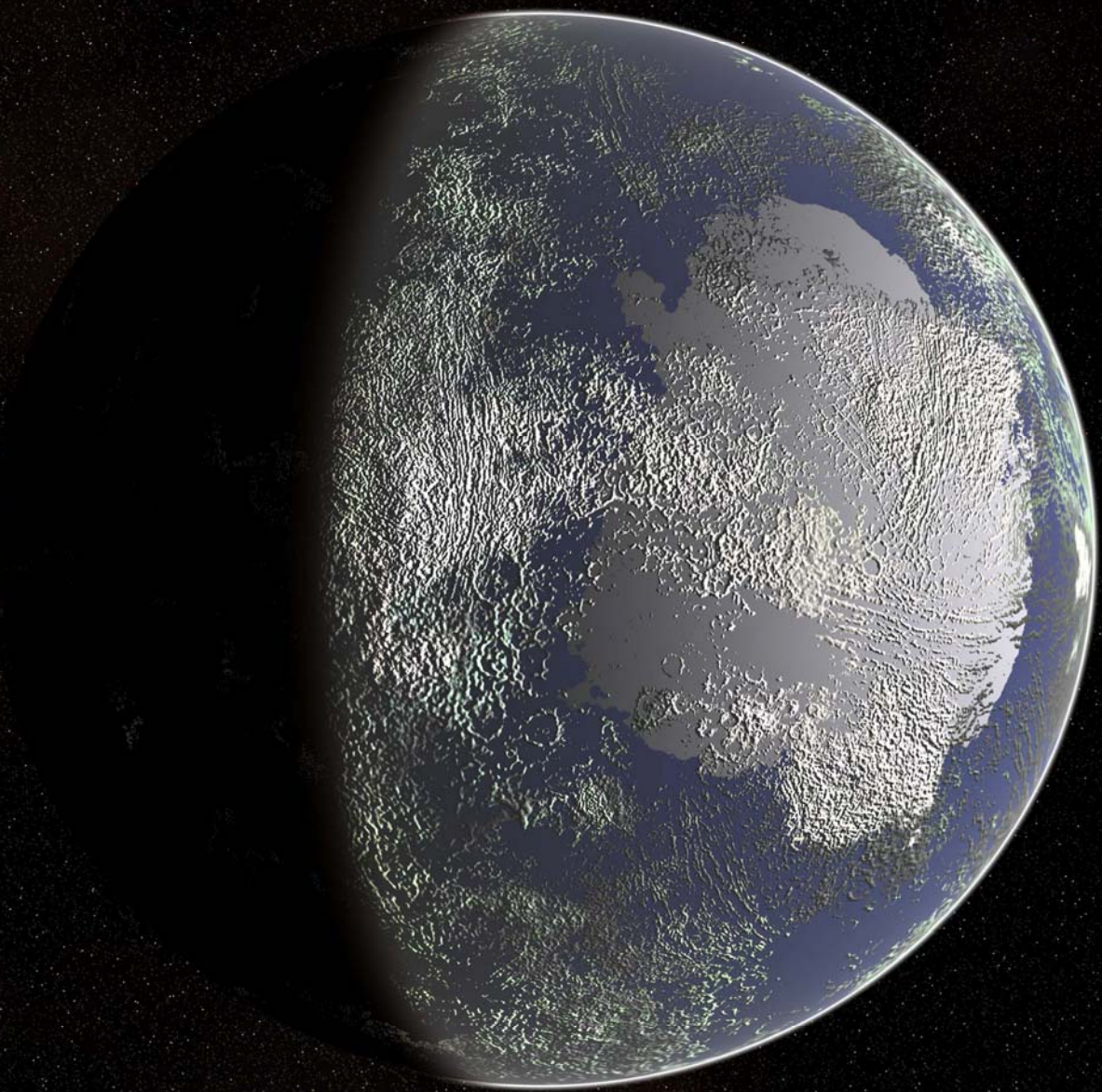


Stellar Reaches

A Fanzine for Traveller T20 And Classic Traveller

Issue #6: Winter 2007



An FLTGames Publication

Stellar Reaches

A Fanzine for Traveller T20 and Classic Traveller

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The Stellar Reaches fanzine's website can currently be found at <http://stellarreaches.nwgamers.org>. Please feel free to browse the site for more information, as well as back issues and other downloads as they become available.

The **BITS Task System**, although modified to include Traveller T20 difficulty classes, has been provided with permission by **British Isles Traveller Support (BITS)**. Its presence here does not constitute any challenge to the rights for this system, and we gratefully acknowledge Dominic Mooney and Andy Lilly for their generosity in allowing our use of this system to allow future adventures to be written in such a manner as to be more useful to all published Traveller rules sets.

For more information on BITS, check out their website at <http://www.bits.org.uk/>

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Calling All Adventurers



Intrigue, Espionage Opportunities, Corporate Trade Wars, Mysteries Abound, a Higher Calling and a Long Lost Treasure...They are ***not*** sure that you have what it takes.

Ready to prove them wrong?

Join the Adventure over on the **Citizens of the Imperium** Board! Look under:
http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/ultimatebb.php?ubb=get_topic:f=64;t=000002

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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts,

Happy Holidays! As a slightly belated holiday gift to the Traveller fans out there, I present to you **Issue #6** of the **Stellar Reaches** fanzine. A little shorter than previous issues at 32 pages, it nonetheless contains a Traveller gaming article, two adventures set in the Empty Quarter, the usual Empty Quarter echo, and two starship data articles, complete with deck plans. All in all, there's plenty in here for your enjoyment.

As if to make up for our art deficiency last issue, the artists among our wonderful supporters rallied, and produced a number of great images for this issue. In addition to Mickazoid's first cover for us, you'll find within art by David "Mandarin Dude" Askius, Bryan Gibson, Christian "Father Fletch" Kelley, Nik "Klaus" Kraakenes, "Ravs and Mike" "the Bromgrev" Thomas. Thank you, one and all, for your amazing contributions to the look and feel of **Stellar Reaches Issue #6**.

The future of Traveller looks bright! Both **QLI** and **Avenger Enterprises** are releasing Traveller material. **Spica Publishing Ltd** (<http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=626371>) has released a new Traveller Art calendar for 2007 (which I highly recommend for the Traveller art fan in all of us). In the coming year, Marc W. Miller will be releasing the long awaited **Traveller⁵** rules set. Two new sector books are due out this year, the Spica sector by Spica Publishing Ltd and the Hinterworlds 1248 sector by yours truly.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Joshua Bell on his fine work to bring one of my favorite CT/MT fanzines of the 1980's to the internet in PDF format for your enjoyment. The Third Imperium fanzine was and remains one of the inspirations for **Stellar Reaches**. If you are interested in checking out this excellent resource online, please feel free to check out Joshua's **Third Imperium** website (<http://www.travellermag.com/thirdimperium/>). Be sure to tell him that **Stellar Reaches** sent you.

As always, my friends, I wish to thank you all for your continued support of the **Stellar Reaches** fanzine. Without your amazing contributions, we simply couldn't do it, so thank you, thank you, thank you to all contributors for your efforts! With that in mind, please enjoy the latest issue and have a Happy New Year in 2007!

Prepare To Jump,
Jason "Flynn" Kemp
Editor, **Stellar Reaches** fanzine

BITS Task System

From pg. 8, BITS Writers' Guidelines June 1999. Copyright ©1999, BITS. All Rights Reserved.
T20 Open Game Content from the article "Extending the Task Resolution System to T20" Copyright 2003, Jason Kemp.

MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + \text{Skill} \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + \text{Forgery} \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty).

Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + \text{Skill} + (\text{Stat} / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (\text{Skill} + \text{Stat}) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq \text{INT} + \text{Forgery}$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq \text{Forgery} + \text{Target Modifier}$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

T20: Maria requires $d20 + 18 \geq 30$. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or

Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Traveller Campaigning: Finding a Game

By Jason “Flynn” Kemp

Unlike many roleplaying games, Traveller is designed to provide entertainment through both solo play and campaign play. A Traveller enthusiast can spend countless hours over the years generating characters, starships and planetary systems. He or she can simulate fleet-sized battles in deep space, or participate in interstellar trade exercises. With almost thirty years under its belt, Traveller and the Official Universe provides an excruciating amount of detail for its fan base, and there’s still a lot left to be developed. Traveller is indeed a wonderful medium for solo play, and many a year can go by spent wallowing in enjoyment without ever sitting down at the gaming table with another person.

While that’s a beautiful thing, and one of the great many things I enjoy about Traveller on a personal basis, this article does not focus on solo play. Today, we’re going to look at the other side of the coin, the actual use of Traveller for campaign play. At its heart, Traveller was ultimately designed as a roleplaying game, allowing gamers to participate in adventures set within a science fiction milieu. Whether sitting across from one another at a gaming table, exchanging long and involved posts in a play-by-email campaign or using an electronic tabletop or online chat program to participate in real-time gaming over long distances, the Traveller campaign can be the ultimate culmination of a Referee’s solo gaming experiences brought to life through the willing participating of active and avid gamers. Personally, I’ve found Traveller campaigning to be a very fulfilling practice, and as much as I have enjoyed the solo play aspects of Traveller over the years, actually participating in a Traveller campaign is far more fulfilling to me.

In this article, we’ll cover a variety of topics in regards to how to get into Traveller campaigning. If this is all “old hat” to you, then this article probably isn’t for you. However, if you are currently not participating in a Traveller campaign and you’d like to start, then maybe you’ll find a few of the tidbits in this article to be helpful.

Types of Traveller Campaigns

There are a number of different Traveller campaign types, classified through a variety of means. For the purposes of this article, we will define Traveller campaigns by duration.

The One-Shot

The One-Shot gaming experience is typically a single session in length, ranging from four to six hours, and gives a simple taste of participating in an interactive Traveller gaming experience. Occasionally, a One-Shot may roll over into a second session, but this happens rarely. The One-Shot has a definite beginning, middle and end, and typically resolves the issue introduced at the beginning of the session over the span of the single gaming session.

This type of Traveller game is most frequently encountered at gaming conventions and local game days, where the format is ideal for offering a sampling of the Traveller experience. One-Shots are also common over the holidays, when gamers find themselves with an afternoon or evening among their gaming buddies and the desire to game, but do not want to participate in an ongoing campaign. These types of games are typically spontaneous, and so are hard to predict. Most Referees, however, use them to expose gamers to the concepts of Traveller, in the hopes that future Traveller games might come from interest and curiosity. For gamers with work schedules that prevent regular gaming, the One-Shot often gives them an opportunity for face-to-face gaming that works with their hectic or unusual schedules.

The Single Adventure

The Single Adventure classically covers several gaming sessions in length, and covers a single adventure from beginning to end. Similar to a One-Shot, the Single Adventure focuses on a single issue and its resolution, but allows for more development as the storyline requires more interpersonal interaction and encounters in order to resolve the matter at hand. The typical Single Adventure tends to last two to five sessions (with an average of four sessions), and provides a wider range of encounters, which de-emphasizes specialized characters and rewards more diverse character types.

This type of Traveller game is most frequently encountered online in PBEM (Play By E-Mail) campaigns, where a single adventure may take over a year or two of Real Time posting to bring to a resolution. This type of campaign is also observed in gaming groups between two different longer-term campaigns, as a change of pace from the group’s usual gaming fare. For those unable to find gamers willing to

dedicate themselves to a full-time Traveller game, sometimes this proves to be a viable option.

The Mini-Series

The Mini-Series shares some characteristics of the Single Adventure and the Ongoing Campaign. While the Mini-Series still has a defined beginning, middle and end, the resolution of the story arc is accomplished only over the course of several adventures. This Traveller gaming experience typically runs from one to six months (or five to twenty-five sessions). Over the course of the mini-campaign (as Mini-Series are sometimes called), the players get to experience a much broader range of character development, and get the opportunity to explore the campaign setting in depth. Some gamers value the fact that the Mini-Series has a defined end-point, as such tends to give the game a significant degree of focus.

This type of Traveller game is most frequently encountered both online and in face-to-face gaming as a short-term Traveller campaign. This distinction is infrequently used, as most Referees picture themselves as either running a Single Adventure scenario or an Ongoing Campaign, but the Mini-Series remains a viable campaign model for Traveller.

The Ongoing Campaign

The holy grail of Traveller gaming, the Ongoing Campaign allows characters to explore the campaign setting in great detail over the course of many adventures. While an Ongoing Campaign has a definite beginning, you would be hard pressed to find a distinctive middle or end for most Ongoing Campaigns. Instead, the adventure development seems to be episodic, and when one story arc comes to an end, there will always be more stories to be told. Sometimes the divisions between adventures are perceptible, while in other Ongoing Campaigns, adventures ebb and flow, sometimes intermingled, and the campaign moves forward with a high level of continuity.

