

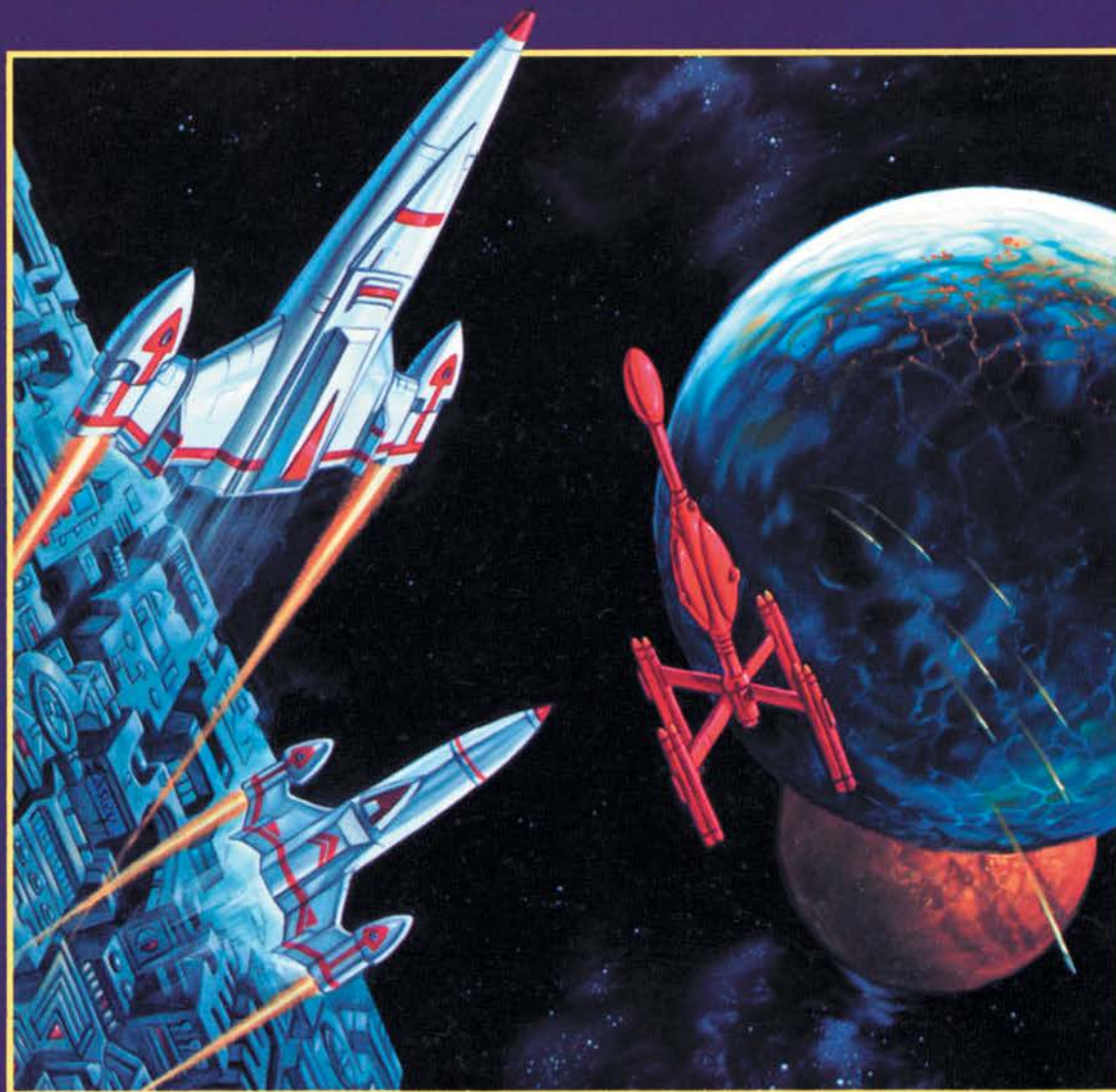
A STAR FRONTIERS®

KNIGHT HAWKS ADVENTURE

The War Machine

Ken Rolston

The third part of the Beyond the Frontier series.



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A **STAR FRONTIERS**®

KNIGHT HAWKS ADVENTURE

The War Machine

Ken Rolston

As far as you know, no one has ever before captured an intact Sathar spaceship. You had one (until it blew itself up), and that makes you valuable property where the UPF is concerned.

Clues from that Sathar ship hint that the Sathar have a base in the FS 30 system, an unexplored star system just beyond the Frontier sector. The UPF wants it checked out, and wants your group to do the checking.

The trouble starts as soon as you arrive; fighter patrols, ravaged planets, mysterious messages, and slave camps are the unmistakable calling cards of the Sathar. Their war machine must be stopped at any cost; does that cost include you?

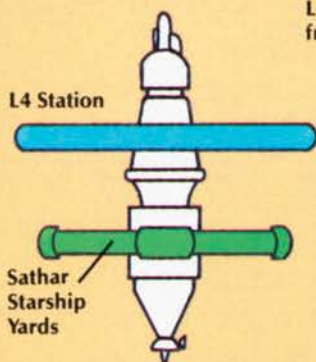
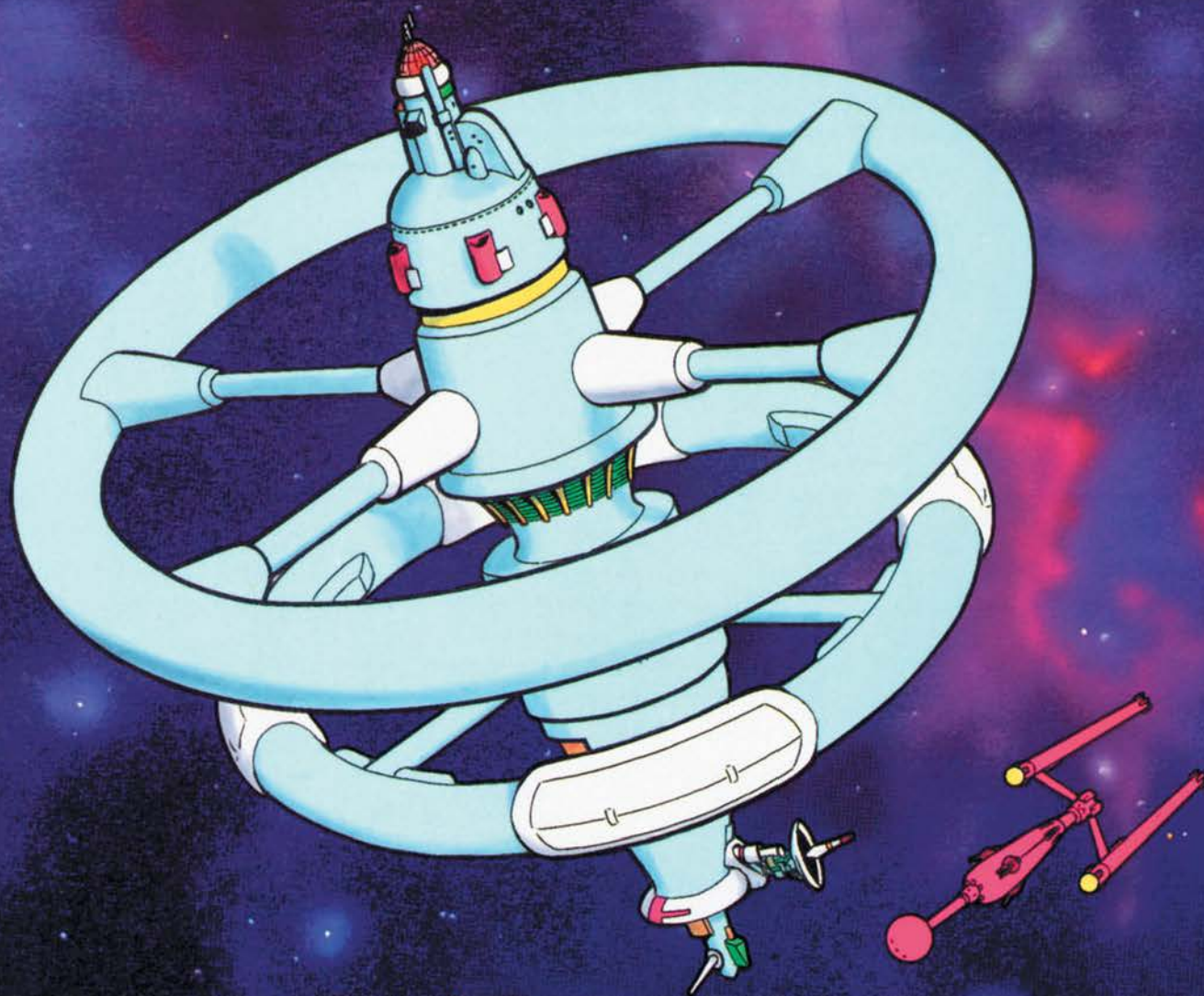
This third and final module in the "Beyond the Frontier" series requires both the Alpha Dawn and Knight Hawks rules.

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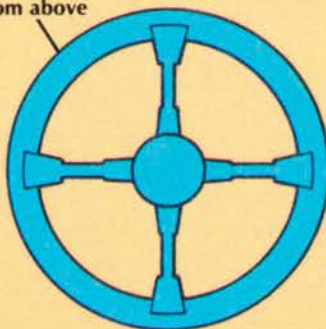
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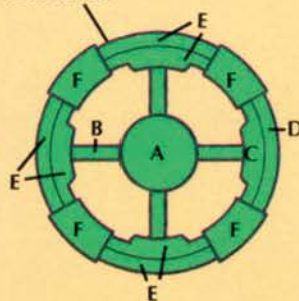
L4 STATION



L4 Station
from above

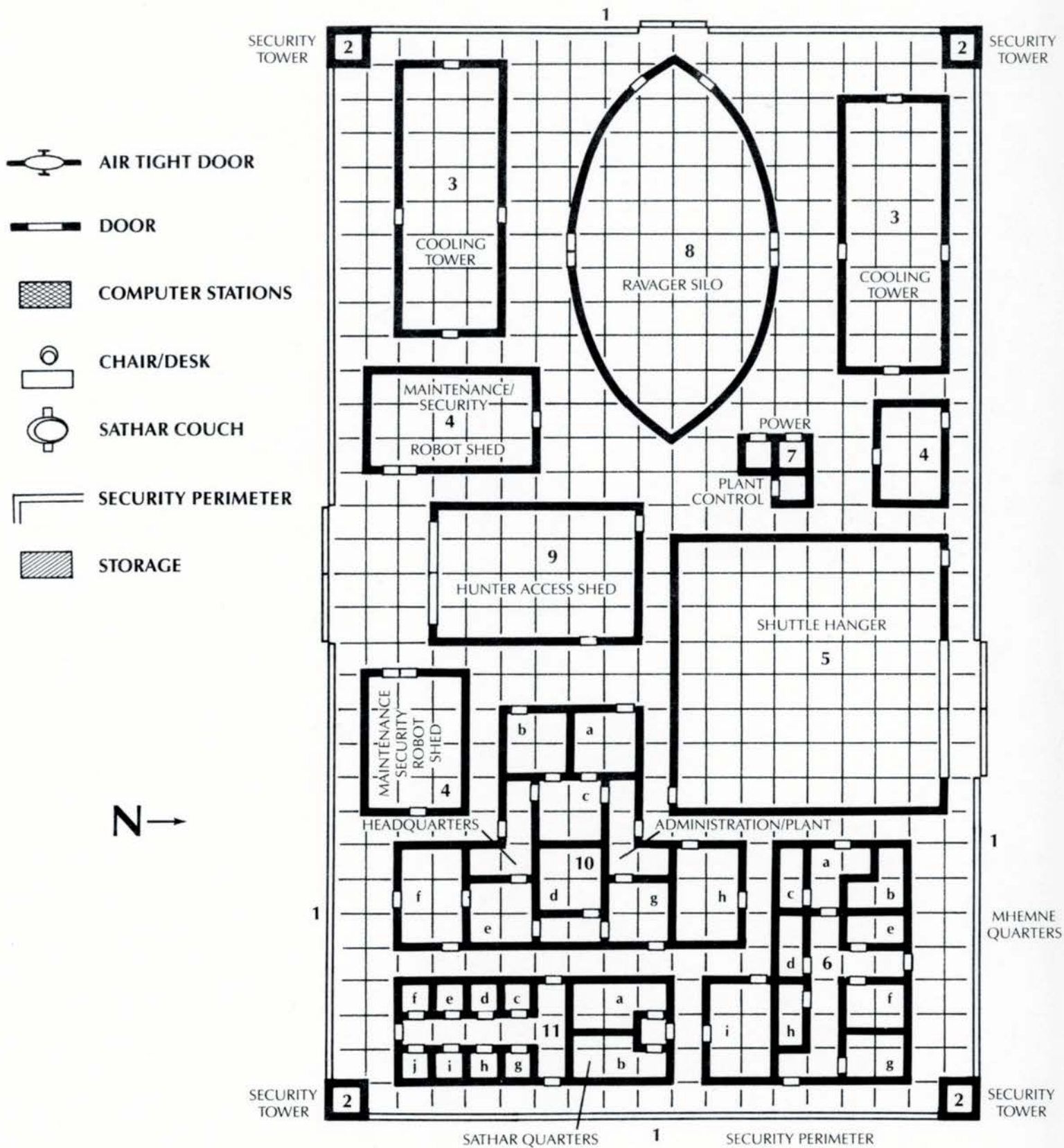


Sathar Starship Yards
from above



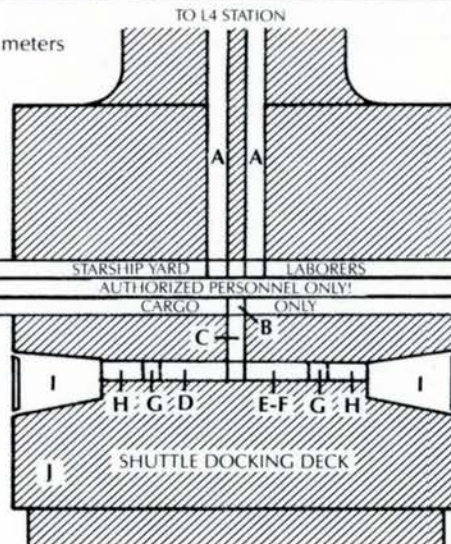
- A. DOCKING FOR SHUTTLES, TRANSPORT OF PERSONNEL & MATERIALS FOR SHIPYARDS.
- B. CARGO AND PERSONNEL ELEVATORS
- C. SHUTTLE CREW DECK
- D. SATHAR ADMINISTRATION DECK
- E. SHIPYARD CONSTRUCTION, MANUFACTURING, AND STORAGE DECKS, WORKSHOPS.
- F. CONSTRUCTION BAYS (OCCUPIED WITH UNFINISHED DESTROYER CLASS WARSHIPS)

MAP 1. SATHAR PROCESSING PLANT



MAP 2: L4 STATION HUB (SIDE VIEW)

Scale: 1 inch = 50 meters

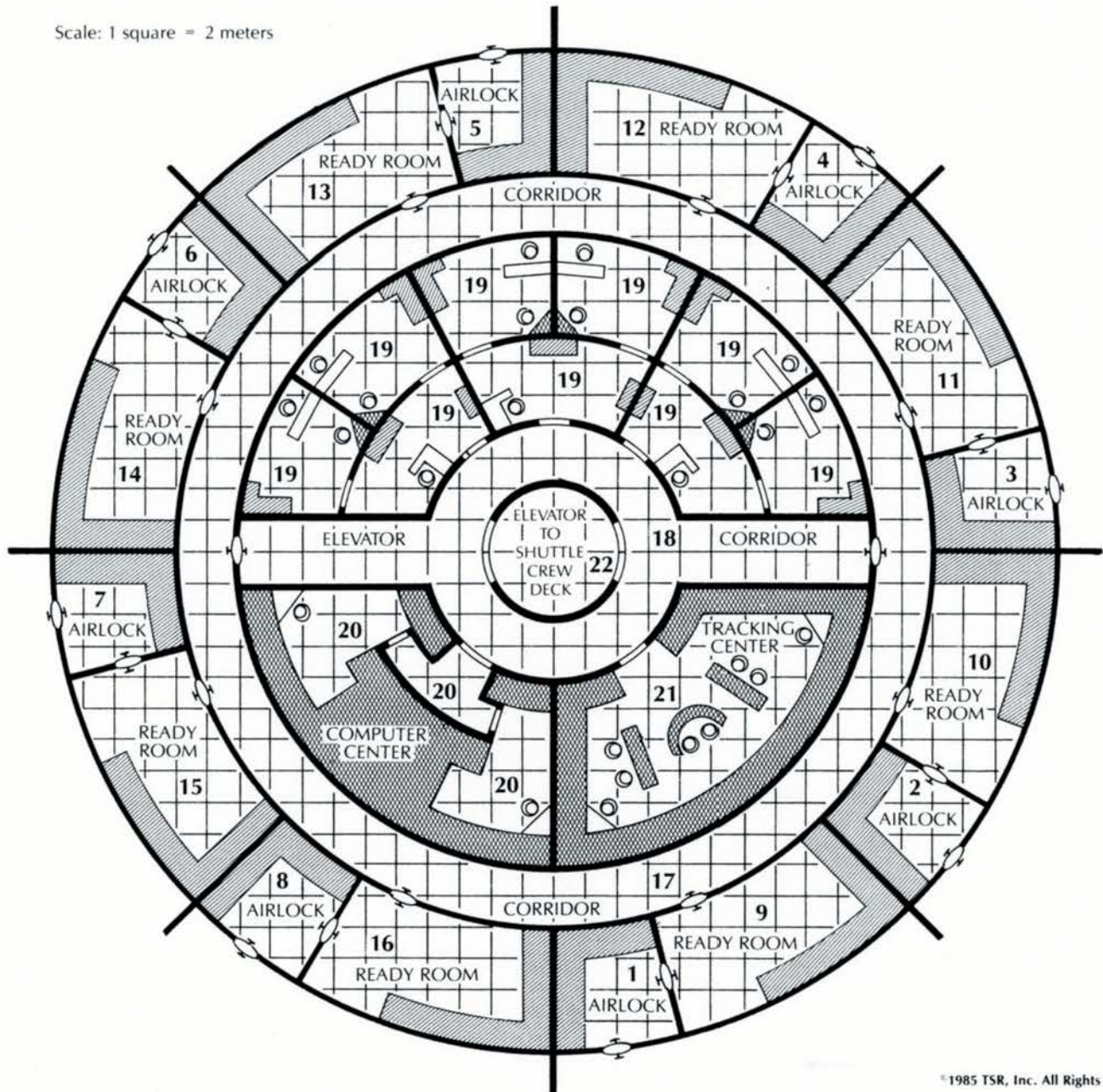


(This map is intended to help the referee orient himself before running adventures on L4 station. Lettered areas on this map do not correspond to the encounter areas in Theta Section.)

