibor; Cras. = Crassite; Tar. = Tarsan; Gor. = Gorlon.

Note: Crystal Folk always have a Personality of 60 when they are the acting character, and a Personality of 80 when they are the reacting NPC.

Chapter 6: PLUNDER AND PROFIT

It costs a lot of money to keep a spacecraft in good repair, and to keep a respectable supply of weapons, equipment, and other knick-knacks on hand. It even costs money to buy new skills or raise scores in the old ones. Chapter 6 explains the economics of the STAR ACE™ game, especially the methods available to PCs (plunder, smuggling, and miscellaneous “contracts”) for getting their hands on money. This chapter also explains how the PCs spend that hard-earned cash.

CURRENCY

When interstellar trade involves some 10,000 inhabited worlds, it is important to have a currency recognized as valuable by all known worlds. This is easier said than done, however. Because governments have been known to change monetary policies overnight, and because one never knows who will rule what planet a month from now, paper money and computer credits have no value in the interstellar marketplace.

What is valued is “hard” currency: money made of a substance with unquestioned value. The Empire and Alliance use three types of hard currency: Bits (small gold coins equal to about \$1 in 1980), Imperials (larger gold coins equal to about \$10 in 1980), and Chips (coins made from the precious metal andilinium, equal to about \$1,000 in 1980).

The relative value of these coins is shown on the following chart:

RELATIVE CURRENCY VALUES

1 Bit = \$1 (1980)
1 Imperial = 10 Bits = \$10 (1980)
1 Chip = 100 Imperials = \$1000 (1980)

MONEY TALK

Money talks, and during the course of an adventure, players will want to “talk money.” Before you or the players discuss any monetary affairs, it is important to understand the economic factors below.

Technology Level

Each inhabited planet is assigned a Technology Level, usually called the Tech Level. The Tech Level is a rating, on a scale of 2 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest), of the technology possessed by the planet’s native inhabitants. The Tech Level reflects the nature and value of goods that planet produces.

The Tech Level of each planet shown on the map of the Wilderness Region is printed next to its description on the game map. Use the guidelines below to assign Tech Levels to planets of your own design.

Tech Level 2. Equivalent to Stone Age on Earth; natives possess stone weapons, use fire for cooking, cultivate crops in a very limited fashion. The most intelligent inhabitants are hunter/gatherers.

Tech Level 3. Equivalent to Earth’s earliest civilizations (such as Mesopotamia and early Greece) through the European Middle Ages. Natives can write, understand basic metallurgy and stone masonry, and are considerably advanced in the fine arts.

Tech Level 4. Equivalent to Earth after the invention of the printing press until the Industrial Revolution. Natives possess gunpowder weapons, steam engines, and are well-versed in the basics of strategic warfare.

Tech Level 5. Equivalent to Earth from the Industrial Revolution to the beginning of the Atomic Age. Natives make extensive use of the internal combustion engine, have developed flight, and are exploring rocketry and space science.

Tech Level 6. Equivalent to Earth during the Atomic Era, from 1945 to the Holocaust of 2054. Natives have begun limited intrasystem space travel and developed early laser weapons.

Tech Level 7. Equivalent to Shamba today (3512). Advanced weaponry, translight space drives, and translight communications systems.

Tech Levels 8 and 9. Not presently known in the Empire or the Alliance. You may develop planets with these Tech Levels in accordance with the guidelines in Chapter 7, Running Star Ace.

Economic Level

A planet’s Economic Level (usually just called “Econ Level”) is a measurement of the planet’s ability to buy goods on the interstellar market. It ranges from 2 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest). The Econ Level usually varies no more than one or two points from the planet’s Tech Level, although an extremely backward planet with a wealth of valuable materials might have an Econ Level much higher than its Tech Level.

Imperial Installation Tech and Econ Levels. All Imperial installations have Tech and Econ Levels of 7. Note, however, that Imperial Nobility use the Tech and Econ Levels of their planets for purposes of dealing in the black market.

The Black Market

The Empire controls the economy tightly on most planets. Citizens often need identification papers and ration cards to buy essentials such as food, clothing, and fuel. Both the Empire and local government heavily tax items that are not rationed. In many cases, the Empire prohibits private citizens from owning some items, such as weapons.

“Black market” refers to the secret sale of items to avoid Imperial or local controls. As one might expect, the black market is virtually a way of life on many Imperial planets. The risks are great, however: the penalties for black marketeering (for non-nobles only, of course) range from life as a mine slave to death.

Imperial efforts to crack down on black marketeers are usually frustrated by the fact that many nobles enjoy the extensive profits reaped in the black market.

PLUNDER

Plunder refers to any goods or equipment characters obtain in large quantities during an adventure. Plunder is always measured in terms of *cargo units*. A cargo unit (abbreviated c.u.) is a 12’ x 12’ x 12’ area. Cargo units are

usually described in terms of the type of goods. For example, a standard cargo ship carries 12 cargo units of goods. Such a cargo might include three c.u. of basic foodstuffs, six c.u. of metal concentrates, and three c.u. of cheap costume jewelry.