This type of Traveller game is rare, but is most frequently encountered in established gaming groups with a definite love for science fiction. For some, this is an ideal that will never be achieved. However, there are plenty of opportunities for Traveller gaming experiences that do not require the presence of an Ongoing Campaign.

Traveller Gaming on the Internet

When most of us think about Traveller gaming, we tend to think in terms of face-to-face sessions, where a Referee and three or four players sit around the gaming table, rolling dice, telling jokes, eating pizza and occasionally focusing on the actual game at hand. That's the bread and butter of roleplaying, indeed, but with the advent of the internet, there are a number of

other gaming avenues worthy of exploration.

Sometimes you can't find local gamers or a local game to get into. Or worse, the local Traveller game is very insular and they've decided for whatever reason that they don't want to accept you or other gamers into their personal little clique. Maybe one of them smells funny to you, and for that reason, you'd rather not game with them. It happens, and fortunately for Traveller fans, it's not the end of the world.

Also, the internet provides an excellent opportunity for physically-disabled gamers to participate in a regular Traveller gaming experience when circumstances might prevent them from joining in a regular gaming session. When physical health can cause obstacles that impair the gaming experience, the internet sometimes provides an opportunity to enjoy roleplaying when one would not ordinarily exist.

In essence, there are two types of internet gaming opportunities: Real Time and Delayed Posting. Each of those can be further broken down into two smaller categories, although there are other options as well. However, this article will only focus on the four major types of internet gaming when considering a substitute for face-to-face gaming.

Chat-based Gaming

The first Real Time option, chat-based gaming has been around for decades. You can find a number of avenues that encourage chat-based gaming, such as IRC chatrooms and Instant Messenger services. In addition to some form of chat program or website, many use random number generators to emulate die rolls, but the interfaces for these are typically very easy to use. Some Referees do the dice rolling themselves, or trust the players to do it. That's a matter to be resolved by the Referee in regards to their online gaming protocols. In terms of gameplay, the average chat-based session usually takes about two or three times as long to cover material in a gaming session as a face-to-face game, due to the fact that most people tend to type slower than they speak.

Electronic Tabletops

The second Real Time option on our list, electronic tabletops have only been available in the last decade, with the more modern version being less than four years old. Essentially, eTabletops (as these applications have come to be called) combine a chat program with a map server for visual presentations of encounters and other scenarios, as well as a built-in dice roller. Some even offer other forms of support, such as character sheet, monster/encounter write-ups, Voice-Over-IP and other conveniences. QuikLink Interactive has created a version of their eTabletop application, GRIP, specifically styled to run Classic Traveller games. Other popular software applications of this type include WebRPG, OpenRPG, Battlegrounds, ScreenMonkey,

Fantasy Grounds, the open source Maptool and the vaporware Ghost Orb. Users of eTabletops often implement VOIP applications such as Teamspeak, Ventrilo or Skype to allow vocal interactions, coming close to a true tabletop experience for the participants. In terms of gameplay, the average eTabletop session usually takes about one and a half times to twice as long to cover material as a face-to-face game might take, but a skilled Referee can compensate for that fairly easily.

Play-By-Email

A popular Delayed Posting method of online gaming, the Play-By-Email (or PBEM) is a very common means by which Traveller campaigning occurs online, and typically utilize a mailing list to organize posts. My first long-term Traveller gaming experiences as a player occurred in PBEM games. The gaming experience is rather cyclical: the Referee posts a description of a scene, then the players post their actions and reactions. Some discussion occurs, building on the scene, and sometimes in-games actions need to be resolved. Then the Referee compiles a new post, encompassing the character actions taken and the process starts again. Referees often use online die servers, random number generators used to represent die rolls, although some either roll the dice themselves or trust their players to do so. Like all Delayed Posting games, PBEMs allow for much deeper character development, at the cost of speed of play. Depending on the turnaround time between Referee posts, the average PBEM usually takes a month to cover the same amount of development that a tabletop game covers in half an hour to an hour.

Play-By-Post

The second Delayed Posting method for online gaming, the Play-By-Post shares some of the conventions of a PBEM. Instead of email, however, a Play-By-Post uses a bulletin board forum as the medium through which posts are exchanged. The turn-around time tends to be much faster, and so games of these types typically accomplish the same level of activity in a month as a face-to-face game might in a single gaming session. Stellar Reaches occasionally advertises for a specific Play-By-Post game over on the Citizens of the Imperium discussion boards.

Finding a Traveller Campaign

Of those Traveller fans that desire to participate in a campaign, most want to play. Let's face it: if you grew up cutting your teeth on science fiction, and your imagination is filled with picturing yourself in the midst of some action sequence on a distant planet, then you probably want to be in middle of all that action. Playing gives you that opportunity. Sometimes, though, it's hard

to know where to start. If you need help in this area, what follows is some good advice on the topic.

Time To Play

First, determine how much time you can devote to a game, and under what conditions. If you work evenings six days a week, including the weekend, it's hard to find a time for a face-to-face game that fits with the schedules of other gamers. If you are looking for a weekday game, your best bet is to look for an evening session that runs perhaps three to five hours, depending on the gaming group. Weekend games can start much earlier on Saturday or Sunday, but it's hard to find local gamers that are willing to start before noon. If you are looking for sessions online, either because of your schedule or because of a lack of local Traveller fanatics, the afore-mentioned guidelines are null and void. With gamers around the globe, your free periods for gaming will assuredly coincide with someone's out there.

If you can only devote the occasional fifteen minute block of time to game, perhaps you should consider one of the Delayed Post gaming avenues. As I've mentioned before, there are a great many Traveller PBEM and Play-By-Post games that do not require you to gather together at a specific time, but can be addressed as you have time. The ability to post regularly is preferred by many a Referee, so if you can spare fifteen minutes every day or two, you're a natural for such opportunities.

If none of the above fit into your schedule, at least consider gaming conventions and local game days. If nothing else, you get to have a taste of Traveller campaigning. These One-Shot sessions provide the only exposure some gamers get to participate in their favorite game. In addition, it's a great way to meet other Traveller fans, so that when you do find time to schedule a more regular game, you already know a few people to contact.

Advertising

Once you have an idea of your schedule and ability to play, it's time to start looking for a Traveller game. There are a number of sources you can use to seek out games to join.

Gaming Groups: If you are lucky enough to belong to an existing gaming group, your quest for a Traveller game can begin among your peers. By checking for the local level of interest, you might find out about other local groups that play Traveller, or find enough interested parties to form a weekly or monthly Traveller game. Of course, if you are organizing it, then that likely means you might end up being the Referee, at least at first. If that's the case, future articles should provide you with some help in creating and running a Traveller campaign.

Mailing Lists: Another good source for locating Referees or Traveller-oriented gaming groups is the use

of mailing lists. Many areas have localized general RPG lists that can be used to allow gamers to locate gaming groups of similar interests. Also, there are general purpose Traveller mailing lists (such as the TML) which can be used to seek out contact with Traveller gamers in your area. You may have much lower chances of getting involved with a local group if you use a general purpose list, but do not discount them just for that reason. Some people have gotten quite lucky in locating local gamers through such lists. However, if your goal is to find internet gamers, the general purpose lists work out great.

Discussion Boards/Forums: Discussion boards and forums have come into vogue within the last five years or so, and provide an excellent resource for locating gamers. Like mailing lists, discussion boards are less likely to turn up local gamers and more likely to turn up internet gamers, but you can try for both. Every opportunity you seek out is one more chance you might find a good group to play Traveller with.

Local Gaming/Comic Stores: Many local gaming and comic stores maintain physical bulletin boards on-site where interested parties can post a note seeking local gamers. Unlike the internet-based resources, the bulletin board is more likely to find local gamers than internet gamers. Getting to know the employees at your local gaming and comic stores might go a long way toward helping you find a Traveller gaming group, as they might be able to connect people of similar interests.

RPG-Oriented Community Organizations: Many college campuses host community organizations that are oriented towards RPGs and gamers in particular. Some organizations, such as the RPGA, provide local chapters that facilitate local gaming. These organizations can be an excellent resource for meeting face-to-face gamers, which can in turn be mined for the possibility of Traveller gamers.

Word-Of-Mouth: Sometimes, just talking about gaming in the right circumstances can open up opportunities for you. Those right circumstances might be attending a local gaming convention, chatting with Browncoats or other Serenity/Firefly fans or working with science fiction writers or enthusiasts. Try blogging about your quest (along with other interesting things), and advertising your blog to friends and family. You never know what might happen when one of your friends starts talking to someone else about your obsession with the game. You might just end up with a possible Traveller campaign connection.

Google: Surprisingly, a resource often overlooked by the questing Traveller fan is our friend, Google. If your google fu is good, you might be able to locate either a local gaming group or an internet-based Traveller campaign with a website that invites interested new players to make contact. Even if the Referee of the game isn't open to new players at the moment, it is likely that he or she knows someone that you could talk to, and soon you are off. I've used this same technique

on Yahoogroups, searching for Traveller mailing lists to join in the hopes of finding a cool PBEM to participate in. Never under-estimate the power of a search engine to help you find something you want.

Joining A Game

Once you've made contact, joining a game is typically the easier side of the equation. You may have to engage in discussions with the Referee or with the group as a whole before you are accepted into the game, but such are small rites of passage. If a group does have such criteria, and you are not accepted, do not give up hope. Chances are, you probably would not have enjoyed gaming with them anyway. There are always other gamers and other games out there, waiting for your interest and participation. Don't give up hope.

When you have been accepted into a group, work with the Referee to create a character that fits within the current milieu. If there are special house rules for character creation, now's the time to find out. Since you are the outsider coming in, you may have to do some things differently than you are used to. That is ultimately the Referee's decision. (When it's your game, you get to make those kind of choices. When you're a player, these are the boundaries that are placed before you.)

At some point, you finally get to participate with your newly created character. Have fun with it. Try to work and play well with others, of course, but don't let that stop you from having fun in the process. I'm sure you'll have a great time.

What If I Don't Like The Game?

Chances are, if you don't have a good time in the first session or two, then that particular gaming group may not be the one for you. Your time is too precious to waste on games that are not fun for you. This isn't a bad thing, so long as you handle it well. Explain to the Referee that you don't feel like you mesh well with the group. If you know specifics and if the Referee asks, feel free to discuss them, but do so in a polite and respectful manner. Even if you aren't gaming with that group any more, how you handle yourself in this matter will affect what they say about you in the future when asked. If you part on good terms, you may find them another source of word-of-mouth contacts that might be able to help you in the future. However, if you part poorly, you might gain a reputation that will follow you in the future. My advice in this arena is simple: don't stay where you know you won't be happy, and don't burn any bridges when you leave, just in case.

What If I Can't Find A Game?

Sadly, sometimes we can't find a game to play in. When that happens, we look to the one major avenue remaining for the Traveller gamer: running a game as a

Referee. Even if you'd rather be playing, sometimes you have to forge a group of your own, train a Referee from among your players and then make the transition from Referee to player at some point in the process. Future Traveller Campaigning articles will cover some of the ins and outs of running a Traveller campaign, and may

serve as a guide in helping you create a varied and interesting Traveller gaming experience. The editor of Stellar Reaches welcomes any and all comments and constructive feedback on the content of the Traveller Campaigning article series



Adventure: Walking in the Air

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

*Walking in the Air*¹ is a low-violence, high-roleplay adventure for gearhead PCs with an interest in the art of the deal and a love of storytelling. More pragmatic Traveller groups can cut off the ‘background fluff’ without affecting the adventure’s core. New characters are preferred, but are not strictly necessary: merely assume that the PCs have chosen to ‘beach’ on the world of Daruka for 2+ years, in order to run a local business venture. This adventure uses the **BITS Task System**, with **Classic Traveller** rules.

The PCs are assumed to lack a starship, as they are offered to command and crew (not own) a starship should they successfully complete the adventure. If they previously had a starship, the Referee should determine what happened: most likely, it was sold for startup capital, but they may have rented it out, had it disabled or destroyed in a previous caper, or it was seized for failure to make ship payments. The Referee may negotiate with the players on this: some Traveller players are very possessive about their hard-won starship.

The adventure begins in 993 Imperial, with the Player-Characters acting as high-tech consultants on the small, low-tech world of Daruka (Hebrin/Empty Quarter 2230, D474645-5). Their local business is quite profitable²: the PCs are among the wealthiest residents of the planet, but over 65% of their business comes from one man, Naginchand Jhaverchand. Assemblyman Jhaverchand is an important elected legislator of the global Republic of Daruka and a leader of the opposition Interstellar Party. He often requires the PCs services for family, business and governmental matters. He has attempted to buy the business from the PCs outright, so they can serve him exclusively: but they have refused his offer.