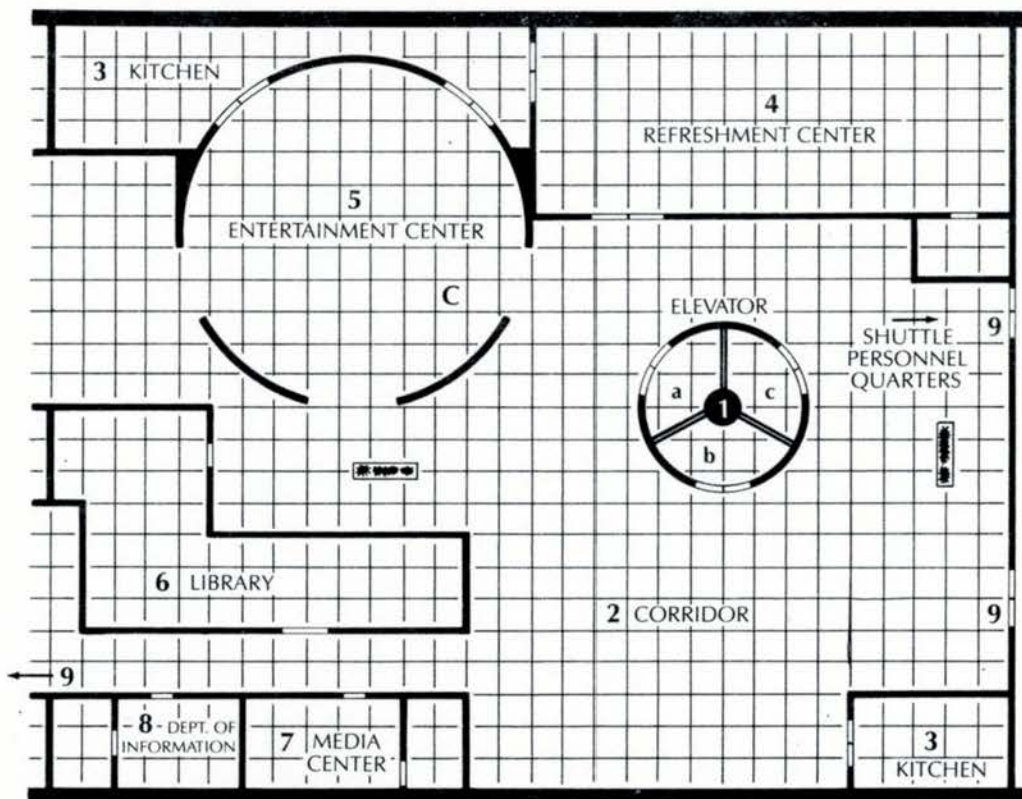
- A. PASSENGER ELEVATORS TO L4 STATION
- B. OFFICIAL SATHAR-SHUTTLE CREW ELEVATORS—RESTRICTED TO AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL
- C. ELEVATOR TERMINAL ON DOCKING DECK
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- E. TRACKING ROOM
- F. COMPUTER ROOM
- G. CORRIDOR—DOCKING DECK
- H. CREW READY ROOMS—DOCKING DECK
- I. SHUTTLE DOCKING BAYS
- J. SHUTTLE UNLOADING

MAP 3: SHUTTLE DOCKING DECK

Scale: 1 square = 2 meters

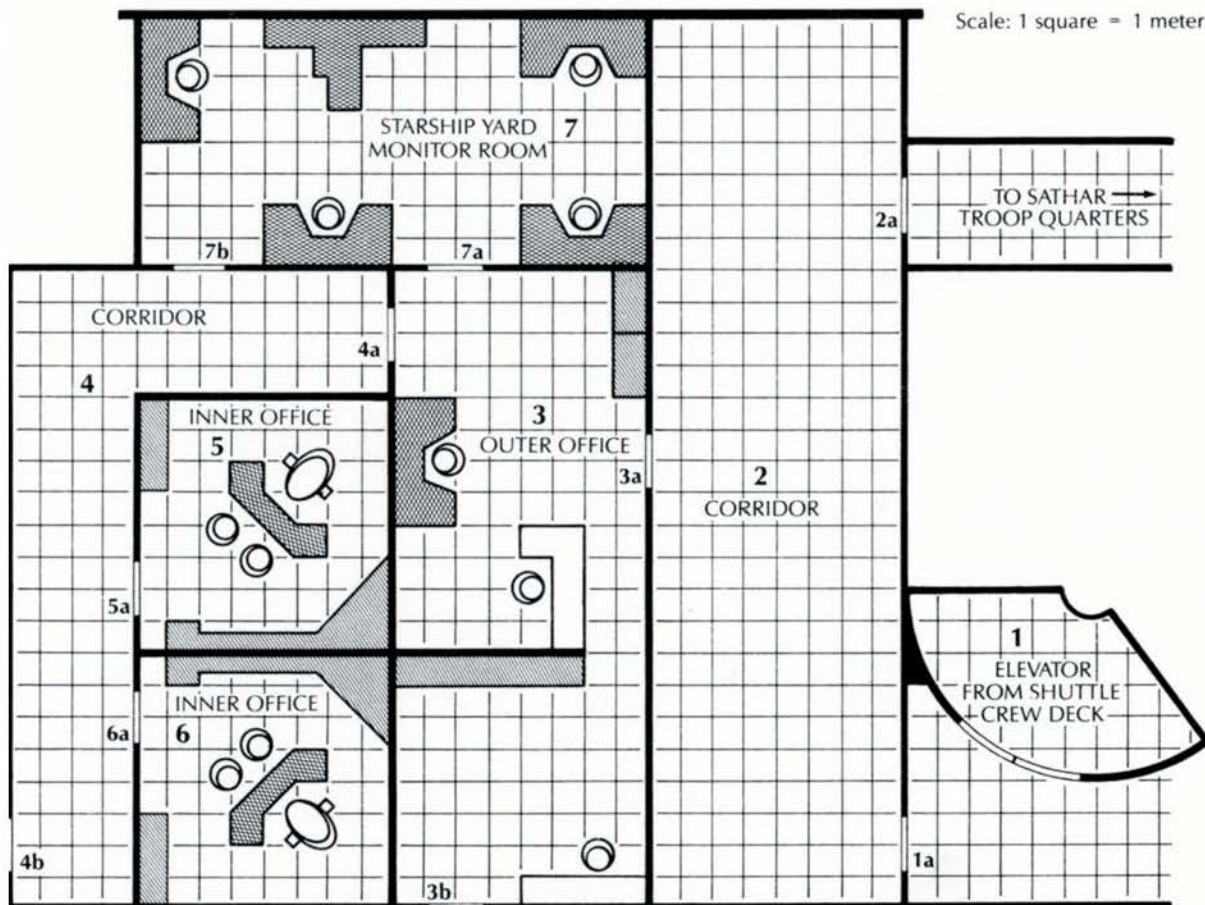


MAP 4. SHUTTLE CREW DECK



Scale: 1 square = 4 meters

MAP 5. SATHAR ADMINISTRATION DECK



Scale: 1 square = 1 meter

A STAR FRONTIERS®

KNIGHT HAWKS ADVENTURE

The War Machine

by Ken Rolston



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ALPHA SECTION: INTRODUCTION

The War Machine can be played by itself or as the third of three modules in the *Beyond the Frontier* series.

This module is written for the game referee. If you plan to participate as a player, don't read any further.

Alpha .1 BRIEFING

Before starting to play, read this booklet carefully. Review the *STAR FRONTIERS®* Alpha Dawn and Knight Hawks rules also, if necessary.

If players (PCs) are continuing the adventure begun in *Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes* and *Face of the Enemy*, they should keep using their established characters. If not, use the pregenerated characters on page 13, or other characters with similar skills. The PCs in this adventure should have enough spaceship skills to operate the Eleanor Moraes, the Osprey, and the Backdoor.

In the middle of this adventure book are several removable sections, including the System Brief, pregenerated characters, ship rosters, and the Players' Background Report. To remove these sections (pp. 11-18), bend the staples out with a blunt object and pull the sheets from the book. Then bend the staples back down.

You will also need the color maps from the Alpha Dawn and Knight Hawks games.

As you run the adventure, read all boxed text to the PCs as they have encounters. The rest of the text given for an encounter is for your eyes only; reveal the details as you see fit.

Before starting the adventure, read the Players' Background Report and the System Brief. If your players haven't participated in the first two adventures of this series, make sure they understand all of the events that lead up to *The War Machine*. When you are ready to begin, give the players the background report and the UPF crew and ship rosters.

Alpha .2 ABBREVIATIONS

STR	Strength	STA	Stamina
DEX	Dexterity	RS	Reaction Speed
INT	Intuition	LOG	Logic
PER	Personality	LDR	Leadership
PS	Punching Score	MV	Movement

ATT	Attack
DAM	Damage
IM	Initiative Modifier
RW	Ranged Weapon Attack Score
M	Melee Attack Score
MR	Maneuver Rating
HP	Hull Points
LC	Laser Cannon
T	Torpedo
MS	Masking Screen
LB	Laser Battery
AR	Assault Rocket
RB	Rocket Battery
ADF	Acceleration/Deceleration Factor
DCR	Damage Control Rating
RH	Reflective Hull
ICM	Interceptor Missile



BETA SECTION: HOSTILE CRAFT APPROACHING!

Beta .1 CAMPAIGN ADJUSTMENTS

Your PCs' resources for this adventure are dependent upon the outcome of *Face of the Enemy* (if the PCs took part in that adventure). If the PCs haven't completed *Enemy*, they have the following resources:

1. UPF Eleanor Moraes, an armed research vessel;
2. CMS Osprey, an assault scout of the Clarion Royal Marines, temporarily attached to the Frontier Expeditionary Force;
3. UPF Backdoor, an unarmed Sathar scout ship captured by the UPF.

All of these ships are undamaged and carry their full load of munitions. Each has made one interstellar jump since overhaul.

If the PCs have finished *Enemy*, however, they may have more (or fewer) ships, in varying states of serviceability. The Moraes and Osprey at least should be in good condition. The Backdoor, however, may have been damaged or destroyed in the assault on the Sathar mothership. The PCs may also have a second captured Sathar scout ship. Finally, if the PCs were wildly successful in *Enemy*, they may have captured the Sathar mothership as well.

At your discretion, the PCs can have the Backdoor repaired. Use the "Repair" rules from the Knight Hawks Campaign Book. The PCs cannot have the mothership repaired. Its laser batteries, ICMs, and masks may still be operational, however. In this case, the UPF forces may design their defense around the mothership as if it were a friendly space station—immobile, but possessing offensive and defensive weapons. (Of course, for this strategy to work, skilled PC or NPC weapons operators must be spared from the other ships.)

Beta .2 ALERT! UNIDENTIFIED SHIPS APPROACHING!

The videocom flashes to life, showing Dentin's grim expression. As he briefs

his ships, a computer graphic displaying the approach of enemy craft wavers behind him.

"We've got Four Sathar-style fighters approaching. Current speed: 120,000 kilometers per minute. Deceleration at 2 gs. If they maintain this constant deceleration on the same course, they should arrive here in less than an hour.

"The Moraes doesn't have enough legs to outrun a fighter, so we'll have to stand and fight. Each ship will operate independently. Stay out of range of their assault rockets; exploit the superior range of your laser batteries. Conserve your rockets if possible; we're a long way from resupply here. Staying within the asteroid belt works in our favor; it breaks up their order of attack.

"Finally, we'll probably have to take some risks in order to win, but don't push your luck until you've had a chance to feel out their weaknesses. With any luck, they'll make some mistakes we can exploit. We, however, cannot afford to make any mistakes.

"That's it. Good luck."

SETTING UP THE STAR MAP

Use 60 upside-down counters as asteroid markers. Distribute them randomly in a band 16 hexes wide across the center of the map (covering the area inside hexes 2001, 3601, 2039, and 3639). Place each counter on the intersection of three hexes.

Place a Sathar assault carrier counter on hex 2720 to mark the location of the mothership (where the PCs' forces start). Place two different-colored assault scout counters (the Moraes and the Osprey) at the Mothership. If the PCs are using the Backdoor and another Sathar scout ship, place markers on the map to represent these ships. Though these ships are unarmed, the PCs may use them as decoys.

Four hostile fighters enter the map on Turn 1. Their speed is 12 hexes per turn.

Sathar Fighter Counter A: hex 0520. Mhemne pilot* (level 2)

Sathar Fighter Counter B: hex 0524. Mhemne pilot* (level 2)

Sathar Fighter Counter C: hex 0120. Sathar pilot (level 3)

Sathar Fighter Counter D: hex 0124. Sathar pilot (level 4, Squadron Commander)

* Mhemne pilots cannot use an ADF or MR of more than 3 without decreasing their skills and running the risk of blacking out, as Mhemne have poor tolerance for high-G maneuvers. The results of ADF or MR of more than 3 are as follows:

ADF or MR of 4: Reduce all skill and attack percentages to one-half normal. There is a 20% chance of blackout per turn.

ADF or MR of 5: Reduce all skill and attack percentages to one-tenth normal. There is a 50% chance of blackout per turn.

If a pilot blacks out, a dead-man's switch automatically reduces acceleration to ADF 2. The pilot then regains consciousness in one turn. The ship maintains its last course during the pilot's blackout.

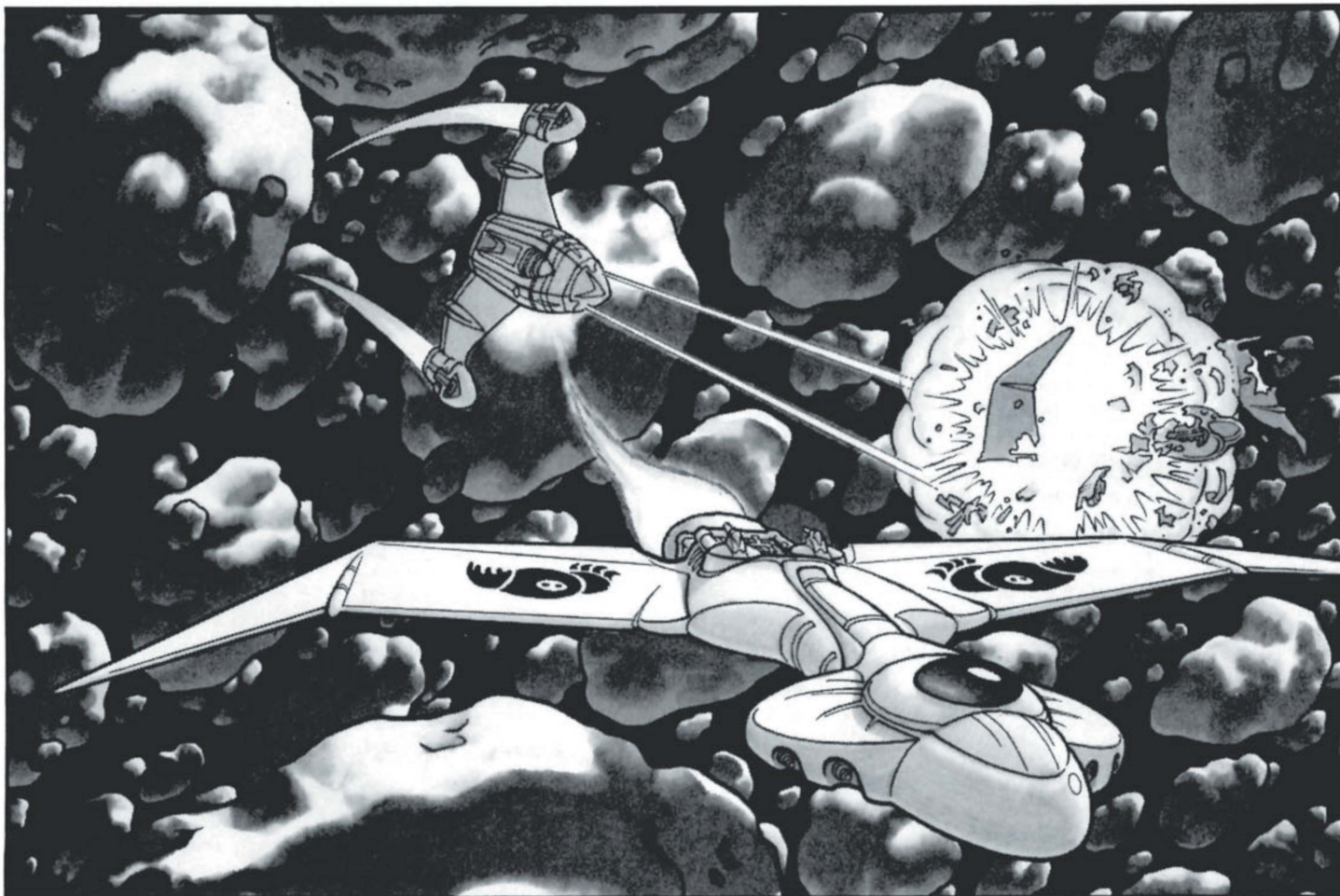
HOSTILE FIGHTER TACTICS

Sathar consider the two Mhemne pilots and ships to be expendable. The two Sathar pilots are responsible for training the other Mhemne system defense pilots; they are the only skilled fighter pilots in the system, and they are by no means expendable!

The purpose of the Sathar/Mhemne attack is to: 1) discover the identity of the intruders, and 2) determine the quality of the intruders' ships and pilots.

The Sathar squadron commander orders fighters A and B to engage in combat. He and the other Sathar pilot keep out of range (at least five hexes away from the PCs' ships). If any of the PC ships flee, the commander orders the Mhemne pilots to pursue.

If the PCs don't destroy fighters A and B within 5 turns of the start of battle, the Sathar commander orders the Mhemne to use full acceleration/deceleration and maneuver power (thus decreasing their skills and creating the risk of blackouts). If the PCs destroy either fighter before one of their own ships is destroyed, the Sathar turn



and run for home at full acceleration. Any remaining Mhemne pilot also retreats.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

Let your players determine UPF strategy on their own. Be fair in how you run this battle, as the odds are in the PCs' favor. Keep in mind that if you finish off the PCs, your game is over pretty quickly! Don't let them get away with foolish mistakes, though.

If you feel the PCs need some assistance, keep the Sathar out of the battle and have them run at the first sign of danger. Also, you can offer advice through Captain Dentin.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Dentin forbids the PCs from chasing any fleeing Sathar fighters. He orders the PCs to make repairs and ready defenses for further attacks.

If the PCs inspect the wreckage of a hostile ship, the only interesting find is the body of its Mhemne pilot. (The UPF forces

may have discovered a partially-dissected Mhemne body in *Face of the Enemy*. The resemblance is unmistakable.)

If a PC's comments indicate that he noticed the Mhemnes' inability to handle high-speed maneuvers, make a secret Logic check for that PC. Any PC with piloting skill would have noticed this about the Mhemne, so you should automatically make a Logic check for those PCs. If a check succeeds, have the PCs rerun the computer recordings of the combat. These recordings reveal that the first two fighters didn't use ADF or MR of more than 3 during the first 50 minutes of combat. If either Mhemne pilot suffered diminished skills or a blackout during the fight, the recordings will also show these.