Occasionally, plunder will be useful to PCs. For example, PCs might someday be lucky enough to plunder an Imperial cargo ship carrying PPRs! For this reason, the Basic Price List in this chapter contains the number of weapons in a cargo unit. In most cases, however, characters must convert plunder to cash before it is of any value to them.

Selling Plunder

PCs must find a buyer in order to sell their plunder. This buyer must be located on a non-Alliance planet; the Alliance would find it extremely distasteful to explain to the Empire why plundered goods are showing up on their planets.

The availability of a buyer depends on the type of goods offered. For example, a resistance group would be a logical place to sell weapons. Merchants (or even Imperial nobles) who deal in the black market are often purchasers of non-military goods.

PCs have a 100% chance of establishing contact with the local black market in any spaceport on Earth, Emniyet, Sepa Green, or Shamba. They have a 50% chance of establishing such contact on Tamilla, Stalitsa, and Asfalia. Such contact is always made through an NPC. Once established, PCs can maintain contact as long as the NPC stays in the black market business.

Use the Black Market Sales Procedure below to determine whether or not the contact will arrange a purchase of the PCs' goods, and to determine how much he will pay:

Black Market Sales Procedure

1. Determine whether the PCs are selling raw materials or finished goods. A *raw material* is anything that something else can be made from, such as metal ore, hides, oil, lumber, stone,

etc. *Finished goods* are items that have been made from raw materials, such as wire, fur coats, plastics, furniture, and so on.

2. Determine the chance that the contact wants to buy the goods (and has enough money to do so). The chance that the contact wants to buy raw materials is equal to 10 times the planet's Tech Level.

The chance that the contact wants finished products is 10 times the planet's Econ Level.

3. Roll a general check against the chance that the contact wants the PCs' goods. If the check succeeds, the contact is interested. If the check fails, the contact doesn't want the goods.

4. Assuming the contact wants to deal, consult the Base Prices Chart below to determine the base price of the goods. If the goods aren't on the chart, use the Base Prices Chart as a guideline in assigning a base price to them.

5. Multiply the base price by the planet's Tech Level. Multiply the result by the planet's Econ Level.

$$\text{Base Price} \times \text{Tech Level} \times \text{Econ Level} = \text{Market Value}$$

This is the market value of the goods on that planet.

A few items have a fixed market value, regardless of Tech and Econ levels. These include spacecraft, certain metal concentrates, and any items listed on the "Fixed Market Value Chart." PCs and NPCs may still bargain to alter the price they actually pay for items with fixed market values.

FIXED MARKET VALUE CHART

Item	Price
Gold Concentrate	5000 C/c.u.
Andilinium Concentrate	50,000 C/c.u.
Xantium crystal (standard cut)	4,200 C/crystal
Xantium crystals (bulk quantities)	2.5 million C/c.u.
Spacecraft	See craft description

6. Next, the PC conducting the transaction rolls a specific check against

his Bargaining skill (or Personality) score. Use the column corresponding to the contact's Bargaining skill (or Personality) score to obtain a result from the Action Table. (If the contact is acting on behalf of another NPC, use the column corresponding to the Personality or Bargaining skill score of the NPC actually making the decision to spend the money.)

Interpret the results of this check as follows:

Bargaining Results Key

Failure = The contact will pay no more than 0.1 times the market value of the goods.

S = The contact will pay no more than 0.5 times the market value of the goods.

L = The contact will pay no more than 0.75 times the market value of the goods.

M = The contact will pay the market value of the goods.

H = The contact will pay 1.25 times the market value of the goods.

C = The contact will pay 1.5 times the market value of the goods.

7. If the PCs agree to sell for the contact's price, determine the final amount of the transaction by multiplying the market value of the goods by the modifier obtained in Step 6 above, and then multiplying this result by the number of cargo units the PCs are selling.

$$\text{Market Value} \times \text{Modifier (Step 6)} \times \text{Number of Cargo Units} = \text{Transaction Amount}$$

Role-play the actual transfer of goods and money normally. All transactions are, of course, strictly cash.

Use the Black Market Sales Procedure for each type of goods the PCs try to sell, even if the goods come from the same source. The PCs may contact only two contacts concerning one type of goods in one week. For example, a Star Team member trying to sell plundered furniture may make only two contacts on Emniyet in a one week in an attempt to sell the furniture. If both contacts refuse, the PC must wait a

week and try again, or peddle his goods on another planet.

Remember that Crassites have a +30 modifier to their Personality score for purposes of bargaining. (This +30 modifier also applies to the Personality score when computing a Crassite's Bargaining skill.)