If the PCs aren’t native Darukans, they are assumed to have resided on Daruka for two years at least, and are familiar with the customs and lifestyle of the Darukan society. Newly generated PCs can be starfaring natives who came back home: if so, their race and culture should reflect the local agrarian-based culture: East Indian by race, speaking an Anglic/Hindi/Urdu patois. At TL 5, Daruka isn’t as advanced as most Empty Quarter worlds. Starfaring PCs can afford to live like Nobles on Daruka, but they would be merely “upper-class professionals” in most systems.

Culturally, the Darukans are strongly Hindu and usually pacifistic, with firm vegan/vegetarian beliefs – to the extent of aggressively enforcing a ban on meat

and egg consumption, and tightly restricting dairy products³. It is likely that offworlder PCs have developed strong local ties; friendship certainly, with marriage and children as likely possibilities.

Daruka: A Brief Survey

Daruka was an originally lifeless and barren world when first settled by Sir Kaadu Narlikar of Irash in 614, as a stronghold for the famous Zinta family³ should the Imperium completely disintegrate during the then-current Civil War. By 631, Sir Narlikar – finally reassured of Imperial unity and stability – withdrew Zinta assets from the system. Hindus from distant Irash, learning of the vast, abandoned military bases, purchased the still-functional habitats and relocated to Daruka. While they can eek out a living, enduring prosperity has eluded them.

Daruka’s atmosphere is not immediately harmful: however, long-term exposure (over a period of years) to the toxic particulate matter is poisonous, eventually slashing decades off a man’s life. Superior air filters and goggles are required for protection: but most of the population is too poor to properly maintain them, and use cheap, low-tech goggles and cloth filters instead. Few locals live past 30, dying of various respiratory diseases and cancers. Terran-derived plant life handles the atmosphere much better, and with a little low-tech know-how (like suspending massive cellophane sheets above their crops, to prevent most particulates from settling on the leaves) excellent produce can be reaped from the land⁴.

The majority of Daruka’s five million people live in small, low-tech villages scattered across Daruka’s face, in tents and towns open to the atmosphere. Many still live in massive, centuries-old, poorly-maintained ‘sealed’ bases with dodgy power generators; tens of thousands are crowded on decrepit bases built for a few hundred soldiers and their equipment. The well-off (including the PCs) live cheek-by-jowl with the poor, residing in low-tech pseudo-arcologies called mohalla (Hindi and Urdu: ‘neighborhood’) – self-contained, well-maintained apartment blocks with air-locks, imported fusion power generators, domed gardens on the roofs, and in-house shops, servants, and guards. The mohalla are works of art: brightly colored and detailed in the Indian style, they often have soothing music and aromas wafting thru them. Numerous bas reliefs are engraved on the walls, with drapery accents. Much of the fabric used is imported from off-world, with

delightful high-tech features in look, feel, and movement.

Celebrate Good Times – Come On!

Business on Daruka is engaged during festivities or celebrations, so the PCs accept an invitation to join the Assemblyman to celebrate the 15th birthday of his firstborn son Vinod. Naturally, it is held in the Assemblyman's pride and joy, the 'starship' *Koi Mil Gaya*⁵. The *Koi Mil Gaya*, a clapped-out 200-ton Free Trader, has been previously patched-up by the PCs for a new role as mobile air yacht and entertainment center for the Assemblyman. In a world where most travel is by geneered mules and transistor radios are something of a luxury, the *Koi Mil Gaya* is an awesome sight to behold, treasured not only by the Assemblyman, but by all Daruka.

The PCs arrive at their town's square, which is being cleared as an impromptu landing pad for the *Koi Mil Gaya*. There is a great cheer as the ship is spotted in the red sky, and the great vessel kicks up black, red, and yellow dust as she lands. As hundreds of commoners cram into the hold of the prettified hulk – to simply gawk, as well as to receive gifts handed out by Party volunteers – the select few are washed down by servants with a harmless chemical disinfectant, efficiently heat-dried, and brought thru the internal air-lock to the upper level, in what used to be the passenger suites. Sweet smells fill the air as the guests suck on their hookah pipes, and sip strange teas and liquors. A thin purple silk screen separates the women from the men - with nonhumans counted as men, male and female alike. As is customary, the men hold forth on Politics and Galactic Affairs, while the women gossip about Family and Feminine Matters. Children ignore the curtain as they run riot; occasionally, a woman corrals them into an out-of-the way corner, but they are soon scampering around again.

The chatter, drinking, and smoking goes on for at least two hours before the Assemblyman gets down to business – the Referee may temporarily deduct 1-3 points off Intelligence, depending on how much the PCs indulged themselves with the party delights. After everyone is in a truly mellow mood, the Assemblyman starts a little wheeling and dealing⁶. After a few requests have been satisfied, he stands to make a proclamation: his beloved son, the jewel of his eye, Vinod, has been accepted to Caunotaucarius Imperial Finishing School⁷ located on Aleshanee!

The guests cheer loudly – and, a few minutes later, the announcement is proclaimed from the external loudspeakers of the *Koi Mil Gaya*. Dazzling, high-tech fireworks explode outside as the town celebrates. The glorified hulk closes her cargo doors, and soon soars into the sky, to squeals of delight from the intoxicated guests. As the Darukan Indian music pounds and the

excitement peaks, Assemblyman Jhaverchand declares that not only will his beloved son enter the Finishing School next year; he shall arrive in style, on his very own ship, the *Koi Mil Gaya*!

The memories of the PCs become somewhat vague after this point. They certainly don't understand the significance of this at the time: but they understand all too clearly the next morning, when they wake up who-knows-where, recovering from the results of last night's festivities.

You're Not Serious?!?

The PCs know for a fact that the *Koi Mil Gaya* is nowhere near spaceworthy – since they acted as the advisors and technicians who labored on it previously. They naturally desire to persuade the Assemblyman that It Can't Be Done. If they make the attempt, the PCs will automatically fail: the Assemblyman saw the miracles they invoked getting the *Koi Mil Gaya* into the clouds, and believes that they can do anything, tech-wise – their 'outworlder magic' is legendary, after all. His firstborn son, the strength of his loins, shall arrive on the *Koi Mil Gaya*. Anything less would bring shame to the family, and is simply out of the question.

If the PCs still refuse to help, the Assemblyman begins bureaucratic machinations to force the PCs compliance; uncompromising inspectors plague the PCs at work, taxmen demand impossible amount of paperwork. Their legal advisor, also feeling the heat, has less and less time to help them out. The Assemblyman's scheduled payments for earlier jobs start to slow down and shrink in size, while other business starts falling off due to 'new circumstances'. The PCs may complain to the local press, but little public sympathy is available – especially if the PCs are offworlders. No goons will be sent: the Assemblyman prefers to attack with strangling red tape and 'passive-aggressive' legal tactics. Physical reprisals against the Assemblyman are extremely unwise: the Referee is invited to aggressively punish the PCs for such an epic display of stupidity.

The PCs must choose: either leave Daruka, or play ball with Assemblyman Jhaverchand. They may leave (and end the adventure) if they desire – after paying a hefty Emigration Tax, naturally. If they decide to make a deal with the Assemblyman, they will find him open to the idea of 'suitable compensation': a really good bargainer could work out quite the sweetheart deal. Expect several nights of fabulous smokes, fine vegan cooking, and spicy teas.

After the deal is inked, the PCs must determine what the *Koi Mil Gaya* needs to reach the stars again. The technically-inclined PCs already have a good ideal on what's needed, but the wise PC still inspects the ship in detail. An accurate inspection (an Average job for the PCs, due to previous familiarity) should reveal minor deficiencies everywhere, but important and critical

faults include: 1) jump fuel circulation, 2) the hull's jump grid integrity, 3) jump computation subsystems; 4) long-term life support, 5) inertial dampers, 6) sensors (instrumentation and data synthesis), 7) cargo (container restraints and the no-slip surfaces have worn away to nothing), and damage control, 8) airlocks (they need to be relined, if they are to handle the increased wear involved in space travel), 9) the fuel space needed for jump and maneuver fuel was removed, and used as space for the servants and the expanded kitchen. This volume must AGAIN be rebuilt to handle purified jump and maneuver fuel (the PCs remember how much they hate this labor-intensive job), 10) the brittle landing pads simply won't handle the ship's weight in stronger gravity fields, 11) the jump engine is crippled: no jump can be completed in its current state. The ship was originally jump-1, but the Assemblyman wants a jump-2 engine, which will be a beast to squeeze into the available space (and available budget!), 12) the ship needs to be certified spaceworthy, and the local D-class port can do neither the needed repairs nor the certification.

Doing The Impossible

How the PCs bring the *Koi Mil Gaya* up to specs is up to them, within these constraints:

- On a decent port with proper equipment, it only takes two weeks and 0.1% of a ship's cost for an annual overhaul. Because of the ship's condition and the lack of needed equipment and expertise, costs tend to balloon to more than 1% of the ship's cost (about 0.3 MCr) and four months of work for a team of four experienced PC starfarers with technical skills – and that's not counting the upgraded jump engine. The PCs will have to sweat to keep costs and the timeframe under control.
- Obtaining the jump-2 engine at the given budget may simply be impossible for the PCs to accomplish. If so, they need to convince the Assemblyman to lower his sights: he must be reassured that the ship can still bring his boy to Aleshanee. If the PCs want a real scrounger's challenge, they can still make the attempt to 'secure' a suitable jump-2 drive. This quest requires a separate adventure, involving raiding dead hulks, contacting fast-talking businessmen with slicked-back hair and unsavory friends, or checking out Ministry of Justice 'stolen goods' auctions on major worlds like Hebrin.⁹
- Because of the importance (and expense!) of this job, Assemblyman Jhaverchand is far more troublesome than usual. His clear lack of starship knowledge doesn't stop him from continually checking in on the PCs work, nor does it inhibit him from endless criticism.
- The Assemblyman continually presses for more work at a lower cost – preferably free. He uses tactics like slowing down payments, pleading for them 'to think about my little angel Vinod', rumor-mongering, wining and dining, even screaming at the PCs to pressure them to doing more for less. Members of the PCs local family are lobbied to bring indirect pressure on the PCs as well. The PCs may cut corners to save money: the possibility of disaster due to this short-term expedient is left to the Referee to determine.
- Assemblyman Jhaverchand insists on detailed lists of expenditures, with justifications. He is no fool, and has a fairly good idea on the proper ballpark figure for this job, as well as the usual padding, embezzlement, and 'creative accounting' scams (having employed quite a few of them himself in his long political career).. If he feels that the PCs are cheating him, expect complaints, bad press, and lawsuits. The higher the costs (in time and money) soar above the promises of the PC, the more likely the powerful politician blows a fuse, with unpredictable results.
- The number of people on Daruka who understand, never mind repair, Stellar-tech¹⁰ equipment is less than 20, including the PCs. The PCs can contract out some of the work, but most of the job is a 'hands-on' affair. The likelihood to avoid a major shipboard accident per week is Average test of the applicable tech skill, plus the Leadership or Administration skill (whichever is greater). NPCs hurt on the job demand compensation from the PCs company: the Assemblyman won't help to pay, but if the press gets involved, he's certain to grandstand and demand that the PCs 'fulfill their civic duties'. Smart PCs (IQ of 9+ in **Classic Traveller**) should be advised by the Referee to insure their workers and themselves before work begins.
- Should the PCs desire to ferry the *Koi Mil Gaya* to a Class-A or -B port, they discover that large transports are either tied up on critical routes, or are currently serving the Imperial war effort, hundreds of light years away. If the PCs insist on going this route, creativity should be encouraged by the Referee: disassembling the ship, hiring non-Imperial transports (if you can find them: most are from the Julian Protectorate), or using several Free Traders to transport the *Koi Mil Gaya*, are possible solutions.
- The cheapest convenient source of starship equipment is at the Travellers' Bazaar, located next to the Starport. You can find all sorts of stuff there, of varying quality – including worn jump drives. Good bargaining skills are required, as well as an eye for mechanical defects.
- There are other sources, if the bazaar owners are too outrageous in their prices. Individual free traders pass by this world once a month or so, but

there is a lot of off-world visitors during the harvest season (twice a year, for two weeks). Personal connections may help scrounge up some unneeded equipment. The local, rather decrepit Darukan Navy is willing to give up some surplus – if you approach the right bureaucrat, with the right incentives.