Beta .3 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

1-3 Experience Points.

Give maximum awards to parties that defeat the attackers, expend no more than two assault rockets, and sustain no ship

damage.

Give average awards to parties that defeat the fighters and keep their ships from being destroyed.

Give minimum awards to parties that defeat the fighters and still have at least one UPF ship in working condition.

GAMMA SECTION: AN ENIGMATIC MESSENGER

Gamma .1 WARNING! UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT APPROACHING!

The UPF forces spend the next 40 hours overhauling the atomic engines (in case they need to escape quickly), repairing any damage caused by the attackers, and catching up on sleep.

A shrill alarm shatters the stillness. Within seconds, everyone is scrambling for his battle station as the computer squawks out new information. Captain Dentin's face suddenly appears on the videocom. He looks puzzled.

"I don't know what we've got here. We're tracking a small, slow-moving chemical rocket that's approaching our location. We've analyzed its thrust gas emissions, and it looks like the rocket is of fairly primitive design—not consistent with Federation or Sathar technology. It's too slow for an attack missile and too small to carry a messenger . . . well, scratch that. Who knows what we might run into out here?"

"I want to send a couple of volunteers out to pick this rocket up, so we can take a good look at it. I need people experienced with space armor and rocket packs. I'll be on the bridge. Over."

You should strongly encourage the PCs to volunteer for the retrieval party. Not all of them have to go, however. Two or three PCs can handle this job.

RETRIEVING THE ROCKET

The rocket is no longer under thrust when the PCs get to it. Rather, it's drifting at a constant 250 meters per turn toward the location of the mothership (where the UPF forces have been for the last two days).

Dentin takes the volunteers aboard the Osprey and matches the rocket's course and speed, following at a constant 500 meters behind the rocket. Dentin won't take the Osprey closer to the rocket, "just in case."

MAP SET-UP: Use the Knight Hawks hex

map. Each hex equals 50 meters. Place a ship counter in hex 1027. The PCs start here. Use another ship counter to represent the rocket, and place it in hex 2027. Both the ship and the rocket drift 250 meters per turn, so the distance between them doesn't change.

Place four counters (representing the PCs) in hex 1027, with the ship counter. The PCs must move to the rocket, examine it to see if it's safe, and (if safe) bring it back to the Osprey.

The PCs must specify what equipment they're taking along before they leave the Osprey. Dentin gives each of them one suit of space armor and one rocket pack. Under no condition does he give them extra rocket pack fuel. (Dentin's trying to enforce conservation of resources.) The PCs may request other gear from the list on the Players' Background Report. Clever PCs will choose magnetic shoes, spacesuit anchors, and cable (1,000 meters). The PCs can use the cable to drag the rocket back to the ship.

USING ROCKET PACKS EFFECTIVELY

Before you run the PCs through this encounter, review the rules on spacesuits and rocket packs (Knight Hawks Campaign Book, pp. 28-29).

To successfully complete their task, the PCs must:

1. accelerate toward the rocket;
2. decelerate and stop at the rocket;
3. accelerate the rocket and themselves back toward the ship;
4. decelerate and stop the rocket (and themselves) at the ship.

The rocket has 10 times the mass of a PC. The PCs must maneuver the rocket by using bursts from their rocket packs. Each 10 bursts from a rocket pack change the speed of the rocket (and only the rocket!) by 50 meters per turn. Therefore, the PCs must reach the rocket with enough fuel left to fire at least 20 bursts (10 to accelerate the rocket toward the Osprey at one hex per turn and 10 to decelerate it again) plus two bursts per PC.

A lot of things could go wrong with this exercise, such as:

1. overshooting the target because of a failed dexterity check;
2. failing to decelerate when approaching the rocket;
3. misjudging the fuel needed to complete the task;
4. forgetting that anything accelerated toward a target (such as a rocket accelerated toward a scout ship) must be decelerated before it reaches its destination;
5. forgetting that fuel is needed to accelerate and decelerate the PCs as well as the rocket;
6. expecting to use tools in free fall, where there's nothing to brace against when applying force.

Even if the PCs are very unlucky with their Dexterity checks in this maneuver, they have a large margin of safety to play with, if they are careful! The spacesuits have 20 hours of air. The worst that should happen is that someone might have to be rescued. Fouling up such a simple mission is certain to get a PC a few minutes "on the carpet" before Dentin, not to mention endless needing from colleagues.

Gamma .2 THE ROCKET

Read the following boxed text as a PC approaches the rocket:

The rocket is a 6-meter-long cylinder. It has no fins or appendages. Large brown markings are painted on the rocket's dull, metallic hull. The markings are repeated on both sides. Other, smaller marks also are visible on the surface.

Just behind the rocket's nose is a 1/2-meter-square access panel. The panel appears to be sealed with some sort of plastic.

Any technician examining the rocket discovers that it is dead, although a faint humming can be heard if someone presses his helmet against the access panel.

The plastic covering to the access panel is very hard, so the PCs must use force to

open the panel. If the PCs brought along a tool kit containing electrosnips, a laser scalpel, or an omnidrill, they can open the panel easily. If anyone tries to force the panel open in zero gravity, he suffers a -50% modifier against his Strength rating (or a 5% chance of success, whichever is higher). Also, each time a PC fails to force the panel, he must make a Dexterity check. If the check fails, the PC slips and hurtles off into space in a random direction at 50 meters per second.

A laser shot at setting 4 melts the plastic that covers the access panel. If other weapons are used, the panel has 35 structural points.

If the PCs wait until the rocket is inside the Osprey to open the panel, they have no trouble getting it open.

When PCs open the panel (in space or on board the Osprey), read the following boxed text to the players.

A single piece of etched metal rests behind the access panel. The design resembles a view of a stellar system from above the orbital plane. The rocket is extremely crude by Federation standards—just a solid fuel booster and a simple, gyroscopic guidance system.

Gamma .3 THE MESSAGE IN METAL

As the PCs study the metal plate, show them the "Message" illustration in this section. Don't hint at the plate's meaning; let the PCs figure it out for themselves.

The plate is a representation of the FS 30 star system. The "X" in the asteroid belt (at the end of the solid, curved line) represents the mothership. The solid line corresponds roughly to the trajectory of the UPF ships as they entered the system. A line of arrows, drawn at a right angle to the mothership's extended trajectory, points to another location in the asteroid belt. This location is marked on the plate by a six-pointed star.

The plate is actually a map that shows a proposed rendezvous at a hidden space station approximately 100 million kilometers away. The plate contains no indication of who is proposing the meeting or why.

The map on the plate contains a misleading feature designed to prevent its use by anyone other than UPF visitors. This feature has also been set up as a *sort of test*; if the outsystem visitors can't deduce it, they aren't worth talking to.

If a PC with astrogation skill examines the

plate, he determines that the solid line corresponds to the UPF ships' trajectories as they entered the system and approached the mothership. He also notices, however, that the trajectories seem to be inaccurately represented. If a PC doesn't have astrogation skill, but still expresses some degree of doubt (see following examples), he also notices the discrepancy between the diagram and the UPF ships' trajectories. PCs discussing the map don't have to be very specific about this; if they're being cautious, they're not likely to overlook any discrepancies.

Some of the comments the PCs might make are:

"Is this map accurate?"

"Is there anything funny about this map?"

"Let's let the computer take a look at this."

"Maybe this map has a coded message."

"Why would someone risk having this map fall into the wrong hands?"

"What if we go to the spot indicated and there's nothing there?"

The UPF trajectories are indeed inaccurately represented on the map; they are off by about 10 degrees. If the PCs correct the angle, the line of arrows drawn perpendicular from the extended trajectory now points to an entirely different location: the correct rendezvous point!

FAILING TO UNDERSTAND THE MAP

If the PCs don't figure out the map's meaning, Dentin radios Reider, whose experts suggest that the line of arrows on the map points to some kind of meeting place. Then allow the PCs a chance to ask questions about the map's correctness.

If the PCs don't figure out the hidden meaning behind the inaccurate trajectory, they may still decide to go to the marked location. Don't try to correct the PCs' mistake at this point. Instead, go to Delta .1: Going to the Wrong Rendezvous.

Gamma .4 MESSAGE FROM REIDER

Once Dentin understands that the plate points to a rendezvous with a presumably intelligent race that may be native to this system, he radios Reider for orders. Reider delivers these orders personally, by way of videocom transmitted over subspace radio:

A distorted, snowy picture erupts on the videocom, but the voice comes through

loud and clear. It's Reider.

"Gentlemen, within five days the assault scouts K'riss and Doboru will join my frigate and flagship, the Flying Cloud, here at Clarion Base. As soon as they arrive, we proceed immediately to support your operation. However, we won't arrive for at least two weeks. You must continue on your own to find out as much as possible before we get there.

"It now seems likely that the FS 30 system is infested with Sathar. There are also indications that the system may be inhabited by another intelligent race. The message you received is a sign of hope. Perhaps this race will be willing to help us in the struggle against the Sathar. We must do our best to elicit their help. Together, we may be able to rub out those lousy worms!"

The blurry videocom picture shivers for a moment as Reider calms himself. Then, in a quiet voice, he continues.

"You must be ambassadors of the United Planetary Federation . . . I imagine the Federation would prefer to have professional diplomats on an operation like this, but I'm confident you'll do what has to be done.

"I don't have to tell you how important your mission is. Your orders are to proceed to the proposed rendezvous, make contact with representatives of the native race, enlist their aid against the Sathar, and offer whatever assistance they may require in return. Also, whenever it is consistent with your primary mission, you are to gather intelligence on the strength, disposition, and objectives of the Sathar in the FS 30 system.

"I wish you luck. We have been presented with a marvelous opportunity here. We must not fail to exploit it."

Gamma .5 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

Each PC earns 1 Experience Point for helping to retrieve the rocket. If the PCs perform in a particularly efficient and elegant manner, award each of them 2 points.

Award each PC 1 bonus point if the PCs decipher the map's hidden meaning (the inaccurate trajectory).



DELTA SECTION: THE MHEMNE

In this scenario, the PCs must meet and confer with representatives of the Mhemne, an intelligent race inhabiting the FS 30 system. The PCs must earn their trust and cooperation. As the players run their characters through this diplomatic exercise, you'll be responsible for running the representatives from the Mhemne race.

Before you run this scenario, make sure you have a firm grasp on the Mhemne background. You should also understand what kind of diplomatic hurdles the PCs face.

Delta .1 PREPARING FOR THE RENDEZVOUS

The correct rendezvous point indicated by the map (discovered in the Gamma section) is located 100 million kilometers from the UPF ships' current location. The trip takes 40 hours.

GOING TO THE WRONG RENDEZVOUS

If the PCs don't read the map properly, the UPF ships travel to the wrong rendezvous. Dentin orders a search of the area. After 8 hours of fruitless search, Dentin reports to Reider. Reider's experts then reexamine the map and discover the error. Reider then relays the rendezvous location's correct coordinates to Dentin, along with a severe dressing down for wasting valuable time.

Dentin then calls a meeting of the various crews in the Moraes's conference room to explain the crews' costly miscalculation. For this meeting, address the PCs in the role of Dentin, and make sure you show how irritated Dentin is about being humiliated before his superior.

The trip to the actual rendezvous point takes another 8 hours.

APPROACHING THE CORRECT RENDEZVOUS

As the UPF ships approach the rendezvous point, the PCs detect a faint radio beacon. Dentin selects a *party to proceed* in the Moraes to the rendezvous point. This party should include all of the PCs and at least one NPC to serve as your mouthpiece

for giving hints, if needed. Dentin orders the Osprey to stand off at a range of 10 kilometers in case the rendezvous is a trap.

PC PREPARATIONS: Before the PCs leave for the rendezvous, they should explicitly list everything they are taking with them. The UPF manuals concerning first contact with aliens recommend the following equipment:

1. videocom cameras and displays
2. computer display terminals
3. poly-vox
4. chronocom
5. radiophone
6. gifts
7. trade samples

Pay careful attention to what personal weapons and techkits, if any, the PCs take with them. Have the PCs make up a list of items they intend to take as gifts and trade samples. Also check to see how the PCs carry their equipment. For example, a ready weapon is an insult to the Mhemne's hospitality, but a weapon carried in a closed package (intended as a gift or trade sample) is perfectly acceptable.

DENTIN'S ORDERS FOR THE RENDEZVOUS PARTY

"Leave a radio channel open to the Osprey so we can monitor the progress of the meeting.

"Avoid gunplay at all costs—even at the risk of your own lives! You can't know what kind of tragic consequences could ensue from bloodshed during first contact with aliens.

"Reider's guidelines on your authority to commit the UPF to treaties and other agreements are as follows:

"Any agreements involving a total expenditure of less than 2 million credits are authorized under the 'Federation Emergency Aid to Allies' Act.

"Also, any general treaty agreeing to mutual aid in the war against the Sathar will be acknowledged by the Federation. Specific provisions must await fur-

ther authorization by the Federation, but Reider gave me permission to assist in any way I choose as long as it doesn't directly interfere with FEF orders.

"Though you have no authority to contract trade agreements, you're free to outline proposals for beneficial trade—subject, of course, to later approval by the Fed."

Delta .2 OUTLINES FOR NEGOTIATING

Use Table 1: Mhemne Response to PCs and Proposals to determine how well the PCs do in their negotiations with the Mhemne.

Table 2: Sample PC Actions/Proposals lists some things the PCs may try. The number of points awarded or penalized for each action are also listed. When applicable, the point totals refer to the number of points awarded or penalized per character for a specific action. For example, if two PCs carry ready weapons into the meeting, the PCs are penalized two points (-1 for each; see first entry on Table 2).

Of course, the instances listed on Table 2 are only examples. The PCs could communicate and negotiate in any number of ways. Use Table 2 as a guide for the number of points a specific action should be worth.

Only the first five instances of an action or proposal count toward point awards and penalties. For example, the PCs would receive points for the first five gifts of technology they present to the Mhemne. A sixth gift would be worth no points. Similarly, the PCs can lose no more than 5 points for carrying weapons into the conference.

More examples of proposals and actions that could be worth points are given throughout the rest of this section.

Make sure you give the PCs feedback on the effectiveness of their attempts at diplomacy. You can do this through the Mhemne, as they are compulsively frank and honest. They candidly describe their personal feelings and opinions about the PCs' proposals and actions.

USING PSYCHO-SOCIAL SKILLS

The PCs may use their psycho-social skills (empathy, communication, and persuasion) to great effect in their negotiations. When a PC is confronted with a situation in which trust points are at stake, he may use empathy to get hints about how to behave. Successful use of empathy also gives hints on how the Mhemne are different from other Frontier Sector races.

The PCs can use the communicate subskill to solve any negotiation problems that might arise between them and the Mhemne.

The PCs can use the persuasion subskill to gain hints on how they can persuade any overly-suspicious Mhemne. When a PC uses this subskill successfully, the Mhemne are more likely to accept the PC's words as truthful and accurate, even in the absence of solid proof.

TABLE 1. MHEMNE RESPONSE TO PCs AND PROPOSALS

Trust Pts.	Mhemne Response
60 or more	confident trust; willingness to consider all proposals, even if they present risks
59 to 20	limited approval of PCs; still cautious; insist on conclusive evidence for all statements
19 to -19	uncertain and suspicious, but willing to consider specifics clearly in the interests of both parties; unwilling to reveal anything about their culture
-20 or less	dissatisfaction with PC actions; will consider proposals only with ironclad security for Mhemne; regard PCs as potential enemies

TABLE 2. SAMPLE PC ACTIONS/PROPOSALS AND POINT AWARDS & PENALTIES

Actions/Proposals	Points
Minor Details of Courtesy & Culture	
Carrying ready or holstered weapon into meeting	-1
Refusing to surrender weapons on request	-1
Showing disrespect to hosts	-1
Giving gift of superior technology	+1
Willing to openly admit to faults and limitations of a proposal	+1
Major Details of Immediate Importance	
Proposing attacks on Sathar that are short-sighted and may cause Mhemne to suffer reprisals	-5
Proposing use of Mhemne as shock troops	-5
Proving ability to defeat Sathar	+5
Proposing well-planned raids or attack on Sathar	+5
Trading weapons for information about the Sathar	+5
Major Details of Long-term Importance	
Making practical proposal of trading UPF - built agricultural station for limited mineral rights in asteroid belt	+10
Negotiating treaty against Sathar (promising weapons, training, technology, and UPF fleet support)	+10
Trading spacedrive and astrogation technology for a long-term agreement to produce trade goods for UPF	+10
Misrepresenting intentions or being dishonest	-10
Implying contempt for the Mhemne's inferior level of technology	-10
Consistently failing to appreciate the Mhemne's insistence on proof rather than trust	-10

ROLE-PLAYING THE MHEMNE

The PCs will be negotiating with the division of the Mhemne race known as Belters (see the System Brief for details). The Mhemne have many good traits, although they have a few not-so-admirable ones as well. To allow the PCs to display their diplomatic skills, you should try to give the Belters as much personality as possible.

The Belters are hard-hearted realists. They must be to survive in the harsh environment of the asteroid belt.

They are a very logical and reasonable race. The only emotions they are likely to display in public are anger, resentment, and suspicion. In private, however, the Belters are tender, trusting, and generous. The Belters never reveal this side of their personality in public, however, and they are uncomfortable with any race that does.

The Belters are also conceited and self-centered, mainly because these traits help them deal with the humiliation of discovering they are an "inferior" race. Though they hate to admit it, they know they cannot defend themselves against the Sathar without help.

At first, the Belters are openly skeptical and distrustful of the UPF visitors; their past experiences with aliens have been very bad. They are also sharp traders by temperament. The Belters don't mean to offend; they're just used to driving hard bargains.

The Belters have a cultural tradition of ruthless warfare and revenge that makes them seem bloodthirsty and cruel in contrast with the Iceworlders and the Confederacy.

Delta .3 STARTING THE CONFERENCE

Remember that this section deals with role-playing and problem-solving. Don't scare the PCs into resorting to gunplay. The Mhemne are very cautious, very polite (though suspicious), very honest, and very unarmed.

As the PCs prepare for the rendezvous, read the following boxed text to the players.

The Moraes slowly approaches the site of the rendezvous. The radio beacon leads you to a slowly rotating asteroid, which is about 100 meters in diameter. A 30-meter-wide door opens out of the asteroid, revealing a docking bay that runs through the asteroid along its axis of rotation. Four cylinders, resembling work pods, emerge from the docking bay.

As the Moraes matches the rotation of the asteroid, the work pods move out to help the UPF ship enter and dock. The asteroid's bay is outfitted to dock several small spaceships, but the docking areas are unoccupied.

Eight figures in bulky spacesuits float toward an airlock in the center of the docking bay. The airlock door slowly opens.

The eight figures wait for the PCs to emerge from the Moraes and enter the airlock. The PCs should move ahead of their hosts, presenting their undefended backs to prove that they trust the Mhemne. If a Mhemne has to point out the obviously open airlock door, penalize the PCs 1 trust point.