BASIC PRICES CHART

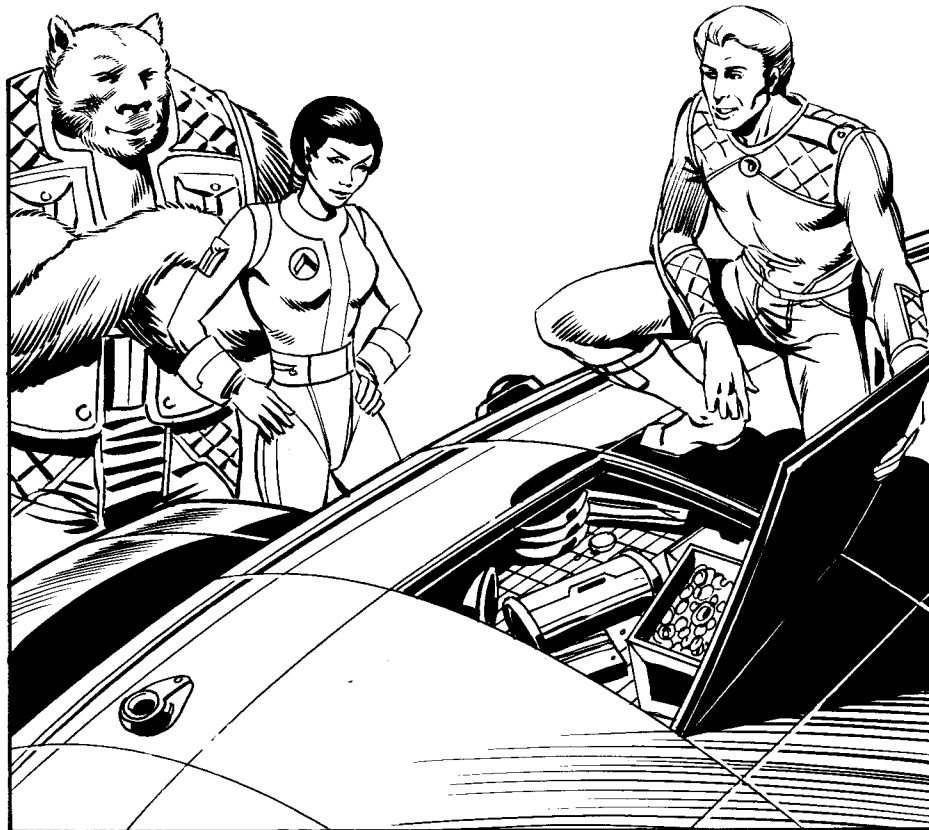
Type of Goods Base Price/c.u.
(in Chips)

RAW MATERIALS

Metal Concentrates	10-100
Silver	70
Iron	40
Tin	30
Aluminum	50
Copper	60
Mineral Ores	1-10
Raw plant products	1-8
Foodstuffs (basic)	1
Foodstuffs (common)	2
Foodstuffs (rare)	3
Fabric plants	2
Fabric plants (rare)	5
Wood/Lumber	7
Spices	8
Raw animal products	2-9
Foodstuffs (basic)	2
Foodstuffs (common)	3
Foodstuffs (rare)	4
Hides/Skins/Furs	8
Uncut gemstones	100

FINISHED PRODUCTS

	(# in chips c.u.)
Weapons	
Laser pistols	800 (4000)
Laser rifles	800 (2000)
Particle	
Beam weapons	2400 (1200)
PPRs	2800 (2800)
Plasma Guns	1200 (1)
Beam Sabers	4700 (11750)
Monofilament	
swords	1300 (2600)
Sensory Knives	6900 (13800)
Starfighter missiles	45 (112)
Grenades	2000 (20000 boxes)
Grenade Launchers	230 (575)
Armor(reflector plate)	260 (650 suits)
Clothing (basic)	1
Clothing (common)	3



Clothing (luxury)	9
Common	Producer's
appliances	Tech Level
Computer systems	50
Industrial equipment	Producer's
	Tech Level
Art works, rare books	250
Jewelry, costume	3
Jewelry, genuine	250
Toys and Games	3
Perfume (cheap)	2
Pets (common)	4
Pets (rare)	9
Holoplays	5
Video novels	3

Designing Plunders

As a CM, you have considerable leeway in designing cargos for the PCs to plunder. As guideline, assume an average cargo vessel carries 12 c.u. of goods from a Tech Level 5 planet, with a base price of 5. On Earth (Econ Level 5), this average plunder would have a market value of 125 C/c.u. (total value = 1500 Chips).

Base Price (5) x Tech Level (5) x Econ Level (5) = 125 C/c.u.

SMUGGLING

Smuggling simply means sneaking goods onto or off a planet illegally. Smuggling is an essential part of the interstellar black market economy.

PCs usually smuggle by contract agreement with some other character involved in the black market. The contractor has usually arranged for the sale of the goods in advance. The PCs must usually pick up the goods, sneak them off-planet, smuggle them to the buyer, pick up the cash, and return the money to the contractor.

Standard payment for smuggling is 10% of the sale price, plus expenses. However, PCs may bargain for a higher fee, especially if the job is more dangerous than normal.

Dangers of Smuggling

Smuggling is a dangerous way to earn a living. Like other black marketers, smugglers caught by Imperial or local authorities face death or life as a mine slave.

Imperial planets monitor all craft from the moment they enter the system.