- The best hope to get a ship certified on Daruka is to persuade the local Baroness to pull a few strings. Baroness Jaya Arunachalam is usually offworld, promoting the cause of the poorer worlds of Hebrin subsector: her planetary business is handled by a young and eager Chamberlain named Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the son of a respected Brahmin family. He has an intellectual and literary bent: bribes and brutality repulse him, but he is fascinated by other societies and can be persuaded to assist, if the PCs have kept their good names clean.
- If the PCs fail to get Sir Tagore's help, then they must travel offworld themselves, to work the Imperial subsector bureaucracy to send an extraordinary certification team to Daruka. Or, they can illegally fly the ship to an A- or B-class starport for certification. If caught in Imperial Space, a hefty fine is a certainty (that, incidentally, the Assemblyman will refuse to pay). Also possibly is forgery of the necessary documents: the PCs can do it themselves, or go to offworld underworld connections and get it done 'professionally'. (The local criminal element is too amateur and low-tech to handle this kind of work).
- At the Referee's discretion, time pressure may be added to the mix. Usually, acceptance notices for Imperial Finishing Schools are given a year ahead of time: nobles insist on receiving a decent time cushion, not only because of the lengthy travel times involved, but also to provide a margin for the many demands on Noble scions. However, the Referee may trim (or slash) this lead time, just to keep the stressed PCs in a state of near-panic.
- Additional work requiring high-tech help can be made available, to give variety to the PCs interactions with the native Darukans¹¹. The Referee may read up on Colonial or Modern India for inspiration, especially short fiction works. (Kipling fits very well into the Traveller mythos, but there are other excellent sources).

Pushing The Big Red Button

Assuming the PCs 1) get the ship in a spaceworthy condition 2) with the required certification 3) without getting in hot water with local or Imperial law enforcement, they receive the effusive thanks of Assemblyman Jhaverchand. A major celebration, with the great and the good of Darukan society, is held on the Jhaverchand estate. The planetary President attends, as well as the Chamberlain and other elite members of

Darukan society. (If the PCs gained a bit of favorable subsector-wide media attention, even the Baroness may deign to show up!) As the PCs are the guests of honor, they are expected to give a speech on how much they love Daruka, how wonderful the Darukan government is, why Assemblyman Jhaverchand is the most impressive man in Darukan history, yadda yadda yadda. (More socially aware PCs may wish to stand right next to less polite PCs, in case Immediate Action is needed when they open their big mouths).

Soon afterwards, the Assemblyman speaks to the PCs, asking them to crew the starship on a shakedown cruise to Aleshanee. Assuming five one-parsec jumps – with a week's downtime after each jump – the round-trip will take 19 weeks. (If a jump-2 engine was installed, then a course using alternating jump-1s/jump-2s should be laid down; the trip will then take eleven weeks). The sendoff from Daruka involves a spectacular festival, but the PCs are all alone when they finally pull the trigger, and discover if that jump drive they bought at the bazaar really works as advertised. Additional issues naturally crop up as they make their way to Aleshanee, but the Referee should reward the PCs with success if they earned it.

Upon their return, the PCs are treated as planetary heroes and the toast of the system. Assemblyman Jhaverchand, building on the good PR, pulls some excellent political maneuvers, forcing the President to call a snap election which the Interstellar Party wins handily. As opposition leader, Assemblyman Jhaverchand is elevated to the President's office. He awards the PCs with a civilian Medal of Recognition during his inauguration, and (if they are outworlders) makes them full or honorary citizens of the planet – their choice. Local media – print, radio, and TV – arrange for fawning interviews with the PCs, making their faces world-famous. Within two months, though, a book containing the unauthorized biography is published and sells like hotcakes. Written by the local muckraker, it's a lurid mishmash of truths, speculation, and outright lies.¹²

Before Vinod leaves Daruka for the Finishing School, President Jhaverchand arrives at the PCs office in his chauffeured antigrav limousine for an informal chat.¹³ He is very pleased with the PCs work, and would like to hire them to crew his starship – and act as agents of the Darukan government. In return, he's willing to not only pay them the going salary for spacers, but commission them as legal officers of the Darukan Republic and provide an additional salary (with pension, naturally). If a PC has high social standing (**Classic Traveller**, 10+ SOC), but ISN'T oath-bound to the Imperial or other planetary/corporate/religious/clan government, that PC is asked to be a "Honourary Consul" for the Republican government, in return for a small honorarium and 'the thanks of the people of Daruka.' Note that he'll regretfully accept no as an

answer, without anger or resentment, but is overjoyed if they ever change their minds.

On the day the voyage starts, the unseasonably cold weather chills the air, and ‘red snow’ settles on the farewell crowd as the usual round of speeches are made – this time, accompanied with a local sangeet band, involving traditional Indian singing, instrumentation, and stylized dance (with an additional 3,000 years of Empty Quarter flavoring, and 400 years of Darukan development). A smartly-attired group of Daruka Rangers – the local constabulary/militia/army – provide a 10-gun salute as Vinod boards the *Koi Mil Gaya*, leaving his childhood behind forever. As the starship lifts off, President Jhaverchand weeps without shame as the sangeet band gently laments.

Besides any profits, fame, and new connections, the PCs should be awarded an additional skill level at the end of the adventure, either mechanical or social (possibly one of each, for extraordinary role-playing).

Epilogue

(To be used only if the PCs agreed to work for President Jhaverchand as ship’s crew)

Despite his privileged childhood and temperamental father, Vinod is actually a good-hearted and personable young man, and befriends the PCs (if they permit it). As he turns 16 on the journey to Aleshanee, Vinod opens his birthday present, and is amazed to discover a brand new P-plane¹⁴! He asks the PCs to teach him how to use it, and will practice until the ship arrives at Aleshanee.

The Caunotaucarius Imperial Finishing School broadcasts a warm welcome to the *Koi Mil Gaya*, which docks at the tiny highport – which, at 1000 dtons, is only five times the size of the starship. Men wearing formal Imperial civil service uniforms of the Imperial College of Arms – a.k.a. the “Ministry of Nobility” – their faces painted in Empty Quarter American Indian motifs, escort Vinod to a waiting School shuttle. Vinod occasionally sends an X-boat datadoc to the PCs, telling them about his adventures and discoveries – and his eventual mastery of the P-plane. If he meets the PCs on Daruka during his annual break, he’ll buzz them by swooping from the air, and never tires of ‘walking in the air, floating thru the moonlit sky...’

Footnotes

¹A song from the 1982 animated short, “The Snowman”, sung by Peter Audy of Nightwish. It’s quite good in showing the childlike wonder of flying through the clouds buzzing your neighbors.

²At TL 5, Daruka isn’t particularly wealthy. The PCs can afford to live like Nobles on Daruka, but they would be merely “upper-class professionals” in Average-tech systems.

³The Zintas, a military family which flourished between the 4th and 7th Imperial centuries, were best known for their technological expertise, rigid sense of

honor and taste for monumental architecture. The last titled Zinta died in 869, and the clan disappeared soon afterwards, merging with the general populace.

⁴A bare majority of the human Imperial Empty Quarter population are vegetarians, following Hindu and Pacifist edits. The Darukans – who are themselves devout Hindu vegans – finds it more profitable to focus on fruit and vegetable cultivation, banning most livestock farming from their world. Two K’kree clans plying the 100 pc-long Two Thousand Worlds-Imperial trading routes know of Darukan attitudes, and a trading clan stops by for a friendly visit about once a decade.

⁵Trivia: the *Koi Mil Gaya* is named after the 2003 Bollywood movie, the first Sci-fi Indian epic (singing included, but no classic dance numbers). The name means “I found someone” in Hindi.

⁶The Assemblyman is quite good at holding his liquor – and various other foreign substances, as well. This has given him an edge in more than one business and political negotiation.

⁷The Caunotaucarius Imperial Finishing School, founded in 259, is a light base set on a very tall, icy spire, surrounded by several tall, carved pillars of ice. (The visual echo to the Imperial Moot on Capital is not accidental). It exists to serve the children of ‘nobility in embarrassing circumstances’ – respected, but not very wealthy⁸, gentry, Knights, and Barons (SOC A-B in game terms). While the education provided is satisfactory superior to local educational establishments (an easy goal to achieve), the Finishing School’s importance is rooted in two purposes, both implicit. First, the school serves as a platform where future movers and shakers can network with each other, binding the interstellar elite together. Second, the Finishing School strongly indoctrinates the children with the “Imperial ethos” – by the example of the teachers, culture, discipline (official and otherwise), and implicit assumptions woven in the curriculum. The Finishing School is partly subsidized by the Sector Duke, and has strong links (formal and informal) to Capital.

The school is christened after the Seneca name of General George Washington, meaning “town taker.” Empty Quarter American Indians are as proud of their historical lineage as any Vilani, and tend to exaggerate their influence over the first (and by far the most famous) American republic.

⁸“Not very wealthy” in Imperial Noble terms. The wealth of these families may tower over their local communities in the Empty Quarter, but most can’t measure up to the Billions and Trillions of Credits available to nobles in more successful sectors.

⁹For more information, see the article on Hebrin (*Stellar Reaches #4*): note that Hebrin is three parsecs away from Daruka, and is accessible via jump-1. For more information of Daruka’s local neighborhood, see *Stellar Reaches #2* for a map of the Empty Quarter’s Delta Quadrant.

¹⁰Stellar-tech – TL 11+

¹¹Vinod's love of aerial stunts can easily involve the PCs and the *Koi Mil Gaya*

¹²The more commercial PCs can recognize opportunity when they see it: they could earn a fine living as a local celebrity, 'famous for being famous'; parley their fame into a promising political career; or turn their name into a brand and capitalize with toy figurines or specialty shops selling cheap 'high-tech' gizmos. "The marketing possibilities are endless!"

¹³As President Jhaverchand has no violent enemies (interstellar or personal), he has no security detail, and doesn't require heavy-handed protection and secrecy – or even a bodyguard.

¹⁴A P-plane (personal plane) is a one-man ultralight turboprop, suitable for worlds with low gravity and standard or thicker atmospheres. Landing a P-plane is seen as an extreme test of piloting skill. Unlike the TL 12 100,000 Cr grav belt, the P-plane can be manufactured at TL 8 and maintained at TL 6: the craft retails at 8,000 Cr.

Personalities

Note: age reflects actual character age: bracketed age follows Classic Traveller rules.

Assemblyman Naginchand Jhaverchand, 51 years. (34 years) Other, 4 terms
65A97A Broker-2, Bribery-1, Carousing-1, Liaison-1
(When elected President, change SOC to "B")

Baroness Jaya Arunachalam, 38 years. (38 years) Other, 5 terms
4748AB Adminsitration-1, Liaison-1, Legal-1, Vacc Suit-1, Pike-1

Sir Rabindranath Tagore, 46 years. (46 years) Other, 6 terms
556B9A Administration-2, Legal-2, Liaison-1, Medical-1, Foil-1, Broker-1

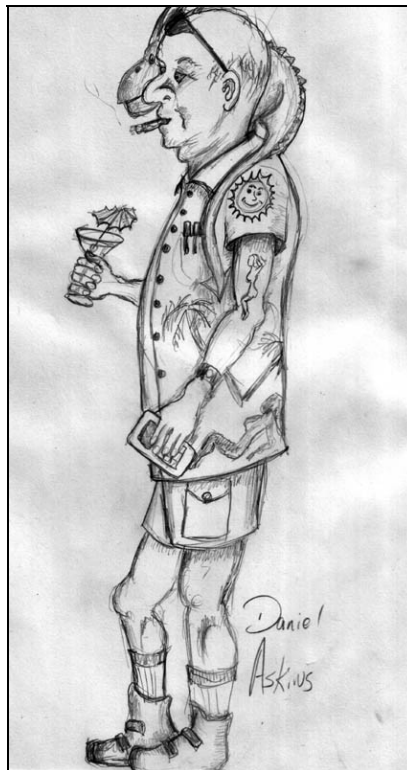
Vinod Jhaverchand, 15 years. (0 years) No terms
779A99
(When leaving for the Finishing School, change SOC to "A", and add Liaison-0 to his skills)

Suggested Visuals

Caunotaucarius Imperial Finishing School
Based on "Venus Moon Outpost 1" by krasblak
http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=874673&member

Abandoned military bases, now used as habitats
Based on "first moon on the fifth planet" by Philip H. Williams: but smaller, and more dilapidated, in my mind's eye.
<http://digitalart.org/artwork.php?ID=10445>

A highly romanticized and idealistic depiction of a P-plane
<http://forums.cgsociety.org/showthread.php?t=300549>



Adventure: *Downed On Uzola*

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Downed on Uzola is an adventure for military travellers, working with – or as soldiers for – the Hegemony of Lorean. Starship ownership is immaterial, except for harsh Referees. This adventure uses the **BITS Task System**, with **Classic Traveller** assumptions. The Referee should be familiar with the weight, travel, fatigue, vision/sensor, and combat rules of his chosen ruleset.

Because of the tactical nature of this adventure, the Referee must NOT let the players read it before it is played. If security is breached, changes and alterations are called for.