After the PCs have entered the airlock, the eight figures in spacesuits follow behind them and close the airlock door. Air rushes into the airlock. Suit monitors indicate that the air is safe to breathe. The Mhemne wait for the PCs to remove their suits. If the Mhemne have to gesture to the PCs to take off their suits first, penalize the PCs 1 trust point.

After the PCs have removed their suits, read the following boxed text to the players.

The eight figures before you remove their suits, revealing humanlike anatomies and features. Their bodies are covered with short, red-brown hair. Their pale red, translucent skin is visible only on their faces and hands. Their garments, made of a blue, synthetic material, are skin-tight.

The figures don't appear to be carrying any weapons. Each wears a small, fabric belt pouch.

After all eight figures have removed their suits, one of them touches a control panel on the wall. A hatch opens onto a 4 meter by 4 meter corridor that leads away from the docking bay. The corridor stretches for 10 meters, ending at two hatches.

The figures stand back, apparently waiting for you to enter the corridor first.

As you approach the end of the corridor, the hatch on the spinward side opens onto another 4 meter by 4 meter corridor. You walk another 10 meters, and are met by a ninth figure dressed in a skintight blue garment. A door opens off the corridor's left side.

Again, the figures pause, expecting you to move first.

A 10-meter-square room lies beyond

the door. A raised platform, about 60 centimeters higher than the rest of the room, takes up the far half of the room. A large, semicircular table, surrounded by 12 empty chairs, stands in each half of the room. The two tables face an open, circular area in the center of the room.

Large video display screens are mounted in the walls behind each table. A computer keyboard and videoscreen rest before each chair. The keyboards reflect no familiar language.

The table in the raised half of the room is for the Mhemne. If the PCs sit at that table, penalize them 1 trust point. The Mhemne don't start the conference until the PCs have taken the seats in the lower half of the room.

The nine figures enter the room and take seats at the table in the raised half of the room. The central figure starts talking in an unfamiliar language. A translation blares out from speakers set into the walls.

"Computers learn speech in radios. Visitor is welcome. You name me Khgree. Race is Mhemne. Mhemne need Sathar gone, food production, and atomic drives. What need you?"

So now the PCs know where the Mhemne stand. The aliens expect the PCs to be just as clear about what they want. Until the PCs outline their needs, the Mhemne ignore everything else they say. For each statement the PCs make that doesn't answer Khgree's question, penalize the PCs 1 trust point.

When the PCs say what they want, Khgree continues.

"We offer you Sathar knowledge, valuable substances, and skilled labor. What offer you?"

The PCs must now outline what they can offer the Mhemne in return. Again, the Mhemne aren't interested in any small talk, and they ignore all statements that have nothing to do with the PCs' offer. For each statement the PCs make that doesn't answer Khgree's second question, penalize the PCs 1 trust point.

Delta .4 BARGAINING WITH THE MHEMNE

After the PCs and the Mhemne have stated what they need and what they can offer, the bargaining process can proceed

more informally. The Mhemne are willing to answer any relevant questions about possible trade agreements between themselves and the UPF.

COOPERATING AGAINST THE SATHAR

The most important aspect of these negotiations for the Mhemne is obtaining help in the fight against the Sathar. No matter how badly the PCs perform their diplomatic tasks (short of starting a battle), the Mhemne at least give them the information listed in Delta .5. The Mhemne accept almost anything in return for this information—even an unsupported promise to attack the Sathar. The Mhemne hold out as long as they can for weapons, however (beam weapons in particular). They aren't concerned with the number of weapons they can obtain, as long as they can get a working model. The Mhemne are confident they can reproduce almost anything, given time to study it. The Mhemne hope to trade one piece of information from Delta .6 for each unique beam or gyrojet weapon they receive. (They would settle for a single laser pistol for all the information, but they would resent such unfair trading.)

The amount of help the Mhemne offer in later encounters depends on how favorably they receive the PCs. At the very least, they help the PCs get to Snowball (a planet in the FS 30 system) to contact the resistance.

Khgree also asks that he be allowed to accompany the UPF forces as a Mhemne representative, observer, and translator. If the PCs refuse to agree to even this condition, the conference is abruptly terminated. In this case, the Mhemne help the PCs get to Snowball, but that is all. The PCs have no chance of contacting the Mhemne resistance there. Go to Epsilon .2 and follow the directions that outline how the PCs should proceed if they fail to establish contact with the Mhemne resistance.

TRADING ATOMIC DRIVES AND PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY

Though these needs are secondary, the Mhemne still negotiate with the PCs to acquire atomic drives and production technology. Other commodities that interest the Mhemne are medical information and equipment, astrogation, robotics, and industrial technology. For these commodities, the Mhemne can offer three things: valuable mineral rights, skilled technical laborers and craftsmen, and superior computer technology (in terms of miniaturization and artificial intelligence).

The outcome of bargaining for these commodities won't affect later episodes in this adventure, so don't worry about the specific results of these negotiations. However, if the PCs can sell the Mhemne on the enrichment that a healthy trade between them and the UPF could bring, the Mhemne will be more cooperative with the UPF now and in the future.

Delta .5 INFORMATION ABOUT SATHAR OPERATIONS

This information is the most valuable thing the Mhemne have to offer in these negotiations. The information relates to Sathar operations in and around the space stations and the moon of the planet Snowball.

The Mhemne also have some resources they can use in the fight against the Sathar. The FEF will need their help if they are to defeat the Sathar.

Following is a list of critical information about the Sathar that the PCs should get from the Mhemne.

1. Sathar system defenses are based on Snowball's moon (Akhala). The moon bases are heavily guarded by Sathar ground weapon systems. The Sathar fleet garrison includes at least six fighters, one heavy cruiser, and one recently constructed assault carrier capable of carrying eight fighters. The carrier may not yet be operational.

2. The Sathar have expanded two Mhemne space stations to provide shipyard facilities for warship construction. Station L4 produces destroyer-class starships. Four of these ships are under construction; two may be operational. Station L5 produces assault carriers and fighters. One of the assault carriers is under construction and may be operational. The Mhemne aren't sure how many fighters are under construction—there are at least 20, and some of these may be operational. Neither of these stations appears to be defended, except for ICMs and a few rocket batteries.

3. There are 10 robot factories on the surface of Snowball that provide organic materials and other resources for the shipyards. These materials are processed at the factories and then shipped by system shuttle to the space station shipyards.

4. The bulk of the metals used in the shipyards are mined in the asteroids and on Akhala. Magnetic slingshots fire unpowered containers of raw materials from the moon and asteroids in to the space stations.

There they are picked up, decelerated, and delivered to the factories and shipyards at the stations.

5. The main concentrations of Mhemne population are:
Akhala (2 million);
stations L4 and L5 (10,000 each);
asteroid belt (500,000?);
Snowball's surface (1,000-2,000?).

6. Mhemne resistance to the Sathar is strongest in the asteroids. Akhala and the space stations are firmly in the hands of Mhemne factions controlled by Sathar. Most Mhemne resistance on Snowball has been eliminated, but small groups still survive.

7. The Mhemne have no information about the defenses on the surface of Snowball. They aren't able to make regular contact with the resistance based there. The resistance groups don't respond to radio signals. No Mhemne ship has made it to the surface of Snowball in 100 years. The only inkling that some resistance still remains there comes from radio contact with agents in the space stations. Apparently, the planet resistance occasionally disrupts shuttle missions to the planet and sometimes battles with shuttle pilots. The Mhemne are unable to substantiate these reports, however.

8. Most of the Sathar system defense ships are piloted by Mhemne.

9. Mhemne have a low tolerance for high acceleration maneuvers.

10. The Mhemne don't know how many Sathar are in the system, but they believe the number to be relatively small. Most high technology on Snowball, Akhala, and the space stations is automated. The Sathar are training the Mhemne to be pilots and gunners for the Sathar ships produced at the shipyards. Astrogators and engineers are presumably offworlders, since the Sathar carefully guard the secrets of spaceship engineering and construction. Most Mhemne system ships are 2,000-year-old antiques powered by chemical drives. The Mhemne do have a few relatively new ion drive ships available in the asteroids. The Mhemne explain that they haven't had the surplus resources or production capacity to build many spaceships.

Delta .6 FINDING THE WEAKNESS IN SATHAR DEFENSES

After the PCs have gotten information from the Mhemne, their hosts suggest a recess for food and relaxation. At this point, the PCs should return to their ship.

Dentin reports the information from the Mhemne to Reider. (Reider's task force is still 13 days away at this point.) Since there is little information about the situation on the surface of Snowball, Reider orders Dentin to visit the planet's surface, make contact with the resistance, and evaluate its strength (as well as the strength of the Sathar planetary defenses). Dentin's team should also check out the nature of the planetside factories that provide materials for the shipyard.

Dentin accompanies the diplomatic party to the next meeting with the Mhemne. He explains Reider's orders to the Mhemne and asks for their help in carrying them out.

The Mhemne offer to use one of their ion drive ships to create a radar window. The UPF ships can remain inside the radar window until the last minute, then dash to the planet's surface before any Sathar fighters can pursue. In return, Khgree asks that the UPF turn over at least one Sathar atomic shuttle, if the UPF is able to capture one on Snowball. Dentin immediately authorizes this agreement.

Khgree also offers blower devices that will cover the UPF ships with snow when they have reached Snowball's surface, providing cover from aerial searches.

Khgree himself will accompany the UPF forces and direct them to a place where they may meet up with the resistance.

Delta .7 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

1-3 Experience Points.

Maximum Award: Give maximum awards to parties that earn the Mhemnes' trust and learn their background and values.

Average Award: Give average awards to parties that establish neutral relations with the Mhemne, obtain necessary information about the Sathar, and obtain an agreement with the Mhemne to provide material assistance and information in operations against the Sathar.

Minimum Award: Give minimum awards to parties that avoid serious conflict with the Mhemne and obtain information about Sathar operations in the system.

EPSILON SECTION: THE RESISTANCE

Epsilon .1 THE HOSTILE HOVERCRAFT

Two Sathar fighters detect the UPF ships as they approach Snowball. The fighters are sent to intercept. The UPF ships, however, are able to evade the fighters and enter Snowball's atmosphere without being damaged. Khgree gives directions to the place where he hopes to contact the planetary resistance.

The ships head for the landing site indicated by Khgree. As you approach, you can't see any sign of Sathar or Mhemne occupation anywhere on the surface of the planet. There are only broad plains of ice and snow, broken occasionally by a frozen, jagged mountain range.

Khgree points you in the direction of the south pole. The ships touch down on a high plateau in a mountain range there. Though the landing goes smoothly, you immediately feel the ship settling into the ice, which was melted by the heat of your ship.

Seconds later, the radar comes alive. A blip slides slowly across the screen, indicating some kind of craft 5 kilometers away. It's approaching at low altitude and is moving at 200 kph.

The blip is a Sathar Ravager, a robot attack hovercraft (see p. 11 for description and statistics). The craft reaches the landing site 2 minutes (20 turns) after it is spotted. As it approaches the landing site, it slows to turn speed (70 meters per turn). The craft moves in a 10-meter-diameter circle around the landing site and fires its heavy laser. The Ravager keeps firing until it is destroyed. Because it is out of contact with its base, the craft uses standard Ravager tactics.

Epsilon .2 CONTACT WITH THE RESISTANCE

A Mhemne resistance unit is located nearby in an *underground* (actually "under-ice") installation. The Mhemne have monitored the UPF landing and the

battle with the Ravager. The destruction of the Sathar ship gives the resistance fighters hope that the offworld visitors may be allies. Under no circumstances do the resistance members fire their weapons or make any threatening gestures, even to defend themselves. They'll let themselves be killed before they risk fouling up the first contact they've had with friendly offworlders in 100 years.

It's been 4 hours since the Ravager attacked you, and there is still no sign of the Mhemne resistance. Suddenly, you pick up a weak radio signal. The polyvox translates the message:

"We hope you come in peace. We desperately need your help. We come without weapons. We are prepared to die if you attack us, but if you are friends, we are ready to conduct you to the entrance to our hidden installation.

"We must trust you. We are afraid of a trap, but we cannot afford to miss this opportunity. If you are Sathar agents, then we are doomed. If you are allies against the Sathar, then perhaps you bring us hope."

If any PC is suspicious, Khgree indicates that this message most certainly came from the resistance fighters.

A few moments later, three Iceworlder Mhemne approach on foot. They are clothed in primitive gear. They are looking for some kind of encouraging sign from the PCs, but they continue to approach whether the PCs give them a sign or not. Khgree signals to them as soon as they are in sight (unless the PCs forbid this, for some reason). The resistance fighters then offer to lead the party to their underground installation.

FAILING TO MAKE CONTACT

If the PCs refuse to make contact with the resistance fighters, the Iceworlders hesitate, then step back. The mission to contact the resistance has then failed. The Iceworlders spread word throughout the resistance network that the offworld visitors have refused

to make contact. From this point on, no other Mhemne on Snowball makes any attempt to communicate with the PF team.

If the PCs fail to make contact, Dentin bawls them out severely. Then he orders them to find a processing plant, scout it, enter it, and then follow through with a detailed report on its operation. The PCs must then destroy the plant and search for another one to attack. If the PCs search for plants, they find one on Day 5, Day 9, and Day 11. (See Zeta Section for details on attacking processing plants.)

Epsilon .3 BRAVE BUT DESPERATE ALLIES

The resistance movement's hidden installation is an ancient research station, powered by a nuclear generator. The 300 Iceworlders living there are descendents of the station's original staff.

Only five other resistance installations of this size still exist on Snowball. Several smaller groups survive in considerably less comfortable conditions. The remnants of the once-large Mhemne population on Snowball stay in touch by radio, but there is little to report. There are few weapons and no means by which more can be manufactured. So much time and effort must be devoted to staying alive that there is little opportunity to attack the Sathar.

Over the past 10 years, however, the resistance fighters have learned a great deal about Snowball's Sathar robot processing plants and their defenses. Read the following computer translation of a Mhemne leader's statement to the PCs:

We know three plants. Plants are same. Most part plants is buried ice. Some is surface buildings. Plant have four shuttles. One launches all day. One lands all day. Plant have 100 dig vehicles. Dig vehicles carry minerals. Plant have 10 laser vehicles. Laser vehicles move air. Robots have lasers. Towers have lasers. Robots have lasers. Sathar are few. Mhemne are few.

The Mhemne are brave, but are inade-

NPC/ROBOT MASTER SHEET

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Statistics for Sathar and Mhemne NPCs are listed on the Table 4: NPCs. Their equipment and skills are listed below.

Sathar Squad A: laser rifle, 5 powerclips, sonic knife, stunstick, skeinsuit. (beam weapons 3)

Sathar Squad B: sonic disruptor, power backpack, inertia screen, stunstick. (beam weapons 3)

Sathar Squad C: sonic disruptor, power backpack, sonic screen, skeinsuit, sonic sword. (beam weapons 4, martial arts 1)

Sathar Squad D: sonic disruptor, power backpack, sonic screen, skeinsuit, sonic sword. (beam weapons 4, martial arts 2)

Sathar Technicians: (technician 2)

Sathar Administrators: laser pistol, power backpack, inertia screen. (beam weapons 1)

Iceworlders: (environmental 1-3 or psycho-social 1-2)

Belters: (computers 1-3 or technician 1-2)

Confederationists: (psycho-social 1-3 or technician 1)

ROBOTS

Statistics for Sathar robots are on Table 5: Robots. Further notes are listed below.

RAVAGER

When linked with a main defense computer, ravagers can be used in coordinated defense and attack maneuvers. When operating independently (when more than 10 kilometers from the plant or when its computer isn't being run by skilled operators), a ravager's tactics are predictable: it fires its laser as it moves around its target at 70 meters per turn in a 15-meter-diameter circle. Also, it fires randomly at unidentified moving or metallic objects.

If a Ravager is attacked by gunfire or explosives, use the Vehicle Damage Table on p. 32 of the Expanded Game Rules. Add 2 to the dice roll when using this table for a ravager unit.

The ravager's heavy laser is mounted in a turret with an all-around field of fire.

Ravager's have sonar, infrared, visible light, and radio detectors.

HUNTER UNITS

Hunters are robotic mining and transport units. They are not programmed for attack or defense, but their detectors will see vehicles (95%) and characters carrying metal gear (80%) as sources of high-grade ore to be mined. The unit's grasping clamp causes 6d10 points of damage if it grabs a character. It can lift 1,000 kilograms. The drill arm causes 10d10 points of damage if it hits a character.

If a hunter is attacked with gunfire or explosives, use the Vehicle Damage Table on page 32 of the Expanded Game Rules to determine damage. Subtract 10 from the dice roll when using the table.

SECURITY ROBOTS

These "cockroaches" have very low intelligence and simple programming. Decoys, camouflage, and smokescreens may fool these robots into firing wildly at inappropriate or nonexistent targets.

Security robots used on Snowball are mounted on treads. Those used on the space stations are fitted with hover units.

Each cockroach has two laser turrets (equivalent to laser pistols; 10 shots each, 5d10 per shot) and two gun turrets (equivalent to automatic pistols firing single shots, 20 rounds each).

A cockroach has 75 Stamina points. A shot that hits the robot with a dice roll of 10 or less damages the central sensor turret and reduces the robot's basic chance to hit to 5%.

TABLE 4: NPCs

	Squad A	Squad B	Squad C	Squad D	Sathar Tech	Sathar Admin	Mhemne
STR/STA	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	45/45
DEX/RS	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	40/40	45/45
INT/LOG	45/45	45/45	45/45	45/45	55/55	45/45	50/50
PER/LDR	45/65	45/65	45/65	45/65	45/65	45/65	45/45
PS	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
IM	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
RW	50	50	60	60	20	30	23
M	20	20	30	40	20	20	23

Table 5: Robots

	Ravager	Hunter	Security
Level	3	3	2
Parabattery type	2	3	1
Accel. (m/turn)	80	60	40/80*
Dec. (m/turn)	40	40	40/80*
Top Speed (m/turn)	250	60	40/80*
Turn Speed (m/turn)	70	50	40/80*
Cargo (kg)	0	20,000	0
Cargo (cubic meters)	0	40	0
Initiative Mod.	6	6	5
Reaction Speed	60	60	50
Attack	60	60	50
Weapons	heavy laser	special	2 laser 2 auto pistols
Damage	8d10	special	5d10

* Tread version (Snowball)/hover version (space station).