Smugglers landing in isolated spots on planets, rather than entering through a spaceport, are almost certain to draw the attention of local authorities. Within 15 minutes, a flight of interceptors will visit their landing spot to investigate.

Spaceports are always guarded by a few customs officers, and occasionally Imperial troops. Most spaceports have some sort of electronic security system, although the system's effectiveness may vary with the Tech Level and importance to the Empire of the planet. Players must find ways for their characters to avoid spaceport security, and you must use your discretion to determine how much and what kind of security PCs will face at each spaceport.

MISCELLANEOUS INCOME

PCs can earn miscellaneous income from many sources. The Alliance often pays a bonus for information about the Imperial fleet or the intrigues of Imperial nobility. Private citizens may have tasks they wish PCs to undertake, such as helping a relative escape from an Imperial detention facility. PCs can sometimes ransom prisoners, especially noble ones, back to the Empire. Creative PCs will think of additional ways to make money. Use the following guidelines to determine how much the PCs should earn from these types of activities.

MISCELLANEOUS INCOME CHART

Activity	Income
Intelligence gathering	1—10 Chips per useful report
Ransoms	100 x Status Rating of the prisoner for nobility; 1 Chip per man for common soldiers
Military actions	Negotiable; usual minimum is 20 C for a "sure thing" mission.

Note that Star Team members never charge for military actions undertaken at the request of their base commander. These are usually missions secretly requested by the Alliance, necessary to the security of Alliance planets.

THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

All Star Team members have expenses. They most commonly spend money in the following ways:

Basic Support. Each Star Team member must pay 5% of his income to his base for basic support, as detailed in Chapter 3 of this book.

Ships, Repairs, and Equipment. The costs of spacecraft, spacecraft repairs, and equipment are detailed in Chapters V and VII of the *Star Team Basic Training Manual*.

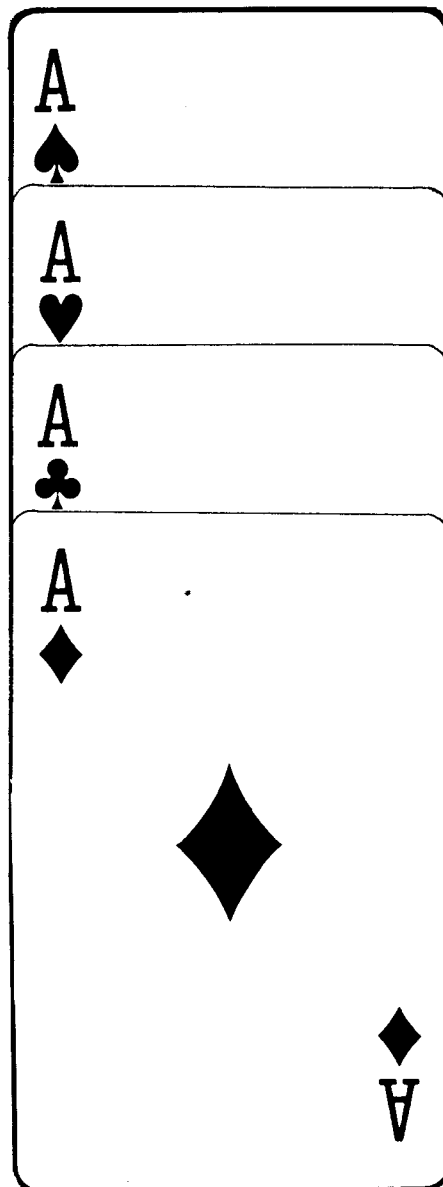
Buying and Improving Skills. These high costs are discussed in Chapter VI of the *Star Team Basic Training Manual*.

Miscellaneous Expenses. These include all the little things a character might desire, such as clothes, jewels, decorations for ship and weapons, a night on the town, etc. Use the following chart for guidelines on such expenses:

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES CHART

Item or Service	Cost
Hotel Rooms	
Cheap Dive	10 Imperials
Moderate	20 Imperials
Luxury	1 Chip
Entertainment	
Drinks	1-10 Bits
Stalitsan nightclub, cover charge	1-5 Imperials
Emniyet amusement park, admission	1 Imperial
Theatre admissions	1-10 Bits
Private clubs, cover charge	10 Imperials
"Night on the town" on Stalitsa	1-5 Chips
Meals	
Cheap	1 Imperial
Moderate	5 Imperials

Ritzy	10 Imperials
Private Club	50 Imperials
Clothing	
Plain, casual	10 Imperials
Moderate, casual	30 Imperials
Designer casuals	1 Chip
Cheap, dressy	30 Imperials
Moderate, dressy	80 Imperials
Best, dressy	3-10 Chips
Cut gemstones	100-500 Chips
Jewelry, real	1-100 Chips



Chapter 7: RUNNING STAR ACE

STAR ACE™ is a free-wheeling game of swashbuckling adventure in outer space. The *Star Team Basic Training Manual* and the *Wilderness Region Briefing Manual* provide all the rules and background material you'll need to run the STAR ACE™ game.