Loadout

The PCs are wearing helmets with transparent face masks (4 kg), which includes a short-range (1 km) radio; a feeding tube (connectable to an outside ‘feed bag’), build-in flashlights and very-short range IR sensors (20 meters), an internal Heads-up Display, and sufficient power for three days of use.

Each PC also has a portable air supply (TL12 Portable Life Support System, 18 kg.) The PLSS is good for 48 hours: should they fail, each trooper has an emergency air supply/scrubber attached to their mask, which is good for 60 minutes. The PCs **MUST** find a source of breathable air before his life support system fail.

Each trooper has:

- a TL12 modified Combat Environment Suit (6 kg), with Hegemony styling and Lorean Ranger¹ markings: this suit renders the user invisible to IR sensors.
- a standard Advanced Combat Rifle (ACR) with a loaded 20-round magazine (4 kg total: each loaded magazine weighs 0.5 kg)
- one PC also has a grenade launcher fitted to his rifle (5.4 kg loaded launcher: each grenade 0.45 kg)
- an autopistol, loaded with 15 rounds (1 kg loaded: each magazine .25 kg)
- three dehydrated feed bags (0.2 kg each bag): one bag feeds an active man for one day
- an ultra-light water purification system suitable to purify seven day’s worth of water (0.05 kg)

One PC, the commander, has a handheld comp/satellite uplink (TL11, 0.6 kg) with tactical maps of the area and areas of satellite-determined enemy

activity within a 3-km range, updated on an hourly basis.

Additional sensory equipment may include:

- a TL11 binoculars (IR, visual, UV light, x50 zoom: 1 kg)
- an inertial locator (TL11, 0.5 kg)
- an atmospheric sampler tailored for NBC (Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical) battlefield operations (TL11, 15 kg)
- basic EW sensors (1 km range to detect and classify EW activity; TL12, 5 kg)

Military PCs may have additional equipment suited to their specialty – up to a point. Referees should have his players write a list of what they need to do their jobs (Demolitions, Communication and Electronic Warfare, Heavy Weapon, Reconnaissance, and Medics). Total weight may be no more than 30 kg. (No Combat Armor or Battledress troops!)

The Referee then determines what items the PCs were able to salvage from the crash site by rolling 2 dice: a roll of 11+ saves one heavy item (>5 kg), 7+ saves one medium item (1-5 kg), and 4+ saves one light item (<1 kg) from the onboard fire.

Situation Report...

The exact date and time the adventure starts is local early morning, 94.012.4 HT² (that is, 025-993 Imperial.) Location: on a minor continent on Uzola: Tsosoe/Empty Quarter 2904 BA78553-9 Ag Ni 224 HI F0 V (note correct star, as per **Stellar Reaches #5**.) The adventure starts in medias res, with the scattered PCs scouting a river gorge near the crash site of their transport. Some PCs can spot a huge stone complex, about three kilometers downstream, past the various rapids. Visual examination sees no signs of life or occupation, but IR sensors show up heat sources that suggest active machinery (an Easy task to detect, with military-grade IR binoculars.) Less than 100 meters away, the PCs can see their troop transport. Filled with dead mates and lost supplies, the roar of the flames is dying down to a distant moan, smothered by the hooting and cries of the ancient jungle.

Surrounding them is a riot of life, long adapted to the poisonous waters and air of the world. Coils of black cables sprout out of the ground: the smaller cables are difficult to spot against the flora and shadows of the jungle, while huge pipes, covered by vines and greenery, span the river ravine in numerous spots. Together, they speak of ancient Vargr hopes and dreams

devoured by the jungle and the inescapable reach of ancient poisons.

A PC may hold his breath if he needs to expose himself to the atmosphere: if he does not breathe, he is basically unharmed. However, every breath taken from this atmosphere deducts one point of Endurance: when it falls to zero, the PCs drown in their own vomit and blood. When back in breathable atmosphere, only half the Endurance level lost is regained at a rate of one point per 10 minutes: the other half is regained at a rate of one point per month in hospital. The first point lost is never regained. Exposed eyes sting in the atmosphere, but this fades with time.

What happened?

The PCs, serving or supporting the Lorean Rangers, were being brought in to support an assault on a known terrorist/criminal base when their transport was shot down by a previously undetected anti-air site. (If the PCs are mercenaries, the Referee may choose to be unpleasant and make the shot-down craft the PCs starship or ship's boat. "That's just the cost of doing business"). The craft is a burning wreck: any gear and NPCs still onboard are toast. However, PCs who have medium-range communications with a 50 km+ range can get in touch with Command: they promise a pick-up within 24 hours. "Just sit tight and don't do anything stupid!"

The PCs may well decide to sit tight. If so, then at the 24 hour mark (mid-morning, next day) they spot a new transport in the air coming for them during the night... only to explode in mid-air. Command reports that no more attempts will be made to rescue the PCs, until the anti-air battery is pinpointed and taken out – sorry, no ETA. That anti-air battery is taken out... 30 hours later. If the PCs wait that long, then the third transport picks up their corpses, for an honorable burial.

Reconnaissance

The distant stone building is set on one side of a mountainside, about 100 meters above the river. The building complex is 30 to 100 meters high itself, at various points. Behind the building is a high fold of the mountain, which goes up another 400 meters. A short distance behind the complex is a sagging, growth-covered network of cables, about 170 meters in length and 15 meters thick, that spans the river gorge. The PCs must determine what approach they want to take: 1) go along the river, hike up the terrain to the cable-bridge, and cross it to end up close to the distant fortress 2) go up the left side of the river bank, and cross over to the stone complex using the cables as a bridge, or 3) climb up the mountain, cross over to a place above the stone buildings, and then climb down to the site.

Each approach has risks and benefits: the cable bridge can be a deathtrap if hostiles are in the complex, but the left side of the gorge is probably not as patrolled

as the right side: also, line-of-sight is better, so any possible enemy movements can be quickly spotted. Going along the river and directly up the cliff is the quickest route, but also the most exposed to visual spotters and snipers. Climbing over the mountain is the least-expected route, but takes a long time and a lot of work: the team's life support might not hold out. While hidden from the stone buildings, this route also means that the PCs line of sight to the building is cut off as well.

Electronic and visual information point to no enemy activity, but IR sensors point to the presence of an electronic sensor grid (Average difficulty for an EW specialist to detect, with suitable field equipment) covering the river approaches. These sensors are placed in three concentric rings surrounding the stone building:

- **Ring I:** A sparse collection of small (about 5 cm³ in size) TL10 infra-red sensors, covering a zone 1-2 km from the building. These sensors are set to ignore single lifeforms (usually animals) wandering: instead, the sensors are tuned to detect vehicles and large (20 or more) groups of people. These sensors are camouflaged, and set in difficult-to-spot locations. Soldiers with the right equipment may catch them doing a 'radio burst' to home base. Sensor range is 50–200 meters, depending on location³.
- **Ring II:** Another ring of visual and IR sensors. These TL9 sensors are about 10 cm³ in size, and are set in a sparse density, 1-0.5 km radius from the building. These sensors see in the visual range as well as IR, and are tuned to relay the location, speed, and direction of individuals and objects down to medium (humanoid) size. "Lens glint" does not give their location away (yay technology!), but their silhouette can be spotted by trained eyes. They communicate home continually via radio. Sensor range is to 300 meters.
- **Ring III:** A final, moderately (not densely) populated ring of TL10 visual, IR, sound, and motion detectors. This ring is set 0.5-0.05 km from the stone building, and is difficult to detect without a mine detector. These disks have a radius of 15 cm, and a 3 cm thickness. The body of the sensor is buried, with 'sensor antenna' sticking up above the ground. Communication is continuous, by underground wire/optical fiber. The sensor can detect the number and vector (speed and direction) of men and objects within a 100 meter radius. The Referee may add an explosive charge to these sensors, if he feels that the PCs should receive an unpleasant surprise.

The following suggested difficulty to sneak past these sensors assumes that the sensors are undetected; the troopers move in clear daylight weather; the relatively poor visual camouflage of the troopers (black uniforms, with dull red shoulder armor and white helmets that glint in the sun) and their better infrared profile (excellent heat-diffusion and radiation

retardation)⁴. Task difficulties: Easy Recon/Stealth/Intrusion for Ring I, Difficult for Ring II, Formidable for Ring III. The number of times to roll depends on how long the PCs loiter in the sensor zone, and how much field discipline they exercise. Moving at night, rain and fog, detecting the sensors before entering their range, and good field-craft all affects the difficulty level.

There are sensors that cover the left bank approach and the mountain that abuts the stone building, but the sensor density is much less. Decrease the difficulty by one for left-bank approaches, and by two for the mountain approach.

Time needed to reach the complex is 1 hour by river, and then another half-hour climbing, using the plant growths as rope. By the left bank, time needed is four hours, due not only to the steep incline, but also due to the undergrowth. Using the right bank, time needed is six hours - not so much undergrowth, but more steeper inclines, and more badly broken ground as well.

Welcoming Committee

If the PCs are flagged by the sensors and watching guards, three to five guards (Regular or Veteran level, Referee's discretion) are sent to intercept the PCs via an underground tunnel network. The PCs movements are tracked, and relayed to the interception team. The ambush team exit at 'the nearest point to the PCs' - usually in 50 - 100 meters ahead of the PCs current location, between them and the stone building. The guards swiftly set up an ambush for the PCs.

Each guard is equipped with:

- a helmet with a clear face mask and integrated radio (5 km)
- jack armor (black/dark green camouflage, no insignia)
- light PLSS units (12 hours of air and life support)
- an assault rifle (one 30-round magazines)
- two fragmentary hand grenades each
- one autopistol, with one 15-round clip
- one fighting knife

One guard carried two landmines (with a radio detonation): the leader has an EMP grenade (to cause havoc with the PCs electronic equipment⁵.) All equipment is at TL9, excluding the EMP grenade (TL11). They do take prisoners, but if defeated prefer to retreat than surrender themselves. If captured, they alert the home base via their helmet communication gear: to the PCs, they give name and rank: nothing else is given willingly given without interrogation. It is an Average Interrogation task to get most guards to tell what they know: what they say depends on the intelligence of the guard in question.

If the PCs are captured, move on to the section entitled "A different place, a different time". If the PCs prevail, they may gain extra oxygen tanks, weapons and

ammo, and radios (built into the helmets) set to adversary frequencies. Using the enemy radios is a pain - the PCs must consider mechanical problems (how to seal the enemy helmet against their own suit?) or go for a techie response (determine the enemy radio setup, and replicate it on their own helmet sets.)

If the PCs can get on the enemy frequency, and got sufficient information from prisoners (passwords, etc.) a creative and silver-tongued PC can accomplish much, but this situation is left for the Referee to adjudicate. If the enemy detects that something is wrong, there's a chance they'll clam up totally, and a chance that they'll play along while setting up a Big Surprise....

Passive listening is useful for a few minutes: then a request for an update is made. No response leads for a few more queries: if silence continues, then there is a long pause for an hour or two: then the PCs can hear the occasional cryptic chatter. It is difficult to interpret, but a PC may recognize that they are using Zhodani codewords (the words themselves - phases like 'the butterfly is singing' or 'Sunset, Sunride' have no obvious relation to battle.) A PC may correctly guess that a spotter has been sent to shadow the PCs, and relate their movements to base. Should this spotter be silenced, no more men are sent out, and no more chatter is heard on the radio. Smart PCs can expect a reception party when they arrive.

In addition to the guards, the PCs may have one or two encounters with the local wildlife on their way to the stone complex: use the encounter tables in the appendix. Exposed wounds are soon covered with a black fungus-like growth, but this does not affect the PCs during the adventure. They really should see a physician afterwards, though.

Knock, Knock

PCs who haven't eliminated their shadow or fail to evade further detection meet a hot reception when they are within 50 meters of the stone complex: about 10 men (Green or Regular expertise), armed with assault rifles (and two 30-round magazines), and wearing flak jackets and helmets, sealed helmets with communication and air for three hours (and a spare bottle for another three hours), and hand pistols with 15 rounds each. They are led by a Veteran with a combat environment suit, four grenades and a grenade launcher, and an improved PLSS (life support) with 48 hours of air.

If the PCs are using the cable bridge, the guards work to shoot the PCs off, but won't chase them across the bridge. If the PCs are using the direct approach, the guards use their height advantage to shoot the PCs off the cliff: they won't pursue immediately. If the PCs attack from the over the mountain ridge, the guards lack such advantages, and must stand or retreat into the complex.