SYSTEM BRIEF

SYSTEM

NAME: Federation Survey #30

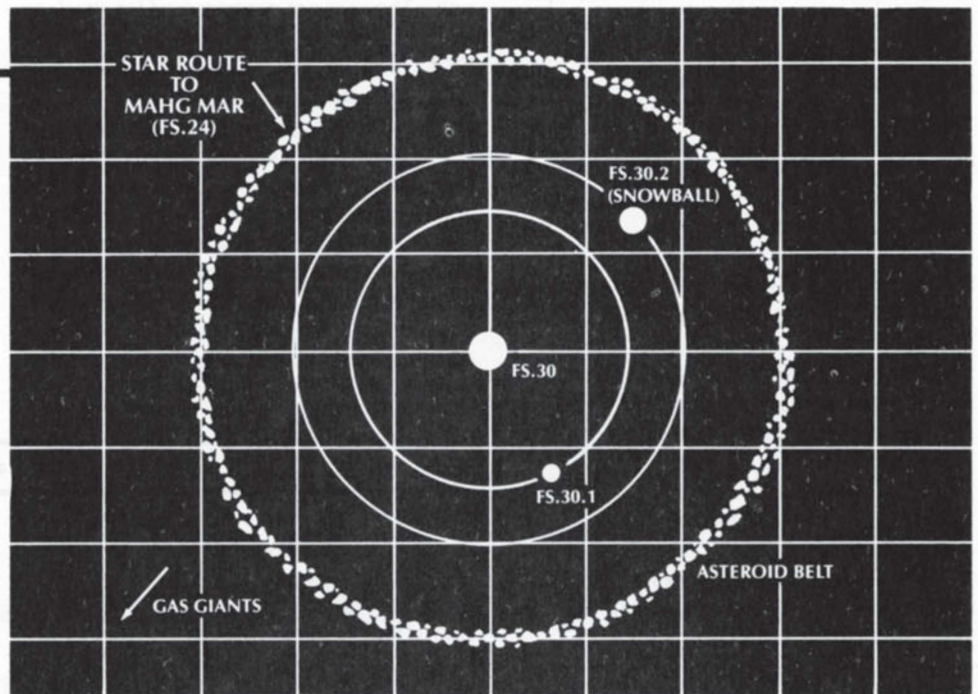
STAR

COLOR: Yellow

HABITABLE

PLANETS: Snowball

UNEXPLORED STAR SYSTEM
Federation Survey 30
(Later known as "Liberty System")



SCALE: 1 Square = 40 million km (star and planets not to scale)

PLANET BRIEF

PLANET NAME: Snowball

CLIMATE: Arctic; land masses and oceanic areas covered with kilometers-deep ice sheets

ATMOSPHERE: 80% nitrogen, 17% oxygen, 3% trace elements

GRAVITY: .924

DIAMETER: 12,000 kilometers

LENGTH OF DAY: 32 hours

TEMPERATURE: -150 C at poles to 5 C at the equator

MOONS: 1—Akhala, completes orbit every 23 days, inhabited

SATELLITE SETTLEMENTS: 2—L4 Station and L5 Station

PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

Snowball has always been at the cooler edge of her star's life zone; substantial

sheets of ice cover its poles, and a narrow temperate zone rings the equator. Still, vegetation and life forms flourished in this thin temperate belt, culminating in an intelligent hominid that is strikingly similar to the human race—the Mhemne (MEM-nee).

About 2,000 years ago a catastrophic disturbance in Snowball's ecosphere caused a drastic, global drop in the temperature of between 1 and 3 degrees C per year. Within a century, the entire planet was gripped in a planet-wide ice age. Nearly all species of plant and animal life became extinct, although some hardy plants, simple animals, bacteria, and viruses survived in the equatorial zone.

This catastrophic disturbance was caused by the Mhemne. The combined effects of their industrialization and deforestation were finally accelerated by nuclear war and a deliberate oceanic asteroid strike. These

asteroids struck during a war between settlements in the asteroid belt and the home planet.

Now only the highest mountain ranges along the equator rise above the ice sheets. The powerful tides caused by Akhala frequently induce earthquakes in unstable regions. The harsh temperatures, high winds, and long nights make this planet's climate hostile to most life forms.

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

By the time the temperature began to drop on Snowball, the Mhemne had become a technologically advanced race. They had built major settlements on Akhala, in large, artificial satellites (space stations L4 and L5), and in the asteroid belt. As a result, the Mhemne population was divided into three main groups: the Ice-

UPF CREW ROSTER

Lt. Dentin is an NPC; all other characters listed here may be used as PCs or NPCs.

ABBREVIATIONS

Race:	PSA (Primary Skill Area)
Dralas—Dralasite	Milit—Military
Yazir—Yazirian	Techn—Technological
	BioSo—Biosocial
Rank:	Skills:
Lieut—Lieutenant	Comp—Computer
Jr Lt—Junior Lieutenant	Demo—Demolitions
	Envi—Environmental
Station:	Medi—Medical
Engin—Engineer	PsSo—Psycho-Social
Marin—Marine	Robo—Robotics
2ndEng—2nd Engineer	Tech—Technician
Astro—Astrogator	BmWp—Beam Weapons
Captn—Captain	GyWp—Gyrojet Weapons
Survey—Survey Team Member	PrWp—Projectile Weapons
Spc. Abil (Special Abilities)	MaAr—Martial Arts
Com—Comprehension	
BR—Battle Rage	
Per—Perception	

BACKDOOR CREW (Temporary Assignments)

	Boobor Momnod	Lappsod Dog	Bogan Doorem	S'hax Mrill'z
Race	Dralas	Dralas	Dralas	Vrusk
Rank	Lieut			
Station	Pilot	Engin	Cook/Marin	Marin
STR/STA	70/60	65/60	60/80	40/50
DEX/RS	50/50	50/50	50/50	70/60
INT/LOG	55/65	50/55	45/45	50/40
PER/LDR	50/40	40/40	50/40	50/50
PS	4	4	4	3
IM	5	5	5	6
RW/M	25/35	25/33	28/30	35/35
Spec. Abil.	Per 20	Per 5	Per 10	Com 37
PSA	Techn	Techn	Milit	Milit
Skills	Tech6	Robo4	BmWp6	PrWp4
	Comp2	Comp2	MaAr5	GyWp4
	PrWp3	Tech4	EnWp2	RcWp2
	Pilo2	Engi4		
		BmWp2		

OSPREY CREW

	Gregor Dentin	M'kix Ris'z	Rhanda Klast	Stann Hartis	Beebe Rhed	Lettes Hradem	"Ham" Labori
Race	Human	Vrusk	Human	Human	Yazir	Yazir	Human
Rank	Lieut	Jr Lt	Jr Lt				
Station	Captn	Engin	Astro	Marin/Gunner	Marin/Gunner	2ndEng/Medic	Marin
STR/STA	60/65	40/40	65/60	50/60	40/50	45/55	70/70
DEX/RS	50/50	65/65	50/40	60/55	65/65	60/50	65/55
INT/LOG	55/55	60/50	50/60	50/45	50/50	55/45	45/40
PER/LDR	45/55	45/55	60/50	50/60	45/45	40/40	50/45
PS	3	3	4	3	3	3	4
IM	5	7	4	6	7	5	6
RW/M	25/30	33/30	25/33	30/30	33/33	30/30	33/33
Spc Abil		Com 25			BR 25	BR 15	
PSA	Techn	Techn	Techn	Milit	Milit	Techn	Milit
Skills	Tech6	Tech5	Comp6	BmWp6	PrWp5	Tech4	BmWp6
	Comp2	Robo2	PrWp4	GyWp3	GyWp2	Robo3	GyWp5
	Robo2	BmWp3	GyWp2	EnWp2	MaAr3	Medc2	MaAr3
	Pilo3	Comp3	Astr2		RcWp2	Engi2	EnWp1
	Engi1	Engi3	RcWp2				

ELEANOR MORAES CREW

	Gratchu Hakes	Marnie Symmes	Terrence Fitzpatrick	Gligits Psshest	Leonid Molokov	Pradi Innessi
Race	Yazir	Human	Human	Vrusk	Human	Yazir
Rank	Lieut	Lieut				Lieut
Station	Captn	Medic	Survey	Survey	Survey/Astro	Engin
STR/STA	40/50	40/60	55/60	55/70	40/40	50/50
DEX/RS	60/55	55/55	50/40	65/70	65/60	60/55
INT/LOG	45/55	65/60	50/60	50/40	50/70	45/50
PER/LDR	50/60	50/50	70/70	55/55	55/55	50/50
PS	2	2	3	3	2	3
IM	6	6	4	7	6	6
RW/M	30/30	28/30	25/28	33/33	33/33	30/30
Spc Abil	BR 10			Com 28		BR 15
PSA	Techn	BioSo	BioSo	BioSo	Techn	Techn
Skills	Tech6	Medi4	Envi4	PsSo4	Comp6	Tech5
	Comp2	Envi2	PsSo1	Tech1	Robo2	BmWp
	BmWp2	BmWp6	Tech6	BmWp6	Medi1	Comp2
	Pilo2	EnWp1	Comp2	Demo1	Astr1	Engi4
	MaAr2		Pilo1	EnWp1	MaAr2	

CHARACTERS' BKGD. REPORT

Following is a summary of events that led up to *The War Machine* adventure. It details the events that took place in the first two adventures of the "Beyond the Frontier" series: *Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes* and *Face of the Enemy*. If your PCs haven't played these two adventures, they should be given this information before you start them on this adventure.

The events detailed here may differ slightly from the actual experiences your PCs had in the first two adventures.

The assault scout Osprey of the Frontier Expeditionary Force (an independent squadron of UPF Spacefleet and militia warships under Commander Karl "Rough" Reider) was dispatched on a rescue mission to the planet Mahg Mar. This planet lies in an unexplored region of space beyond the Frontier Sector. The research vessel *Eleanor Moraes* had been damaged during the suppression of a mutiny and the Osprey was sent to render assistance and to investigate the circumstances of the mutiny.

As the repairs were being made, Captain Dentin of the Osprey directed a party to make contact with the Notui, the primitive but intelligent indigenous race of Mahg Mar. Dentin was obliged to do so under standing FEF orders to search for evidence of Sathar presence on unexplored planets. The Notui gave the party information that led them to discover and salvage a derelict Sathar scout ship, which was in operating condition. The party found information in the ship's log and in its flight computer that pointed out the location of the Sathar scout's base—an unexplored system listed in the Federation Survey as System FS 30.

The scout ship, recommissioned into the UPF Spacefleet as the *Backdoor*, approached an asteroid belt in FS 30, where a Sathar mothership was being used as a mobile scout base. The UPF was able to take the Sathar by surprise and board the mothership, which was a lightly armed warship about half the size of an assault carrier. The Osprey and *Eleanor Moraes* supported the crew of the *Backdoor* in this operation.

The UPF crew did not achieve its primary objective (which was to take a live Sathar

prisoner); still, overall, the mission was extraordinarily successful and yielded a great deal of unique information on the Sathar.

The boarding of the mothership did not, however, go unnoticed. Immediately after the boarding operation was completed, a group of four Sathar fighters was detected heading for the three UPF ships. The apparently hostile ships would arrive in less than two hours. Lt. Dentin, the ranking UPF officer, ordered his tiny force to prepare for battle.

SHIP SPECIFICATIONS

UPF BACKDOOR: Sathar Scout Vessel

Hull Size: 3
Length: 30 meters
Width: 8 meters
Wingspan: 24 meters
Hull Points: 10
Hatches: 1
Engines: 2 atomic, size A
Fuel: 1 loaded, 1 reserve
ADF/MR: 6/5
Weapons: none
Defenses: reflective hull
Security: level 3
Life Support:
 main & backup—capacity 6
Commun.:
 videocom, subspace radio
Detection: radar
Computer Programs:
 computer security alarm
 installation security astrogation
 computer lockout life support
 damage control atomic drive

NOTES: The hull has 100+2d100 structural points. The entire bridge has independent propulsion and life support, and can be detached in emergencies.

BACKDOOR PERSONAL GEAR

(Most borrowed from the *Eleanor Moraes*)

- 6 Sathar space suits with radiation protection
- 2 armored Sathar space suits
- 12 spare suit life support cannisters

- 1 engineer tool box
- 1 laser torch with power pack
- 2 anchors, 1,000 meters of cable
- 10 spare suit patches
- 1 robcom kit
- 1 techkit
- 1 envirokit
- 2 radiophones
- 12 standard equipment kits
- 4 infrared goggles
- 2 laser rifles
- 2 automatic pistols (400 rounds)
- 4 grenade rifles
- 5 each of all six grenade types
- 4 laser pistols
- 4 vibroknives
- 6 albedo suits
- 6 skeinsuits
- 20 power clips
- 6 power backpacks

UPF ELEANOR MOREAS: Research Ship

Hull Size: 3
Length: 50 meters
Width: 24 meters
Wingspan: 24 meters
Hull Points: 15
Hatches: 2
Engines: 2 atomic, size A
Fuel: 1 loaded, 1 reserve
ADF/MR: 4/3
Weapons: 2 heavy laser turrets
Defenses: reflective hull
Security: level 3
Life Support:
 main & backup—capacity 25
Commun.:
 videocom, subspace radio, radiophone
Detection: radar
Computer Programs:
 computer security alarm
 installation security astrogation
 computer lockout life support
 damage control atomic drive
 information storage analysis
 robot management language
 maintenance
Surface Craft:
 explorer, survey blimp
Robots: 1 remote survey robot (level 4)

with heavy duty jetcopter chassis, two work limbs, laser battery/automatic rifle turret; programs include attack/defense, computer link, topographical survey, sample collection, photo survey, site maintenance.

2 utility robots (level 3) with standard body; programs include maintenance and computer link.

NOTE: Bridge section has emergency propulsion and life support and can be detached in emergencies.

ELEANOR MOREAS PERSONAL GEAR

- 16 space suits
- 2 radiation suits
- 20 spare suit life support cannisters
- 2 rocket packs
- 20 rocket pack fuel cannisters
- 2 engineer tool boxes
- 1 laser torch with power pack
- 2 pairs of magnetic shoes
- 2 anchors, 1,000 meters of cable
- 40 spare suit patches
- 3 medkits, 20 freeze fields
- 12 gas masks
- 3 robcom kits
- 3 techkits
- 3 envirokits
- 3 radiophones
- 12 poly-voxes
- 20 standard equipment kits
- 12 infrared goggles
- 20 laser pistols
- 4 laser rifles
- 2 grenade rifles
- 20 doze grenades
- 30 tangler grenades
- 20 smoke grenades
- 6 incendiary grenades
- 3 fragmentation grenades
- 2,000 grams of Tornadium D-19
- 2 stunsticks
- 16 skeinsuits
- 16 inertia screens
- 100 power clips
- 20 power beltpacks
- 12 power backpacks

CMS OSPREY: Assault Scout

- Hull Size: 3
- Length: 30 meters
- Width: 10 meters
- Wingspan: 26 meters
- Hull Points: 15
- Hatches: 1
- Engines: 2 atomic, size A
- Fuel: 1 loaded, 1 reserve

ADF/MR: 5/4

Weapons:

laser battery, 4 assault rockets

Defenses: reflective hull

Security: level 3

Life Support:

main & backup—capacity 12

Commun.:

videocom, subspace radio

Detection: radar, energy sensor

Computer Programs:

computer security alarm

installation security astrogation

computer lockout life support

damage control atomic drive

NOTE: Sky bridge and lower bridge have emergency propulsion and life support and can be detached in emergencies.

OSPREY PERSONAL GEAR

- 12 space suits
- 12 spare suit life support cannisters
- 2 armored space suits
- 2 rocket packs
- 2 pairs of magnetic shoes
- 2 anchors, 1,000 meters of cable
- 40 spare suit patches
- 30 rocket pack fuel cannisters
- 2 engineer tool boxes
- 1 laser torch with power pack
- 3 medkits, 20 freeze fields
- 12 gas masks
- 1 robcom kit
- 3 techkits
- 1 envirokit
- 3 radiophones
- 12 poly-voxes
- 12 standard equipment kits
- 12 infrared goggles
- 2 electrostunners
- 12 laser pistols
- 4 laser rifles
- 2 sonic disruptors
- 2 sonic stunners
- 1 heavy laser
- 2 automatic rifles (400 rounds)
- 2 automatic pistols (400 rounds)
- 2 needler pistols (200 rounds)
- 2 needler rifles (200 rounds)
- 2 machine guns (4,000 rounds)
- 2 gyrojet pistols (200 rounds)
- 2 gyrojet rifles (200 rounds)
- 4 grenade rifles
- 4 grenade mortars
- 20 each of all six grenade types
- 1 rocket launcher (10 rounds)
- 1 recoilless rifle (40 rounds)
- 2,000 grams of Tornadium D-19
- 4 stunsticks

- 4 vibroknives
- 12 military skeinsuits
- 12 albedo suits
- 6 albedo screens
- 6 inertia screens
- 6 sonic screens
- 100 power clips
- 20 power beltpacks
- 12 power backpacks

MAP NOTE ON OSPREY: Use the large color map from the Knight Hawks game for a layout of the Osprey, with the following modifications:

1. The sky bridge and lower bridge are rigged with emergency escape pod gear.
2. The storage deck is now a boarding party quarters, and has four double-occupancy cabins.
3. The weapons locker is on the sky bridge.

FEDERATION EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SHIP ROSTER



UPFS ELEANOR MORAES

Research Vessel

HP 15

LB (Energ 1: Symmes)

LB (Energ 1: Psshest)

ADF MR DCR

4 3 69

DEFENSES: RH

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 2 (Hakes); Engin 4 (Innesti); Astro 1 (Molokov)

SPEED:



UPFS BACKDOOR

Unarmed Scout Ship

HP 10

ADF MR DCR

6 5 69

DEFENSES: RH

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 2 (Momnod); Engin 4 (Dog)

SPEED:



CMS OSPREY

Assault Scout

HP 15

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 3: Rhed)

LB (Energ 2: Hartis)

ADF MR DCR

5 4 59

DEFENSES: RH

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 3 (Dentin); Engin 3 (Ris'z); Astro 2 (Klast)

SPEED:



UPFS FLYING CLOUD

Frigate

HP 40

RB ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rockt 4)

T ☐ ☐ (Rockt 5)

LC (Energ 3)

LB (Energ 3)

ADF MR DCR

4 3 70

DEFENSES: RH; ICM ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 5; Engin 4; Astro 4

SPEED:



UPFS K'RISS

Assault Scout

HP 15

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 2)

LB (Energ 3)

ADF MR DCR

5 4 50

DEFENSES: RH

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 2; Engin 2; Astro 2

SPEED:



UPFS DOBORU

Assault Scout

HP 15

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 2)

LB (Energ 2)

ADF MR DCR

5 4 50

DEFENSES: RH

DAMAGED SYSTEMS:

Other Crew Skills: Pilot 2; Engin 2; Astro 2

SPEED:

The Eleanor Moraes, Backdoor, and Osprey are PC ships. The referee should examine the skill levels listed for these ships and adjust them to match the PCs' skills, if necessary.

worlders, the Confederacy, and the Belters.

The Iceworlders retained an emotional attachment to their planet. They struggled in vain to forestall the inevitable collapse of civilization and extinction of life forms on Snowball. These romantics and visionaries wanted badly to reconstruct the planet whose fate they had brought about through their shortsighted and self-destructive actions. Descendents of the Iceworlders have inhabited a few well-equipped research stations on Snowball, as well as several smaller settlements that aren't so well-established.