The box doesn't include one thing that will be necessary for your endless hours of science-fiction adventuring: a good CM. This chapter is especially for you CMs. It explains how to run an exciting STAR ACE game.

WHAT THE GAME IS ALL ABOUT

First, as CM, you must understand the flavor of the STAR ACE game thoroughly. This is a game of adventure and action—it's not a game of science theory and fact. Hard scientific theory (or even fact) does not play an integral part in the game system. We decided to downplay scientific fact because:

1. Interstellar travel, in any sense meaningful to a game, is not possible according to the laws of physics as we currently understand them. Consequently, scientific explanations for things like translight drives aren't "scientific" anyway. However, such things are necessary to have a wide-open game of space adventure, whether modern science understands them or not.

2. Most game players, and most CMs, aren't specialists in fields like biochemistry and astrophysics. We wanted to create a game people could play without consulting college textbooks in vain attempts to figure out what is possible according to science today, and what isn't.

3. A good adventure must have a good plot and strong characters. The CM must be free to concentrate on the story and the players must have time to concentrate on their characters. These things are hard to do if you must compute the ratio of argon to oxygen in the atmosphere of every planet the characters visit.

So, STAR ACE isn't a game of science. It's a game of fast-paced, swashbuck-

ling action. It's a game of tough, resourceful good guys battling an interstellar empire of bad guys. It's a game of futuristic weapons and mental powers that are just plain fun to play with. In short, STAR ACE is adventure in space; it isn't a lecture in modern physics.

THE CM'S ROLE

The CM has the most important role in a STAR ACE game. He must perform a number of tasks, each equally important to the ultimate goal: everyone having fun.

First of all, the CM creates the adventures in which the player characters find themselves. He or she controls the opportunities and challenges the PCs face: Does that convoy have a valuable cargo for the PCs to plunder, or is it just a decoy, with ICE frigates hiding nearby? Will the Baron negotiate for the ransom of his captured troops? Will the PCs survive this hard-fought space battle? Or will an Imperial cruiser pop out of translight and destroy them? Only you, CM, know for sure—because you create the story.

But you don't just create the story; you must tell it to your player characters. More accurately, you must answer PC questions in such a manner that the PCs gradually uncover the story of which they are a part. You are the "eyes and ears" of the PCs. The PCs know only what you tell them they see, or hear, or sense, or remember, or otherwise know. You must become an actor, learning to use your language and voice to describe the action vividly and in an exciting manner.

Of course, the action in a STAR ACE story isn't one-sided: the PCs have a lot to say about how the story progresses. The options they choose, or even the unexpected things they do, often have as much (or more) influence on the plot of the adventure as your original story. When the PCs go into action, you must act as referee, applying and interpreting the rules of the game according to the situation, and ensuring that everything proceeds in an orderly, fair way. For this reason,

it's important to have a thorough working knowledge of the game's rules. This doesn't mean you have to memorize the rules; it does mean you should know them well enough to find what you need quickly during play. The index in each of the two STAR ACE books will be of great help in this regard.

Finally, every adventure depends on the actions of certain NPCs. Those actions should arise naturally from the NPC's character. The CM is the person who brings those NPCs to life for the other players. Don't be shy about "hamming it up." Play the role of the NPCs rather than just describing what they say or do. Acting and speaking as if you are the NPC(s) makes the game more fun for everyone, and it helps your players become role-players themselves.

CREATING AND RUNNING ENCOUNTERS

An "encounter" is any meeting between an NPC and a PC. It can be something simple, like meeting for a drink in a spaceport bar, or it can be complex and dangerous, like a deep space battle.

When creating and running encounters, you must always consider the crucial factor of *game balance*. In the simplest terms, a well balanced encounter isn't so easy that the PCs waltz right through it with no sense of danger, but it isn't so deadly that the PCs have no chance of winning (or at least escaping).

New CMs will quickly learn that the STAR ACE combat system is fast and deadly. It is designed this way to ensure that encounters are fast-paced and challenging to the players. But keep in mind that the system's lethal nature makes balance that much more important.

Ultimately, all CMs learn to balance encounters by experience. After you have run several starfighter combats, for example, you'll have an intuitive feel for what makes a balanced, fair fight and for what will overwhelm the PCs.

Until you've gained that experience, however, it's better to *err on the side of*

the player characters. Remember, they're just learning the game, too; an even shooting match might not be so "even" at all! In your early adventures, you can always make an encounter more difficult as it progresses if the PCs aren't challenged; a few more interceptors could be ordered into the battle, a few more Imperial troops could wander into the barroom brawl, and so on. It's a lot easier to make an encounter tougher as it progresses than to make it easier after you realize all the PCs are about to die.

This doesn't mean, however, that you should never let a PC die. The threat of death, after all, is the basis for the game's excitement. If no character ever dies, your game won't be very exciting. PCs who blunder badly, turning nicely balanced scenarios into death traps, should die. The players may be temporarily sad, but their next characters will be wiser.