The very best way to enter the complex avoids the direct approach, but uses the same tunnels the guards used to ambush the PCs. This preserves the element of surprise, bypassing the sensor grids. Moreover, at regular intervals within the tunnels first aid kits are provided, as well as additional air tanks. Navigating the unlit tunnel maze is a pain, but PCs with good direction sense or useful tech aids can figure out where they should go within an hour or less. They could also play ‘gopher’ going from exit to exit, determining where they need to go. The tunnels are not sealed: remind the PCs how much time there is left on their PLSS. Using the tunnels, they can reach the heart of the stone fortress – after they pass an airlock, watched by a mini-cam. The correct code must be entered using the keypad to open the airlock. Correctly passing this gate gives the three techies on the other side a big surprise (a fatal surprise, if it is blown open via explosives.) The wrong approach leads to death by a rain of lead.

Once within the enormous complex, the PCs must defeat about ten guards, wearing face masks (three hours of air each), and armed with assault rifles and two 30-round clips of ammo. There are also ~30 techies and ~40 other unarmed civilians. There is mass panic (and possible mass death) within the complex, but only the guards fight the PCs: they surrender if morale fails. As the PCs finally settle everybody down, they may or may not notice a small, hidden air/raft blast out from behind a waterfall: somebody made a successful escape from capture.

The PCs soon get access to life support, and can hail Command: a pickup is made in three days. An investigation reveals that the base was run by “Mr. White”, a tall, quiet man wearing a turban. Activity centered on the ancient equipment and relics nearby. What he was looking for? Who was financing him? No one knows. Where is he? “Well, he was here when you took the base...” The local intranet is partially wiped, but may still yield useful information - but grasping “Mr. White’s” goals comes by understanding the specialized equipment he left behind (to determined by the Referee.) Note that some equipment and certain computer nodes were designed with a talented psion in mind: these items have no keyboards or voice interface.

A Different Place, A Different Time

If the PCs are captured, they are disarmed, handcuffed, and brought to the stone complex: they are given medical care if in need, but the restraints stay on, and are watched by an armed guard. In a day or two, they are brought to see “Mr. White”, obviously a Zhodani, wearing a turban. One of his flunkies interrogates the PC, preferring to dampen rather than aggravate hostility. (Referee: a good cop/bad cop routine may be useful here.) Mild drugs may be administered in their food (even the straight liquor has an agenda behind it), but no

torture is used: not even ‘no touch’ techniques like sleep deprivation or noise bombardment. The Zhodani noble is a poor liar (Zhodani culture despises deceit) so he lets his aide do the talking: but if the PCs play their cards well, they should be rewarded with the Zho dropping some useful fragment of information.

The players must now leave the room, abandoning their character sheets. The Referee should modify the character sheets, to take into account two additional years of adventuring. When the players return their characters are on a different world, in a relaxing situation, when they realize that a two-month period of their memory is missing. Their service records show that the memory that is missing is from two years ago, while they served on Uzola: they were discovered unconscious near their transport, and endured a long hospital stay. Revived, vague memories of ancient fortresses of stone, entwined wires snaking across the jungle floor, and Zhodani nobles eight sectors from home are put down as ‘combat stress’ by their peers and officers.

Footnotes

¹The Lorean Rangers are ‘first response’ light infantry, specializing in terrestrial raids and reconnaissance operations. While not of elite quality, they are effective in combat, and the Rangers take pride in their marksmanship and demolition abilities. Personnel are almost exclusively human males: as of 993, Vargr males have been admitted into the ranks for only six Imperial years, on an experimental basis. Those few who have joined up find it hard going – tolerating social isolation is not a Vargr strength - but the prestige Ranger membership brings makes the pain worthwhile to some. The human brass remains doubtful: the last such experiment, over 50 years ago, proved to be a disastrous mistake and was quickly closed out.

Since 991, the Hegemony has been upgrading the Rangers with TL12 armor and light transport, and is experimenting with improved Electronic Warfare capacities down to the stick (5-sophont) level. The Rangers, long comfortable with atmospheric drops and covert landings, are currently experimenting with orbital drops ‘like the Imperials do’: the blood-price of mastering this technique is proving to be unexpectedly high.

²94.012.4 Hegemony Time translates to “94th Hegemony Cycle, 12th day, point-four day.” A cycle of the Hegemony is determined by the current Hegemon, but usually ranges between 300 and 850 days. One Hegemonic day equals ~19 Terran hours. Tenths of a hegemonic day are subdivided into additional decimal places, as needed: ordinary speech uses ‘tenths’ and ‘hundredths’ in the same way Imperials use ‘hours’ and ‘minutes’. Seconds are precisely the same length in both societies.

Note that the dating system actually predates the Hegemony: before it's founding at 53.091.0 HT (864 Imperial), Hegemony Time was called Starfarers' Time (ST), and was commonly used by the interstellar community in Arzul Sector. For what it's worth, 0.0.0 ST was only an arbitrary start date of Starfarers' Time (now Hegemony Time), and has no additional significance.

³It's quite possible that the PCs can get in range, be spotted, and yet not be noticed. The sensor may mistake them for something else, their behavior may not flag them as sophonts, or the guards watching the IR, motion, and sound sensors may call it a 'false positive' (Visual data, by their nature, are rarely mistaken for something else). If the PCs fail the test, by definition the guards are alerted to their presence, and have decided to react.

⁴A really smart, clued-in PC may choose to make a nighttime assault, to maximize his anti-IR benefits, while reducing the problems of his poor visual profile. Night vision equipment is not built into their helmets, but (if available) must be carried. Navigation must be carefully planned out. Remember that the adventure starts at local early morning – comparable to '0800 hours' on Terra. Each Uzola day is 21.607 T-hours: the PCs must wait ~11 hours before nightfall. They have

only enough air in their PLSS for 48 hours, plus an emergency hour.

⁵To give the PCs a sporting chance, it is NOT recommended that the EMP grenade affect their life support equipment: consider that hardened against EMP pulses. Other electronic equipment may be considered fair game. Yes, the EMP grenade will destroy the hand laser pistols of the ambush team: but their radios are hardened against EMP bursts. The guards carry no other electronic equipment, save cheap entertainment gizmos.

Suggested Visuals

Downed on Uzola – a story based on art by Daniel Lu Visi:

http://features.cgsociety.org/challenge/journey_begins/entry.php?challenger=11169

Gun detail close-up, for the weapon gearheads:

http://features.cgsociety.org/challenge/journey_begins/entry.php?challenger=11169&page=3

“Wired world” detail, for those with good eyes:

http://features.cgsociety.org/challenge/journey_begins/entry.php?challenger=11169&page=1

Appendix

The following is a few snippets of data: as generated using Classic Traveller rules, using the Heaven and Earth program written by Stuart W Ferris. Note that the world is partly frozen, from ~35° to the poles from either hemisphere. The adventure itself takes place very close to the equator, where jungle conditions still reign: the “Hex 1 South” row on Traveller geodesic maps.

SIZE RELATED DETAILS

- 2a. Planet Diameter: 10,100 miles (16,160 km)
- 2b. Planet Density: Molten Core, 0.94 terra
- 5. World Mass: 1.836 terra
- 6. World Gravity: 1.175 terra
- 7c. Orbital Period: 1,312.511 standard days
- 9. Rotation Period: 21.607 standard hours
- 10. Axial Tilt: 43 degrees

ATMOSPHERIC RELATED DETAILS

- 1. Atmospheric Composition: Standard oxygen-nitrogen mix, with pollutants taint
- 2. Surface Atmospheric Pressure: 1.0 atm
- 7a. Length of day and Night: 10.804 standard hours

HYDROSPHERE RELATED DETAILS

- 1. Hydrographic Percentage: 83%
- 2. Hydrographic Composition: Tainted liquid water
- 6. Continents and Oceans: 3 major continents, 3 minor continents, 4 major islands, 5 archipelagoes

TEMPERATURE WORKSHEET

HEX ROW	BASE TEMPERATURE	LATITUDE TEMPERATURE EFFECTS	BASE TEMPERATURE FOR HEX ROW			
1	1	24	25			
HEX	SUMMER	AXIAL TILT	AXIAL TILT TEMP PLUS	DAYTIME	ORBIT ECC	HIGHEST TEMP FOR

ROW 1	PLUS 26	FACTOR 0.25	IN SUMMER 6	PLUS 9	PLUS 0.0	HEX ROW 41				
HEX ROW 1	WINTER MINUS -43	AXIAL TILT FACTOR 0.25	AXIAL TILT TEMP MINUS IN WINTER -11	NIGHTTIME MINUS 11	ORBIT ECC MINUS 0.0	LOWEST TEMP FOR HEX ROW 4				
ENCOUNTER TABLES										

ENCOUNTER TABLE, JUNGLE TERRAIN										
DIE CHARACTERISTICS	ANIMAL	ATTRIBUTES	WEIGHT	HITS	WOUNDS	WEAPONS	ARMOR			
1	2 Reducer		200	19/13	8	Claws	None	A9	F5	S2
2	1 Intermittent		50	10/10	6	As Broadsword	None	A4	F4	S0
3	1 Intermittent		24000	43/21	24	Stinger	2	A9	F4	S2
4	4 Intermittent		3	1/2	7	Thrasher	2	A4	F7	S0
5	1 Gatherer		12	7/5	9	As Body Pistol	2	A9	F8	S1
6	1 Killer		6000	39/18	12	Claws	None	A4	F9	S0



Empty Quarter Echo

By Jeff M. Hopper

The Caravanseries

In every sector of Known Space there are waystations known as Deep Space Refueling Stations or Calibration Points that allow rifts to be traversed by ships. In the Empty Quarter though, they are a whole different story. The cultures that settled here from Terra brought with them the concept of the caravanserie - a small permanent camp used as a resupply point for desert caravans and as a free market. The caravanserie of the Empty Quarter serve as both for interstellar merchants.

Most caravanseries are located along routes which would normally be considered jump-2 and allow jump-1 ships to traverse the empty hex without having to install demountable tanks. Caravanseries are often established near worlds that make profitable trading partners, such as a few Non-Industrial or Agricultural worlds near an Industrial world.

The caravanserie itself is often a starship which has reached the end of its useful life as the core, with a mishmash of tanks and living spaces made from pressure tents, portable airlocks, advanced bases, asteroid chunks, and other flotsam hauled out to the empty hex. The caravanserie often looks like a metallic webwork with a starship at its center and parts trapped inside a snarl of scaffolding. Power is provided by the starship's power plant typically while the rest of the drives are broken down and sold as spare parts. It should be acknowledged though, that many caravanserie owners are not too picky about where the ships have come from that are used to build the station. It is not unknown for pirates to unload their plundered ships at a caravanserie; what the station owners do with these vessels is considered their own affair.

Fuel is provided by beltors who make a marginal living mining ice and hauling it to the caravanserie where it is processed into unrefined fuel. Merchants also practice ice hauling to caravanserie in the belief that an empty hold is more of loss than one filled with ice that goes for less than a hundred credits per ton. If the caravanserie is lucky, it is built upon some passing interstellar ice chunk hoping to become a comet. As a starport, a caravanserie is usually considered a type E with unrefined fuel at services priced at twice to three times normal. See, a caravanserie can get away with that because they are the sole supplier in an empty hex.

Since most ships are just passing through, you'd think that very little trade would go on at a caravanserie, but you would be mistaken. Cargoes awaiting trans-shipment often find their way to a caravanserie, where

the art of the deal is heavily practiced. Many caravanserie traders are more interested in the act of dealing than they are in making a profit. Haggling over a price has been raised to a high art by the caravanserie masters. Point in fact, every transaction that takes place should be haggled over - it would be insulting to do otherwise.