Iceworlder culture is characterized by a communal socialism, pacifism, and an abiding concern for the miracle of life. The typical Iceworlder is open, generous, friendly, and rugged enough to survive the harsh conditions on Snowball.

The Confederacy was a loosely-organized group of independent states set up on the natural and artificial satellites of Snowball. The Confederacy quickly abandoned any hope of saving Snowball, and turned to the more immediate task of ensuring the survival of Mhemne culture in space. They have been plagued with uncontrolled population growth (a central principle of personal freedom) and a scarcity of food.

Over the past 2,000 years, there have been no major technological advances in the Confederacy. The Mhemne here work hard to conserve the technology of the past. Since the already scarce resources must be distributed equally, there is no surplus to go for research.

Confederacy culture is characterized by unchecked population growth, and the fierce protection of their freedom-loving society, even though the substance of these freedoms is being eroded by poverty and social stagnation. The typical Confederate is formal, polite, humble, and self-conscious of his status in society.

The Belters were the least affected by the "death" of Snowball. They have continued to grow technologically over the past 2,000 years, though the scarcity of resources and the difficulty of survival in the Belt have slowed the rate of development. The Belters are strongest in the biological sciences, computers, and electronics. Still, the Belters are far behind the Frontier societies in most areas of science and technology.

Since the Belters were responsible for the asteroid strike that precipitated Snowball's sudden ice age, they have borne the hatred of the rest of Mhemne society for the past 2,000 years. Though the generation of war

lovers has passed, their descendents still feel a heavy burden of guilt. Belters get very uncomfortable when the subject of Snowball's climate change even comes up in conversation; they change the subject or become sullen and uncommunicative.

The Belter culture is characterized by cold, emotionless application of science and logic to all problems. They are fiercely independent. Belters believe all intelligent behavior is motivated by self-interest, and they don't trust anyone who pretends to be motivated by generosity or charity. They are extremely honest as well as proud and self-satisfied. If it is suggested that they are in any way technologically inferior, Belters become hostile and uncooperative. They are shrewd and aggressive traders, and can cleverly manipulate circumstance to give them every advantage in a bargain.

MHEMNE RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Apart from a few superficial differences, the Mhemne are remarkably similar to the Humans of the Frontier Sector. In fact, later genetic studies will show that, although the two are indeed separate species, the Mhemne and Humans are genetically identical.

The Mhemne are tall, thin hominids covered with an amber, downy inner fur and a reddish-brown, coarse outer fur. This outer fur is about as long as that on a short-haired domestic cat. Their skin is a pale red, and nearly translucent. It is exposed on only the hands, feet, and face. The Mhemne have wide-set eyes and narrow noses with tiny nostrils. Belter and Confederacy Mhemne are relatively weak-muscled, because they have adapted to free fall and low gravity environments. The Iceworlders are more robust and muscular.

All Mhemne are vegetarians. Food is provided by hydroponics. Animals are rare, domesticated, and extremely valuable.

If shaved, a Mhemne could pass as a Human, although, upon close inspection, the impostor would be revealed.

THE SATHAR INVASION

Ten years ago, a powerful Sathar fleet entered the FS 30 system. The Sathar ruthlessly destroyed every settlement they could find on Snowball. They brushed aside the Confederacy's defenses and occupied Akhala and the two space stations. The Sathar left the traditional forms of government on these satellites as they were but placed Mhemne collaborators at the top of the power structure. The Sathar also

destroyed the larger, more obtrusive settlements in the asteroid belt, but they never completely pacified this region.

The Sathar then established starship construction yards at the space stations. The Sathar brought in an IMPP (see Zeta section for details) to set up mining operations on the moon and in the asteroid belt. These operations provided materials for the starship yards, while automated processing plants on Snowball's surface provided additional mineral and organic resources not available in space. The Mhemne population in the Confederacy became the Sathar's subject race, providing them with technicians and craftsmen to man the warship construction yards.

Since the Sathar set up these yards 10 years ago, 20% of all Sathar warships operating in the Frontier Sector have been built here. With the exception of occasional raids and attempts at sabotage by the Belters, the Sathar have met no resistance.

The Sathar invasion has had relatively little effect on Belter culture, apart from the initial destruction of the larger population centers. Nevertheless, the Belters are adamantly resolved to avenge the deaths of their people, and have vowed to rid their system of all Sathar. The Belters are no fools, though; they know they won't be able to accomplish this for several years.

The Confederacy has suffered even less under Sathar control. In fact, the material quality of life has improved somewhat, since the Sathar have enforced population control and introduced improved food production methods. However, the Confederates have not abandoned their traditional values, and they would welcome the chance to overthrow the Sathars' puppet government and drive the aliens out.

The Iceworlders are most threatened by the Sathar, and are the most desperate to free themselves of the Sathar at any cost. The Sathar have been trying to eliminate all Mhemne from Snowball, and the Iceworlders have the least resources with which to resist. They have renounced their pacifist doctrine, and they are fanatic in their resolution to destroy the Sathar. The Iceworlders are willing to cooperate with anyone who can help them. (They would even be willing to forgive the Belters, if there were a chance that the two groups together could destroy the Sathar.)

SATHAR SHIP ROSTER



SHUTTLE

DEFENSES: None
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Crew Skills: Pilot 1
SPEED:

HP 10

No Weapons

ADF MR DCR
4 4 26

SATHAR SYSTEM DEFENSE FLEET



SAV FIGHTERS A-F

DEFENSES: RH
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 2
SPEED:

HP 5

AF ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 2)

ADF MR DCR
5* 5* 23



SAV RIPPER

Fighter G
DEFENSES: RH
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 3
SPEED:

HP 5

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 2)

ADF MR DCR
5 5 23



SAV REAVER

Fighter H
DEFENSES: RH
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 4
SPEED:

HP 5

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 3)

ADF MR DCR
5 5 23



SAV FIRESTORM

Heavy Cruiser
DEFENSES: RH; ICM ☐ ☐
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 6; Engin4; Astro 3
SPEED:

HP 80

RB ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 5)
T ☐ ☐ (Rocket 5)
LB (Energ 5); LB (Energ 5)

ADF MR DCR
1 1 108



SAV PREDATOR

Assault Carrier
DEFENSES: RH; ICM ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 6; Engin 4; Astro 4
SPEED:

HP 75

RB ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 5)
LB (Energ 5); LB (Energ 5)

ADF MR DCR
2 1 105



SAV FIGHTERS I-M

(aboard Predator)
DEFENSES: RH
DAMAGED SYSTEMS:
Other Crew Skills: Pilot 1**
SPEED:

HP 5

AR ☐ ☐ ☐ (Rocket 1)

ADF MR DCR
5* 5* 23

* Mhemne pilots cannot use an ADF or MR higher than 3 without suffering skill penalties and risking blackout.

ADF or MR of 4: Reduce all skill and attack percentages to 50% of normal. There is a 20% chance of blackout per turn.

ADF or MR of 5: Reduce all skill and attack percentages to 10% of normal. There is a 50% chance of blackout per turn.

If a pilot blacks out, a deadman switch automatically reduces the acceleration to ADF 2. The pilot regains consciousness in one turn. The ship maintains its previous course while the pilot is unconscious.

** Inexperienced pilots, suffer -50% modifier when attacking.

quately outfitted to attack a Sathar plant. The PCs should give whatever surplus weapons they have available on their ship to Mhemne volunteers (of which there are 20—see p. 11 for Iceworlder statistics). If the PCs take a few days to train these volunteers, the Mhemne could ably assist in an attack led by the PCs. The Mhemne are very enthusiastic about being given the chance to strike back at the oppressive Sathar and will be very grateful to the PCs for giving them the opportunity.

PLAN OF ATTACK

Dentin reports to Reider by radio. Reider orders the UPF force to destroy as many processing plants as possible during the 12 days remaining before his task force arrives in the system. Reider feels that such attacks should disrupt the shipyards and force the Sathar to use their starships to defend the operations on Snowball. Such a strategy should weaken the defenses on Akhala and the space stations, which Reider intends to attack as soon as he arrives.

Reider also tells Dentin to have his team try to capture at least one of the shuttles used by the Sathar to ship materials to the space stations. If the PCs are able to arm enough resistance fighters and can transport them via stolen shuttles to one of the space stations, the resistance may be able to recapture a station during the confusion created by Reider's attack. Reider hopes that if the Sathar lose one of the space stations, they will be forced to abandon their operations in System FS 30.

Epsilon .4 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

1-2 Experience Points

Maximum Award: Give maximum awards to parties that destroy the Ravager without allowing any UPF ships to sustain any disabling damage, and sustain no PC casualties. They must also contact the resistance, gain their cooperation, and get descriptions and locations of Sathar robot plants from them.

Minimum Award: Give minimum awards to parties that destroy the Ravager but fail to contact the resistance and gain their cooperation.



ZETA SECTION: THE WEAK LINK

Zeta .1 **HISTORY OF THE "WAR MACHINE"**

The "war machine" located in the FS 30 system is actually a network of robotic mining and processing plants. This network (dubbed an Independent Materials Processing Plant, or IMPP), has been operating in FS 30 for at least 10 years.

IMPPs are enormous, fully-automated starships that are sent to uninhabited star systems, where they turn the abundant mineral resources of planets and planetoids into another generation of mining, transport, and processing machines. This second generation of machines becomes a mammoth industrial complex that prepares valuable raw materials and industrial products. These materials are then shipped back to the culture that originally sent out the IMPP.

In theory, the IMPP was a dream. The complexes should have produced an almost endless supply of raw industrial materials for no more than the cost of the original IMPP starship. Still, the cost of initial setup was quite high and engineers ran into dozens of roadblocks in designing the complex systems. Add to that the possibility of unintentionally destroying habitable worlds, as well as threatening intelligent races with extinction, and the Frontier Sector had a huge controversy on its hands.

Finally, a full-scale war broke out between a Vrusk colony and the machines of a particular IMPP. In the wake of all this, the UPF ordered that all IMPP projects be destroyed or abandoned.

The history of the IMPP in Sathar culture has been somewhat different. The Sathar never intended their IMPPs to be independent. Only a few Sathar robots and computer technicians are needed to run an IMPP, but these Sathar retain complete control over the operating system.

To meet the needs of the Sathar military in their war with the Frontier Sector, the Sathar have established a large number of IMPPs in unexplored regions adjacent to the Frontier. These IMPPs are designed to produce starships and war materials. These systems are not completely automated. Technologically-advanced subject races

provide skilled labor where automation proves impractical.

Zeta .2 **THE FS 30 IMPP**

There are three basic components to the IMPP located in FS 30. The first is a group of robot ships that mine resources from the moon and asteroids surrounding Snowball. The second component is a series of 10 processing plants on Snowball's surface that provide mineral and organic resources not available on the moon or in the asteroids. The third component is a pair of starship yards located at the Mhemne-built L4 and 5 space stations.

The first two components are mostly automated; small technical crews supervising hundreds of robots. The space stations, however, require large numbers of trained technicians and laborers. These workers are provided by the Sathar-dominated Mhemne population on the space stations.

For the past decade, the FS 30 IMPP has produced over 20 percent of all the Sathar warships encountered by the Frontier forces in the Second Sathar War. If this IMPP were disrupted or destroyed, the Sathar war effort would suffer a serious setback. Unfortunately, the Mhemne haven't been able to overcome the Sathar's military and technological superiority.

IMPP DEFENSES

The Sathar have set up adequate defenses for the robot mining ships and the starship yards. The processing plants on Snowball's surface, however, are the weak spots in the system. The shuttles based there are sophisticated but unarmed.

Much of the plants themselves are buried deep beneath the planet's surface, but the administration buildings, as well as the shuttle hangars and landing areas, are on the surface. Security robots, fixed batteries, and robot hovercraft (ravagers) are all that defend these areas. These defenses are more than adequate for turning away Mhemne resistance, but a force of UPF and Mhemne, supported by modern warships

and firepower, could easily knock out the surface areas of Snowball's processing plants.

Zeta .3 **PREPARING CHARACTERS FOR PLANT ATTACKS**

(See Map 1.)

The layouts of the 10 IMPP processing plants on Snowball are identical. Keep in mind that the defenses of all other plants will be improved after the PCs attack the first plant. If you overlook this detail, the Sathar will seem implausibly stupid to the PCs, and the challenge of attacking a string of plants will be lost.

The Mhemne resistance knows the locations of three processing plants. The PCs can use UPF ships or captured shuttles to search for more plants, if they want. They then locate a new plant every four days. If the PCs search from orbit, they run the risk of being intercepted by Sathar fighters.

The PCs can use any ships they have to support the attacks on the processing plants. Khgree and 20 Mhemne Iceworlders also take part in the attacks. The PCs may outfit the Mhemne with weapons and defenses from their ships.

The PCs should keep track of the number of shuttles they capture and the number of Mhemne pilots they free. The shuttles and pilots may play a part in subsequent plant attacks and the attack on L4 Station.

The PCs can continue to attack plants until 12 days after landing on Snowball. At that time Reider's task force arrives and the UPF forces receive new orders.

MAP NOTES

Map 1 shows the above-ground portion of a Sathar processing plant. For tactical displays to the players, use the 4-color Town Map from the Alpha Dawn game. Then note these changes and additions to that map before play:

1. The top of the map is north.
2. The scale is 1 hex = 4 meters.
3. An 8-meter gate stands in the western

security perimeter adjacent to building 8 (the ravager hangar). The ravagers enter through this gate.

4. Double hangar doors (each 4 meters wide) stand at the western corner of building 8.
5. A 24-meter gate stands in the northern security perimeter adjacent to building 5 (the shuttle hangar). The shuttles enter through this gate.
6. Double hangar doors (each 12 meters wide) stand in the northern side of building 5.
7. A 2-meter door stands in the southeast corner of building 5.
8. A 2-meter door stands in the northwest corner of building 5.

Zeta .4 **APPROACHING A PROCESSING PLANT**

The party can approach a plant on foot or in the explorer vehicle from the Eleanor Moraes. If the PCs use the explorer, hunter units detect the valuable metal in the vehicle and try to "mine" it; that is, the hunters attack the explorer as if it were a valuable ore deposit. The PCs' metallic gear does not attract the hunters, however.

If the PCs are transported to a plant in a ship, they don't encounter the hunters.

THE HUNTER UNITS

The remote mining/transport machines (see p. 11 for statistics) provide raw materials to the processing plant. Over 1,000 hunters roam within a 10-kilometer area around each plant. The PCs see only about 100 of them moving slowly across the surface near the plant; the rest are burrowing deep under the frozen surface in search of deposits.

A hunter looks like a giant, streamlined dump truck mounted on tank treads. Drills and digging tools are mounted on its front. An armored blockhouse near the front holds the computer and sensor devices. The cargo container takes up most of the rest of the vehicle. Three extending, mechanical arms reach out of the rear container. One has a grasping clamp hand, one has several drills, and one has sample collectors.

A robot technician may take over a hunter unit by altering its mission and functions. (Because of the hunter's alien design, modify checks by -20.) PCs can use a controlled hunter as a battering ram or as transport. A hunter holds 10 characters and their gear in its cargo container.

Zeta .5 **SCOUTING THE PLANT**

The PCs probably will want to approach and observe a plant before attacking. To avoid losing the advantage of surprise, the PCs must not reveal themselves to the plant's security systems. If PCs use stealth and concealment subskills, apply the following modifiers as they try to avoid being detected.

1. If PCs wear white camouflage gear (available from Iceworlders), reduce the chance of being detected by video scanners by 20%.
2. If PCs wear or carry heat-shielded objects (like spacesuits), reduce the chance of being detected by infrared sensors by 30%.
3. If PCs approach a plant inside or behind a hunter unit, they can't be detected at extreme or medium range.

Roll for detection for each character or vehicle only once for each detection system (video, infrared, and tripwire) when entering a detection zone.

DETECTION ZONE: EXTREME RANGE (over 1 kilometer)

Video scanners on security towers (see 2 on Map 1) can distinguish intruders from hunter units (100% chance) at a range of 3 kilometers in daylight or 500 meters at night. The chance of detection can be reduced through use of environmental skills or camouflage. If PCs are detected, alarm sirens and defenses are activated.

DETECTION ZONE: MEDIUM RANGE (less than 1 kilometer but more than 100 meters)

Infrared scanners on security towers (see 2 on Map 1) can distinguish intruders from hunter units (100% chance) at a range of 1 kilometer. Video scanners distinguish intruders (100% chance) at 1 kilometer in daylight, 500 meters at night. The chance of detection can be reduced through use of environmental skills or camouflage. If PCs enter from the southeast (moving through the vapor clouds that come from the cooling towers), reduce the effectiveness of video scanners by 50% and infrared sensors by 90%. If PCs are detected, alarm sirens and defenses are activated.

DETECTION ZONE: CLOSE RANGE (less than 100 meters but outside the security perimeter)

Video and infrared scanners operate the same as they do at medium range. Pressure-sensitive wires (level 1 system) are buried 100 meters from the security perimeter. Reduce a technician's chance of detecting these well-hidden wires by 50%. The chance of deactivating the wires, however, stays normal. Gaps at the gates adjacent to building 5 (shuttle hangar) and building 9 (hunter access shed) permit shuttles, hunters, and intruders to approach without setting off alarms. If PCs are detected, alarm sirens and defenses are activated.

DEFENSE RESPONSE TO DETECTION AND ALARMS

1. Half of all available ravagers move to intercept and attack the intruders. The other ravagers patrol the security perimeter at 70 meters per turn, 100 meters from the perimeter.

2. Security robots patrol inside the security perimeter.

3. Heavy lasers mounted in the security towers fire on intruders at the following ranges:

- For the first plant attacked: lasers open fire at close range only.
- For the second plant attacked: lasers fire at medium and close ranges.
- For third and subsequent plants attacked: lasers fire at all ranges.