The second important element in a good encounter is *pacing*. This means you should not let the game drag or be delayed. There are always a few players in any group who take half an hour to determine what their characters are going to do during the next five-second round. Don't let them. After you've made the CM's declarations, ask each player what his character is going to do. If the player doesn't answer in a reasonable amount of time, move on to the next one. Assume that player's character is doing *nothing*; like the player, the character is befuddled and trying to figure out what to do next. Keep the action fast and furious; everyone will have more fun.

CREATING ADVENTURES

An adventure is a complete story composed of several encounters. You may purchase ready-made adventures for the STAR ACE™ game from Pacesetter, Ltd., (and we certainly hope you do!) or, if you have the time and energy, you can design your own adventures.

Good adventures have two essential ingredients: the characters and the plot. These two ingredients are very closely related; the plot (or story) must flow naturally from the motiva-

tions and actions of the characters. You can create a good adventure by thinking about either element first, but it is usually easier to start with the characters.

The most important characters in your adventures are the PCs (they're the heroes). Of course, the whole idea of playing the STAR ACE™ game is to have as much adventure and excitement for the PCs as possible. But they are also the most important characters because, as in any story, the plot of the adventure must revolve around them. Everything that happens must involve them in one way or another; if the admiral of the Imperial fleet is plotting to destroy an entire system, this should concern the PCs for some reason (perhaps it's their home). Although NPCs might do something the PCs aren't aware of, the results of the NPCs' actions should impact upon the PCs somehow. Never bore your PCs with an encounter (or even a description of something) that doesn't concern them.

The second most important characters in the adventure are the bad guys: one or more major NPCs who are, in some way, at odds with the PCs. They serve as the catalyst for adventure; just when the PCs think they've got it made and things are going smoothly, the bad guys do something to make life exciting again.

Because the players determine what their characters are like and what they will do, it is usually wisest to start creating an adventure by thinking about a few major NPCs.

You must know your major NPCs thoroughly, the same way an author knows his villains. You must determine what kind of people your NPCs are, how their minds work, what they want to accomplish, and so on. In Chapter 3, we provide background information on a number of major NPCs; use this information as a model when creating your own NPCs. In the brief space available, we've tried to provide details that will help you get to know these NPCs, as well as outlining some of the schemes they've set afoot. These characters and their schemes are excellent starting points for your early adventures.

For example, look at Baron Gruy, with his mining interests and secret fleet construction project on Tamilla. He wants to be Overlord of Emniyet as well. He is a ruthless, cunning, calculating, backstabbing kind of fellow. What will he do in order to get Emniyet? Once you have answered that question, you have the starting point for an adventure.

The second element in an adventure is the plot (or story). A good plot develops naturally out of the actions of the major characters. Let's suppose the Baron happens to know when a valuable cargo of industrial machinery is due in the Emniyet system. The Baron might have some of his underlings leak this information to some Star Team members (our PCs), hoping that they will intercept the incoming convoy. This will make the current overlord of Emniyet look somewhat incompetent. In fact, the Baron might show up himself to rescue the cargo (and capture the PCs), thus demonstrating that busy as he is with the affairs of Tamilla, he is a better defender of Imperial interests on Emniyet than the current overlord.

Thus, a plot is born. Of course, this would be only the beginning of an adventure. The continued growth of the plot would depend upon a number of things: Do the PCs fall for the bait? How does the overlord of Emniyet react? Will he deal with Star Teams to avenge himself? Is there a way resourceful PCs can work this feud to the Alliance's advantage?

The most important thing to remember when plotting your adventures is to keep NPC actions consistent with the NPC's character. Unless something terribly dramatic happens, a cold calculating villain is not going to have a change of heart and help the good guys; nor will a ruthless, cunning enemy act in a half-hearted, squeamish, or stupid manner.

CAMPAIGN PLAY

Just as adventures are composed of several encounters, a campaign is composed of several on-going adventures. A typical campaign game might involve one CM and four to eight PCs.

These adventures are linked together in two ways: they involve the same characters, and the plot of one adventure grows naturally and logically out of the previous adventure.

The STAR ACE™ game favors an especially free-wheeling style of play which lends itself well to a campaign game. The PCs have many options. The Wilderness Region is a relatively large section of interstellar space ready for them to adventure in. There are plots, counterplots, resistance movements, and rich cargo to be plundered. In short, there are a lot of things for the PCs to do. After their first few adventures, the players will probably start picking these options without much urging or "guidance" from the CM. At that point, a real campaign has begun, and your task is to portray how the environment reacts to the PCs' actions.

Bright CMs will quickly find that this eases their burden, rather than increasing it. Once you have the character of the major NPCs firmly in mind, and are comfortable with quickly stating their reactions, the campaign game seems to run itself. Adventures will evolve at the gaming table as NPCs react to PC actions, forcing the PCs to take new actions, and so on.

Of course, in a campaign game setting, player characters will acquire new skills and improve old ones. They will become more powerful as the game progresses. Thus, balance becomes just as important to the campaign as it is to encounters. Here again, balance is the trick of making the game just hard enough to be exciting and challenging, but not so hard that most player characters can't make progress.