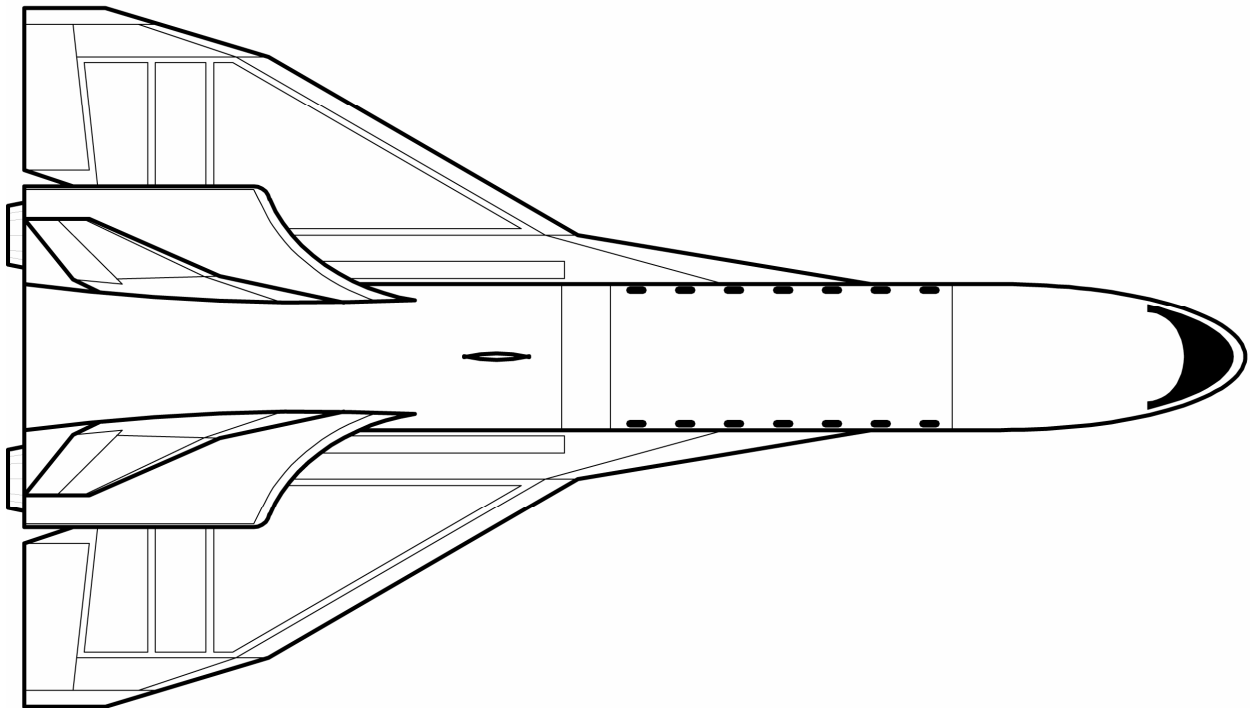
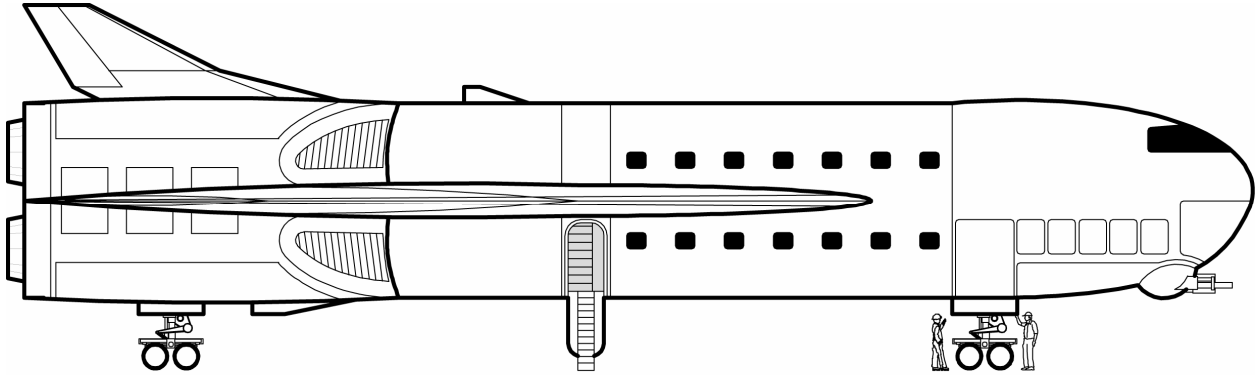
Oh, the haggling that takes place in the makeshift corridors and access tubes of the caravanserie is a sight to behold. When two old merchants face off over the price of a cargo, it is like two fighters entering a ring. First, coffee is served to both, small cups of an oily potent brew that could be used to strip paint off a bulkhead. Yet you dare not refuse it, so just suck it up and get on with haggling if you're smart. Bring your own mug and fill it to the brim and gulp the coffee down if you're smarter - it'll intimidate them even as it gives you heartburn. Then the sparring of prices commences, with each new bid tossed out as a punch to be blocked by the obligatory degradation of the seller's item or the ritual insulting of the buyer's offer. The thrust of cost against the parry of price seldom ends in a knockout blow of profit, but in a compromise arrived through mutually exchanged insults of friendly rivalry. As in any good haggle, the amount of money to be exchanged is only arrived at when the participants are satisfied that they have adequately swindled the other.

It warms the heart to watch.

The economy of a caravanserie is a service industry oriented one, with the majority of supplies coming from another world to be resold at inflated prices once they reach the caravanserie. Businesses that cater to the more base recreational needs do outnumber more respectable establishments. When a ship comes in to dock, the caravanserie becomes energized in a party atmosphere to welcome the fresh currency in a festive bacchanal. A caravanserie is decadence for a price in that respect. Trust me, liners and yachts do not frequent caravanserie because of the offering of these vulgar pleasures there. Since most caravanseries are built individually by merchants using ships that have reached the end of their useful lives, each one is a unique community. For instance, Josephus Rohsoe who owns the Rohsoe's Hole caravanserie, holds an annual gathering that he calls a "swap meet". Attendance for the gathering varies from 10 to 60 ships of various types. All of the ships dock with each other in a conglomerate around the caravanserie and trade goes on round the clock for the next seven days in a festival atmosphere in which not only cargoes, but sometimes crew and wedding vows are traded.

Starship Datasheet: Shuttle

By Mike "the Bromgrev" Thomas



High Guard

Shuttle	QY - 0103621 - 000000 - 30002 - 0	MCr 70.15	95 dtons
batteries bearing	1 1		TL=13
batteries	1 1		Crew=2

Crew=2. Passengers=56. Cargo=37.3. Fuel=5.7. EP=5.7. Agility=2.

Tonnage:	95 dtons standard. 1330 cubic meters.
Crew:	1 X Pilot, 1 X Gunner.
Performance:	Jump=0. 3-G. Powerplant=6. 5.7 EP.
Electronics:	Model/3 computer. No bridge.
Hardpoints:	One chin-mounted triple turret.

Armament:	Two beam lasers (one battery). One missile rack (one battery).
Defenses:	None.
Craft:	None.
Fuel Treatment:	Integral fuel scoops. No purification plant.
Cost:	MCr 70.15 standard. Not produced in quantity.
Construction Time:	12 months singly. Not produced in quantity.

The Greif class shuttle is a high performance variable mission small craft. Capable of 3-G acceleration and with an oversized powerplant allowing it to operate a variety of equipment including weapons and a model/3 computer, it is a rugged and versatile craft. Fully aerodynamic, its wings incorporate a number of variable lift devices to enhance the Greif's atmospheric handling at all speeds. Fuel is carried in the structural honeycomb of the wing. The robust undercarriage allows the craft to 'kneel' for easier access. It can be found in any number of roles, from orbital transfer to interplanetary transport to ground support gunship.

Atris Interplanetary of Sangre (1816 Cotan, Empty Quarter) produces small numbers of this craft at TL13, usually to individual specifications. The example illustrated is a fairly standard model, fitted for 56 passengers and 37.3 dtons of cargo in one cavernous bay. Normally armed with a triple chin turret mounting two beam lasers and a missile launcher with a 1 dton magazine, Atris will provide any weapon combination to order. Alternatively, the entire armored tub may be swapped out for a 2 dton module fitted out to the buyer's specification with, for example extra sensors, external grapples or specialised cargo.

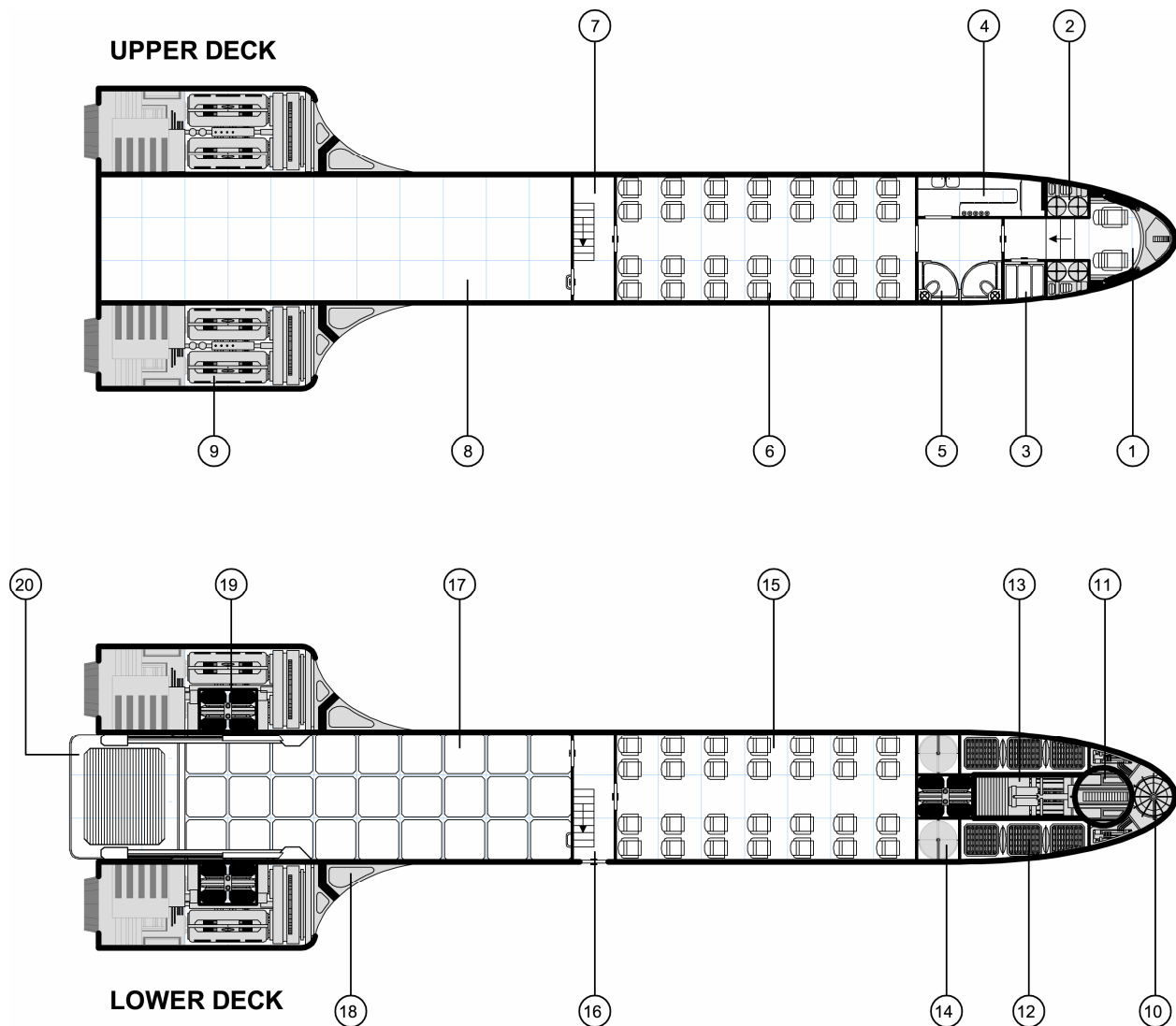
This shuttle is not a cheap vessel, but it is economical - Atris has an enviable record of precision manufacture and reliability, and the Greif is the corporation's flagship product. Maintenance costs are rarely more than half to three quarters that of comparable small craft, provided it is carried out by Atris' own in house maintenance department. Operators who are unable (few are unwilling) to make use of this face higher maintenance costs due to the scarcity of parts and precise manufacturing tolerances. Even so, the Greif's long design lifespan means they are a worthwhile investment for those who demand a little more from their interplanetary fleet.

Players may encounter these craft when their ship is hailed by a customs shuttle, or when they catch a ride to the satellite of a planet. The shuttle could be corporate transport for a mining cartel. Or maybe it is in use by pirates (or corporate militia) to prey on prospecting ships in a remote asteroid belt.

Location Key

1. **Cockpit.** This rather cramped space contains controls for one pilot and one gunner/steward. Its position forward and slightly above the normal level provides excellent visibility. In an emergency, a hatch in the ceiling can be blown out to allow the crew to escape.
2. **Secondary life support.** These back-up systems can be maintained via access panels from the cockpit.
3. **Ship's locker.** Weapons and restricted goods belonging to passengers are stored in this secure armored compartment, along with miscellaneous items such as survival gear and tool kits. For security, it is only accessible from the cockpit.
4. **Galley.** In addition to supplying crew and passenger meals, this chamber can also double as a basic workshop or laboratory fitted out according to the operator's needs.
5. **Freshers.** Rather generously appointed for a small craft, these feature full sanitary facilities including UV lights and massage shower.
6. **Upper passenger deck.** Acceleration couches and overhead lockers for 28 passengers.
7. **Upper access space.** Part of the airlock, with stair access to the lower deck and hatches leading to the cargo bay and upper passenger deck.
8. **Upper void of cargo bay.** There is no floor on this level, although wall mounted rungs allow lead to the upper access hatch.
9. **Drive pod.** The ship's drives are mounted in four independent pods, allowing the craft to continue operations even with one or two pods disabled.
10. **Sensors.** This bay is only accessible from the exterior, although the entire assembly may be swapped out and replaced.
11. **Turret.** The standard triple turret in its chin mount is ideally suited for ground attack as well as defensive fire. The turret and its missile magazine are mounted together in a single armored tub which can be swapped out in its entirety.
12. **Electronics bay.** Mainly housing the massive model/3 computer hardware.
13. **Missile magazine.** Loaded from a ventral port, this magazine holds 20 missiles.