INFORMATION PCs CAN GAIN DURING SCOUTING

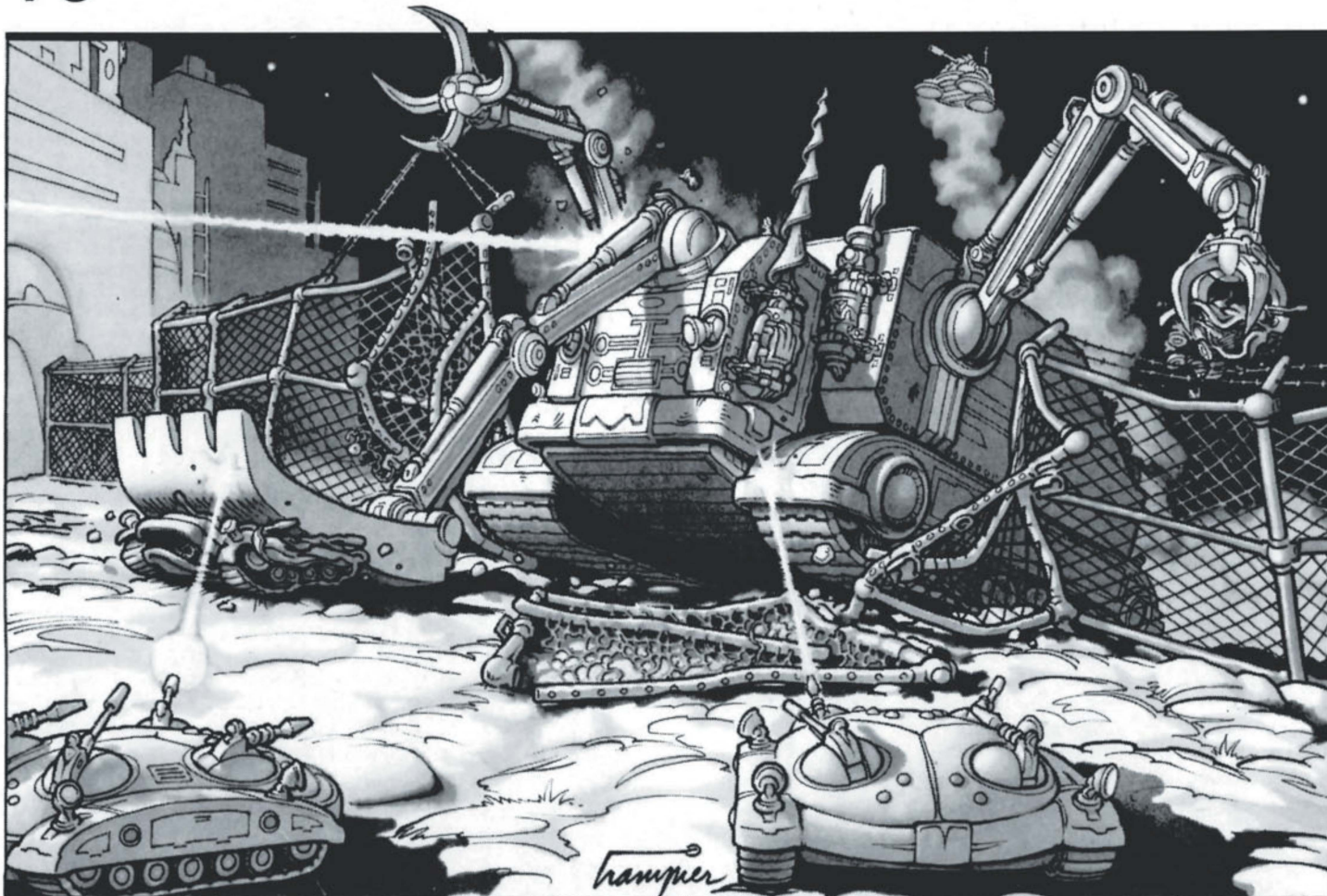
Show the Town Map to the PCs as you run them through the scouting phase of their mission. At each range (extreme, medium, and close), they can learn certain information. The plants are lit by floodlights, so the PCs aren't hampered by darkness even without IR goggles. Give this information to the PCs as you see fit. If they are obviously being careful and observant, they should learn all of this information:

EXTREME RANGE

1. Hunters move in and out of the south gate at a rate of between one and six per hour. They enter and exit a hangar that is too small to hold them all.

2. Large clouds of vapor drift southeast in the prevailing winds. The clouds come from the tops of two towers.

3. Towers outfitted with sensors and laser batteries stand at each corner of the security perimeter. (These weapons could be eliminated at long range with grenade launchers, recoilless rifles, rocket launchers, or ship's lasers. The tower wea-



pons' effects can be minimized by approaching under cover or in a hunter's cargo container.)

4. There is one shuttle launch and one shuttle landing per day on the landing field north of the plant. The shuttles enter a hangar through a gate in the northern security perimeter. The hangar is too small to hold more than one shuttle.

MEDIUM RANGE:

1. Robots move in and out of sheds in no apparent pattern.
2. Humanoids travel between the shuttle hangar and a building in the northeast corner of the area.
3. Sathar travel between a central building and a building in the southeast corner.
4. Humanoids also travel from the northeast building to the central building.

CLOSE RANGE:

1. The PCs can determine the function of all buildings in the plant, except for buildings 7 and 10.
2. The gates and hangar doors apparently open automatically to admit hunters.

3. Humanoids regularly visit only buildings 5, 6, and 10.

4. Sathar regularly visit only buildings 10 and 11.

Zeta .6 ATTACKING A PROCESSING PLANT

(See Map 1.)

After the PCs have had a chance to scout the processing plant, they must prepare a plan of attack. They may ask for advice from NPCs, but they should do the bulk of the planning themselves. Dentin vetoes any plan that is clearly foolish or unnecessarily dangerous.

During the attack, the PCs are confronted by two types of personnel (in addition to robots): Sathar and Mhemne. The two races react differently to the PCs.

SATHAR PLANT PERSONNEL: No Sathar will be taken alive! Sathar technicians don't run or fight. They cower in terror until captured; then they die instantly, killed automatically by a post-hypnotic suggestion.

(For Sathar combat statistics, see p. 11: Sathar Administrators).

MHEMNE PLANT PERSONNEL: Rumors of space combat in the asteroids have prepared the Mhemne pilots and technicians for revolt against their Sathar masters. Any Mhemne NPCs encountered in the plant immediately surrender and offer to help the UPF/Mhemne team. All Mhemne at the plant have cold weather gear, but no weapons or military skills. The pilots store their spacesuits in building 5.

PROCESSING PLANT ENCOUNTER KEY SECURITY PERIMETER (1)

If a PC touches this 3-meter-tall electrified fence he suffers 3d10 points of damage and sets off an alarm (level 1 security system). See Zeta .5 for details on what happens when alarms are sounded.

The gates along the perimeter are also electrified; they also have level 1 locks. The fence and gates can absorb 25 structural points of damage.

SECURITY TOWERS (2)

Heavy laser turrets, which are robotically controlled, are mounted on these 5-meter-tall towers. The lasers have a 60% chance to hit. They cause 8d10 points of damage. If the lasers fire into the vapor clouds that come from the cooling towers, the lasers are diffused and their damage is reduced by half. These lasers fire upon intruders only as outlined in Zeta .5. They cannot aim or fire at targets inside the perimeter.

Make sure the PCs are properly respectful of these laser batteries, or this will be a very short adventure.

Video scanners and infrared sensors are mounted on the tower roofs.

COOLING TOWERS (3)

These towers rise 30 meters above the plant. Clouds of condensing vapor are constantly drifting from these towers. The prevailing winds catch these clouds and carry them toward the southeast. The clouds reduce laser damage by half.

MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY ROBOT SHEDS (4)

The doors to these sheds aren't locked. Each shed contains 29 heavy-duty work robots and 30 utility robots. None of these robots can engage in combat.

Each shed also contains five cockroach security robots (see p. 11 for statistics). The defense computer operator uses these robots to defend the plant if an alarm goes off. The operator uses the robots' remote sensors to define the target. The robots then pursue and attack their target until the operator changes their orders. Since the operator defines targets, the PCs won't have much luck confusing these robots.

SHUTTLE HANGAR (5)

This building is really only a shelter for the elevator that lowers the shuttle to a 200-meter-square underground hangar. The southeast door and hangar doors are unlocked.

Four shuttles are parked in the underground hangar. Two are standby ships, fueled and ready to go. Robot technicians are working on the third shuttle, which recently returned from a run. Work robots are loading the fourth with processed materials for delivery to the space stations. The work robots do not interfere with PC or NPC intruders. There are no Mhemne or Sathar here.

A pilot ready-room holds 20 Mhemne-

style spacesuits and 10 Sathar-style spacesuits.

A technician can figure out how to operate the elevator, which then brings a shuttle up to the upper hangar in (10 - skill level) minutes. A PC can open the hangar doors in (5 - skill level) minutes. A PC must make a Detect/Defeat Security check and an Open Lock check (level 1 device) to open the security perimeter gates. The PCs may also blast open the doors and gates. The hangar doors have 50 structural points. The gates have 25 structural points.

SHUTTLE

Hull Size: 2
Length: 25 meters
Width: 5 meters (hull diameter)
Wingspan: 20 meters
Hatches: 1
Engine: 1 atomic, A-rated
Fuel: 1 loaded, 1 in reserve
ADF/MR: 4/4
DCR: 26
Weapons: None
Defenses: None
Main Life Support: 4
Backup Life Support: 4
Communications: videocom, radio
Detection: radar
Computer Programs: Life Support;
Atomic Drive; Astrogation (in system only)

Notes: Only pilot skill 1 is necessary to operate this shuttle. The cargo bay can be rigged with improvised acceleration couches to carry 30 passengers, if they provide their own life support.

MHEMNE QUARTERS (6)

All doors here are unlocked. The specific rooms and the Mhemne found there are listed below. All of the Mhemne are unarmed; they surrender immediately and cooperate unflaggingly with the UPF and the resistance forces. Statistics for the Mhemne are on p. 11.

LOUNGE (6a): Three Mhemne shuttle pilots are here.

DINING AND AUTOMATIC KITCHEN (6b): Unoccupied.

ENTERTAINMENT (6c): Unoccupied.

PILOT BARRACKS (6d-6h): Six Mhemne

shuttle pilots and four technicians are in these rooms.

STORAGE (6i): Unoccupied.

POWER PLANT CONTROL (7):

The doors to this small building are not locked. This building holds control panels and gauges for the atomic power generator that is buried deep beneath the factory. Even if PCs sabotage this building, automatic systems take over and maintain its proper function. (The PCs cannot destroy this power plant.)

RAVAGER SILO (8)

The doors to this building are not locked. If an alarm is sounded at the plant, all ravagers in this hangar are automatically sent out to track down the intruders. Otherwise, there are two ravagers parked in the silo at the first plant the PCs attack. At the second plant attacked, there are three ravagers here. At the third plant, there are four ravagers here. If all ravagers are out scouting for intruders, only work robots remain behind.

This building can withstand 300 points of structural damage. If the building is demolished in 1 round, the ravagers are buried beneath the collapsed walls (the PCs may dig them out and reprogram them). If the building is attacked but not destroyed, the ravagers emerge undamaged.

HUNTER ACCESS (9)

One to six hunter units approach the shed's southern gate. A radio signal identifies the hunters, and then the gate and shed doors open. The hunters then lumber through the security perimeter and into the shed.

The elevators inside the shed lower the hunter units to the area where they are loaded and serviced. This vast underground area extends 1,000 meters beyond the southern security perimeter on the surface. If PCs take an elevator down to this area, they can't leave until the elevator automatically goes back up to deliver or receive another hunter unit (6d10 minutes). When a hunter approaches the elevators (at either level), the elevators automatically begin to function. The PCs themselves cannot control the elevators.

SATHAR/MHEMNE ADMINISTRATION AND PLANT HEADQUARTERS (10)

SATHAR ADMINISTRATION (10a): One middle-caste Sathar is here. Armed with a laser pistol, this Sathar fights to the death. This room houses plant production records.

PLANT DEFENSE AND SECURITY (10b): There are two Sathar in this room. One is a middle-caste administrator and is armed with a laser pistol. He fights to the death to keep the PCs from entering.

The other Sathar is a lower-caste technician responsible for operating the computer defense system. He is unarmed. If the PCs threaten to capture or wound the Sathar, he automatically dies.

The plant's defenses are controlled from this room. If the PCs destroy the control panel, the coordination of defenses breaks down, and each element of the system follows its programming or its own last order. If the PCs manage to reprogram the defense computer, they can take over the plant's defenses, including the robots.

The computer in this room is a level 3 defense and security computer. It runs the following programs (all level 3): robot management, installation security, computer security, and computer lockdown. The computer is protected by a level 3 alarm/self-destruct mechanism. If the computer is accessed without a special code (known only by the Sathar technicians, who do not reveal it), the self-destruct mechanism is activated (signalled by an alarm and a green, blinking light). The computer self-destructs in two minutes; the ensuing explosion causes 12d10 points of damage to anyone in the room (treat as damage from fragmentation grenade).

PLANT CONTROL (10c-10e): Two unarmed Sathar technicians are in each of these rooms. They offer no resistance. If the PCs capture or wound them, the Sathar die automatically.

These rooms hold the monitors and computer links for the entire processing plant. There are two level 6 computers in each of these rooms. If a computer technician can reprogram these computers, he can take over the entire processing plant.

If the PCs use 100 grams of explosives (or if a computer technician works to sabotage the computer for 15 minutes), the computer is destroyed and the plant automatically shuts down.

These level 6 processing plant computers use the following programs (all level 6): robot management, industry, maintenance, transportation, computer security, and

computer lockdown. The computers are protected by a level 6 alarm/self-destruct mechanism. If any computer is accessed without a special code (known only by the Sathar technicians, who do not reveal it), the self-destruct mechanism is activated (signalled by an alarm and a green, blinking light). The computer self-destructs in two minutes; the ensuing explosion causes 12d10 points of damage to anyone in the room (treat as damage from a fragmentation grenade).

HUNTER CONTROL (10f): One unarmed Sathar technician is here. He offers no resistance. If the PCs capture or wound him, he dies automatically.

This room houses the computer that controls the hunter units. The computer is similar to the plant control computers (10c-10e); it is defended by the same security/self-destruct mechanism.

WORKSHOP (10g): Two Mhemne technicians are in this room. They surrender immediately when the PCs enter.

Equipment and tools used to repair the plant's computers are stored here.

SHUTTLE ADMINISTRATION (10h): One Mhemne technician is in this room. He surrenders immediately when the PCs enter.

A schedule of upcoming shuttle launches and arrivals is posted here. There are also manuals here that describe the procedures for docking at the space stations.

SATHAR QUARTERS (11)

SATHAR ADMINISTRATION QUARTERS (11a-11b): Unoccupied.

SATHAR TECHNICIAN QUARTERS (11c-11f): Unoccupied.

SATHAR TECHNICIAN QUARTERS (11g-11j): The PCs find one Sathar sleeping soundly in a fluid bath in each of these rooms. If the PCs awaken a Sathar, he dies instantly.

Zeta .7 IMPROVED DEFENSES AGAINST LATER PLANT ATTACKS

WHEN CHARACTERS ATTACK A SECOND PLANT: Heavy lasers in the security towers fire on intruders at close and medium ranges. Two ravagers patrol the perimeter, while three ravagers wait in their hangar. All 15 security robots are on patrol

inside the perimeter (scattered randomly).

All doors leading into buildings are locked with level 3 locks.

Both Sathar administrators are in room 10b, ready to defend the defense computer. All Mhemne pilots and technicians are locked in their sleeping quarters.

The shuttles are destroyed by incendiary explosives to prevent their capture.

If the PCs used a specific trick when they gained entry to the first plant, that trick is well-guarded against.

WHEN CHARACTERS ATTACK A THIRD PLANT: Four rocket batteries have been installed on the shuttle hangar roof to defend against air attacks by UPF ships or captured shuttles.

Heavy lasers mounted in the security towers fire on the intruders at close, medium, and long range. Four ravagers patrol the perimeter while four ravagers wait in their hangar. Ten security robots are on patrol inside the perimeter. Four security robots protect the approaches to plant headquarters (building 10).

All doors leading into buildings are locked with level 3 locks.

Both Sathar administrators and one security robot are in room 10b, ready to defend the defense computer. The defense computer is programmed to self-destruct if it is about to fall into enemy hands.

All Mhemne pilots and technicians have been executed. The shuttles are destroyed by incendiary explosives to prevent their capture.

If the PCs used specific tricks to get inside other plants, those tricks are well-guarded against here.

Each subsequent attack should be more difficult for the characters than the previous one.

Zeta .8 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

2-6 Experience Points per plant captured or destroyed.

Maximum Award: Give maximum awards to parties that sustain minimum casualties, use clever tricks to gain entry, defeat security, and take control of plant defense systems.

Average Award: Give average awards to parties that capture or destroy a plant, capture shuttles, and sustain minimum PC casualties.

Minimum Award: Give minimum awards to parties that destroy a plant.

ETA SECTION: OPERATION CRACKER—ATTACKING THE SATHAR DEFENSE FLEET

Eta .1 REIDER'S ORDERS

Twelve days after the UPF forces land on Snowball, Commander Reider enters the system. As he passes the asteroid belt on the final approach, he radios the forces on Snowball. He wants to coordinate his attack on the Sathar system defense fleet with the allied UPF-Mhemne attack on L4 station. Read Reider's orders to the players:

"Operation Cracker is the code name for our attack on the Sathar system defense fleet. The frigate Flying Cloud and two assault scouts—K'riss and Doboru—will enter Sathar energy detector range at 09:00 hours. The apparent destination will be Snowball's moon. We're using a slow approach to give the Sathar time to reveal and commit their forces. At 10:30, we'll be 50,000 kilometers from Akhala, and we'll be moving at 10,000 per minute. If the Sathar haven't already engaged by this time, the squadron will turn and attack L5 station. We won't risk coming within range of their moon base defenses—they're too powerful.

"The main objective of Operation Cracker is to draw off system defense ships so you can go after L4 station. The secondary objective is to damage or destroy as many Sathar ships as possible without risking our own ships.

"Operation Ferret is the code name for the joint UPF-Mhemne attack on L4 station. At 09:30, the UPF ships and captured shuttles will lift off at 3 ADF on course for L4. That should put you in position to attack at 10:30. By that time, the Sathar system defense ships should have been committed to meeting our squadron as we approach. Use the Moraes and the Osprey to spearhead your attack. Keep in mind that you should use the superior range of your lasers to knock out the rocket batteries, which are the only defenses at L4. The Osprey and Moraes should then lead the shuttles into the space station's docking bay. Each UPF ship should carry its regu-

lar crew and as many armed Mhemne as life support can handle. The shuttles should carry the rest of the Mhemne fighters recruited from the resistance installations.

"The main objective of Operation Ferret is to put the spaceship yards on L4 out of commission. You should still be able to manage this even if you can't completely capture the station. The secondary objective is to actually return control of the station to the Mhemne.

"Good luck! I'm buying when this one's over."

You may run this section before you run Theta section (Operation Ferret), or you may run the two sections simultaneously.

Eta .2 SETTING UP OPERATION CRACKER

SHIP ROSTER AND SETUP

The setup listed below (using the hex map from the Knight Hawks game) represents the locations of UPF, Mhemne, and Sathar forces at 09:20, 2 turns after the FEF squadron enters energy detection range.

Use appropriate counters to mark the locations of the following planets and stations:

TABLE 3: STARTING POSITIONS FOR OPERATIONS CRACKER AND FERRET

Ship	Hex	Spd	Cntr	Heading
(FOR OP. CRACKER:)				
Flying Cloud	0236	B	A	Akhala
K'riss	0236	B	B	Akhala
Doboru	0236	B	C	Akhala
(FOR OP. FERRET:)				
Osprey	4510	0	D	L4
Eleanor Moraes	4510	0	*	L4
(SATHAR SYSTEM DEFENSES:)				(Hex no:)
Fighter	3025	0	A#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	B#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	C#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	D#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	E#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	F#	0236
Fighter	3025	0	G	0236
Fighter	3025	0	H	0236
Heavy Cruiser	3025	0	A	0236
Assault Carrier	3025	0	A	0236
Fighter I## (Assault Carrier A)				
Fighter J## (Assault Carrier A)				
Fighter K## (Assault Carrier A)				
Fighter L## (Assault Carrier A)				
Fighter M## (Assault Carrier A)				
Fighter N## (Assault Carrier A)				

Key:

* Use pirate assault scout counter A for the Eleanor Moraes.