As a general rule, player characters in a campaign should play between 12 and 18 hours in order to score enough kills to advance to the next rank in their Free Order. With each increase in rank, you should increase the challenges they face. The plots of nobles should become more devious, the number and quality of enemy craft and pilots should become greater, the jams PCs get themselves into should become stickier, the mysteries

they must solve should become more difficult, the stakes should become more lucrative, and the consequences of failure more desperate. On the other hand, as PCs rise in rank and power, NPCs should exhibit a little more respect, they should be presented with opportunities for more lucrative deals, they should have an easier time gathering resources for their missions, and so forth.

A few characters will eventually reach Ace rank in their Free Order, and a few extremely lucky characters may even reach Ace level in almost all available skills. Eventually, these rare, extraordinary characters should be retired from the game. By the time they have reached such a high rank and such high skill levels, they are wealthy enough to terraform their own asteroid in some nice Alliance system and live the life they've always dreamed of. Of course, such characters may always be brought out of retirement from time to time to help other PCs on some extraordinarily dangerous missions.

Beyond The Wilderness Region

Campaign play is not confined to the Wilderness Region by any means. The Wilderness Region is stressed in the boxed game so players and CMs will have a ready-made setting for their initial adventures. In fact, you could run a perfectly fine campaign without leaving the region. But most gamers like something new from time to time, and CMs may want to try their hand at creating new worlds and alien races. Although there is no need in the STAR ACE game system to place such creations outside the Wilderness Region, you might want to place these creations elsewhere in order to preserve the integrity of your campaign inside the Wilderness Region.

Aside from the Wilderness Region, there are several other areas where the borders of the Empire and the Alliance are very close, where the same sort of uneasy truce is maintained. In addition, there are inhabited worlds affiliated with neither the Empire nor the Alliance. There are

worlds deep in the heart of the Empire where the fires of the resistance movement are beginning to burn, and there are worlds near the galactic core which are part of whatever it is the Xenophobes are creating. Finally, there is the rest of limitless space, unexplored and unknown, both within the galaxy and in the countless galaxies beyond.

You are free to develop these areas as suits your own imagination and campaign. The most important thing to keep in mind when you create new worlds and races is *believability*. The things you create must seem real to your players in order for the game to remain fun. The best way to make new inventions believable is to refrain from violating the known rules of science or logic until you have no other choice. Because the STAR ACE game (and most science fiction) borders on the limits of our knowledge of what is possible and what is not, you may eventually find it necessary to violate the rules of science and logic. When you must do so, violate them consistently. Most players will accept your creations as long as they are consistent with themselves and the rest of the game.

Miscellaneous Tips

Here are a few more miscellaneous tips to help you make your campaign game easier for you and more fun for the PCs:

1. Keep copies of all your players' character sheets, and have them handy during play. This saves a lot of time and trouble when you want to roll a secret skill or Ability check without the player's knowledge. It also helps when designing your own adventures; you won't have to rely on memory to tell how much money the PCs currently have, which skills they have at what level, and so on. Finally, it will be especially handy when a player loses his own copy of the character sheet, which almost always happens.

2. Make sure to take care of any bookkeeping concerning money, new skills, advancement in rank, and so

on at the end of each gaming session. When the next gaming session begins, your players want to sit down and play, not sort out details from the previous session.

3. Keep accurate notes about the actions, possessions and status of NPCs, as well as the progress of the adventure. It is amazingly easy to forget some detail critical to the plot of an adventure.

4. From time to time during play, do a few things to keep the players on their toes. Roll the dice loudly out of the players' sight, and act as if the results are very interesting. Then, when you must roll a secret check, the players won't know whether something is about to happen or not. Occasionally pass a few folded notes to different players which say nothing in particular. That way, when you must tell one player something without the knowledge of the others, you can simply pass a note without arousing undue suspicion.

COMBINING GAMES

CMs who are familiar with Pacesetter's other role-playing games, CHILL and TIMEMASTER, will notice that the basic game systems are compatible. It is entirely possible to take a character from one game into the environment of either of the other games. Players and CMs who have one or both of these other games might occasionally enjoy a "super adventure" in which Time Corps agents from the TIMEMASTER™ game travel back in time to recruit a few S.A.V.E. envoys from the CHILL™ game and join some STARACE™ PCs in a battle against some horror from outer space. There are many different ways such combination scenarios could be constructed.

Should you run such a scenario, give any CHILL characters the number of wounds consistent with their Stamina scores in the STAR ACE system and use the STARACE damage and recovery system. Characters from the CHILL and TIMEMASTER games should keep their own skills, disciplines of the Art, and paranormal talents, using them as they would in

their native game system. Characters from these other games should make skill checks on Column 3 of the Action Table rather than Column 4.

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT RULES

These two rules are more important than any of the rules in either of the books in the STAR ACE game. We've saved them for the end.