14. **Main life support.** External access panels allow maintenance and replacement of the tanks and machinery in this compartment.
15. **Lower passenger deck.** Acceleration couches and overhead lockers for 28 passengers.
16. **Airlock.** The main personnel access, the airlock is a double-height space connecting the passenger and cargo areas of the craft.
17. **Cargo bay.** The cavernous 16.5m long double-height bay is fitted with a variety of mechanical, electromagnetic and gravitic fixing points along its floor, walls and ceiling.
18. **Fuel scoop.** Each drive pod features a fuel scoop fitted into its leading edge.
19. **Undercarriage.** The Greif has a wheeled undercarriage, allowing horizontal take-offs and landings for economy of when carrying unusually massive cargo. The hydraulic legs are extendable to a maximum 4.5m ground clearance, and can 'kneel' to within 1m of ground level.
20. **Cargo ramp (lowered).** The large rear cargo ramp creates maximum flexibility by allowing cargo measuring up to 4m wide by 5.5m tall to enter the cargo bay with ease.



Starship Datasheet: Modular Scout Courier

By Christian "Father Fletch" Kelley

TL14 150-TON MODULARE SCOUT COURIER

Class: Spacecraft, Wind (Type SM)

Tech Level: 14

Size: Medium (150 tons)

Streamlining: Streamlined

Jump Range: 2

Acceleration: 2-G

Fuel: 31 tons

Duration: 1 week

Crew: 4

Staterooms: 0

Small Cabins: 6

Bunks: 0

Couches: 0

Low Berths: 0

Cargo Space: 0.0 tons

Atmospheric Speeds:

Cruising = 3525kph

Other Equipment: Fuel scoops, TL14 Fuel purification plant, two 30-ton hanger bays for standard 30-ton modules.

EP Output: 10 (3 excess)

Agility: 2 (+3 EP)

Initiative: +2 (+2 agility)

AC: 12 (+2 agility, +0 AR)

Repulsors: None

Nuclear Dampers: None

Meson Screens: None

Black Globes: None

AR: 0

SI: 107

Main Computer: Model/2

Sensor Range: Short (Model/2)

Comm. Range: Short (Model/2)

Cost: MCr73.099 (new)

NoE = 1175kph

Maximum = 4700kph

Missile Rack TL7, +1 To Hit, 6d6 (18/x1), Range: 90,000km, Ammo: 0 missiles

Pulse Laser TL7, +1 To Hit, 1d10 (19/x2), Range: 45,000km

Sandcaster TL7, +1 AC

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)

Sirocco - Wind Class Modular Scout Courier

(This description only applies to the T20 version of this design. Other design systems force different design compromises, but fall generally within this models performance envelope.)

Designed to take advantage of two assets in large supply, the Serpent and Wind class Scout/Couriers and the ubiquitous 30-Dton Cutter Modules, this ship is very flexible in the type of missions it can accomplish; however, this flexibility comes at a price.

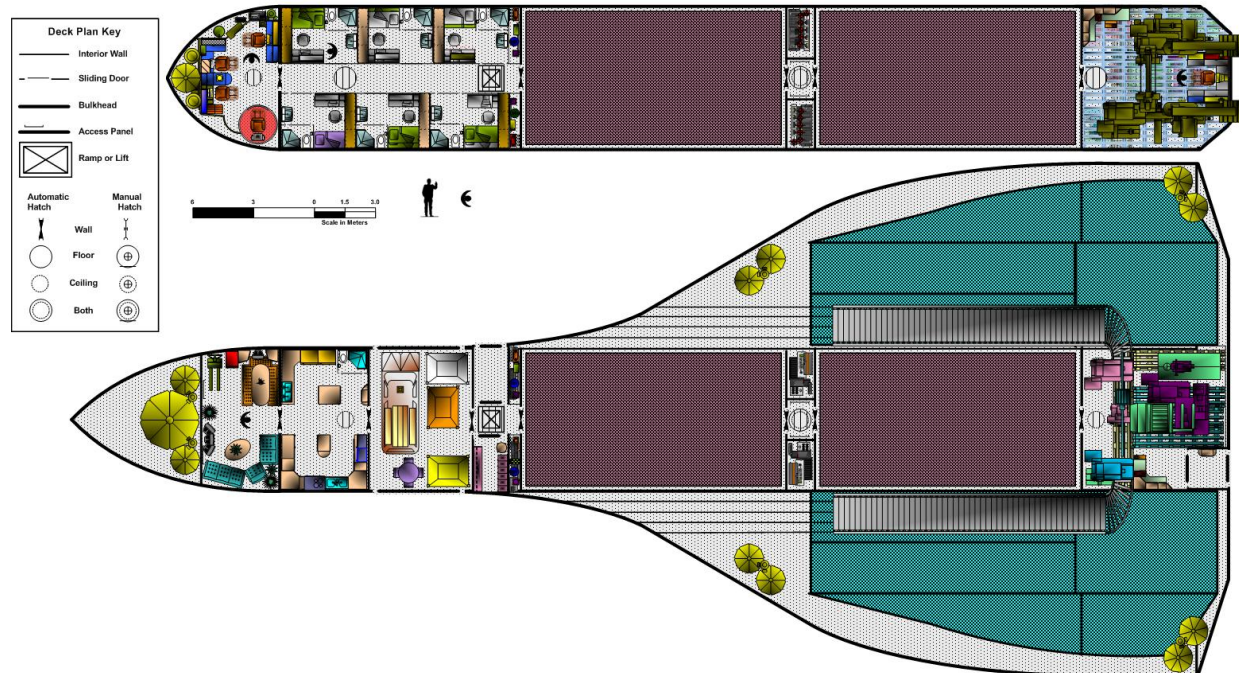
With the ability to carry a wide load of different and commonly available modules, this ship can perform missions ranging from covert insertion of troops or operatives, to simple cargo and crew supply to remote stations. This flexibility is highly appreciated by smaller militaries and paramilitary organizations. The purchase of a few ship hulls, with multiple different modules allows the building of a fleet on the cheap. As new missions are needed, different modules can be purchased, leased or pressed into service from available models. Modules can be found in all areas of settled space, and often beyond! This means an enterprising crew lucky enough to be assigned one of these for detached duty can quickly change the ship to take advantage of markets. While no where near the cargo capacity of even a small free trader, being first to market with a high value or novelty item has made the difference for many crews. Some lucky entrepreneurs have even begun fledgling merchant lines with just one of these. Small and middle sized mercenary units with organic ships have used these to scout the next deployment system, act as mobile VIP lounges and business offices, pre-place small units, drop off and retrieve sensors, re-supply remote bases, even to act as combat drop craft. This last option is a move of desperation however, as a jump capable craft is an expensive asset to lose.

The weapons suite is designed to be flexible and allow this ship to fight, run or defend itself, depending on the mission and situation. Given her relative small size and lack of armor, however, speed, agility and stealth are her only real defensive assets. This is in keeping with the overall design goals.

One of the first noticed and major compromises is that the power-plant only has enough fuel for one week of operations. This decision was a deliberate design compromise, with the naval architects planning for at least one of the modules to carry enough additional fuel for extended operations. The result of this compromise is that the actual cargo space available or total jump range for the ship are less than what they might be, but this compromise was felt well worth the price.

The second major compromise is the crew space; with only small staterooms, there is little room for carrying additional crew beyond six. This is not such a disability since the ship only needs four crewmen for normal operations. When carrying modules designed for passengers this problem goes away, of course. However, if a module needs more crew than it has quarters for; the week in jump can get very uncomfortable very quickly.

Both of these compromises force the careful consideration of mission load-outs prior to departure. Once in a new system, the captain and crew are forced to make do with what they brought with them. While unable to be all ships to all men, she is a versatile tool to the crews that man her; a jack-of-all-trades of the space lanes.



Ship Walkthrough

Starting from the forward upper deck, there are 4 acceleration couches on the bridge, going clockwise from the iris valve, at 1 o'clock is the co-pilot seat, at 3 o'clock is the comms/sensor ops, at 9 o'clock is the enclosed gunner station (holo projection surround screens with remote connections to the turret weapons) and at 11 o'clock is the pilot seat.

Aft are the crew staterooms, with the foremost port stateroom being a single bunk for the Captain. The others are all double bunk as needed. Each stateroom has a fresher.

There is a lift shaft which can be sealed to the lower deck.

Aft of this is the upper Sandcaster emitter and control array. This covers the upper defensive arc of the ship.

Aft is Cutter Module Bay 1

The between module bay space is a through passage and airlock. This airlock opens overhead and has a docking ring array to lock onto craft and space-stations above the ship.

Port and starboard are the missile launch arrays. They are accessible from the access panels and outside. Loading is done on the ground from the outside. You could load them from within the ship, but it is difficult and can only be done slowly (no more than one missile per combat turn, it would need a minimum of two crew members and that crew would be taken away from any other duties; e.g. Damage Control, Engineering, Gunnery, etc.)

Aft of that is Cutter Module Bay 2

Aft of that is the upper engineering deck, which is catwalked and open grating to below. This deck mounts the maneuver drives and the engineer's station dead aft. It also has a work bench to starboard and forward in this compartment.

Below this is the lower deck engineering space. This space contains another work bench, the Jump drive, the Power plant, the fuel purification plant and a small airlock aft and portside.

Port and starboard are the fuel tanks, the inlet valves and plumbing for fuel and the wing root sensors.

Forward is the lower part of Cutter Module Bay 2.

Forward of that is the lower pass through and the pulse laser arrays. The pulse laser uses 8 emitter arrays, on laser periscopes, which collimate on distant targets. This airlock opens through the deck below and has a docking ring array to lock onto craft and space-stations below the ship.

Forward of that is the lower part of Cutter Module Bay 1.

Forward of this is the lower Sandcaster emitter and control array. This covers the lower defensive arc of the ship.

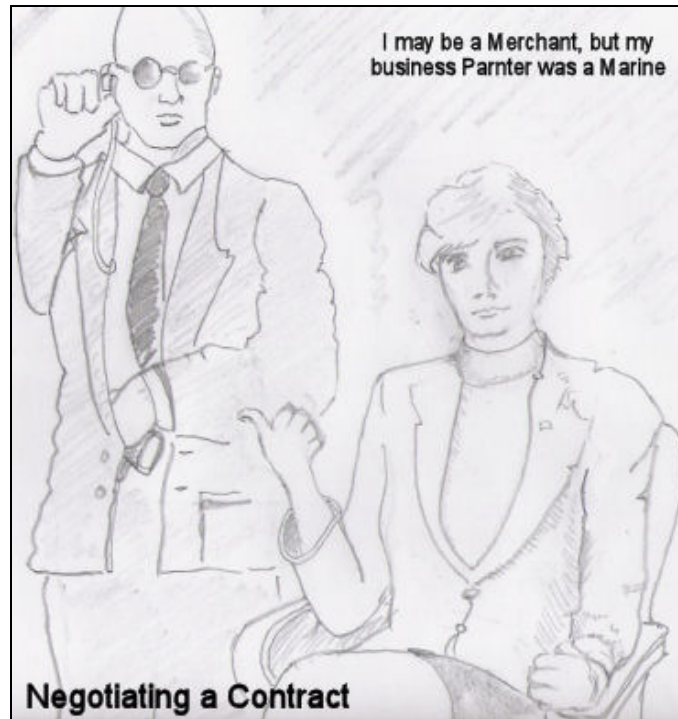
Forward of that is the main crew/passenger airlock on the starboard side, the ships locker and main safe on the port side. This area contains the lower part of the lift shaft.

Forward of that is the ship's cargo bay, which opens both port and starboard.

Forward of that is the galley and work space. It even has a washer and dryer and work space for folding clothes. The galley has 2 refrigerators, 2 microwaves, 2 dishwashers, a garbage compactor, a range with 4 burners and a griddle, a coffee maker and water cooler, a built in oven and lots of shelf and counter space.

Forward of this is the crew lounge. Clockwise from the iris valve is the repeater monitors for ship controls at 12 o'clock, the multi-machine exercise device at 2 o'clock, a multi option video machine at 2:30, the wardroom table at 3 o'clock, the couches and recliner at 9 o'clock to 11 o'clock.

Forward of that is the main sensor emitter and receiver array. A smaller array is above this in the bridge space.



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