Mhemne pilots cannot use an ADF or MR of more than 3 without suffering a decrease in skills and possibility of blackout (see Sathar Ship Roster for details).

Inexperienced pilot-trainees capable of handling the fighters as system ships. In space combat, cut base attack percentages by 50%.

Planet Snowball: hex 4510
 Moon Akhala: hex 3025 (fortress counter)
 L5 station: hex 1906 (station counter)
 L4 station: hex 5035 (station counter)

Use appropriate counters to mark the starting locations of the ships and fortresses involved in the attack, as noted on Table 3.

Eta .3 SATHAR STRATEGY

When the FEF squadron enters the map at hex 0236, the Sathar have all of their operating ships prepared for battle.

The Sathar forces mass between the FEF squadron and its apparent destination—the moon Akhala. The Sathar then execute a fighting withdrawal, trying to draw the FEF squadron within range of heavy planetary or satellite defenses.

At 09:40 (or the first turn after the Sathar detect Operation Ferret's liftoff from Snowball), Sathar fighter counters A and B separate from the rest of the Sathar forces and move to intercept Operation Ferret. After 2 turns, these two fighters are called back to

the Sathar main force. The Sathar command actually decides that the assault on L4 station is a diversion.

As commander of the Sathar forces, try to limit your defensive strategy to fit the inexperience and poor crews of the Sathar ships. The Sathar simply lack a theory of mobile defense. The Sathar haven't had much of a chance to develop effective defensive strategies. Even if they outnumber their attackers, the Sathar defense is disorganized and sluggish.

This scenario is your opportunity to give your players a little turkey shoot. Allow them to outmaneuver and shoot up the green Mhemne fighter pilots. Let them dance out of range of the heavy cruiser and the assault carrier's bigger weapons. Don't make it so easy for the PCs that they don't have fun, though!

After a spirited (and generally one-sided) battle, the remnants of the Sathar forces withdraw to the protection of Akhala Fortress. The PCs should know better than to attack this fortress. If they are so foolish, don't hesitate to blast them.

Eta .4 UPF STRATEGY

The PCs should follow Reider's orders. Operation Cracker depends on the actions of the Sathar system defense fleet so those orders are open to interpretation.

Eta .5 EXPERIENCE AWARDS

1-3 Experience Points

Maximum Award: Give maximum awards to parties that destroy 45 hull points worth of Sathar ships.

Average Award: Give average awards to parties that destroy 25 hull points worth of Sathar ships without losing a UPF ship.

Minimum Award: Give minimum awards to parties that destroy at least two Sathar fighters, keep the Sathar forces too busy to defend L4 station, and lose no more than one UPF assault scout in the fight.



THETA SECTION: OPERATION FERRET— ASSAULT ON L4 STATION

This section outlines the battle for control of the L4 space station. In preparing for this battle, have the PCs give an accounting of the number of shuttles, trained pilots, and armed Mhemne resistance fighters they have before they lift off from Snowball.

Even though there may be a small number of Mhemne resistance fighters taking part in this battle, the PCs should take the lead. They are better equipped and trained than the Mhemne; they also have more experience in fighting the Sathar. Most important, you shouldn't let the PCs get upstaged by the NPCs in the battle.

All Sathar trooper, administrator, and technician statistics are listed on page 11.

Theta .1 BRIEFING ON STATION DEFENSES

The PCs can learn the following information from Mhemne shuttle pilots liberated in the processing plant attacks (see Zeta section).

1. The Mhemne can lay out the floor plans of the Shuttle Docking Deck (Map 3), the Shuttle Crew Deck (Map 4), and the Sathar Administration Deck (Map 5) for the PCs. (Let the players study the maps inside the adventure booklet cover.) Use the Commercial Deck Section from the Knight Hawks color map for a tactical display of the Shuttle Crew Deck (modifications are listed in subsection Theta .4). Give the PCs this map from the Knight Hawks game and explain the modifications to them.

2. Security devices are usually of level 3 or higher.

3. The only access to the Sathar Administration Deck is through the Shuttle Crew Deck.

4. The station security garrison consists of about 20 well-trained and well-equipped Sathar troopers. Since Mhemne have only projectile weapon technology, most Sathar screens and defense suits may be geared for that type of attack.

5. Security robots may be found on the Sathar Administration Deck. They are similar to the security robots at the processing plants, except that they move on air cushions and are somewhat faster.

6. Depressurizing a compartment on the space station may kill unprotected Mhemne inside. The PCs must avoid using depressurization as a tactic at all costs. (The Sathar, however, know of the Mhemne vulnerability to such a tactic and do not hesitate to use it.)

Theta .2 SPACE STATION: SHUTTLE DECK (See Map 3.)

The approach to L4 goes as planned (this may change, depending on the outcome of Operation Cracker—Eta section). No Sathar defense ships attack the UPF-Mhemne force. The PCs can use laser fire from a distance and easily destroy the station's rocket batteries.

DOCKING AT THE SHUTTLE DECK

If PCs have captured Mhemne shuttle pilots and shuttle operations manuals, this procedure should be simple. If the PCs don't have shuttle pilots or manuals, the docking still goes normally, but each pilot must roll lower than 40% + (his pilot skill x 10%). If the pilot fails at this roll, he causes 1d5 points of hull damage to his ship during the docking procedure. If the pilot takes an extra 10 minutes to dock, he does not damage the ship.

The two docking bays opposite airlocks 2 and 8 are unoccupied. The UPF-Mhemne ships need not dock to unload passengers. If the PCs use this tactic, however, they must fix some sort of anchor to the ships to keep them from drifting away or damaging other ships.

This deck is in free fall. All rooms and corridors here are pressurized and brightly lit. The docking bays are not pressurized.

AIRLOCKS (1-8)

Each airlock hatch is locked with a level 3 alarm/lock system. Each hatch can take 150 points of structural damage.

SHUTTLE CREW READY ROOMS (9-16)

These rooms contain shuttle pilot gear. All of the rooms are unoccupied. There are

four spacesuits in each room, however.

CORRIDOR (17)

One Squad A Sathar trooper stands outside each hatch that opens onto this corridor. The troopers are prepared for attack; the PCs can't surprise them. They fire at the first creature that comes through a hatch. Then they withdraw, fighting defensively and covering one another, until they reach hatch 4a or 4b. The troopers then move to defend the corridors (18) that lead to the elevator (2). At this point, the troopers stand their ground and fight to the death.

ELEVATOR CORRIDOR (18)

One Squad A Sathar trooper stands outside each of the two hatches that lead toward the elevator. These hatches are not locked.

The troopers are prepared to fire a massed volley at the first non-Sathar that looks in through a hatch (+15 for careful aim). These troopers let other Sathar move through the hatches to take up positions in defense of the elevator corridor. These troopers do not retreat; they fight to the death.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES (19)

The doors in this area are locked and guarded with level 3 security alarms. There is nothing in any of these offices but paperwork.

COMPUTER CENTER (20)

The doors here are locked and wired with level 5 security alarms. The rooms are unoccupied. The level 3 computer housed here controls docking approaches, maintenance robots, and life support for this deck. Its programs include Computer Security and Computer Lockout.

TRACKING CENTER (21)

The door into this area is locked and wired with a level 3 security alarm. The room was evacuated when the PCs' ships unapproached. This room is designed for

monitoring shuttle approaches and handling communications with surface bases and approaching ships.

ELEVATOR TO SHUTTLE CREW DECK (22)

This elevator is locked and guarded with a level 3 security alarm. It operates normally.

Theta .3 SHUTTLE CREW DECK

(See Map 4.)

Use the Commercial Deck Section from the Knight Hawks color map when displaying this area to the PCs. You should use Map 4 as your guide when running PC adventures on this deck. Lay the Knight Hawks map out for the PCs and point out the following modifications to them:

1. The "Frontier Lounge" becomes the "Entertainment Center."
2. The "Spacer Club" becomes the "Refreshment Center."
3. The "Clothing Store" becomes the "Library."
4. The "Jewelry Store" becomes the "Department of Information."
5. Located off the map to the right and left are living quarters for Mhemne pilots, technicians, and service personnel.

This area is pressurized, and has $\frac{1}{5}$ normal gravity. All corridors are brightly lit. All rooms are dark, but PCs need only flick on the wall switches to light these rooms. All doors are locked with level 3 security devices. All of the Mhemne living quarters along the rim (not shown) were evacuated when the PCs approached. There is nothing of value in the living quarters.

ELEVATORS FROM HUB (1)

Elevator 1a carries passengers to the Sathar Administration Deck (Map 5). Elevator 1b and 1c carry passengers to and from the hub.

Two Squad B Sathar troopers wait in each of the three elevators. They fire on anyone who enters the elevator.

CORRIDOR (2)

Two Squad B Sathar troopers stand at the points marked A and B (on Map 4) in this corridor. They are hiding behind ornamental shrubs and dining tables. The troopers fire a massed volley into the first non-Sathar that tries to leave elevator 1b or 1c (+15 for careful aim). The Sathar fire from under

cover. If the PCs move in to fight, the troopers switch to their stunsticks. These troopers do not retreat; they fight to the death.

KITCHEN (3)

This area is unoccupied.

REFRESHMENT CENTER (4)

This area is unoccupied.

ENTERTAINMENT CENTER (5)

Four Squad B Sathar troopers hide at the point marked C (on Map 4) in this area. They fire a massed volley at any non-Sathar that tries to get off elevator 1a. They use the tables and doorjamb to steady their weapons (+15 for careful aim) and as hard cover. If the PCs move in to fight, the troopers switch to their stunsticks. They do not retreat or surrender, and they chase fleeing PCs.

The PCs can make Intuition checks to avoid being surprised. If a check succeeds, the PC hears a metallic click from inside the entertainment center.

LIBRARY (6)

This area is unoccupied.

MEDIA CENTER (7)

This area is unoccupied.

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION (8)

This area is unoccupied.

CORRIDORS/DOORS TO SHUTTLE PERSONNEL LIVING QUARTERS (9)

These areas are unoccupied.

Theta .4 SATHAR ADMINISTRATION DECK

(See Map 5.)

This area is pressurized, and has $\frac{1}{5}$ normal gravity. All rooms and corridors are brightly lit. All doors are locked and wired with level 3 security alarms.

ELEVATOR FROM SHUTTLE CREW DECK (1)

Two security robots ("cockroaches," see p. 11 for statistics) dodge around this room when PCs enter, firing aimlessly (-20% to hit and to be hit). Since there is no operator directing these robots at a target, the PCs may easily decoy them.

CORRIDOR (2)

Four Squad C Sathar troopers fire at the PCs from behind a jumble of metal boxes that are piled across the corridor. This makeshift barricade is 1 meter high and stretches across the corridor, blocking access to door 2a. The troopers, who are wearing defense screens, fire at anyone who enters the corridor from door 1a or 3a. The Sathar troopers have soft cover and can use careful aim.

If the PCs head toward room 3, the troopers follow them. The PCs must unlock door 3a while under fire. Door 2a leads to Sathar troop quarters, which are unoccupied.

OUTER OFFICE (3)

When PCs enter this room, two Squad C Sathar troopers fire from behind a 1-meter-high counter to the left. The troopers are dressed in defense screens and skeinsuits.

Two security robots ("cockroaches," see p. 11) are dodging and firing at the PCs from in front of the counter to the left.

Two more Sathar troopers are firing from behind cover inside door 4a at the opposite end of the room. A Mhemne body lies in front of door 7a along the wall to the right. The two security robots are identical to the ones in the elevator from the shuttle crew deck (room 1). All four Sathar troopers have a +15% modifier to hit for careful aim. The characters suffer a -20% modifier to hit the Sathar, who are behind hard cover.

A message is scrawled in blood on door 7a. The message reads, "We have 15 Mhemne technicians held hostage in here. If anyone comes through this door, we will begin killing them."

This is the room where the Sathar receive reports from the Mhemne collaborators who run the station for them. (These Mhemne have offices in the residential area of the space station.) The only Mhemne permitted beyond the counter in this room are the technicians who work in the spaceship yard monitor room (room 7).

Door 3b opens onto the corridor that leads to the rest of the station. Door 4a stands open.

CORRIDOR (4)

Two Squad D Sathar troopers stand before doors 5a and 6 in this corridor. They are wearing defense screens and skeinsuits. As all other Sathar here, they do not retreat, and they fight to the death.

This corridor leads to the Sathar's inner offices. Door 4b leads to the private quar-

ters of the Sathar administrators and technicians.

A message is scrawled in blood on door 7b. It reads, "We have 15 Mhemne technicians held hostage in here. If anyone comes through this door, we will kill them."

INNER OFFICES (5 & 6)

The Sathar administrators ran the space station and starship yards from these offices. These rooms are unoccupied. Piles of burned records are still smoldering when the PCs enter these rooms.

STARSHIP YARD MONITOR ROOM (7)

This is the room where the Sathar are holding 15 Mhemne technicians hostage. By the tone of the Sathar's message, the PCs should know they must give some thought to their plan of action before bursting into this room.

There are two Sathar administrators, four Sathar technicians, four squad C Sathar troopers, and 15 Mhemne hostages in the room. Only the administrators and troopers are armed.

Obviously, there aren't enough Sathar to prevent the station from being captured. Their only hope is to stall until help arrives from Akhala base. If the PCs can't figure out a way to free the hostages, the Sathar hold out until their reinforcements arrive.

The Sathar are arranged in this room with their backs to the wall opposite doors 7a and 7b. The Mhemne are lined up in front of them, facing their captors. The Sathar have told their prisoners that if they make a single move, they will be killed. The one Mhemne body in the outer office is an assurance to the Mhemne that the Sathar mean business.

SOLVING THE HOSTAGE PROBLEM

The PCs may decide that sacrificing the lives of the hostages is justifiable under these circumstances, particularly since skillful medical attention might revive all but the most horribly injured. If the PCs make a decisive attack and manage to neutralize the administrators and troopers in the first few rounds, injuries to the hostages should be minimal. Even a sonic disruptor isn't likely to kill a hostage with a single shot, and any Sathar who is firing at a hostage won't be able to fire at the attackers.

If PCs yell "duck!" when they open fire, the hostages may have a chance to get out of the way, or at least turn them into moving targets. Brave hostages may even attack

their captors (see Running the Attack, below).

The PCs may find the following tactics to be effective (have an NPC suggest something if the PCs seem to be stumped).

1. Use synchronized demolition charges to blast through the walls and doors and surprise the Sathar.
2. Hurl doze grenades at the hostages, who will then slump to the floor, giving the PCs clear aim at the Sathar.
3. Use darkness (technician skill check needed to cut the circuits) or smoke grenades to reduce ranged weapon effectiveness.
4. Run directly into melee to force the Sathar to deal with the PCs rather than fire at the helpless hostages.

RUNNING THE ATTACK

Even if the PCs' plan seems likely to cause some hostage casualties, give them credit for a well-thought-out plan. If they properly execute their attack, the PCs stand an excellent chance of succeeding without losing a single hostage.

Reward the PCs for ingenuity and commitment to protecting the lives of the hostages. It's up to you to determine how ruthless the Sathar are in their dealings with the hostages. Balance the dramatic value of establishing the Sathar as cruel and inhuman monsters against the heroic thrill the PCs should get from rescuing the hostages. Try to strike a balance that fits your players' role-playing styles. If they like happy endings with lots of glory, spare the hostages. If they can handle darker, more tragic endings, have a few dying hostages thank the PCs for giving them freedom, even at the cost of their own lives.

If the PCs are having a tough time of this battle, you can carefully play up the actions of the NPC Mhemne resistance fighters as they land their last, berserk blows for freedom, or of the hostages who recklessly attack or divert the attention of the Sathar.

Theta .5

SECURING THE SPACE STATION

Once the PCs have taken care of the Sathar administrators and troopers, they can easily liberate the rest of the space station. Some Mhemne collaborators may resist the PCs (use Iceworlder statistics for these Mhemne), but they are armed only with automatic pistols and wear no defense screens or suits. Most of the collaborators try to disappear; they are aware that, with-

out the support of the Sathar, they face lynching and summary justice from the citizens of the station.

The Mhemne aren't able to take the station over without first taking care of a few problems. They must reprogram many of the computers, and they must also deactivate some of the security devices that are keeping some doors locked. Still, these are problems the Mhemne can handle on their own. The PCs may stay and help get things ready in case the Sathar try to retake the station, but they are free to rejoin Reider and the task force, which is standing by close to L4 station, watching for Sathar counterattacks.

Theta .6

EXPERIENCE AWARDS

2-6 Experience Points

Maximum Award: Give maximum awards to parties that capture the station with a minimum of PC or Mhemne casualties.

Average Award: Give average awards to parties that capture the station with a minimum of PC casualties, and that manages to keep most of the hostages alive.

Minimum Award: Give minimum awards to parties that capture the station with heavy loss.

EPILOGUE: LIBERTY SYSTEM

You may relay this information to the PCs in any way you feel is appropriate.

At 15:20 the entire surviving Sathar system defense fleet launches for L5 station. As the ships leave, the bases on Akhala are destroyed by nuclear explosions. No Mhemne lunar cities are destroyed, much to the surprise of the UPF and Mhemne personnel.

At 16:00 hours, a swarm of shuttles lifts off from the Snowball processing plants that are still under Sathar control. Minutes later, nuclear explosions rip through these bases, completely obliterating them.

At 16:40, the system defense fleet and the shuttles rendezvous at L5 station. After a delay of less than 10 minutes, all operational fighters at L5 station join the Sathar fleet. A series of huge explosions demolishes the unfinished assault carrier based at L5. The Sathar fleet then begins a steady acceleration out of the system.

After waiting at L4 station until 16:00 hours to protect against a possible counter-attack, Reider's FEF squadron pursues the

Sathar fleet until it enters hyperspace. Reider's forces manage to destroy a few more Sathar ships, but stay out of range of the Sathar heavy cruiser and assault carrier. Within 20 hours of the Sathar departure from Akhala, the FS 30 system, home of the Mhemne, is completely free of Sathar domination.

The FEF squadron remains in FS 30 system, now known officially as Liberty System, for one month. They are waiting for the first of the UPF ships being sent to guard the Mhemnes' recently won independence to arrive. All UPF personnel who have taken part in the Snowball War (as it has come to be called) are given the option of being assigned to the Liberty System or returning to the Frontier Sector.

POSTSCRIPT: Two years later, the Mhemne produce their first interstellar starships. The first two ships bore the very un-Mhemnelike names of *Osprey II* and *Eleanor Moraes II*, in honor of the brave individuals who helped the Mhemne win their freedom and their ticket to the stars.