1. **HAVE FUN.** The purpose of playing any game is to have fun. Role-playing games intimidate some people because they seem to have so many rules. A few people turn into "rules lawyers," attempting to argue about every fine point and every decision the CM makes. Both of these groups are missing the point, which is to have fun without worrying too much about the rules. The rules exist only to help you have fun, not to get in the way. As a CM, apply the rules as best you can and forge ahead! If you are having fun, and your players are having fun, you're doing everything right. If someone isn't having fun, do whatever is necessary to see that they do.

2. **THE CM CONTROLS THE GAME.** The CM has absolute control over what happens in the game. A good CM will listen to the arguments or pleas of his players, but in the end, the CM's decisions are final. There is no court of appeal. The CM has the authority to change any die roll, interpret or even change any rule, or do whatever else is necessary during play to keep the game moving and keep it fun. The best CMs use this power very sparingly, but without hesitation when necessary.

Ultimately, the responsibility for the success of your STAR ACE game lies in your hands. It is your imagination, your voice, your guidance which brings the world of STAR ACE to life for your players. And now, somewhere out there, some helpless race is being trampled under the ugly boot of Imperial troopers. A valuable shipment of metal concentrate is leaving Tamilla to enrich the coffers of the Empire, and the resistance on Emniyet needs weapons desperately. Assemble

your players, rattle your dice, and take off to adventure!

SUGGESTED READING AND VIEWING

The following books and T.V. programs will help you get into the mood for great STAR ACE adventures, and may suggest plots which you can use in your own campaign.

Books

Poul Anderson: *The Space Merchants*

Isaac Asimov: *The Foundation Trilogy*, and most of his other science fiction works.

Arthur C. Clarke: *A Fall of Moon Dust* and *Childhood's End*

Harry Harrison: *The Stainless Steel Rat* series, and *The Deathworld Trilogy*.

Robert Heinlein: *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* and *Double Star*

Frank Herbert: The *Dune* series

Ursula K. LeGuin: *The Left Hand of Darkness*

E.E. "Doc" Smith: The *Lensman* Series and The *Skylark* Series

T.V. Programs

Buck Rogers (Original serials)
Flash Gordon (Original serials)

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STAR ACE™

Action Table

Defense Column

Attack Margin	1-15 1	Ability Checks 16-30 2	31-45 3	Skill Checks 46-60 4	61-75 5	76-90 6	91-105 7	106-120 8	121-135 9	136+ 10
0	LK	L	L	L	L	S	S	S	S	S
1-4	M	M	L	LK	L	LK	L	S	S	S
5-9	H	MK	M	L	L	L	L	L	LK	S
10-29	C	H	MK	M	M	M	LK	L	L	L
30-49	C	C	H	M	MK	M	M	MK	L	LK
50-69	CK	CK	C	H	H	H	M	M	M	M
70-89	CK	CK	CK	CK	H	H	H	H	M	M
90-94	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	HK	H	H	H	H
95-99	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	HK	HK	H	H
100+	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	CK	HK	HK	H

ARMED COMBAT RESULTS

Code	Result (Defender loses points from current Stamina.)
S	Scratch Wound: Lose 1 or 2 points; (see above), and mark 1 wound box.
L	Light Wound: Lose 2-20 points (1d10x2), and mark two wound boxes.
M	Medium Wound: Lose 4-40 points (2d10x2), and mark three wound boxes.
H	Heavy Wound: Lose 6-60 points (3d10x2), and mark four wound boxes.
C	Crippling Wound: Lose 6-60 points (3d10x2), and mark five wound boxes. (Or called shot, if specified otherwise.)
K	Knockdown: Defender knocked down and back 5 feet; must make DEX check to hold onto any hand-held item; any uncompleted actions this round are cancelled.

COMBAT PROCEDURE

1. Declare attack
2. Determine base chance
3. Determine strike number
4. Defender declares Luck use (PCs, missile attacks only)
5. Attacker rolls specific check against strike number
6. Apply results

UNARMED COMBAT RESULTS

Code	Result (Defender loses points from current Stamina.)
S	Scant Damage: Lose 1 - 2 points(roll 1d10; 1-5=1, 6-10=2).
L	Light Damage: Lose 2-20 points (1d10x2).
M	Medium Damage: Lose 4-40 points (2d10x2).
H	Harsh Damage: Lose 6-60 points (3d10x2), and mark one wound box.
C	Crushing Damage: Lose 6-60 points (3d10x2), and mark two wound boxes. (Or called shot, if specified otherwise.)
K	Knockdown: Defender knocked down and back 5 feet; unfinished actions cancelled this round.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY FOR ONE ROUND

1. CM declaration
2. Player character declaration
3. Initiative determination
4. Side A uses noetic skills
5. Side A fires or throws missiles
6. Side A moves
7. Side B defensive missile fire
8. Side A melees
9. Side B uses noetic skills
10. Side B fires or throws missiles
11. Side B moves
12. Side A defensive missile fire
13. Side B melees
14. Stamina loss and recovery

Side
A's
Attack

Side
B's
Attack